



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FOURTH MEETING OF THE 2025-2026 SESSION
Second Sitting

Thursday
5 March, 2026
(Pages 1-64)

Hon. D. Ezzard Miller
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. D. Ezzard Miller
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert. Hon., JP	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, KC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Mrs. Julie J. T. Hunter, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, JP, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town North
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town Central
Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Elected Member for George Town West
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac East
Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town East

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

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

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
FOURTH MEETING OF THE 2025-2026 SESSION
THURSDAY
5 MARCH, 2026
10:06 AM
Second Sitting

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

The Speaker: This honourable Parliament is in session. I now invite the Member for Bodden Town West to read prayers.

PRAYERS

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Let us pray.

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

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

Let us say the Lord's Prayer together:

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

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

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

The Speaker: None.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: I have only one message. I would like to have a short meeting with all of the women parliamentarians on the lunch break in the small committee room to discuss the event tomorrow evening. Okay.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: I have been given notice of one personal explanation. I now call on the Deputy Premier and Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism & Trade Development, Elected Member for George Town South: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I just have two to make this morning, sir.

First of all, I want to thank my wife for the thirty-two wonderful years of marriage we're celebrating today.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: You didn't bring her this morning so we could tell her what a wonderful woman she is.

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier: I think we wore her out yesterday. You know, I've accomplished many things in life, but the most successful I can say is my family, the three children that we have successfully raised together.

An Hon. Member: Amen.

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier: The other one I want to mention today is very heart-warming. There is a young man celebrating his birthday today, seventeen years old — young Alexander Tibbetts, and he is struggling. Very, very tough today. I want to remember him and give him a shout out.

Three years ago I took him to dinner in Miami and he was very impressed with cars. He said, *You know, Uncle Gary, can't wait to the day that I turn 17 that I can get my driver's licence* and unfortunately, and that's with an act of God and a miracle, he may not have got that wish. I want to give him a big shout out today;

I hope he's listening, and if you all could remember him in your prayers, it'll mean a lot to him and the family.

Thank you all very much and thank you Mr. Speaker for the opportunity.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The Speaker: None

URGENT QUESTIONS

The Speaker: None

QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Speaker: Just a minute.

The House is suspended for thirty minutes.

Proceedings suspended at 10:11am

Proceedings resumed at 10:53am

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

QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

QUESTION NO. 67

**IS THE MINISTRY WORKING ON AN INITIATIVE
FOR THE PRIVATE HEALTHCARE FACILITIES
WHICH ARE ACCEPTING THE CINICO HEALTH
INSURANCE CARD?**

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

Question number 67 standing in my name to the Honourable Minister of Finance. Can the Honourable Minister say if the Ministry is working on an initiative for the private health care facilities which are not accepting the CINICO health care insurance?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

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

Mr. Speaker, the answer: CINICO is currently progressing an initiative which will seek to have private

healthcare facilities accept the CINICO health insurance card without the need to have an accompanying approval from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

At present, with the exception of vision care providers, members — other than those enrolled in a Standard Health Insurance Contract or (SHIC) — generally require a referral approved by the CMO to access healthcare providers outside the Cayman Islands Health Services Authority.

As part of a pilot programme, CINICO intends to establish provider network agreements with Health City Cayman Islands and Doctors Hospital during the second quarter (Q2) of 2026. These agreements will allow CINICO employees direct access to these providers at negotiated rates without requiring prior CMO approval. CINICO employees accessing care through this arrangement will be subject to applicable co-insurance requirements.

The purpose of the pilot programme is to collect sufficient data to assess utilisation patterns and potential pricing implications before any decision is made on whether direct access can be extended to civil servants more broadly. Any such decision will require close consultation with the Portfolio of the Civil Service, as it may have cost implications for the government's budget.

SHIC members will continue to have access to private health care providers under existing SHIC benefit arrangements, including applicable discounts and co-insurance provisions. In addition, the provider network will support an upgraded health insurance plan intended to be offered by CINICO to the public in the second quarter of 2026.

Looking ahead, CINICO intends to expand its provider network during 2026, to include pharmacies and dental practitioners, followed by selected general practitioners and specialists. The final phase will be undertaken in consultation with the Central Procurement Office (CPO) to ensure full compliance with procurement requirements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Honourable Minister. I want to thank him for that comprehensive answer on behalf of my Bodden Town East colleague. Can the Honourable Minister say, based on the responses, which entity does CINICO pay the most money to each year?

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker given the customer base, which of course is the civil servants, it would be the Health Services Authority (HSA).

The Speaker: Member for Bodden West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Honourable Minister. Can the Minister say which entity manages the HSA's health plan?

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, I am reliably informed it is British American Insurance Company, locally known as BritCay.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Speaker. Is this House and civil servants to understand that CINICO pays the most money to the Health Services Authority; the Health Services Authority, staff and civil servants on a whole, their health care plan is being managed by CINICO, but the Health Service Authorities' plan is managed by BritCay?

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, whilst that wasn't a question, permit me if you would, just —

The Speaker: I was about to say no, but...

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I want to get it accurate. Just two Tuesdays ago, the Caucus approved it for me and the Deputy Governor; we're forming a small subcommittee, and we are looking at the policy around SAGCs. I just want to be transparent with the House. I can tell the House what my personal policy is: All SAGCs need to come home. We cannot have one Entire Public Sector (EPS) with a multiple of systems around health care and pension.

Mr. Speaker, two seconds, with your permission. I had come to my constituency office, and I'm sure all of us have experienced this, a 29-year employee of the Water Authority who, if God spares him the average male life in the Cayman Islands, has close to two decades more to live, and his pension is all but done.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West, last supplementary.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Don't worry. I just want to thank the Honourable Minister of Finance and his Government for dealing with this issue once and for all. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

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

I, too, want to thank the Minister for his comprehensive answer, and say that many employees have two insurance policies just to try to keep up with the pace of getting urgent care in a timely manner. The wait times sometimes are extensive, especially for pharmacies and so forth. I thank the staff of CINICO for all the work they're doing.

I thank the Minister, especially; so early on in this term that I know he'll get it done. It's not like time will run out on you and I know that the Minister will see to it that this gets done. It's something I think they can save money on also. Thank you.

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

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning to you, sir.

Can I ask the Honourable Minister: Did I understand he intends to do a committee to review this? Is the review more internal, within government, or potentially a review of some members on the opposite side? If so, I kindly put myself forward if he needs my services.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, this one was not intended to be a [section] 54(6) because we want to move with pace but, in the spirit of cooperation, I do not believe the Government would have any difficulties with us ensuring that we have at least one meeting, Deputy Governor, to which we invite the Opposition. Let's get everyone's views to make sure we are all on the same page with this.

The Speaker: I just want to remind Members that yesterday we spent almost three hours on questions, so I want to keep the preambles [brief]. I don't want to rule anyone's supplementary question out of order, but the Standing Order is quite clear what supplementary questions should address so... Next question.

QUESTION NO. 68

IS THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARE THAT SOME ENTITIES OR PERSONS ARE REFUSING TO ACCEPT CASH AND CHEQUES FOR PAYMENT AND DO NOT RECOGNISE THESE LEGAL TENDERS?

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I do the preamble because when you don't the Minister asks you, "Can you give me some more information?" Then you have to 'pre'.

The question number 68 in my name. Can the Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Development please say if he is aware that some entities or persons are refusing to accept cash and cheques for payment and do not recognise these legal tenders.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. I am not aware of any specific entities or persons that are declining to accept cash or cheques as a method of payment.

For clarity, while the Cayman Islands currency issued by the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority constitutes legal tender, a private business is not, in general, obligated to accept any particular form of payment in every circumstance. A retailer may determine in advance of a transaction the payment methods it is prepared to accept, whether cashless, card only, or otherwise, provided that customers are clearly informed. It is also important to note that cheques are not legal tender. They represent an instruction to a bank to pay funds and may be accepted at the discretion of the receiving party.

The government encourages transparency and clear communication by merchants so that consumers are aware of accepted payment methods before entering into a transaction. I would invite the honourable Member to inform me privately of entities or persons that are not accepting cash as payment for goods and services.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I thank the Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker for that response.

Basically speaking, Mr. Speaker, older persons are the persons who are actually being told and run all around because they don't have the online capability. Most people want you to transfer and I asked to try the system myself by sending a cheque first, and they wouldn't accept cheque. Then I sent cash, and they wouldn't accept cash and after I called and reminded them it was a legal tender, they accepted it and said that they would only accept it this once but next time I needed to transfer online.

Mr. Speaker, I transfer online internally, and in some regards I can tell you that for politicians, who can easily transfer money... Anyhow, let me not go there, but you know they're going to go broke.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: You have a supplementary question?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I heard what the Member said, Mr. Speaker in terms that private entities are not obliged to accept and can decide what form of payment they will accept, but we have the problem of the older persons; and not only that. Last year, I think, there was an international engine that shut down almost the whole world, and I saw a big line in the bank when the computers went down. Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, we got to protect the older persons.

The Speaker: That's outside the bounds.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter. I mean, obviously, when many of us travel, especially when you go to Europe and other countries, it's ordinary for us to go to retailers that have gone cashless; but I get the point that the Member is driving at.

Certainly, from our side, I think what we will do and undertake to do is some [communications] just reminding merchants to really be upfront because for a customer to have reached that stage and not realise that they couldn't pay in the method they were comfortable with seems to be unfortunate; but let me reiterate this is a challenging one when a merchant literally can decide how it's going to receive payment, right? It's down to them. They can accept...

Many of them don't accept American Express, for example, right? That's a business decision every merchant has to make, so the government has to tread carefully around this whole area because merchants have to be free to decide how they're going to conduct their business.

The Speaker: Next question.

QUESTION NO. 69

HOW MANY NATIONAL HERITAGE SITES DO WE HAVE IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS AND HAS THE FIRST CAPITAL BODDEN TOWN BEEN CONSIDERED FOR ANY SUCH DISTINCTION?

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question number 69 in my name to the Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

Can the Honourable Minister say how many national heritage sites do we have in the Cayman Islands and has the first capital Bodden Town been considered for any such distinction?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of [Youth], Sports, Culture and Heritage.

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

Mr. Speaker, the answer: The Cayman Islands has identified and recorded more than 330 sites of historic, cultural, and national significance, which include historic homes, cultural landmarks, and natural features. These sites are formally recognised on the Cayman Islands National Trust Heritage Register, which has been maintained by the National Trust since 1990 and is publicly accessible via its official website.

Several of the most prominent heritage assets are located in Bodden Town, including Pedro St. James, Gun Square, Mission House and the slave

walls. In addition, the 1997 Development Plan established a historic overlay zone along Manse Road in Bodden Town. This designation was introduced specifically to safeguard the area's historical and architectural character, ensuring that future development remains sensitive to its heritage value.

To provide further context, a heritage site is a location recognised for its cultural, historical, scientific, or natural significance and is often legally protected to preserve its value for future generations. These sites may include landmarks, monuments, buildings, landscapes, or natural areas, and are generally categorised as cultural, natural, or mixed heritage sites. They serve as tangible reminders of the history, cultural identity, and natural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging through generations.

In alignment with Broad Outcome Number 5 – Caymanian Identity, Culture and Heritage, the Ministry is committed to developing a modern, fit-for-purpose National Strategy to promote and preserve Caymanian culture and heritage including the development of legislative framework through review and modernisation of existing laws as well as the revision of the National Culture and Heritage Policy and Strategic Plan.

These efforts aim to promote Caymanian identity and strengthen the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources for Caymanians.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable Minister for that answer. I know definitely culture is your heart.

Is the Honourable Minister aware that one of the cannons at the entrance of Gun Square has been knocked down by a motorist? It's been down now, probably about ten days, and it hasn't been re-erected. I don't know who would be responsible for it. I've tried a couple of avenues but can the Honourable Minister say who is responsible for those cannons?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Culture and Heritage.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through you to the Member. I wasn't aware that there was an accident that knocked over one of the cannons, but certainly we can have a team have a look at it and see how we can get it re-erected because Gun Square is certainly one of the listed historic sites.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Again, Mr. Speaker, [we give an undertaking to have someone look at it and see how we can get it re-erected.](#)

The Speaker: Next question.

QUESTION NO. 70 VACATION DAYS FOR CAYMAN ISLANDS MONETARY AUTHORITY (CIMA) EMPLOYEES

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question number 70 standing in my name and the question reads: Can the Honourable Minister say

- How many vacation days were Cayman Islands Monetary Authority (CIMA) employees entitled to for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025; and
- How many vacation days were used by Cayman Islands Monetary Authority (CIMA) employees for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister and Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker just briefly, at the risk of violating your rule this morning on preambles; this might spare follow-up questions on the next six questions, so with your leave, I want to make an overarching statement. The Member for Bodden Town West and I have had extensive discussion and this leads on from a comment that the Minister of Finance made on his question, that there is an undertaking by the government to have a review of the Public Authorities Act. I think by March next year the legislation will be 10 years old. At this point, it is ripe for a review to see what's working and what's not working. This is one of the areas in which there needs to be improvement.

In addition to Minister Anglin's committee, the Office of the Premier has engaged local counsel to engage the Deputy Premier's Office to also look at other areas such as section 47 that deals with remuneration of staff. That said, we may not have all the answers to any supplementary questions coming today, but that's because we're going to have an undertaking, with inclusion from members of the Opposition, to have a holistic review of certain areas of the Public Authorities Act.

I also mentioned to the Member that in certain cases, which affect the Deputy Governor as well, in the time period of these questions certain agencies have changed databases, have gone from paper to electronic, so sometimes they can only go back so many

years within the time they had but we can give an undertaking for further years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, the answer. Based on readily available information from CIMA, the total accumulated vacation days' entitlement for all staff by the following years is:

Year	Days accumulated for all staff
2023	6836
2024	6346
2025	8432

The total vacation days taken for all staff by year is as follows:

Year	Days taken by all staff
2023	5833
2024	5309
2025	7123

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for that answer; and he is correct, we did have the conversation and that agreement in terms of some information not being readily available. The point I wanted to make by filing these questions was that, as the Premier said, next year will be ten years since the Public Authorities Law.

It is for us to start harmonising many things inside the public sector, so I think this exercise brought out exactly what we wanted to in terms of those discrepancies, and I want to thank the Premier and the Deputy Governor for their understanding in this matter. Thank you.

The Speaker: Next question.

QUESTIONS NO. 71 TO 75

[To be answered in writing]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, with the leave of the House and in the interest of time and since the point has already been made, I am okay to get the answers to my remaining questions, 71 through 75, from the other government entities in writing, because it will be quite time consuming to be asking the same thing. I think the point has been made.

The Speaker: Okay.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly to thank the Member for Bodden Town West for that collaborative approach. We'll continue to work on the issue together. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Just to reiterate, the answers for 71, 72, 73, 74, and 75 will be given in writing to the Member, and circulated to other Members as well. Thank you.

Okay. Question number 76.

QUESTION NO. 76 HOW MANY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S AFFORDABLE HOMES HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE JANUARY 2025?

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition—

[Laughter]

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: I rise to ask the Honourable Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure: Can the Honourable Minister say how many of the government's affordable homes have been occupied since January 2025?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member can actually keep his job title.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, the response: The National Housing Development Trust has advised that 13 homes constructed under the affordable housing initiative have been occupied since January 2025.

The Speaker: Next question, 77.

QUESTION NO. 77 WHEN WILL THE AFFORDABLE LANDS IN EAST END BE AVAILABLE FOR SALE AND WILL THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDER ANOTHER SUCH INITIATIVE?

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

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

Question number 77 standing in my name to the honourable Minister of Planning Lands, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure: Can the Honourable Minister say when the affordable lands in East End will be available for sale and will the government consider another initiative as such?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the initiative involving the Cayman Islands Government purchasing a large tract of residential development land in East End, filling, servicing, and subdividing the land and offering the individual parcels for sale to qualifying Caymanians is progressing well.

Ministry staff are currently preparing a policy document, which is expected to be completed by Easter 2026. Once finalised, the policy will be submitted to Cabinet for review and approval. The Government is also actively exploring additional land and locations where similar initiatives may be implemented across the Islands.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that response. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Minister say whether a method for how these properties will be distributed has been agreed upon by the government?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, through you. I cannot say how the agreement will be until we get the final decision from my colleagues in Cabinet.

The Speaker: Next question.

QUESTION NO. 78 UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question 78 in my name to the Honourable Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure. Can the Honourable Minister provide an update on the National Development Plan?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker, the review of the National Development Plan – PlanCayman continued during 2025 and into 2026. At its meeting on 2nd July 2025, Cabinet approved the appointment of members to the Development Plan Appeals Tribunal, which has been tasked with reviewing objections and representations submitted in relation to the Draft 2024 Planning Statement.

The Tribunal held four hearings during the latter part of 2025 and a further three hearings in January and February 2026. These hearings took place across all three Islands, with participation limited to individuals who made submissions during the 2024 consultation period and confirmed their willingness to participate.

The next stage is for the Development Plan Appeals Tribunal to prepare its Report of Enquiry. In accordance with section 11(3)(a) of the Development and Planning Act (2021 Revision), [the Central Planning Authority will consider the objections] or representations together with the Tribunal's report before submitting the Planning Statement document to the Cayman Islands Parliament for approval.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Let me thank the Honourable Minister for the detailed response. Honourable Minister, I understand that the Tribunal held meetings across the three Islands with participation limited to individuals who made submissions during the 2024 consultation period and confirmed their willingness to participate.

Understanding the next step, will there be another opportunity for public consultation even during the zones, or will this now move into the full review of the plan?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker through you. After that is finished, the next step is actually starting to move into reviewing the full plan, sir.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Minister update us as to how many zones or what the thinking of the government is at this point in carrying out the review of the plan; will that include the three Islands or just Grand Cayman as it is?

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

As mentioned in my response, the next stage is to carry it to Cabinet for its approval and then for it to come to Parliament so at that time, Cabinet will be able to see everything that was put forward from all of the hearings and from what the Tribunal has actually implemented and put forward for the development plan. At that time, we will be able to give a broader statement when it comes to the zones and where the locations and everything will be.

The Speaker: Before we go to the next item of business, I would just like to remind Ministers that there are a number of outstanding questions. Business Committee agreed that we would put 18 questions per day. You will notice on the Order Paper that there are only 12 questions today because we only have 12 answers.

I really want to make an appeal to Ministers to get the [remaining] questions' answers in to Parliament before close of business today, because we have to make certain preparations and get them on the Order Paper tomorrow.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, briefly to say that we take that completely on board. Another six were due to come in, but it was too much for the staff to arrange. *We are giving an undertaking to get them done by tomorrow.*

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Submitted today for tomorrow.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay. Next order of business

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Speaker: I have been given notice of a number of statements and I've approved them. I'll call on Minister DaCosta for a total of four. There are more than these, but these are the ones on the Paper for today — *[Counting]* five, six... ten.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Ten for today, yeah.

I call on Minister DaCosta to give his four statements. Most of these statements are very short. They just have to do with section 11(5).

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Well, okay. All right, cool. I don't want you to get winded today, you know, so you can do two tomorrow.

Honourable Minister of District Administration & Home Affairs

Additional capital funding required to complete the accommodation block project in Cayman Brac

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, Minister of District Administration & Home Affairs, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me see. Let's start with this one.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement to this honourable House regarding an exceptional circumstance Appropriation approved by Cabinet pursuant to sections 11(5) and (6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) for the former Ministry of District Administration and Lands.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry sought the then Cabinet's approval to transfer appropriations within the Ministry in order to provide additional capital funding required to complete the accommodation block project in Cayman Brac and to meet the final contractual payments associated with that project.

Mr. Speaker, these circumstances were beyond the control of the Government; could not reasonably have been anticipated at the time the Appropriation Act was enacted and required the expenditure to be incurred within the financial year in order to complete the project. Therefore, on the 25th February, 2025, the then Cabinet approved, pursuant to section 11(5) of the Act, the transfer of appropriations in the amount of \$1,300,000 as follows:

- A decrease of OE 134 – Depreciation of Sister Islands Roads by \$1.3 million; and
- An increase of EI 87 – Equity injection in the Minister of District Administration and Lands by \$1.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance confirmed at the time that this Appropriation change would not result in any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'll just continue straight in. Thank you very much.

Additional funding for Cayman Brac Sports Complex and Cayman Brac Public Parks

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Speaker, another statement pursuant to section 11(5) and 11(6) of the PMFA for the former Ministry of District Administration and Lands. The Ministry sought Cabinet's approval to transfer appropriations to provide additional funding for two capital projects in Cayman Brac.

Works at the Cayman Brac Sports Complex included the installation of an international standard rubberised running track and associated athletics infrastructure. Additional procurement and insulation works were required to ensure the facility met international competition standards. In addition, works at Cayman Brac public parks involve the development of community recreational infrastructure including hard courts, landscaping, and related public amenities for residents of Cayman Brac.

These circumstances were beyond the control of the Government; could not reasonably have been anticipated at the time the Appropriation Act was enacted, and required the expenditure to be incurred

within the financial year in order to complete these projects. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on the 25th February, 2025, pursuant to section 11(5) of the Act, the then Cabinet approved the transfer of appropriations in the amount of CI\$1 million, as follows:

- A decrease of OE 134 – Depreciation of Sister Islands Roads by \$1 million;
- An increase of EA 60 – Cayman Brac Sports Complex expansion by \$500,000; and
- An increase of EA 167 – Cayman Brac Public Parks by \$500,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance confirmed at the time, that this Appropriation change would not result in any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management.

Additional funding for NGS 38 – Services for Irregular Migrants

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Speaker, another statement regarding sections 11(5) and 11(6) of the PMFA.

The Department of Customs and Border Control is responsible for the management of irregular migrants who arrive in the Cayman Islands including their detention, triage, assessment, processing, accommodation, care, custody and, where applicable, repatriation. For the 2025 Financial Year, the sum of \$668,000 was appropriated under NGS 38 – Services for Irregular Migrants. Due to the inherently unpredictable nature of irregular migrant arrivals and the associated operational costs, this Appropriation proved insufficient during the financial year.

The resulting expenditure pressures arose from circumstances beyond the control of the government, could not reasonably have been anticipated, and required additional expenditure in order for the government to meet its legal and operational obligations in managing irregular migrants. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on the 3rd September, 2025, pursuant to section 11(5) of the Act, Cabinet approved the reallocation of appropriations as follows:

- A reduction of OE 144 – Depreciation of Executive Assets by CI\$2 million; and
- An increase of NGS 38 – Services for Irregular Migrants, by \$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, again, the Ministry of Finance confirmed at the time that this Appropriation change would not result in any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management.

Additional funding for assistance to vulnerable community home-owners,

community initiatives and events and maintenance of public parks

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Finally, the last one for today; another statement regarding 1 (5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry delivers a number of programmes that support the communities of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, including assistance to vulnerable homeowners, community initiatives and events, and the maintenance of public parks. During the 2025 Financial Year, several appropriations within the Ministry required additional funding to meet operational commitments and outstanding expenditures. These pressures arose primarily from higher than anticipated demand on the Sister Islands' Home Repairs and Hurricane Shutters Assistance Programme, additional initiatives under Sister Islands community projects, and increased costs associated with the maintenance of public parks in Cayman Brac.

These expenditure pressures could not reasonably have been anticipated at the time the Appropriation Act was enacted and required additional expenditure to ensure the continued delivery of important community programmes and services in the Sister Islands. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on the 29th December, 2025, pursuant to section 11(5) of the Act, Cabinet approved the reallocation of appropriations in the amount of \$390,000 as follows:

- A reduction of EI 93 – Capital Acquisitions for the Ministry of District Administration and Home Affairs by \$390,000;
- An increase of TP 66 – Sister Islands Home Repairs and Hurricane Shutters Assistance Programme by \$75,000;
- An increase of TP 101 – Sister Islands Community Projects by \$140,000; and
- An increase of EA 167 – Cayman Brac Public Parks by \$175,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance confirmed at the time that this Appropriation change would not result in any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Attorney General; one statement.

Honourable Attorney General

Portfolio of Legal Affairs additional expenses incurred during the 2025 Financial Year

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs: I thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act, I wish to make a statement to this House regarding an exceptional circumstance which was approved by the Cabinet for additional expenses incurred by the Portfolio of Legal Affairs during the 2025 Financial Year.

Mr. Speaker, the exceptional circumstances that required making changes to the 2025 Appropriation were as follows:

- Additional funding totalling \$210,000 — required in 2025 to cover rental costs in excess of the budgeted amount due to the relocation of the Truman Bodden Law School;
- To cover the cost of living and certain salary adjustments to some lawyers in our law reform team.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, the Truman Bodden Law School operated from the Tower Building up until Hurricane Ivan in 2004. It then relocated to leased premises on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the CIBC building on Edward Street, since renamed Monaco Towers, where it remained until June 2024. The lease with Monaco Towers was due to expire in June 2024; given certain issues with the premises and the proposed renewal terms, the Truman Bodden Law School worked with the Lands and Survey Department to identify alternative accommodation. After conducting a property search, the second floor of Artemis House was identified as a suitable option for consideration.

Artemis House was recommended for the relocation based on the ability to house all of Truman Bodden Law School on a single floor at more favourable costs, and the fit-out for both the law school's current needs and future expansion. On the 13th February, 2024, Cabinet approved the relocation of the law school to Artemis House; additional funding of \$150,000 was required to cover the shortfall between the budgeted amount for rent in 2025 and the increase in rent going forward.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the Law Reform Division, on the 10th October, 2024, the Government announced its support of a 5 per cent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for the Civil Service, which would take effect on the 1st January, 2025. The costs relating to the COLA and the salary adjustments for lawyers were not included in the 2025 Budget, and therefore additional funds were required to cover these costs for the Law Reform Department.

In 2025, as part of the wider Cayman Islands Government (CIG) initiative to modernise Human Resources (HR) through the introduction of job families and professional standards, work was undertaken on the development of a comprehensive HR strategy to better recognise the value of the legal services delivered by the Portfolio and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and their strategic importance to

the Cayman Islands Government's outcome; and enhance the delivery of those services through improved recruitment, development, and retention of high-calibre employees, including Caymanians, at all levels of the profession, Mr. Speaker. Additional funding of \$60,000 was required to cover the cost of living adjustment and salary adjustments of lawyers for our law reform team, which was effective from January 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the need for additional funding is an exceptional circumstance since the increase in rent could not reasonably have been anticipated during the 2024-2025 budget preparation. Further, if suitable alternative premises had not been identified, the operation of the law school and the delivery of tertiary level education could have been compromised by remaining in accommodation that was not fit for purpose. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the need for additional funding to cover the salary increase for employees in the law firm team could not reasonably have been anticipated during the budget preparation.

The following change was approved by Cabinet via section 11(5):

- Decrease 2025 Appropriation LGA 6 – Financial Intelligence Services, \$210,000;
- Increase 2024 Appropriation LGA 3 – Law Teaching and Publications by \$150,000;
- Increase LGA 7 – Review and Modernisation of Acts by \$60,000.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the above exceptional circumstance, which was approved by the Cabinet for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs for the 2025 Financial Year, along with the overall effect of the government's compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management, can be found in the 2026 Supplementary Bill.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health.

Honourable Minister of Health

Backlogged audits for the Ministry of Health, Environment and Sustainability

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide an update to this honourable House and the public regarding the status of the several backlogged audits for the Ministry of Health, Environment and Sustainability that I inherited. The Ministry appreciates the continued engagement and oversight of the Public Accounts Committee and acknowledges the constructive dialogue that took place during the Committee's witness session on the 15th January, 2026.

During that session, the Committee strongly recommended that the Ministry accept the offer of the Office of the Auditor General to issue a disclaimer of opinion for the backlog audits covering the period 2020 to 2023. The Committee indicated that this approach would enable the 2024 and 2025 audits of the Ministry to be completed by the Office of the Auditor General during the 2026 calendar year. It would also eliminate the audit backlog and ensure that current financial information is available to the public in support of transparency and accountability.

As discussed and outlined during the witness session, the Ministry's position regarding the backlog audits has been guided by the requirements of the Public Management and Finance Act and the international standards on auditing. Within these established frameworks, there is no valid basis for the issuance of a disclaimer of opinion or foregoing full financial audits for the backlog years. This is especially the case as financial statements for each of these years were submitted within the statutory timelines and the supporting records remain available to facilitate the conduct of the audits.

Notwithstanding this position, the Ministry acknowledges the Committee's recommendation to accept the Office of the Auditor General's offer to issue a disclaimer of opinion for the years 2020 to 2023. This course of action would mean that full financial audits for these years will not be conducted by the Office of the Auditor General. While this approach does not reflect the Ministry's initial perspective, there is no doubt that much time and resources are required to carry out all the outstanding audits. It is similarly true that the value of financial information which these audits would provide is significantly diminished by the time that has passed. Accordingly, the Ministry accepts that, on balance, it is a better use of resources and a better outcome to draw a line on the outstanding audits, to restore the relevance and value of the financial information provided by the audit of the Ministry's financial accounts.

Mr. Speaker, that does not mean that the Office of the Auditor General will ignore the several years of financial statements which would not have a full audit. In fact, they will be reviewed and analysed to ensure there are no red flags or obvious issues which would prompt a more thorough review but the investment in time and resources to do that will be considerably less than doing a full audit.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that this approach is a more efficient use of resources to get the Ministry audits back on track and current with their full value restored, and I'm grateful for the guidance of the Office of the Auditor General. The Ministry is currently in communication with the Office of the Auditor General to agree commencement dates for the 2024 and 2025 audits. The 2024 Annual Report and Financial Statements were submitted in February 2025 by the Ministry, while the 2025 Annual Reports and Financial Statements

were submitted in February 2026, as per statutory submission timelines.

The Ministry stands ready to provide our full co-operation to commence these audits, and to continue working collaboratively with the Office of the Auditor General to support their timely completion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

One-time stipend for bus wardens and drivers employed by private entities

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement as to the circumstances and the reason why I, as Minister of Social Development and Innovation, had to request a reallocation of appropriations within the 2025 budget under sections 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, last year, the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation administered through TP 41 (Financial Assistance), a one-time stipend to bus wardens and bus drivers employed by private entities contracted to provide school bus transportation services to the Cayman Island's Government education system for the 2023 - 2024 school year. As a result of the concerns raised regarding the loss of wages for the summer period, the Minister administered the delivery of a one-time stipend via TP 41 for the bus wardens and bus drivers employed by the private entities.

Mr. Speaker, the Bus Warden Stipend was provided to address the void in salary for bus wardens and bus drivers who are not employed during the summer months when schools are not in session. In order to process this stipend, supplemental funding was required in FY 2025 as there was no budget allocation for this stipend. The supplementary funding request at this time was necessary and urgent to address the discrepancy in pay structures between the civil servants and employees of private bus companies who all deliver the same services of providing transportation to our children so they can access education and to avoid negative economic and social impacts due to the loss of income for the summer period.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation requested to reallocate \$380,000 from TP 60 – Housing Assistance to TP 41 – Financial Assistance in accordance with sections 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management Finance Act (2020 Revision). The aforementioned exceptional circumstance transaction, which was approved by Cabinet for the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation during the 2025 financial period, did not cause any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management.

Increased appropriation for Department of Financial Assistance

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Speaker again, I wish to make a statement as to the circumstances and the reason why I, as Minister for Social Development and Innovation, had to request the Supplementary appropriations within the 2025 budget via section 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, in November 2025, the Department of Financial Assistance confirmed to the Ministry of Social Development that its budget would be insufficient to meet its projected expenditure for December 2025. Subsequently, there was a need to increase the appropriation in order to allow the Department to make payments throughout the remainder of the year. The Department indicated that funding was primarily being depleted before the end of this year due to the increase in demand for rental assistance from August 2025 to November 2025 and the projected demand for December 2025. There was a 25.23 per cent increase in the number of households receiving rental assistance from January 2025 to November 2025.

Mr. Speaker, in December 2025, the Ministry was advised of the decision to provide the additional holiday stipend for persons receiving the Ex-Gratia Seafarers and Veterans Benefit and the Long-Term Financial Assistance from the Department, which required an increase in the appropriation in order to allow the Department to make the additional payment.

Consequently, the Department of Financial Assistance confirmed to the Ministry that for December 2025 they would be unable to continue funding essential services for their clients who are in dire need of financial assistance, as allocated funding would be exhausted. Due to insufficient availability of funds, the Department would also be unable to provide the additional holiday stipend, as allocated funding would be exhausted.

The Ministry responded to this critical need by submitting a Paper to Cabinet requesting supplementary funding. The Cabinet therefore approved the request from the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation for Supplementary appropriations per section 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) to:

- i. Re-allocate \$500,000 from ITI 3 – Digital Services, Strategy and Business Investment Services, to TP 41 – Financial Assistance, for the continuation of financial assistance services through December 2025.
- ii. Increase TP 41 – Financial Assistance in the amount of \$450,000 for the continuation of financial assistance throughout 2025.
- iii. Increase TP 47 – Ex-Gratia Benefits to Seamen and Ex-Servicemen in the

amount of \$427,500 for an additional holiday stipend of \$500 to be provided to all recipients of the Seafarers & Veterans Ex-Gratia Benefit.

- iv. Increase TP 41 – Financial Assistance in the amount of \$501,000 for an additional holiday stipend of \$500 to be provided to all Long-Term Financial Assistance recipients.

Mr. Speaker, the aforementioned exceptional circumstance transaction, which was approved by Cabinet for the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation during the 2025 financial period, did not cause any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management.

Funding For The Pines Retirement Home

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: The third statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement as to the circumstances and reasons why I, as Minister for Social Development and Innovation, had to request supplementary appropriations within the 2025 Budget via sections 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, in December 2025, the Honourable Premier André Ebanks and Honourable Minister Rolston Anglin visited the Pines Retirement Home for the Residents' Christmas Drop-In, at which time the Ministers and their Ministry teams were able to witness first-hand the need of the Pines Retirement Home residents.

Mr. Speaker, during the visit, the Ministers were advised that the Pines Retirement Home Board has appointed a new Chair, and the members agreed to expand the facility but are currently short on the necessary funding to complete the project. Consequently, following the visit, and in an effort to assist the Pines Retirement Home with incentivising private sector philanthropy, the Cayman Islands Government was desirous of contributing to this important initiative and providing a 'seed-funding' donation of \$600,000 toward the overall cost of the expansion.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet therefore approved the request from the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation for Supplementary appropriations per sections 11(5) and 11(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) to:

- i. Decrease JAD 1 – Administrative Support to the Judiciary by \$180,000 to provide funding for the expansion of the Pines Retirement Home;
- ii. Decrease JAD 2 – Support for Court Proceedings by \$320,000 to provide funding for the expansion of the Pines Retirement Home;

- iii. Decrease EGA 8 – Facilities Maintenance & Operational School Support Services in the amount of \$100,000 to provide funding for the expansion of the Pines Retirement Home; and
- iv. Increase NGS 64 – Care of Indigent, Elderly and Disabled) in the amount of \$600,000 to provide funding for the expansion of the Pines Retirement Home.

Mr. Speaker, the aforementioned exceptional circumstance transaction, which was approved by Cabinet for the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation during the 2025 financial period, did not cause any non-compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: I have received notice from several Members who wish to give obituaries, and the Business Committee decided that we will do all of those tomorrow.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: None.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 9 OF 2025-2026 MOTION ON AN ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE 2026-2027 BUDGET

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town Central and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Motion No. 9 standing in my name, Motion on an Economic Impact Assessment of the 2026-2027 Budget and it reads as such:

WHEREAS we in the Official Opposition have concerns as to the economic impact of the budget for 2026 and 2027;

AND WHEREAS many members of the community have expressed concerns of inflationary impacts on families and businesses;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED [that] the Government considers tabling a formal Economic Impact Assessment on the 2026/2027 budget, no later than the September Meeting of Parliament.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Mr. Speaker I rise to [second the Motion].

The Speaker: Do it now, do it now; then he can second the withdrawal and we do the Motion.

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

My apologies for my administrative gap there. I do have intention of withdrawing this Motion; I thought the formalities were that it had to be read into the record before withdrawal. Allow me, with your indulgence, to quickly say the reason for the withdrawal.

After yesterday's contribution by way of questioning to the Honourable Minister of Finance, and through the Honourable Premier and others, we feel comfortable that the Government is keeping a close tab on the inflationary measures that are affecting the country, in particular, with the unfortunate war that is happening in the Middle East and the potential impacts on fuel cost — inevitable increase. With that being said, we are working closely with the Government to ensure that we can assist in any way to keep a close eye on these inflationary circumstances in our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder for the withdrawal of the Motion?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: I second the Motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Motion is that Private Member's Motion No. 9 be withdrawn.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 9 withdrawn.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 6 MOTION FOR DUTY-FREE IMPORTATION OF RECYCLING EQUIPMENT

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town Central and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 6 standing in my name — Motion for Duty-Free Importation of Recycling Equipment and it reads as such, Mr. Speaker:

WHEREAS the Government of the Cayman Islands is committed to environmental sustainability and the "4Rs" (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recover) as outlined in the National Solid Waste Management Policy;

AND WHEREAS the current cost of importing specialised machinery for waste processing—such as glass crushers, plastic shredders, and balers—serves as a financial barrier to private sector participation in the green economy;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers amending the Second Schedule of the Customs Tariff Act to provide a 100% duty exemption on all machinery and equipment imported specifically for the purpose of recycling and waste reduction.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the Mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

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

[Pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. As you see, I'm going a bit slower than normal, but I'm trying to transition... Interestingly enough, in respect to what this topic is about, namely the environment, so I'm trying to be as electronic as I possibly can—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: —rather than paper.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move the Private Member's Motion I just outlined, which seeks to bridge the gap in the journey for a better environment. I want to take this opportunity to thank the honourable Member for George Town East for seconding this Motion thus giving me the opportunity to present to this honourable House and to the people.

I wish to open this debate by speaking directly to my colleagues on the Government benches. I do not bring this Motion forward to highlight differences, but to celebrate our shared commitment. We all share the same fundamental stewardship of these three Islands — we all want a cleaner, more sustainable future for

our children. This Motion is an invitation for us to take that major bipartisan step towards that future together.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has already set the vision. This Administration has formally committed to environmental sustainability and the implementation of the four Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover. As clearly outlined in the National Solid Waste Management Policy, this is a goal that transcends the political divide. We recognise that the Government wants to see these pillars succeed for the benefit of every Caymanian, and this Motion is designed to provide the legislative fuel to make that happen; however, we must address the practical hurdles our local entrepreneurs and environmental advocates are facing on the ground.

Currently, the sheer cost of importing specialised machinery for waste processing serves as a significant financial barrier to local businesses that want to import glass crushers, plastic shredders, balers or other specialised equipment and are met with high entry fees at the border. This cost acts as a deterrent, preventing the private sector from fully participating in and growing the green economy that we all want. We cannot ask our citizens to help us recycle if we make the tools to do so prohibitively expensive. This is where we can work in a bipartisan manner to clear the path for those who want to travel down this journey with us.

This Motion calls for the Government to consider amending the second schedule of the Customs Tariff Act. The proposal is simple and effective: provide 100 per cent duty exemption on all machinery and equipment imported specifically for the purposes of recycling and waste reduction. By removing this duty, Mr. Speaker, we aren't just cutting costs; we are signalling to our local innovators and entrepreneurs that their Government and their MPs are active partners in the environmental efforts. We are making it easier for the private sector to invest in the very technology that will help fulfil the government's own waste management goals.

Mr. Speaker, no need for a long, drawn-out speech today. It's pretty straightforward. This is a common-sense win for the environment, for local businesses, and for our national policies. Let us show the public that when it comes to the health of our Islands, this House, this Government and all Members stand as one.

I look forward to the Government's support in turning this environmental vision into a tangible reality for every constituent that we represent. I so beg to move this Motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Honourable Premier.

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

I rise to accept and support the Motion on behalf of the Government, not only for its subject matter, which I'll come to in a moment, but also to thank the

Member for George Town Central. I think the words I wrote down were a *major step towards bipartisan collaboration*.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, by the prior Motion that was withdrawn, that we are moving towards — and I think it is part of your vision for the House in this term — all 19 Members working collaboratively. First off, I thank the Member for withdrawing the last Motion and realising we are all having to grapple with cost of living inflationary effects for our people and we're all going to be working towards trying to lessen the burden for them; and specifically, as it comes to this Motion, we all have to live here. We all have to try to protect and promote our precious environment, so I thank the Member.

There are aspects of the Motion as we get into more serious policy and legislative development where we might have to make adjustments, think about whether there will be a distinction between it being residential and commercial, but the Member can rest assured that he has the Government's support to consider this seriously; adopt policy proposals and legislation that will be fit for purpose for our people and with full inclusion of the Opposition. There may be other Ministers or Caucus members who may want to add a few contributions, but again, I thank the Member for the Motion and it is indeed supported by the Government.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

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

The [Minister] of Finance and Economic Development.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Private Member's Motion before the House is indeed an important one as the Premier said and certainly, from my perspective, one that the Government has to look at carefully to ensure that we meet the objectives that the Mover has said, because those objectives are critically important to all of us for a sustainable Cayman; a more resilient Cayman and a Cayman that is able to grow and mature and build as we develop.

The pace of development has been rapid and all of us know — and this is [over] years; this is no government's fault but just a decades' old issue — managing waste has not been something that we have been particularly good at, and so we just need to continue to work collaboratively, because when we politicise waste management, when we politicise where things like landfills are going to go, that's when the country loses. This is more important than that debate because this looks to reduce and eliminate waste before it even gets to a landfill.

I certainly want to lend my support to ensuring that we move forward and build out more opportunities for Caymanians to participate in the space but more importantly, more opportunities for homeowners to also benefit and be encouraged to incentivise themselves to recycle and reduce waste at the source, which is at our homes and businesses.

With those few words, I certainly want to lend my support to the Motion.

[Desk thumping]

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

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Very briefly.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the seconder of the Motion I am extremely heartened to see that the Government has accepted it. I know they will act on it as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about, you know, the four Rs — reduce, recover, recycle and... what is the fourth one?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Reuse. Anyway, we've been talking about it for a long time and governments over the years have taken steps to implement recycling programmes, but Mr. Speaker, to me there's been a defining lack of take up by the private sector in joining the recycling efforts that are taking place. We lack their participation, and the only way it succeeds is if you get the private sector buy in. I listened to the Minister say yesterday, while she was making her contribution, that there were big plans for the government to introduce recycling.

Mr. Speaker, I accept, and I know government can't do it all; it is going to take that collaboration. There are businesses in this country that are going to need different types of recycling equipment, and I'm talking about the larger retailers or developers, whatever. There is going to be a need for some heavy-duty equipment when it comes to recycling of materials— cardboard, plastic, whatever it might be; and I think giving them a substantial break in the overall cost of the equipment they are going to have to import is one way in which we can energise or influence the private sector to get more involved in it.

From that standpoint alone, I am truly grateful for their willingness to accept the Motion and move forward with it. I do hope we can see some tangible evidence of the government's efforts and plans with regard to dealing with solid waste in Cayman in terms of the recycling efforts that will need to be undertaken, and I look forward with great anticipation to seeing it happen.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to speak very briefly and look forward to supporting the Motion.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; very briefly, because I want to allow the Minister for Environment to speak on this.

Just for everyone's knowledge, the Ministry of District Administration and Home Affairs has already begun the work of reviewing our Tariff Act not only with the purpose of providing relief for the cost of living in this country, but also with a targeted view of how we can encourage behaviours. I thank the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing this Motion, and I associate myself with all the comments made thus far on both sides of this House.

I think in our review we will look even further to encourage behaviour of the four Rs in that, while this Motion proposes duty free for import of machinery to process recyclables, we also want to encourage private households to recycle. Whereby our current tariff Act will charge or levy a duty on importing recyclable bins for sorting and promoting that behaviour it is [something] we can do to encourage a behaviour of more sustainability within our households.

As I mentioned, we've just begun the work in our Ministry to do a holistic review of our tariff Act, so I'm more than willing and happy to continue the dialogue with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and, of course, anyone who is willing to lend their thoughts and ideas for how we can continue to progress our nation for the benefit of our people in one small step through our tariff Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Minister of the Environment.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Motion as it certainly aligns with our broader objective of strengthening recycling and reducing the amount of waste going into the landfill. Many of my colleagues on the Government bench said much of what I would share, but as Minister for Sustainability, Health and Environment, I wanted to stand and personally lend my voice to supporting this Motion.

As we develop the National Recycling Programme and the long-term waste management solution, increasing the availability of modern recycling equipment will actually be an important part of this transition. It has been said a couple of times, but I also agree that measures that reduce barriers for the private sector utilising recycling equipment and infrastructure will certainly help to encourage and promote participation from businesses in the wider community. While this Motion alone will not solve the waste challenge, it certainly represents a step towards innovation; it improves the diversion from the landfill and continues to a more sustainable waste management system in the Cayman Islands.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I, too, will be supporting this Motion.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town East.

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

I was willing to give way to the Honourable Deputy Premier, but my contribution is very short. I thank the honourable Member for bringing this Motion, one that I support. I know there are many businesses out there that want to buy some very expensive equipment and will need this duty-free [allowance] to be able to bring them into the island; but I want to say that as former Minister of Environment we started some initiatives a few years ago.

I heard one of the Honourable Ministers mention containers and bins just now. What we intended to do, Mr. Speaker, was to take the area of Prospect and utilise that area as a test-run. We went out and bought one of those trucks that could actually load the bins. It was just for recycling and I want to say that if we don't start recycling at home, we'll never achieve our goal. It has to start at home, but the government has to put some funds into it, buy some bins that are colour coded or otherwise.

There's a truck that we actually brought in a few years ago, six years ago or something, but it came with the arm on the wrong side — it was from the US, so the arm was on the right; we needed it on the left side, so we had to send the truck back. The arm picks up the bin, puts it in, and puts it back down. I congratulate the honourable Member for bringing this Motion, and it definitely has my support.

The Speaker: Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Gary B. Ruttly, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

I'd also like to thank the Member for George Town Central for bringing this. I, too, fully support this Motion and I also find, you know, as Minister of Tourism and we're all Ministers of Tourism here because we have global eyes looking at us at all times and something they ask us is what do we do with all of our trash; how do we accumulate so much. When we look at Mount Trashmore, it is an eyesore and anything we can do to minimise that, we need to do.

I always say we need to keep making Cayman clean and green. It's going to take a concerted effort from everybody across this country — start within your own homes and we will all make a difference together. I just want to thank the Member for George Town Central and his team for bringing this.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Would the Mover of the Motion like to exercise his right of reply?

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

Mr. Speaker, there's not much to say other than to thank all Members of this House for their tacit support.

I want to first say thank you to the honourable Member for George Town East who was eager to support this as his commitment to the environment and to keeping Cayman clean, so I thank him publicly. I want to say thank you to the Honourable Premier and his Government and the Minister and all Members who got up to express their support for this; I think we're all on the same page in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that I highlight what was said yesterday that there are currently amendments to the environmental Law under review that will also continue to support this endeavour and I look forward to when the Minister brings those to this House. I truly believe this will help us to adjust our behaviour in respect to waste like the Honourable Minister, the little [Member] for Cayman Brac said —

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: —that he is going to be expanding this further to assist what we do in households, not only in businesses. It [leads me to] think of garbage cans and I don't want to pre-empt the discussion about the coming Litter Bill, but that's another area that will help us with the four Rs— reduce, reuse, recycle and recover.

I want to close by saying to all the entrepreneurs out there, all of those who are in the business of waste collection and recycling as it is: start making your plans. You heard the Government give the commitment to coming forward with a cheaper way for you to deliver that very important service. I would love to see some young Caymanians come up with creative ways to help us meet these four Rs, you know; and there's an opportunity to make money from it and the government is going to do what it takes to help it, make it easier for you, so we all benefit as a country.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, thank you and again, I thank all Members of the Parliament for their support.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question now is: BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers amending the Second Schedule of the Customs Tariff Act to provide a 100% duty exemption on all machinery

and equipment imported specifically for the purpose of recycling and waste reduction.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 6 passed.

The Speaker: Parliament is suspended until 1:30p.m.

Proceedings suspended at 12:25p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 1:36p.m.

The Speaker: This honourable House is back in session. Please be seated.

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 5 OF 2025-2026
MOTION TO MANDATORILY REDLINE
AMENDING BILLS**

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

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

I rise to bring Private Member's Motion No. 5 of 2025-2026, a Motion to Mandatorily Redline Amending Bills. Mr. Speaker, the Motion reads as such:

WHEREAS the NCFC Government has identified "Transparent Governance" as a pillar of the 2026–2028 Strategic Policy Statement (SPS);

AND WHEREAS the current "isolated clause" method of amending legislation creates a "Democratic Deficit" where the public and Opposition must manually cross-reference documents to understand the law;

AND WHEREAS recent proceedings, specifically the Committee Stage of the Immigration Bill, 2025, proved that even Ministers find it challenging to explain fragmented amendments in layman's terms;

AND WHEREAS the Opposition currently has no dedicated legal drafting staff to assist in decoding these complex changes, creating an unfair information monopoly;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the government considers mandating "Redline Schedule" (Tracked Changes) for every Amending Bill, to be published on official portals when amendment bills are being gazetted.

The Speaker: Is there a Seconder?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for George Town West: Mr. Speaker, I second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded. Does the Mover wish to speak to the Motion?

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move this Motion not in a spirit of division, but in the spirit of partnership. We all sit in this honourable House with one common purpose: to serve the people of the Cayman Islands to the best of our ability. I want to begin by acknowledging the Government's own Strategic Policy Statement for 2026 and 2028. The NCFC Government has been very clear about its commitment to Broad Outcome 7, which is entitled Transparent Governance [sic]. This Motion is not a challenge to that mandate; it is a tool to help the Government achieve it. We are all on the same team when it comes to making the laws accessible to our people.

Mr. Speaker, we've all been in a position where we are in Committee Stage looking at a Bill that says delete subclause A and substitute subclause B and even for those of us who live and breathe legislation, it can be a bit of a maze. We saw a very human moment recently, during the debate on the Immigration Bill [when] a Minister with total honesty admitted that the sheer complexity of a document made it difficult to translate into layman's terms.

Mr. Speaker, that wasn't the Minister's failing; it was the failing of our outdated system. By providing a redline document, we aren't just helping the public, we are helping the Ministers and all Members of this honourable House. We are giving them the tools to explain their vision to the public clearly and accurately, without getting lost in the technical code of drafting.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the "on the ground reality" for our constituents. When we pass an amendment without a red line, we are essentially sending our small business owners and our citizens on a scavenger hunt. Many of them feel they have to hire a lawyer just to find out what a three-word change means for their business. In a time when we are all concerned about the cost of living and the cost of doing business, we should not be imposing what I call "a complexity tax" on our people.

Providing a red line document costs this House almost nothing in terms of technology, but it saves our constituents thousands of dollars in legal fees and countless hours of frustration. Mr. Speaker, this initiative aligns with the international best practises for regulatory transparency as recommended by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), which notes that readable legislation reduces the cost of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, we often look to other jurisdictions for guidance, but here is an opportunity for the

Cayman Islands to take the lead. While other territories may be weighted-down by centuries of archaic tradition, we are a modern, agile, and technologically advanced nation and we will continue to be. By adopting mandatory redlining, we show the world and our own people that we aren't afraid of transparency; that we are a first-world jurisdiction that values its citizens' time and intelligence. Let us not wait for others to innovate. Let the Cayman Islands set the standard for the Commonwealth.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that this Motion is an olive branch for working together yet again; it is a request for us to modernise together — all Members of Parliament. It is about moving from shadow legislation to sunlight legislation. If we vote for this today, Mr. Speaker, we aren't voting for a win for the Opposition. We are voting for a win for the Government and every Member of Parliament, a win for the civil service, and most importantly, a win for the people of the Cayman Islands. Let us make the law human readable. Let us show our people that their elected Members of Parliament and their Government are truly open, truly transparent, and truly theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this Motion to this honourable House.

[Desk thumping]

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

Honourable Premier.

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

I thank the Member for his Motion and I rise to briefly set out the Government's acceptance and support for the Motion.

As the Member for George Town Central will know, having been a Minister, this is not new, it has been... I choose my words carefully because we love legal drafting — we can't be here without them; but we do know that we grapple with having to read an Amendment Bill. Even for those of us who have a legal education or who have been in Parliament for a very long time it is still somewhat cumbersome to read between Amendment Bills and if there's an amendment on the Amendment Bill. Hence, I thank the Member because he knows there has been an internal discussion about this for years, but in highlighting his olive branch I want to extend one in return to show this is how Parliament evolves—

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: —because by the Member filing the Motion, it motivated us on the Government side to go to the AG and First Legislative Counsel and say, *look, we know we agree on the Government side so we're not going down to Parliament to*

have some kind of halfway answer when we know we agree so we need to flush this issue out now. The Motion — thank you, Member for George Town Central — helped bring the issue to a head, and this is why we support it.

Also bear in mind the load that Legislative Drafting has; we've worked with the Attorney General's Chambers and they'll identify one individual who can then train the Ministries — because they're really the ones tracking the stakeholder consultation and the drafting — to be able to provide the software tool and the tutelage to be spread out among the Ministries to make it even more efficient. That [way], each Ministry that's at the coalface of consultation would be able to provide the resource, help Members, and help the public with red line copies.

From our standpoint, the Motion is accepted. We will put the resources and the training in place because it not only helps every single one of us, it also helps the public and I'd like to pick up on the Member for George Town Central's point when he said this is an opportunity for Cayman to show it's innovating; although you could look around and say, *well, I don't see it happening in that jurisdiction. They don't do red lines, they don't do red lines...* but since there's nothing wrong with it, [and] it would make the process more efficient, let us take the lead.

You may be surprised who might adopt the practise after us, so thank you to the Member. This is a great, continuing way to work across the aisle and be more efficient and collaborative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

If not, would the Member like to exercise his right to reply?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, Mr. Speaker and thank you. Short and sweet.

I just want to say thank you to all Members for their tacit support and thank the Honourable Premier for his representation on behalf of his Members; and all the Independent Members for their support on this Bill. I think this will truly embrace and redefine transparency and understanding, and allow members of the public to participate further in our democracy.

I want to say to the Premier that with this new transition and the Government's commitment to take this away to formulate it; with the pressures they have, we understand it may take some time not only once you get there, but the very first time to procedurally get accustomed to how it works. When I heard you say *training each Ministry*, I can see that might be a bit of time, so I want you to know from today that there is going to

be the necessary patience for you to deliver this, so that we can be the leaders of our jurisdiction eventually.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you for your support and I look forward to a better, transparent legislating process for our people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question now is BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers mandating "Redline Schedule" (Tracking Changes) for every Amending Bill, to be published on official portals when amendment bills are being gazetted.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 5 of 2025-2026 passed.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 4 OF 2025-2026 NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY FOR MASK WEARING

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2025-2026, National Public Safety for Mask Wearing. Mr. Speaker, the Motion reads:

WHEREAS the Cayman Islands has experienced a concerning surge in armed robberies involving perpetrators who utilize a "total masking culture" to conceal their entire head and facial structure; creating a climate of fear across all districts and three Islands;

AND WHEREAS during the Finance Committee on November 18, 2025, the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Kurt Walton, confirmed that these extensive coverings weaken the national surveillance and facial recognition technology and policing strategy;

AND WHEREAS it is necessary to distinguish between criminal concealment and legitimate medical or accommodation [sic], occupational necessity— Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the honourable House, I'll read that again.

The Speaker: Take your time.

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

AND WHEREAS it is necessary to distinguish between criminal concealment and legitimate medical or occupational necessity;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Honourable Parliament calls upon the Government to consider amendments to all relevant legislations to:

- 1. Restrict Public Masking: Prohibit the use of non-medical masks and total head coverings in all public spaces, neighbourhoods, and commercial establishments nationwide;**
- 2. Define Medical Exemptions: Establish clear provisions for individuals with documented medical disabilities or health conditions, requiring a standard of visibility that allows for health protection without facilitating total anonymity;**
- 3. Preserve Occupational PPE: Maintain exemptions for workers (gardeners, construction, etc.) strictly within the parameters of their job sites;**
- 4. Urgency of Action: Treat this as a matter of National Importance.**

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to second Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2025-2026, National Public Safety for Mask Wearing.

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

Does the Mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer contributions to Private Member's Motion No. 4 that I just read, entitled National Public Safety for Mask Wearing.

I want to begin by saying to my colleagues on the Government benches again: I do not bring this Motion to this honourable House as a point of political friction. I bring it as a matter of urgent national necessity — the safety of our people from the streets of West Bay to the end of Spot Bay, Cayman Brac is a responsibility that we all share regardless of where we sit in this honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, we must be honest about the reality on the ground. The Cayman Islands has recently experienced, particularly around the Christmas period, a concerning surge in armed robberies. We are seeing a total-masking culture where perpetrators utilise full head and facial covering to hide their identity. This has

created a climate of fear that touches every district across all three Islands. We all remember when masks were a symbol of community caring during the COVID-19 pandemic; but today, Mr. Speaker, that same culture is being exploited by those who wish to do us harm. When a person can walk into a commercial establishment with their entire head and facial structure concealed without question, we have a security gap that is being exploited. This isn't just an observation from the Opposition side, I'm sure. It is a fact confirmed by our law enforcement leadership.

During the Finance Committee on November 18th of last year, the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Kurt Walton confirmed that such extensive head coverings significantly weaken our national surveillance and facial recognition technology or CCTV systems. Mr. Speaker, the government has invested millions of dollars into state-of-the-art CCTV and policing strategies, yet, as the Commissioner has confirmed, those tools are being rendered nearly useless when a perpetrator's identity is entirely obscured. We are effectively asking the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) to fight crime with one hand tied behind its back and I think it is unfair to the service.

This Motion does not call for a blind or insensitive ban, Mr. Speaker; we recognise there is a necessary distinction to be made between criminal concealment and legitimate medical, occupational, and even, as another colleague brought to my attention, religious needs. Our proposal asks the Government to consider amendments that:

1. Restrict public masking: Prohibit non-medical masks and total head coverings in all public spaces and commercial establishments;
2. Define medical exemptions: We must protect those with documented health conditions, Mr. Speaker. We are calling for a standard of visibility that allows for health protection without facilitating total anonymity;
3. Preserve the occupational PPE (personal protective equipment), Mr. Speaker. We must ensure that our gardeners, construction workers and labourers can continue to wear protective gear but strictly within the parameters of their job sites.

Mr. Speaker, like the last two, this Motion, again, is pretty straightforward; and I'm appealing to the Government to treat this as a matter of national importance. This is an opportunity for us to work together again. Let this be three times in a row.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: The community is looking for us to be leaders. They want us to know that when they walk into a

bank or a grocery store they are not vulnerable— Mr. Speaker, forgive me. I need a cup of coffee this morning or this afternoon. That's what happened. My timing is out of the loop. The little Minister from Cayman Brac has offered me some coffee. You will not get rid of that name, *bobo*. I'm going to make sure of that.

The community is looking for us to be leaders. They want to know that when they walk into a bank or a grocery store they are not in a vulnerable position because of outdated and vague regulations. Let us refine the Police Act and our Public Health Regulations as all Members of Parliament — Opposition and Government together. Let us give the Royal Police Service the legislative clarity they need to challenge someone wearing a full-face mask in high-risk areas without legitimate reason. [Someone] can't be just walking around scaring people as they are doing now. Mr. Speaker, safety is the foundation of Cayman's economy and the Caymanian way of life. If we lose our reputation as a safe jurisdiction, we lose everything; we lose who we are as Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this Motion. Let us stand and send a clear message that the Cayman Islands will not be a playground for masked criminals. We will protect our businesses and we will protect our residents and we will restore the peace that our three Islands deserve. With that being said, I move this Motion to be accepted by the Members of this House.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You might get a three pointer.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I rise on behalf of the Government to accept and support the Motion. Instinctively, Mr. Speaker, as soon as you read the Motion, all of us as Caymanians knew that mask wearing is not us. Outside of if you're doing it for some sort of sporting activity, which is rare, it's just not us; and when you walk into a facility, it's jarring. Even if— and I'm not saying they are doing anything wrong, so I'm going to choose my words carefully, but I'm just giving you the human reaction— you have a mobile car wash come to your house and you looked out the door, you look on the Ring and they got on a mask, you don't know. Now, that just happened to be my guy — but I didn't know, so I almost didn't open the door because it's just unnatural in our society; so the Government accepts and supports it.

When we caucused about it (not knocking the Motion, it advanced a legitimate issue), there were a couple of things we thought about that might have to be

added as carve outs and conditions — whether it be on religious grounds, the national security matters to consider, matters of proportionality on human rights; but the general point remains: we agree with the foundation. We're going to work with the Attorney General Chambers and the [Police] Commissioner to find a method and a manner in which to do this so that it's not unnecessarily challenged, and it will include consultation with the Opposition, but at the end of the day, I think there is broad agreement and support that, *legalise* aside, unless you have some legitimate ground, the country is rejecting full-face covering because we do not feel safe.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there will be a large debate other than for us to work together to get this done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Tourism and Deputy Premier.

Hon. Gary B. Ratty, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity for me to speak on this. I also would like to thank the Member for George Town Central for bringing this to the House.

This is long overdue, sir. How many days do we travel on our roads and we see motorbike riders going down the road with no helmet, but they're all masked up, gloved up, everything. No licence [plate]; nothing. How can we tell the police anything if we have no identity? We don't know if it's a male or a female on that motorbike, much less.

Also, from the domestic and the tourism side, we have our visitors come here — the good Member for George Town Central, we just had a discussion outside. We not only need to make our people feel safe but also our visitors who come to our shores; we need to make sure they're protected and they feel safe. It's a very balanced proposal that has been put forward. We talk about religion, we talk about health, and we talk about industries.

I myself, when I go fishing, I got to try to wear a mask because I got tender skin and—

[Laughter]

Hon. Gary B. Ratty, Deputy Premier: I need to be careful because they are running out of things to cut out of me right now.

However, he has made clear provisions to ensure that we're all taken care of. The number one thing we must always remember is the safety of our people, our country, and those who visit.

Whatever we can do to help the police in being able to identify these people would only be a start in the right direction. I just want to let him know he has my full support and I have nothing else to say in this matter but good luck, and let's keep the Cayman Islands safe.

The Speaker: Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, thank you.
Mr. Speaker, first off—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: No, man. I'm *gonna* be good today. Mr. Speaker, the [Member] for East End wants me to say things that I shouldn't say.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Member for George Town Central for bringing this Motion. During the last [Meeting] of the House it was something that I mentioned, that we need to bring a Motion and I encouraged him at that time to bring a Motion so he's a good fellow and brought it as he was told to.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: In the good spirit, he knows that I fully support it.

Mr. Speaker, just this morning on my way to town, I passed four or five people along the road riding bicycles or cleaning somebody's yard with a full-face mask — or whether they want to say it's a t-shirt on their face — 7 o'clock in the morning, yet half the time they say it's the hot sun they are complaining about. Go get a *sombrero*, get something else to put on, right, go get a Cayman-thatch hat, since some of you do not understand what a *sombrero* is.

Mr. Speaker, this has become a serious problem. It has actually brought crime into areas because, as the Premier mentioned, there are people coming to your yard that you don't [recognise]. Whether they are washing a vehicle or raking the yard or doing anything, nobody can come to my yard anymore with a mask on. It has to come off — and I'm telling you, I've seen it too much in Cayman Kai. Every yard I go to there, I've seen it. The people don't know who is in the yard; the cameras can't pick them up, and when somebody comes back and robs, we don't know Peter from Paul, so we need to make sure... I'm also hoping that in the wrap-up we talk about what the penalties will be when we start catching people with this.

What are the fines for it? That is what we need to dive into, make sure this is not just another slap on the wrist. We need to encourage people whereby they know that it is not going to happen. We're taking it very seriously. Whether you're riding a bicycle, or as the Deputy Premier talked about, you don't know whether it's a he or she on a motorbike because they are crossing his house so fast, but he'll have to get out there one day and try to figure it out. Hopefully he'll be able to tell now whether they're he or she because they won't be able to wear the t-shirt around their faces anymore.

It is becoming a norm and some of our people are just passing other people by and walking across, and we don't know who they are anymore. I don't understand why people have to put on a full-face mask. Now, we understand there are times when people are sick; they need to wear their regular mask like we did

in COVID but a full-face mask whereby nobody can actually even see your eyes sometimes is not needed.

We've seen recently, as a matter of fact, I think this is how this came up. Right after the last Meeting of the Parliament, we had a robbery in town. The two men walked right in, masked with a T-shirt on their faces. If we had this in place, those two men might not have been able to walk down the road from where they were coming from as normal people because everybody probably saw them on the road and just did not pay them any mind because they had on a mask. Everybody is so used to seeing them. Until they decide to do a robbery... but now, this will be able to stop, so I thank you, Member for George Town Central. Thank you for bringing this forward.

As we said, we don't have to beat this until the cows come home like what we did last night. This one, I think, everybody is supporting, and I can guarantee you, sir, it will make a big change, and we will start to see the way crime starts to fall because those people who are doing bad will not be able to hide behind this anymore, will not be able to hide. Let us think now of what the penalties are going to look like. Is it going to be a 1, 2, 3-strike policy if you get caught doing it? Is it going to be a \$300 fine when you're doing it? Is it going to be a \$500 fine? What is it, what will the penalties look like when they go forward?

Mr. Speaker with that, I just want to say I fully support it, but I would love to hear more about the enforcement and the penalty side of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I also rise to lend my support to the Motion.

When we started to discuss the Motion, without casting my eyes on it, the first thought I had was face masks for medical purposes but then when I realised that was excluded, I'm very supportive. What I'm happy about from the medical standpoint is that wearing face masks for medical purposes has sort of become normalised. You'll see people wearing them on the airplane. If somebody's got the cold they'll wear them, but you clearly can see and identify who those individuals are.

On behalf of the people of West Bay Central, I am very supportive because we have been impacted by individuals who come into our constituency with those t-shirts around their faces and choose to rob the little wayside stores— and not just West Bay Central, West Bay on a whole; out by the four way stop.

Member for George Town Central, thank you for the Motion and I will be lending my support.

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

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Hey, hey, what you said, the sweet little one from Little Cayman? All right.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Let me be quick because I know everybody is eager; seems like everybody on this side got their coffee. I did try to share some with my good friend earlier. This is a very easy Motion for me to support, especially as the Premier said observing the behaviour. The emerging and constant behaviour of full-face coverings around this country is unacceptable, especially considering the work of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

We invest a significant amount of the people's money into the National CCTV System that we have around this country. We continue to invest, continue to deploy new cameras, expanding throughout Cayman Brac and moving into Little Cayman to secure our people, secure our communities; but all of that money goes to waste if we can't even identify who is frolicking and gallivanting around our streets.

Mr. Speaker again, I said I'd be brief; my coffee is still not done, but the Motion certainly has my full support.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even if you short me that is fine, sir.

Mr. Speaker, when I first saw the Motion notification being filed, I made up my mind that I was going to support it. For far too long we have seen this build up and there is obviously a direct link [between] this mask-wearing and the increase in crime that we've seen around the country.

Mr. Speaker, East End is no different from the rest of this country. I have seen an increase in our people wearing these masks, covering their faces in the middle of the day, at 12 o'clock when the sun is out bright and there is no reason for it to happen; and when I pass someone and see them wearing a mask, of course, I'm obviously going to start thinking negatively about what they may have on their mind and what they're intending to do.

Mr. Speaker, we've had some burglaries, we've had theft of vehicles, et cetera, and what has been common is [people] saying they are seeing people around those times wearing masks walking through the district. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support this Motion wholeheartedly because we need to do something — we cannot sit idly by anymore, sir.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for West Bay West.

Mrs. Julie J. T. Hunter, Elected Member for West Bay West: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quickly add my support to this Motion. It's one that we have needed for a while, and I want to commend the Member for George Town Central for taking the initiative to bring it forward. I know this has been spoken about, but it's so very, very necessary. I mean, we have been elected as a group of legislators to do what is right, and right now this is something that is very, very right and necessary for our country.

I would say that if you intend to walk the streets of the Cayman Islands, if you intend to live here, then you should be able to show your face. I would say it is known that many people who walk around with face coverings are not doing it just for the sake of having a face covering on. Most times you associate it with something wrong that they want to do; they are doing it for the wrong reasons and to cover up something they have done that is not acceptable, not right. As the Members have said already, we have seen such an increase in crime and criminal activity in our society through these masks.

I mean, before COVID-19, you would see one [here], one [there] wearing a mask, but since then, it's like that has given people licence, a general licence, to wear these and even if it's six o'clock in the morning that they come to cut your yard — there's no sun out at six o'clock in the morning — and yet they want to have a mask on. You answer your Ring camera and they don't even have the respect to take it off when they come to your door, sometimes to just ring your doorbell. That is unacceptable. We are living in the Cayman Islands. You know, we are not living in a country in the Middle East where these things are acceptable; that is not acceptable for the Cayman Islands.

As a representative for West Bay West, I want to let my people know that I am standing up; that this is unacceptable, and that we are not going to stand [by] any longer and have our stores robbed and our businesses vandalised in the Cayman Islands because we didn't put our foot down and say *enough is enough*. We are going to stand up for you and with you and say this is unacceptable. Thank you again, Member, for bringing this, and we fully support it going forward.

I also want to agree with my colleague, the Member for North Side, and drive home the point that we are not going to leave it here and see that the Motion comes into effect, but the penalties for it have to be stiff, have to be a serious deterrent, and we are going to ensure that happens.

Thank you again, everyone.

[Desk thumping]

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

Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, the one thing that has been delightful about today is that our plea from yesterday for camaraderie and us working together is already bearing fruit...

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: [It is] already bearing fruit and I must say that while the Minister of PLAHI (Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure) and I had a brief meeting outside the Chamber, we were still listening to the debate and I said to him, you know, that it was good to hear so much camaraderie in the Chamber, because our constituents deserve it. All of us went to the polls ten months ago, and we had some healthy debate [and] competition, campaigning to earn the right to represent our people.

As has been mentioned, since the COVID-19 pandemic it seems as though literally you cannot traverse our roads and not cross at least one person fully masked — it seems you just cannot; and this not only poses a huge public risk as has been mentioned, it is a culture that we want to stomp out. You see, these sorts of things start with little infractions. The road, the slippery slope toward lawlessness very rarely starts with people brandishing guns in the street or walking around with them in their waistband. It starts with these small, little infractions and cultural nuances that shift how a community expects its citizens to behave.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Absolutely right, Member for Bodden Town West. It is that Broken Window Syndrome whereby you accept that we just break one window on a building and it's not a big deal. Nobody pays any attention to it, nobody cares, [and] nobody reports it. The society says, *let's just leave it alone* and ten years later you end up with a ghetto-like neighbourhood.

We have to set a very high standard for our country because I believe that's what all of us can unequivocally join voices on and say, when we project out, where do we want the Cayman Islands to be in five, ten years' time? It is built brick by brick and this is one of those things that we need to remove because it has no place in nation building.

A few weeks ago I was at a gas station — gas station, middle of the day. A young man rides up on a motorbike, jumps off, comes in, gets his stuff, and walks out. Not a single person there could have assisted the police had he committed a crime, other than shade of skin and his height. Other than that, nothing, because he had on a shirt that came down almost to his wrist and was fully, fully, fully garbed all the way into his neck. That cannot be the way in which we accept people to move and have their being in public places, and let us be clear what we're talking about. We're talking about people in public places and on our streets.

Some carve outs have been added to in terms of medical reasons and whether you're on a job site — I see it says in the parameters and presume it means perimeters of the job site they're on. As the Minister of PLAHI said, the key thing for us, for government to do, is to work closely with the Opposition because, as we've all known as legislators, very rarely is there any perfect piece of legislation; but we need to work together to ensure we harness all views before we bring any draft Bill back here because small things could be left out and then we are back here making amendment after amendment. I'm not saying we're going to get it perfect, but let's get it as close to by working together as we have today. Once we get a draft Bill, we share it before we come here, talk it through to ensure it's the best possible product that we can produce because, again, we are doing this work on behalf of our community.

There are going to be some people in some quarters who are potentially going to resist any exclusions on religious grounds. I'm going to take the Member for Red Bay's lead, who called on us last night: Let us make sure that when we are debating, we put everything in the open and let's be honest about that as colleagues. We're going to get that resistance, colleagues. We have a Constitution. We have a Constitution that protects people's religious freedoms. We have to accept that we have Caymanians who practise other religions — because some people seem to have the misconception that there are no Caymanians who practise any other religion.

[There's] a person who graduated with me from high school; I have known him since we were about 11 years old, good friends with him. He's a Muslim; so I must pass legislation here and discriminate against him and his family? I'm not going to do it, so we have to think through some of the things, some of the barriers, and the challenges we may have with this. I think that is one small one that we may have but, colleagues, let's just do what's right. Let's do what's right for all our people — and when I say all our people, it must be all of our people — and ensure that any exclusions we have are for well thought out, legitimate reasons. Other than that, a total ban.

Additionally, we must put a serious penalty regime in place. We have to. We have seen the evidence; we don't need any study. We don't need any criminologist. We don't need any psychologist. We don't need anyone to tell us there is a definite connection between masking up and being brazen enough to commit crimes certainly in fashions that you otherwise would not have even attempted. For me, just that connection is enough to lend my wholehearted support.

Let us just get on with the business. Let us ensure that we get the drafting instructions. Let's get the *Hansards* to the drafting team so they can capture the essence of this debate and let's get on with the work of the people. I congratulate the Mover and seconder of the Motion, and I commend it to the entire House.

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

The Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and I want to start off by congratulating my good friend from George Town Central for bringing this Motion to Parliament today. The funny thing, Mr. Speaker, is that if memory serves me right, I think it was around the middle of December, the 16th or 17th of December, when the Member for George Town Central and I spoke about this Motion and I believe it was right after the robbery in town.

As I listened to the honourable Member for North Side speak about the penalties, I remembered having a conversation with one of my constituents when the video went viral. Based on the mannerisms, he actually could tell who the person was, and I think he actually reported it to the police; unfortunately, the person had already left the jurisdiction and was gone. He even knew who he worked for and everything about the guy, and was surprised the guy was still on the island because his employer had nothing for him to do.

When we are talking about penalties, these are some of the things but, Mr. Speaker, we also have to accept that we do have people on this island that have a legal right to be here, and in some cases the people who have taken out a permit for them have no work for them. I think this is one of the things we need to start looking at and one of the simplest ways is pension contribution. I mean, the law requires everyone to be paying a monthly pension, and if you see a person who's on a work permit and there are no pension payments coming in... granted, I know that some positions are exempt. Now don't get me wrong, from that standpoint, if you see pension is not being paid and a person is on a work permit that should be an immediate red flag in terms of *what is this person doing here* kind of thing?

The same with health insurance, so there are means in place to see where we have productive versus unproductive members of society, and we already have a challenge enough as it is for us to open the doors to people, non-nationals who basically have nothing to do and are literally hanging out on the island looking for opportunities. Opportunities are reserved for people who are Caymanian; it is as simple as that.

I am glad the Member for George Town Central brought up this issue and I am also glad that the Member for North Side talked about penalties, but Mr. Speaker, something the Honourable Minister of Finance touched on during his debate is the little nuances that we start to see building up. I mean, the Member for Savannah is well documented for her issue with littering; there are certain things that are very Caymanian and some which are un-Caymanian. How you keep your home, how you keep your yard and so forth are things that we as a people literally pride ourselves on, and the minute we start seeing these things chip away, chip away, chip away, as the Honourable Minister of

Finance said, at some point it becomes the norm — and this is something we accept, that should never become the norm.

Mr. Speaker, going into my third term, I'm impressed. There are certain dogmatic views that I had coming in as a young Parliamentarian, you know. For the Parliament to start on time, as you pride yourself on... I still remember my very first time sitting inside this Parliament. I would come and sit here before the [Sitting] started [and] I remember getting a call, *What you doing in there, you need to go outside*. I was like, *for what? Opposition don't form quorum; that's the Government's job. When they get the quorum, Opposition go in*. Yes, Mr. Roy, you look up; that's why your meetings used to start so late sometimes, because the Government had to get their ten members there.

Those were the norms and as I look around this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and see Parliament starting on time, things like that can't happen unless there is a certain behaviour by all members, whereby we say, *you know what? We're gonna be inside, we're gonna get the ten, and we're gonna start*. I just sit back and say, *Okay, well, this is now a new Parliament*. We talk about Parliament sovereignty and so forth; it [serves] as a reminder to me that I can't take the habits of Parliament 2017 to '21, Parliament '21 to '25 and bring them into Parliament '25 to '29. It's a new group. It's a new breed.

I remember having a conversation with the Minister of Finance, even in terms of committees. There was a belief before that a committee was where you sent things to die. Now we have a situation where people are willing to work together at a committee level, and I have to say, *You know what, I have to take an open-minded approach* so, as we adjust our mindset in terms of mask-wearing, et cetera, Mr. Speaker, it's time for us to look at what else we need to adjust ourselves to. This is but one so I'm happy the Member for George Town Central brought this; I'm happy that he opened the door, but it's also an opportunity for us to look at other things that were acceptable before and ensure we kind of nip it in the bud so it does not become the norm because it is chipping away bit by bit, by bit.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with a story I remember clearly from when I was going to school in New York. There was a drop in the crime rate in New York and everyone was trying to figure out what triggered it, you know. [Rudy] Giuliani was the Mayor; he was taking credit for everything, and they put together a group, a think tank. The story was actually featured in a book already. The think tank came out and said the drop in the crime rate in New York was because of a woman by the name of Norma McCorvey and everybody was like, *Who? Norma McCorvey or something like that*.

It turns out, Mr. Speaker, that Norma McCorvey was what they called a white trailer type, whatever person from Texas. She had two children, the state took them away, and she was pregnant with a third child and wanted an abortion. Now, in the state of

Texas, abortion was illegal, and she decided to challenge the law. For court purposes they changed her name to Jane Roe, and the person who represented the State of Texas was the Dallas District Attorney, Henry Wade — that's the famous *Roe v. Wade* case.

They went through and they looked at all analysis and I mean, they started backing this up with some serious statistics, none of them making a case for abortion— I don't want anyone to even think I'm going that route. However, I remember in our political science classes we started looking at the same issues and at things that happened. When you look at a criminal, they don't start today. You go back to the first seven to twelve years of a child's life and you see the environment, you see where the risk is and so forth— and we have gone through much of this from the *Yolande Ford [Pre-Disposing Factors to Criminality in the Cayman Islands] Report* where we have seen so many different things; it is about catching things early, nipping things early and dealing with them early, you know.

I think the immigration debate brought out a lot yesterday. We were talking about people making decisions based on information at the time. The lawmakers of fifty years ago did not have the information that we have at our fingertips today, so we should not be making the same mistakes. It is timely that we revisit these things. COVID-19 may have been only six years ago — hard to believe that COVID-19 was in 2020; here we are in 2026, and we still remember COVID but, again, six years ago is six years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for bringing it. It has stimulated our minds in terms of looking not just at robberies but overall way of life and other things. I think it's an opportunity for us to look at other things that maybe we need to fix, especially even the litter laws. I mean, people with derelict vehicles, people doing all kinds of things they shouldn't be doing in their neighbourhoods — rats breeding in parked cars, all that kind of thing so it's an opportunity for us to look at other things also.

My friend from George Town Central, thank you for stimulating my thoughts. I want to thank the Member for North Side for inspiring me, because more than anything it was listening to him that actually made me want to get up to speak on this Motion and also the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, that is my contribution, and I support this Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Would the Mover of the Motion Like to exercise his right of reply?

Member for George Town Central and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

Three strikes... or three in a row, not strike outs.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Hat trick, hat trick. I'm a basketball guy. I like the three-pointer [reference].

Today is a good day, Mr. Speaker, not only for this particular Motion on which we all had some comments, but, while closing on this Motion, I want the listening audience to see that there is a changing culture in the way we do governance, the way we represent. Personally, Mr. Speaker, I'm tired of fighting; I didn't get into politics to be a warrior, though I can be. I want to get solutions, so from yesterday and today I feel rather positive about partnerships from all sides — from the Opposition, independent Opposition members, to the Government to each Minister. Even that personal conversation [between] myself and the Honourable Minister of Immigration and Caymanian Employment. I think there is a good spirit of "*We can do this way better.*" We have many issues in this country that we need to face and [having] all our minds together on it would be so much better for all of us to fix them.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the Honourable Leader of Opposition for seconding in the Motion. I want to thank my colleagues in the Official Opposition for supporting me in bringing this Motion to the House. I want to thank all Members of Parliament who have given their support verbally or tacitly. I am happy to know that we will start to address some of these things.

In respect to the Honourable Minister's concern about having to bring penalties and fines, the good news about this Motion is that it asks for the Government to consider, and by those principles, the Government will have control over what the final outcome of this Motion will be [once] finalised. They will have the ability to do the necessary tweaks, expansions, exemptions that they feel fit and bring it back to Parliament, but I'm happy to know that they're in support of the spirit of it. I recognise the Honourable Minister of Finance's concerns from the religious perspective and our constitutional obligations, so I don't think it would be a surprise to us on this side if and when those changes come to Parliament reflecting that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk to those persons who are, and I say this gently, with a small g — probably genuinely covering themselves with no negative intentions. I don't want to assume that everyone who covers themselves up is a criminal. That's definitely not what I want; but I want to send the message to them that they need to understand human behaviour. I cannot... and I'm talking about my own experience; it is difficult for me not to feel weird, unsafe, uneasy — is something serious about to happen, with a person fully covered, the only thing I see is their eyes like a ninja in the middle of the day, next to a jewellery store? It's just

not normal. Now, you may feel *okay, I'm just covering myself up; it's hot or I just came from work or I was just cutting some lawn*, whatever. Unfortunately, your perceived comfort is reducing the quality of life for everyone else, so this is not an attack on you. You're just going to have to adjust and, like the Honourable Minister said, you know, buy a good old Caymanian thatch hat. It does the same thing.

However, for those who are doing it for the wrong purposes, this is us saying to you: we're not going to live with that anymore, and for the business community that have had the devastating circumstances of being robbed and scarred— Mr. Speaker, I don't know what I would do if I were in a store and a person came in and robbed it. The experience could be done in 60 seconds, but you're scarred; you're scarred for life. Every time you see somebody come across, you probably get anxious. You probably don't want to leave your house for days. Our people shouldn't have to go through that.

I understand that there was a visitor during the most recent daylight robbery, the one around Christmas at the jewellery store, and as a former Minister for Tourism I wanted to find that individual and apologise on behalf of the good people of this country. For them to be left with that kind of memory of Cayman... that is not us, and this Motion and the agreement of all of us in this House is sending the message that we will no longer stand for it — and I agree with Members, this is the first step in many other steps for changing it. Without pre-empting a Bill that is expected before the House tomorrow, you'll see us start to address littering. You hear about the Broken Window Syndrome; I support that because these are the small little tweaks. Yes, Minister, we all need that coffee because I'm needing it now too.

Again, today is a historical day in my humble opinion from a parliamentary perspective. I want to congratulate the Honourable Premier — Premier, the spirit of us working together, my Leader speaking with you, even the other Opposition members working in partnership through the break, the public doesn't see that, they don't see us gathering in the well to talk about it. They only see when the Honourable Minister of Finance pokes me and tries to get me riled up and then tries to sing Scriptures of the Bible at the end of his wrap-up to soften me again so—

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: —I want to say thank you again to all Members for their support. This is a good day for Cayman; let's keep them protected and continue to succeed together as a country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question now is, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Honourable Parliament calls upon the Government to consider amendments to all relevant legislations to:

1. Restrict Public Masking: Prohibit the use of non-medical masks and total head coverings in all public spaces, neighbourhoods, and commercial establishments nationwide;
2. Define Medical Exemptions: Establish clear provisions for individuals with documented medical disabilities or health conditions, requiring a standard of visibility that allows for health protection without facilitating total anonymity;
3. Preserve Occupational PPE: Maintain exemptions for workers (gardeners, construction, etc.) strictly within the parameters of their job sites;
4. Urgency of Action: Treat this as a matter of National Importance.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2025-2026 – National Public Safety for Mask Wearing passed.

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 11
OF 2025-2026
MOTION TO ESTABLISH A BANKING AND
ECONOMY STANDING COMMITTEE**
[Withdrawn]

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 12
OF 2025-2026
MOTION TO ESTABLISH AN EDUCATION AND
HUMAN SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE**
[Withdrawn]

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 13
OF 2025-2026
MOTION TO ESTABLISH AN INFRASTRUCTURE
AND HOUSING STANDING COMMITTEE**
[Withdrawn]

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Member for George Town Central spoke about the earlier discussions in the well that would not have been caught on camera. In the true spirit of camaraderie, after discussions with the Honourable Premier and the Honourable Minister of Finance, we agreed that some committees need to be set

up to provide oversight, but we recognise there are some complexities in setting up such committees; thus, we have agreed to withdraw the next three Motions which deal with their establishment. We will meet after this Session of Parliament and agree on the committees that we should set up as oversight and bring them to the next Sitting of the honourable House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, not to jump ahead of your agenda, I would like to move that [the following Motions be withdrawn at this time]:

- Private Member's Motion No. 11 – Motion to Establish a Banking and Economy Standing Committee;
- Private Member's Motion No. 12 – Motion to Establish an Education and Human Services Standing Committee; and
- Private Member's Motion No. 13 – Motion to Establish an Infrastructure and Housing Standing Committee

The Speaker: Okay. Is there a seconder?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was the seconder that will now be withdrawn. I support the Member's bipartisan approach for withdrawal.

The Speaker: As a former President used to tell us on a regular basis a long, long, long, long time ago, for belts and braces around it, I am going to put the vote for each Motion separately so it is recorded in the *Hansard* properly.

The [question] is that Private Member's Motion No. 11 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish a Banking and Economic Standing Committee be withdrawn.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 11 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish a Banking and Economic Standing Committee was withdrawn.

The Speaker: The [question] is that Private Member's Motion No. 12 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish an Education and Human Services Standing Committee be withdrawn.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 12 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish an Education

and Human Services Standing Committee was withdrawn.

The Speaker: The [question] is that Private Member's Motion No. 13 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish an Infrastructure and Housing Standing Committee be withdrawn.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 13 of 2025-2026 – Motion to Establish an Infrastructure and Housing Standing Committee was withdrawn.

The Speaker: Next Motion.

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 10
OF 2025-2026
LIMITING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHILDREN
UNDER THE AGE OF SIXTEEN**

The Speaker: Elected Member for George Town West and Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2025-2026 standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS the Government of the Cayman Islands has a duty to safeguard the welfare, mental health, and healthy development of children and young persons;

AND WHEREAS a growing body of evidence indicates that intensive use of social media is associated with increased risks of anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, as well as cyberbullying, online exploitation, addictive behaviours, and exposure to age-inappropriate content, the scale of which presents population-level mental health concern;

AND WHEREAS children under the age of sixteen are in critical stages of cognitive and social development, and evidence of potential harms from intensive social media use justifies precautionary age-based protections grounded in child welfare principles;

AND WHEREAS multiple jurisdictions, including Australia and several European and Asian nations, have either proposed or enacted legislation, recognising such measures as proportionate child-protection interventions rather than limitations on freedom of expression;

AND WHEREAS this Honourable House recognises the positive role of digital technologies

in education, creativity, communication, and economic participation, and affirms that responsible digital technology use is compatible with strong child protection standards and that these measures seek to delay, rather than permanently deny, access until an appropriate stage of cognitive maturity.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers the introduction of legislation to prohibit access to social media platforms by persons under the age of sixteen (16) years within the Cayman Islands as a child protection and public health measure;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that any such legislation shall place primary responsibility for compliance, age verification, and enforcement on social media platform operators, and shall not criminalise or penalise children or young persons;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that "Social Media Platforms" shall be defined as digital services for social interaction and content sharing, and shall exclude:

- Educational platforms;
- Messaging services used primarily for private communication;
- Essential services required for school or public services;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that the proposed framework shall include proportionate regulatory sanctions for non-compliant platforms while ensuring safeguards for data privacy, user rights, and constitutional protections;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers accompanying the legislation with public education initiatives, including digital literacy programmes for parents and accessible mental health resources for young people;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that the legislation shall be subject to periodic review, to ensure it is consistent with constitutional protections, and remains consistent with human rights obligations and the principle of proportionality;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers commencing stakeholder consultation and legislative drafting without delay, recognising the urgency of protecting children from demonstrable and preventable digital harms, and affirms that this resolution shall not be construed as an endorsement of censorship, surveillance, or content-based regulation, but as a child protection and public health measure grounded in evidence, proportionality, and the best interests of the child.

The Speaker: Is there a Seconder?

Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Elected Member for Red Bay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded. Does the Mover wish to speak to the Motion?

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

Mr. Speaker, honourable Members of this honourable House, I rise today as the Member of Parliament for George Town West to move a Motion of urgent national importance. That this honourable House enact legislation to prohibit the creation, possession or operation of social media accounts by persons under the age of 16; and to impose enforceable statutory obligations on social media platforms operating within our jurisdiction to protect our children.

This Motion is not anti-technology nor anti-progress. It is not an attempt to reverse innovation or to deny young persons' access to the digital world. Rather, it is an evidence-based response to a rapidly evolving public health and child protection crisis. It is a declaration that mental health safety and the development of our children must take precedence over the commercial interests and profit models of global technology cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, when we refer to social media in this debate and in this context, it is essential that we be very precise. We are speaking of large-scale algorithms-driven user to user platforms that actively curate and amplify content for engagement. This includes but is not limited to TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, X, Threads, and similar services. These platforms are not passive tools; they are highly engineered digital environments designed to maximise attention, emotional response, and time spent on the platform. Their algorithms are built to reward outrage, controversy, sexualised imagery, and social comparison — factors that are particularly harmful to developing minds.

Mr. Speaker, the age of 16 is not arbitrary. It is a widely recognised legal and development milestone in many jurisdictions across the world. Scientific and medical research constantly shows that children and younger adolescents are neurologically and psychologically more vulnerable to peer pressure, reward-seeking behaviour, and social validation. Their vulnerabilities are directly exploited by the design of modern social media platforms.

International evidence underscores the scale of seriousness of this issue. Research cited by the United States' Surgeon General indicates that up to 95 per cent of adolescents engage with at least one social media platform with more than one third reporting near-constant use. The same advisory warns that social media has not been proven safe for children and adolescents and highlights a clear association with anxiety,

depression, sleep disruption, and exposure to harmful content.

Mr. Speaker, closer to home, Caribbean nations face unique vulnerabilities. Our societies are small, closely connected, and highly digitally connected as well. Harmful content, cyberbullying, and reputational damage spread rapidly and are difficult to contain. UNICEF works across the Eastern Caribbean [and] constantly identifies [that] cyberbullying, inadequate supervision, and exposure to harmful online behaviours are growing child protection concerns. Cyberbullying deserves particular attention. UNICEF reports that globally, one in three young people has experienced online bullying and many have missed school as a direct result. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying follows the child at home. It is relentless; it is public and permanent. Screenshots do not disappear. Videos do not forget; a moment of embarrassment can become a lifetime digital scar.

Mr. Speaker, social media also presents a serious risk of exploitation and grooming. Open messaging systems, anonymous accounts, disappearing messages, and algorithm recommendations create pathways through which predators can access children with alarming ease. Education alone cannot counter this threat, general safeguards are required at this time. Equally troubling are the effects of social media on body image and self-worth. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok promote unrealistic and heavily edited portrayals of beauty, success, and lifestyle. Young users analyse these standards long before they have the emotional maturity to critically assess them, leading to anxiety, low self-esteem, and disordered behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, sleep deprivation and attention disruptions are additional consequences. Social media platforms are deliberately designed to be addictive, employ infinite scrolling, auto play videos, variable rewards, and constant notifications. Adolescents require adequate sleep for brain development, emotional regulation, and academic success. Some may argue that social media can offer benefits including connection and creativity. That may be true for some older adolescents and adults; however, the presence of limited benefits does not negate overwhelming evidence of harm to our younger users. We do not permit children to gamble, consume alcohol, or drive vehicles simply because some adults can do so responsibly.

This honourable House should also note that the global community is moving decisively in this direction. Australia has enacted legislation prohibiting social media use for persons under the age of 16, placing responsibility squarely on platforms to enforce age restrictions. Several jurisdictions in the United States have introduced similar age-based restrictions and parental consent requirements. The United Kingdom has strengthened its online safety laws mandating robust age assurance measures as well, and is looking to ban.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion proposes a clear and enforceable framework.

- First, it places the legal duty on social media companies, not parents alone, to prevent underage access.
- Second, it requires meaningful age verification and age assurance measures rather than simple self-declaration.
- Third, it incorporates app stores and device-level protection to support parents and guardians.
- Fourth, it establishes strong penalties, independent audits, and transparency reporting for non-compliance platforms.
- Fifth, it provides for phased implementation, public education and support for families and schools; and
- Finally, it recognises the need for positive alternatives including youth programmes, digital literacy education, and mental health services in an age-appropriate online environment.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion is about reclaiming childhood in this digital age. It is about drawing a clear line that says childhood is not a testing ground for unregulated technology. Our children deserve protection, not exploitation.

We will now look at proportionality, and what's in the best interest of the child. Any responsible legislator must consider not only whether to act, but whether actions are proportionate, reasonable and consistent with the best interest of the child. This Motion meets this test. The principle of proportionality requires [that] a measure pursues a legitimate aim that may be rationally connected to that aim; that it impairs rights no more than is necessary, and that a fair balance be struck between individual rights and the public interest. This proposal satisfies each of those requirements.

The legitimate aim is clear and compelling: the protection of children's mental health and safety, and the development in digital environments that have outpaced existing safeguards. The measure is rationally connected to that aim as "harm" identified that cyberbullying, exploitation, addictive use, sleep deprivation, and psychological distress are disproportionately experienced by a younger user and are amplified by algorithm-driven social media platforms. This Motion is narrow-targeted and time-limited. It does not ban the internet. It does not criminalise children. It does not restrict access to education, information, or family communication. It applies only to high-risk, commercial, social media platforms, and only until the age of 16.

Mr. Speaker, this honourable House already accepts age-based restrictions in other areas of public policy. We prohibit children from purchasing alcohol, not because alcohol is inherently immoral — some may argue that — but because their developing bodies and brains are more vulnerable to harm. We prohibit children from gambling not because adults cannot gamble responsibly, but because minors are more susceptible to addiction and financial loss. We prohibit children

from driving motor vehicles, not because driving is wrong, but because the combination of speed risks and underdeveloped judgement creates unacceptable danger.

Social media presents comparable, in some aspects greater, Mr. Speaker; unlike alcohol, gambling or driving, social media is constant and psychologically invasive. It follows the child into the home and the classroom, and even into their sense of self. This proposal therefore aligns squarely with the best interests of the child. Acting in the child's best interests sometimes requires limiting access to environments they are not yet equipped to navigate safely, particularly when those environments are deliberately engineered to exploit development vulnerabilities. This is not control; it is responsible governance. Freedom grows with maturity, and this Motion simply applies that long-accepted principle to the digital age.

Now we have to seek. Let's look at international evidence when it comes to adolescents' mental health, and digital harm. Mr. Speaker, this Motion is grounded not only on observation but based on growing credible international evidence from a leading global institution charged with safeguarding children and adolescents. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that adolescent mental health is facing unprecedented pressure.

In its most recent regional reporting, the WHO Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study documents a significant rise in what is defined as problematic social media use among adolescents increasing from 7 per cent in 2018 to 11 per cent in 2022. This category includes behaviour such as loss of control, withdrawal symptoms, neglect of other activities, and continued use despite negative consequences. The WHO further reports that more than one third of adolescents are now in near constant online contact, with the highest level observed among 15-year-old girls. The organisation has identified digital environments including social media platforms as emerging determinants of adolescent mental health and has called on governments to consider regulation responses where voluntary safeguards have proven insufficient.

Mr. Speaker, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) has likewise sounded the alarm. In a major international poll conducted across 30 countries, UNICEF found that one in every three young people reported being victims of online bullying. Alarming, one in five reported missing school as a direct result of cyberbullying or online violence. UNICEF has repeatedly emphasised that online harm is no longer secondary to the child's protection but is now the central driver of educational disengagement, anxiety, and psychological distress.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has reached a similar conclusion. Its global work on school violence and bul-

lying confirms that cyberbullying now affects approximately one in 10 children worldwide with a higher prevalence among early adolescents. UNESCO reports that victims of bullying including cyberbullying are twice as likely to experience severe loneliness, sleep disturbance, and suicidal thoughts. These are not abstract harms; they are measurable and life-altering outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, the warnings from WHO, UNICEF, and UNESCO point to a clear conclusion: the current digital environment is not neutral for children and adolescents. It is an environment that amplifies vulnerability, intensifies social pressure, and exposes young users to harm at a scale and speed that existing safeguards have failed to control. This honourable House would therefore be acting in line with international best practice and authoritative global evidence in taking proportionate legislative action to protect children during the most vulnerable stages of their development.

Mr. Speaker, while international evidence is compelling, it is equally important that we examine what is happening within our Cayman Islands community. Recent qualitative research conducted in 2024 provides important local insight on the relationship between adolescents and social media. This research, currently submitted for publication, was conducted by Dr. Chantal Basson, Felicia McLean, and Miss Emily Kelly as part of the *Inspire* Research Programme examining youth wellbeing in the Cayman Islands.

One of the key findings of this research emerged in theme five of the analysis, which focused specifically on social media and its impact on young people. Participants in the study identified several recurrent concerns associated with social media, including:

- exposure to harmful content;
- screen time addiction;
- loss of motivation;
- body image pressures; and
- experiences of online cohesion.

Mr. Speaker, these findings reflect the lived experience of our young people in this jurisdiction that we call home.

Mental health challenges among adolescents in the Cayman Islands are becoming increasingly visible. This is demonstrated by the growing number of young people accessing services through Alex's Place, the national adolescent mental health hub here in the Cayman Islands. In 2024 alone, approximately 265 young people sought support through Alex's place, representing a record level of engagement with youth mental health services. These are not abstract policy debates. These are Caymanian children presenting for real mental health support that requires intervention at this time. Practitioners working with these young people have reported that social media frequently emerges as a contributing factor in the presentation of anxiety, emotional distress, and in some cases, suicidal ideas.

Mr. Speaker, the development science behind this vulnerability is well established. During early adolescence, the brain's emotional centres are highly active while the frontal and prefrontal cortex, the regions responsible for impulse control, emotional regulation, and analytical reasoning, are still developing. From approximately the age of 16, these areas begin to be more effective; in other words, younger adolescents are neurologically less equipped to interpret and manage intense social media pressures that are generated by algorithm social media platforms.

Social media also has consequences beyond the individual child. Parents and educators increasingly report that online environments contribute to significant tension and conflict within parent-child relationships. Adolescence is already a period marked by emotional change and identity development. When social media becomes a constant source of negotiation, secrecy, or conflict, it can deepen relational strain within families.

Mr. Speaker, clear national standards would not undermine parental authority. On the contrary, they would support parents by providing a consistent and constant framework that helps families navigate an issue that has become increasingly difficult to manage alone. In this sense, the proposed age restriction is not only a measure of child protection but also a measure that supports healthier family relationships.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time. I therefore commend this Motion to this honourable House and urge all Members, and I say all, to support this in the best interest of our children and future children, and their future — and let's hit a home run.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Honourable Premier.

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

I think we can grant the lady Member for George Town West a home run.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I rise to accept and support the Motion on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out, and I told the lady Member so during the break — it's a brilliant Motion. It is well researched. It is well outlined, and having heard her deliver it, it was compellingly delivered.

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: With International Women's Day coming up, that's our colleague.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it raises an issue that has all the countries that I suspect were in this position whereby you're grappling with trying to stay ahead of

technology and keep up with innovation, but at the same time, how do you then implement and enact appropriate safeguards so you don't dissuade the technology but you try as much as you can [to] mitigate harm. Being that we are wrestling with that, I think she has done a good body of work such that we can learn lessons from jurisdictions and not have to reinvent the wheel — is what I got from your Motion; because we are wrestling with AI algorithms and if you're not savvy enough to come out of your device, it shapes the way you think.

My wife's Netflix account looks totally different from mine and we're sharing the same account, so when I go into her profile, I didn't even know they had those movies because it's feeding her what she likes; and then she'll go into my profile which... throws her off, put it that way, or bores her if it goes into politics that she didn't even know Netflix had those, so if you are not getting the tools and the social aids to know how to navigate that, it could send you down a rabbit hole and completely distort your thinking.

Then you have the acute issue of cyberbullying, which is very relevant to the Cayman Islands and its connection to youth mental health. This was a topic of conversation at CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market); we are not alone. It's one thing in our day when we got bullied in high school. It was what it was and you passed the day — some of the things you still remember when it was physical bullying, but the fact that it can stay online forever... Even as young as the nice little one from Little Cayman says he is, we have not gone through that stage in our development that our young people are going through and grappling with now, so we cannot blame them for feeling the pressure of youth mental health, so that means— sorry, I heard that.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I did give you an apology yesterday. I know.

It means, and I think this is also part of what I heard in the Motion, that we are going to have to combine legislation and policy with actual interactions with our youth; and that was another thing that came up with CARICOM, is us in small countries finding more things for the youth to actually do physically. Which is why it will be no surprise, as I sit down, you will hear from the Minister of Education, you will hear from the Minister of Health, you will likely hear from the Minister for Youth and Sports because we're going to have to find other physical activities to draw them out, while we grapple with these safeguards.

Which is why I play pickleball. I not only do it for exercise, because it's not just for the physical activity, it's the camaraderie that happens down at the pickleball court; so whether it's basketball for you, whether it's cricket, whether it's football, it's the fellowship and the engagement, so I do it more so for mental health

than physical health and if that is us in our third-quarter age—

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: You and I are in the third quarter.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: You prime?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: —you could only imagine it when your mind is now being shaped and developed under 16.

I think the last point I will convey since we have the home run, since we have the vision of working collaboratively, the next step after leaving from this Parliament, is to turn our feeling of Kumbaya into action and—

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: —really sit down and start working across the aisle, so the next time we come to the House, it won't be just a feeling that's in the air; we will have solid deliverables to our people that we can honestly stand up and say we worked on together.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will allow the other Ministers and Members to chime in, but it bears repeating, it is a brilliant Motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I've heard today three-pointers, hat tricks and home runs, but Member for George Town West, I give you something better— you hit a grand slam.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier: You know, I look at my fellow [Minister] of Culture, the Member for East End. We keep talking about our culture and heritage, but every time you see kids they're always on the phone. They need to get outside and find out what Cayman has to offer. Get some maiden plum on you; get some cow itch.

[Laughter]

Hon. Gary B. Rutty, Deputy Premier: No, man; they need to grow up like we grew up. Take some licks and

enjoy what this country has. The things they're exposed to in these phones... You can't go to the movies and see an R-rated movie unless you're 18 or over, but they're getting it here, *[holds up his cell phone]* all day long.

It's about time that parents become accountable for their children and help raise them and stop giving them this access that is really destroying much of the fabric that we have in our homes today, because it's also an excuse for the kids to spend time away from their family. There's no interaction. You go to dinner, they're on their phones; they're ordering on their phones but after that, they continue to be on their phones. Only God knows what they are seeing.

You know, my children didn't get phones until they were about 15 years old, and they didn't have what we have today. There was no TikTok back then either, or whatever they watch; but I guess I'm guilty because I am probably on Instagram more than them right now as well. Nonetheless, I want to thank the Member for George Town West for bringing this. It is long overdue and it's time that we come together and protect our children and put some limitations in and hold them to it. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride and I'm honoured to get up and offer a few words on Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2025-2026, Limiting Social Media for Children Under the Age of 16 brought to us by the honourable Member for George Town West — and I'm sure you are proud, as your Deputy Speaker, of the way she researched her first Motion in this House; the way she crafted it, the way she articulated it.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you first-hand the amount of work that she put into this. The amount of research she has done, but we all heard it in her debate.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: All while at the same time, representing the people of George Town West to her very best ability. Launching programmes such as West Work Wednesdays, when she spends the entire day out meeting with her constituents, going from door to door.

Mr. Speaker, she has not forgotten her entire community because she also continues to visit most of the schools in Grand Cayman, the High Schools in particular, delivering motivational and leadership presentations in particular to the young women, encouraging

them to pursue excellence and leadership similar to what she demonstrated here today.

Mr. Speaker, as you also know, she is playing a central role in launching the Commonwealth Women Parliamentary Association branch here in the Parliament tomorrow, so all across the board, she's working for her community and representing this Parliament and making us all proud.

Mr. Speaker, there's not much more that can be said about the Motion. I agree with the Honourable Deputy Premier — we are all guilty of not taking our kids outside, spending more time with them, teaching them the way we grew up. I remember the first day I handed my eldest son a conch. I said, *I'll break it, you clean it*, and he looked at me with a blank face. I said, *Boy, you don't know how to clean a conch?* He said, *Dad, you didn't teach me.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: That's when it hit me, but I don't remember anybody teaching me actually. We spent so much time on the street that when older guys like Franz and them came in, we would go down and watch them. We would go down by Slipper Edges and watch them break a conch or two and that's how we learnt.

However, the communities aren't like that anymore. We're no longer villages, unfortunately, in certain senses, and so, the responsibility falls entirely on us parents to go out there and teach our kids some of the culture, you know, some of the heritage, some of the things we used to do. I know I knew where every fruit tree in West Bay was, and I knew every fruit that was in season because we had nothing else to do, but we know the damage that social media is doing to our children.

Mr. Speaker, it is no coincidence that on Monday, at the Youth Parliament, one of the subjects being debated is youth mental health. The challenges our children are facing are not just [for] the children who have difficulties at home. We have children from parents who are paying as much attention as they could ever pay, paying as much money, providing resources as much as they can, and the children are still struggling with their mental health. It is like what was once said about a drug dealer if you have a friend —and this is a true story. You have a friend who's on drugs, and you do your best to check in on them. The one day you miss, the drug dealer is not missing it. The one day you don't pray to God, the devil is not missing it. The devil is persistent. There every day, every minute, waiting for that one opportunity — that is social media.

That is what our children are facing. They are faced with the temptations; they are faced with the influences every single moment. The minute you turn your back, it is there. It doesn't matter how much love you give them, how much attention, how much time, even though we are all guilty, we need to spend more

time with our children than perhaps in here fighting each other, but the minute you are not there... The minute you're not there, the bad influences are. Like the drug dealer, waiting for that one window to go in and offer a free sample.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say once again how impressed, delighted and proud I am — I expected nothing different by the way, Mr. Speaker — by the presentation of this Motion by the honourable Member for George Town West, and I [encourage] the entire Parliament to support it.

Thank you, sir.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll wait for the lecturer. Thank you.

The Speaker: Not supposed to be reading a speech, now, you know.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by joining in commending the Honourable Deputy Speaker and Member for George Town West. Mr. Speaker, it takes courage... I will look at her as I say this, because she knows I've said it before. It takes courage to bring forward legislation that challenges global technology giants and potentially unsettles social norms.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member called me a few weeks back and discussed this, and I said to her that I'd be happy to second it and support her with it, but I did ask— *are you sure?* Because I believe I know the arguments she may be getting from some quarters. As my friend the Minister of Finance said earlier, let's speak the truth; not everyone will be happy with this. She did not flinch. She said, *it's important; I've seen the impact on my people, and I really want to move forward with it*, so I commend her again for her bravery.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: She has presented her Motion thoughtfully, carefully, and grounded it in evidence. Mr. Speaker, we all heard it and I say again, I am proud to support this Motion and to support her with it.

As we've heard, the Member has laid out local data as well as international data from the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, UNESCO, and others that link heavy social media use among adolescents to anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, sleep disruption, and other forms of problematic use. I will not repeat that evidence, Mr. Speaker, she did an outstanding job with that, but as we know and as she indicated, this is not just an international issue— it is a Cayman issue.

Over recent years we have seen what appears to be an increasing number of young people locally struggling with depression, anxiety, and emotional distress. I am sad thinking about it. I remember a year or two back there seemed to be a spate — I don't know if that's the right word, but that's the word that comes to mind — of young people taking their own lives. I remember the shock it had throughout our community. It was not something that we were accustomed to.

Our young people today, Mr. Speaker, have pressures in this modern age that we have never experienced and probably don't understand. Certainly, I don't necessarily understand it; but these pressures, as was said, cause depression, anxiety, and emotional distress. Our teachers speak about it. Parents speak about it, perhaps more quietly and hushed. Councillors are seeing it and young people themselves are more open about their struggles. Mr. Speaker, I have people in my family who at a young age suffer from anxiety and other forms of mental challenges.

As it happens, whenever things happen to people you know personally, all of a sudden your eyes are opened, whether it's a disease — all of a sudden you look around and the disease is more prevalent. This certainly is a disease. Once I became aware, I started reading and I went to local symposiums and the like and you start to realise how widespread the concerns are; how many young people are being impacted, and it really tugs at your emotions. It certainly did mine. I know it probably tugs at all of ours. I have a constituent whom I have spoken about previously with a daughter struggling with mental health challenges. I won't say it's related to social media, but it's another case, another situation that I'm aware of, so Mr. Speaker, this is personal for me, and as has been said, there have been linkages in terms of the negative impacts of social media on younger aged adolescents.

Social media, Mr. Speaker, is not the only cause of this added anxiety and this modern pressure that young people have, but as was said earlier, it is increasingly being recognised as being a powerful accelerant of these anxieties and mental health challenges. It amplifies the comparison of me with you. It amplifies humiliation; it amplifies exclusion. It too readily allows cyberbullying. In a small country like ours, online harm spreads quickly and possibly permanently. A mistake at 14 can follow a child forever into adulthood and that, I know, concerns us. I am grateful the Government will be accepting this Motion, Mr. Premier — thank you, sir. I had no doubt that would be the case.

Mr. Speaker, I have said for some time that social media can be a good tool [but] a poor, poor master, like many, many things — like technology generally; used well, it connects families and promotes business, but these social media platforms are not neutral. As was said, they are driven by algorithms designed to maximise engagement. They feed you what they interpret you want and like, and they keep feeding you, feeding you, feeding you the same things to keep you

engaged. Engagement is maximised by triggering emotions. It is not concerned with promoting the wellbeing of the person, so we are promoting profits.

It triggers these emotions, as was said, through a variety of means encouraging you to infinitely scroll, constant notifications about things you may like [that] ping and you feel compelled to answer, [and] auto-play videos. These features, Mr. Speaker, are not accidents. They're designed that way. They are deliberately designed to impact your behaviour, so we see young people unable to disconnect from their devices, as has been said. They are constantly — as do adults, as do I, sometimes — checking their phones; but young people, and I saw this amongst my daughters when they were teenagers, will stay up late into the night, losing sleep and can't wake up in the morning. Thank God, I think they've outgrown that now; but loss of sleep is not good.

Measuring your self-worth in likes and comments, Mr. Speaker, is not good. That does not mean our young people are weak. It just means they're being exposed to systems that are engineered to hold their attention. In that sense, Mr. Speaker, in my view, what we call social media can become profoundly unsocial. For quite some years now, I've referred to social media as just that: "unsocial"; and I was refusing to be a part of it, but in this day and age, as a modern politician, you have to be online. You have to be telling people what you're doing and showing your worth and being measured through likes and so on. Mr. Speaker, I understand it, but I'm a grown man.

Children at a young age don't need that added pressure, Mr. Speaker. Young people and adolescents are still forming their identity, developing their confidence and their emotional resilience. They don't need the added pressure of social media. As has been said by the Mover, Mr. Speaker, 16 is not an arbitrary age, and she explained why that was, but preventing adolescents below the age of 16 would help to safeguard their development. The Mover spoke to it and as she said, we already accept age restrictions on a range of activities because we recognise that young adolescents are more impulsive, they are more reward sensitive and less equipped to assess long-term risk.

This Motion does not ban access to the internet. It does not criminalise children. It does not censor speech. What it does, Mr. Speaker, is delay access to high-risk algorithm-driven platforms during our young people's most vulnerable development years. Importantly, this Motion places responsibility on the platforms themselves, not on the children and not on the parents. Too often we might say *parents should monitor their children*, but Mr. Speaker, parents can try to monitor their children, but they are [up] against multi-billion-dollar corporate giants who employ behavioural scientists to optimise children's engagement. That is not a fair contest.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen a documentary that also discusses this issue. It was speaking to parents

and I remember a mother saying that she's happy for a ban because when she tries to moderate the use of social media by her children in her home, it's a fight. It's an argument and they storm off, so at times she may tend to shy away from being the parent she might want to be because she doesn't want that fight, but the government has banned it. The government has said that social media platforms should not be providing services to children under 18, so she smiled; and I can imagine in her head she's probably singing that old song, *"It Wasn't Me."* She can say to her children, *it wasn't me, it is the government; it's a law* — so it can assist family situations.

The proposal states that if a platform operates in our jurisdiction, it must meet standards designed to protect our children, but Mr. Speaker, we must be realistic. As I said earlier, we are dealing with multi-billion-dollar corporate giants. We are a small jurisdiction, sir. Enforcement of that will not be easy and will require co-ordination. Coordination with the UK, where significant work is already underway on online safety and age assurance measures.

Mr. Speaker, they are also considering a similar ban, so we will need to align whatever framework being developed to what they're doing there to ensure that platforms comply effectively; so whatever they are doing with regard to mandating the platforms, with the might of the UK and the ability to do that, we would want them to include us in those conversations and requirements of those platforms. We won't be able to do it on our own, but this is a case where the UK can be extremely beneficial in helping us to get to where we want to get to. Our small size doesn't mean we don't have a duty to do what we know we need to do to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, if anything, in a small and closely connected society the consequences of online harm are magnified. Reputational damage travels faster, isolation feels sharper, and exposure spreads further. How I wrote my initial speech said, *even if this Motion evolves through Amendment or it was not to pass* — which won't be the case because we know it will pass; but I will carry on with the thought. I said to my friend, the Honourable Member for George Town West, *this Motion is already doing something important: It has opened wider the national conversation about child mental health in the digital age.*

I want to pause here and just — he's not in the Chamber but I want to pause here, sir, to mention my friend, the Member for Newlands who will probably appreciate this topic more than most of us in here, sir. I want to commend him and his family for the work they are doing through the Alex Panton Foundation.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mention was made earlier of Alex's place. It was when I attended a symposium that that organisation held some years ago that I got to mix and

mingle with fathers and mothers and young people and hear their stories and their struggles that helped open my eyes in terms of how widespread the issue is amongst our young people, so I say again, sir, that the Motion has opened wider a national conversation about child mental health. It asks whether profit-driven algorithms by these large corporations should shape childhood without guardrails.

I made a note earlier on the comment — I think it was from the Mover — that the Motion is about reclaiming childhood. I thought that was worth noting because I agree with her, sir, I agree, and that conversation that I mentioned earlier on widening the national conversation really, really, really matters. The honourable Member for George Town West has shown leadership in bringing this forward. I am proud to second her. The Motion is not about moral panic, it's not anti-technology, it's not about censorship; instead, sir, it is about child protection as she said. It's about public health and about this House doing what we know we need to do to protect our children — easy or not.

If we know, and we all do, that these platforms are designed to capture attention; if we know that adolescent mental health challenges are rising; and if we know that younger users are developmentally more vulnerable, then we must act. Inaction is not neutral. It is permission for these large corporations to continue prioritising their profits over the wellbeing of children. That's not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by saying again that childhood should not be shaped primarily by corporations engineered for profit rather than protection. Protection of our youth is paramount. To the Mover, I say again: thank you. This is important. I agree, Mr. Premier. For the reasons I just mentioned, I fully support the Motion. I will be voting for it — I seconded it, so I hope I vote for it.

[Laughter]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I want to say that this Member for Red Bay, Roy Tatum, is extremely proud of this House today, when I know it will pass unanimously. I want to thank you all and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Member for West Bay West.

Mrs. Julie J. T. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, just on Monday we were on the radio, highlighting the Women Parliamentarians Branch about to start tomorrow in Cayman, and we were encouraging support for our women parliamentarians and advocating for more women to join our fight, become parliamentarians — and not only become parliamentarians, but to support those of us who are. Today, I just want to say it is a proud, proud moment for me on the cusp of that women's parliamentary branch starting tomorrow, to have our Member for

George Town West, a first-time Member of Parliament deliver this kind of Motion with such vigour, like the honourable Member for George Town [East] said. How well it was articulated.

I don't even have the words to express how happy and proud I am today of you, honourable Member; I am so proud of you. I thank you for bringing this forward. I know that it's well needed. I do have a few notes that I am going to deliver, but I just wanted to say it's my privilege in this House today to support this Motion for limiting social media access to children under the age of 16. Proud, proud moment for us as parliamentarians today; and to think that like the Deputy Premier said, we're having a grand slam today. Four for four. Wow, I tell you. Awesome. Awesome.

While this conversation is new to this House, it is currently echoing through Parliaments across the globe, from Australia to France, and Spain to Norway, nations are reaching the same urgent conclusion: the status quo of unlimited screen time is failing our children. We are not outliers in this debate. We are part of a global movement of responsible governments acknowledging that the digital world as currently designed, is not a safe environment for developing minds.

This Motion correctly identifies that we can no longer afford to be spectators while the mental health and safety of our youth are compromised; we must give this issue the urgent priority that it deserves by joining our international partners and setting a new global standard for digital protection. By supporting this Motion today, we are ensuring that the Cayman Islands leads both with compassion and pragmatism. We are declaring that while the internet is global, our duty to protect our children is local, immediate, and absolute. During the pandemic, many children struggled with loneliness, disrupted routines, academic uncertainty, and delays in key milestones, and we've heard some very staggering statistics from the Mover of the Motion today, so I don't need to go back through those.

For some, increased and unchecked social media use intensified anxiety and stress. It is our responsibility to consider how best to support children's mental health in this digital age. In January 2026, in the UK, the House of Lords voted 261 to 150 to amend the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to require platforms to block under-sixteens within twelve months. The government initially opposed the blanket ban but is now using the consultation to decide whether to accept this move completely. Ministers are seeking new legislative powers to act on the consultation's findings within months, rather than years, once a decision is reached by summer 2026 — that's just a few months away.

In the UK, the Online Safety Act is already in active enforcement. Since July 2025, the regulator, Ofcom (Office of Communications), has had the power to fine companies up to \$18 million or 10 per cent of their global revenue for failing to protect children from harmful content. Highly effective age assurance such

as facial age estimation or ID matching is already required for adult sites and platforms hosting primary priority harmful content. The government has issued stronger guidance to head teachers to enforce mobile phone bans in schools, with Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspectors now checking for full compliance.

We are addressing a generation-wide experiment in neurobiology. Algorithms, like we've heard, are designed specifically to exploit dopamine pathways, creating addictive loops that children are biologically unequipped to resist. A restriction is a necessary circuit breaker for the rising rates of anxiety and self-harm among our youth.

I know it happens, but to have someone share with me today that their child was repeatedly told on Minecraft, *why don't you go and out yourself?* That doesn't mean get out of the game; that meant go kill yourself. Luckily, that child immediately told his parents and the parent was able to put a full ban on social media for that child — but what if that was a child who didn't tell his parents and just continued to accept that? *Why don't you out yourself? Why don't you out yourself?* What might have happened again to that child, like we've seen happen to so many other children in Cayman?

At an Inspire Youth Meet Up event in October 2024, over 200 students from Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac's public, private and home schools came together to discuss experiences with mental health, self-care and community wellbeing. Challenges in relationships, hostile school environments, lack of face to face interactions, cultural issues, and the negative impact of social media, drug use and the loss of hope were all identified as the major themes after analysis of that event in October 2024 — all around social media.

Folks, it's time for us to end the Wild West of online activity. Social media has become a primary tool for grooming and sextortion. A government mandated limit removes the digital playground where predators currently hide in plain sight. It moves the barrier from the child's bedroom door to the platform's front gate. I remember when bedrooms used to be used as places for board games, story time and play time, now it has become a place of digital harm and digital hurt, sadly. Bullying no longer ends at the school gate, it follows children into their beds well into the evening. Restricting access provides the necessary physical and mental distance for children to grow without constant threat of viral humiliation.

Just this week, we had teachers tell us that they have seen a trend where many children in Cayman — we're not talking about Australia, or the US or UK — now are slow to self-problem solve because they are so used to looking everything up online and seeing how to do everything. They've seen a slowdown in children being able to solve problems for themselves and be able to think critically.

I remember when we were kids, we were able to outwit our parents, many times, and we were able to do things on our own and problem solve. Nowadays, it's all about looking everything up on Google and that gets your mind so that becomes your go-to. Folks, this is a very serious matter and it's time that we put this squarely where this belongs.

Mr. Speaker, this marks the beginning of a vital national initiative and as we move forward, we will work across this House to ensure that our actions are tempered by the appropriate guard rails, protecting privacy, preserving digital literacy and ensuring no child is left behind. We must act with proportionality and precision, but above all, we must act; for while we deliberate on the details, our children remain at risk. Together, all of us in this House, we can build an environment where children's wellbeing online and offline truly comes first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for Savannah.

Ms. Heather D. Bodden, Elected Member for Savannah: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to work in an atmosphere where everyone is working in collaboration. It truly makes my heart feel happy this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this Private Member's Motion and I wish to first acknowledge the honourable Member and the seconder who has brought this important issue before this honourable House. Honourable Member, I'm very proud of you.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion speaks to something that many parents, teachers and community leaders across our Islands are increasingly concerned about — the impact of social media on the wellbeing of our children.

As someone who has spent many years working closely with families and young people in our community, I have seen first-hand the pressures that our children face today. The digital world offers incredible opportunities for learning, connection and creativity, but we must also acknowledge that it brings real risks, particularly for young minds that are still developing. Across our communities we're hearing the same concerns, rising anxiety and mental health cries among young people, exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying and the challenges families face in managing screen time in a world where technology is everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, protecting children has always been a shared responsibility between families, schools, communities and government. This Motion does not seek to remove technology from children's lives nor does it ignore the benefits of the digital world, instead, it calls for the government to carefully consider whether stronger protections may be needed and to examine what responsible digital safeguards might look like in the Cayman Islands. Importantly, the Motion recognises that any approach must be measured, evidence-

based and respectful of constitutional rights, while placing the wellbeing of children at the centre of the discussion.

From the perspective of this government and particularly through our work with families and children across the Islands, this conversation, Mr. Speaker, is both timely and necessary. The NCFC Government has made it clear that supporting families, protecting children and strengthening communities remains our core priority. As part of that commitment we must be willing to examine emerging challenges, including those arising from the rapid growth of digital technology.

Mr. Speaker, in my role as the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation, I see first-hand the importance of policies that protect and support our children and families. This Motion provides an opportunity for the government to engage stakeholders, listen to parents and educators, consult with young people themselves and review the international evidence before determining the most appropriate path forward for our country. Mr. Speaker, safeguarding the healthy development of our children is not a partisan issue, it is a responsibility that all of us in this House share. If further review shows that additional protections are warranted, then it will be our duty to act thoughtfully and responsibly in the best interests of Cayman's children.

For those reasons, I support this Motion and the opportunity it provides for careful study and consultation on this important matter.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and this Motion has my full support.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Minister of Social Development & Innovation, and Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first, I want to commend and thank your Deputy Speaker for bringing this Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2025-2026 to this honourable House. The Member in her contribution comprehensively covered the Motion that she brought and she's also most definitely correct that the government of the Cayman Islands has a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children in the Cayman Islands. I want to emphasise in that regard that every child matters and that every child deserves protection, stability, dignity, and an opportunity to become their best selves from the earliest possible moment in life. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this Member's Motion certainly appears to have been developed with the intention of providing further protections for our children.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion seeks to prohibit social media for children under the age of 16, but it presents both opportunities and challenges. The Motion mentions that the prohibition of social media should not

be construed as censorship and that there is a balance to be struck between freedom of expression and the proportionate regulation of the use of social media in the best interest of the child.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding this Motion before us here today, my team in the Ministry of Social Development did have this matter on its radar and had been actively monitoring the various jurisdictions that had embarked on, or are currently making progress towards, enacting social media regulations as well, including United Kingdom, France and Australia.

At present, Mr. Speaker, the available information and opinions on this topic are vast and for the most part, studies are only just commencing on the impact of prohibiting social media in various countries. Keeping in mind that Australia was the first country to introduce regulations in December 2025. However, there are established studies on the impact of social media on children's mental health.

Mr. Speaker, recent analysis from John Hopkins University in 2024 indicates that those who spend more time on social media tend to show more symptoms of depression. However, it is noteworthy that social media exposure cannot be definitely linked as the sole cause of depression as there may be a number of other reasons for symptoms of depression to occur, including social isolation, lack of sleep, and a lack of healthy activities.

In contrast, Mr. Speaker, the Office for National Statistics in United Kingdom through its children's well-being survey in 2015 identified a clear association between longer time spent on social media and mental health issues. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also reported a statistically significant difference in life satisfaction scores between extreme internet users compared to moderate users.

Additionally, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe has revealed a sharp rise in problematic social media use among adolescents with rates increasing from 7 per cent in 2018 to 11 per cent in 2022. This, coupled with the findings that 12 per cent of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, raises urgent concerns about the impact of digital technology on the mental health and wellbeing of children.

Mr. Speaker, the local data we have on children's mental health paints a troubling picture. In 2024, the Cayman Island Student Drug Use Survey completed by the National Drug Council showed that 12 per cent of the students who took the survey reported they had attempted suicide. Additionally, 68 per cent of the children reported seeking help for their mental health challenges. While the National Drug Council reports that barriers to support have decreased since the last survey cycle, which is encouraging, the data strongly suggests that far too many of our children are struggling significantly with their mental health.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion also mentions the need for accessible mental health resources for children and I could not agree more with this. It is important to note that the health insurance in Cayman Islands can be expensive, particularly where there is a pre-existing condition which may include a mental health or intellectual disability diagnosis. In response to this need, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry has committed funding in the amount of \$150,000 in 2026 and again in 2027 towards the Alex Panton Foundation's Financial Assistance Programme.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: If memory serves me right, I want to thank the Member for Cayman Brac East for helping us increase that amount during the Finance Committee stages of the budget last year.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: This programme offers financial support to cover therapeutic services for children who would otherwise not be able to afford these services under the insurance plan.

Mr. Speaker, while we must account for the unhealthy impacts of social media on children, we must also consider the merits that may exist with appropriate social media use. Social media has created opportunities for connection and socialising for children on a scale that previous generations could not have imagined. I think most of us in here in our teenage years probably didn't even know what a cell phone was, the best we had was Radio Cayman 89.9, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Yes. I guess the only other social media that we had before that was just those VHS tapes and video Max, right?

However, Mr. Speaker, all jokes aside, if we are seriously considering limiting or prohibiting social media use for children under the age of 16, we must also consider what positive alternatives we are prepared to promote and invest in so that young people continue to have healthy opportunities for connection, growth and engagement. I know the Member for Red Bay touched on this during his contribution.

The Cayman Islands is fortunate to have a number of programmes that already provide positive outlets for young people. These include youth development initiatives through the Youth Services Department, other government departments through the Department of Children and Family Services, as well as after-school and community programmes that encourage mentorship, leadership and community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, young people also benefit greatly from opportunities in sports and physical activities, and

there are programmes supported by local sporting associations and organisations from football, basketball to swimming, track and field, and the new sport for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, pickle ball, and other organised activities. These all play an important role in promoting physical health, teamwork and discipline.

Equally important to sports, Mr. Speaker, are opportunities for creative expressions, participation in music, drama, visual art, cultural activities and these all allow young people to develop confidence, creativity and a strong, strong sense of identity. These activities can provide a constructive outlet for self-expression and connection with peers.

Mr. Speaker, community centres, youth clubs and mentorship initiatives will also provide valuable spaces where young people can build supportive relationships with peers and positive role models; and the government strengthening these types of programmes can help ensure that young people have meaningful alternatives to spending large amounts of time online.

In addition, promoting digital literacy and responsible technology use must be part of that conversation, Mr. Speaker. Teaching children how to navigate the digital world safely, recognise online risks and develop healthy habits around technology proves to be just as important as any regulatory measure.

Mr. Speaker, while prohibition may reduce exposure to harmful content in the short term, evidence also suggests that children rely on social media for connection, exploration and support. For example, for neurodivergent children, being online can offer benefits by helping to build self-esteem and providing peer support. This again speaks to the importance of connection in the lives of young people.

As mentioned, Australia has implemented a ban on social media for persons under the age of 16. However, UNICEF Australia has indicated that while they welcome the efforts by the Australian Government to improve the online world for young people, they remain sceptical that the changes in the Act will fully resolve the problems that young people face online.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we must support, listen to and empower our children. Any proposed regulations in relation to this Motion should be consultative and must include engagement with children themselves, emphasising the voice of the child and our duty to consider their perspectives.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to share a quote from the Children's Commissioner of England Dame Rachel de Souza who said **"Childhood is a short and precious time, but it is undeniable that children today are facing pressures like never before, with too many children growing up in an online world that takes advantage of their insecurities and tells them they are not good enough as they are."**

To this point, Mr. Speaker, it is undeniable that childhood should be cherished. Our government is committed to the children of the Cayman Islands and to ensure that they are protected. I also commit to this

honourable House that after this Motion is passed here today, that my Ministry of Social Development and Innovation and the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage will engage in consultations and listen to the voice of children in order to ensure that we consider a way forward that is fit for purpose for our beloved Cayman Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Minister of Caymanian Employment & Immigration.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Honourable Deputy Speaker's Motion.

I'd like to approach this from sort of a different vantage point of working with young people. Mr. Speaker, I've been a social worker for close to 35 years and over that time, we have seen a tremendous amount of stress put on families in our country and a lot of these have been predicted.

I can go back to when I first became a social worker in 1995, there were many challenges with gangs and there were several reports, and we failed to acknowledge that we had a problem. We now find ourselves at a crossroads with this particular issue and we knew it was coming. We have seen probably for the last decade, an uptick of mental health challenges among our young people and we did not face the fact that it was going to get worse.

While this ban or at least reviewing how kids access social media is something that I believe this House all supports, we can't legislate parenting. Like everything else that we have come into this House to try to legislate, parents still have a responsibility. Just like gangs and guns and drunk driving and many other social ills that we have dealt with in the last 30 years that I have seen, the biggest challenge that we have never engaged is parenting.

I'm hoping that as we form this Motion into a Bill and bring this back to the House that we have open conversations about how we're going to do this, because we can ban social media just like we ban guns, but they still come into our shores. Our kids still have a fascination with them.

I have seen all of this evolve over the course of time and as lawmakers, I don't want us to get into this frenzy that this is going to be the panacea of solving this problem. We have to ensure that there's a conversation with our people. If parents aren't taking cell phones away or limiting access to social media, the Deputy Speaker's ban on social media doesn't end. They'll just find another way; we will drive it underground and young people will evolve, they will find different ways to access this.

My youngest daughter, Marley, had a birthday party on Saturday and my wife and I had this at the public beach. My daughter just turned 12 — her actual birthday was on Sunday, but we had the party on Saturday. I got there around 1:00/1:30 and the beach was packed with young people. It gave me pause because I had never seen so many young people in one spot for a very long time — probably other than going to Camana Bay on a Friday night or a Saturday which I don't get to do because I just feel that it's just too many at one point — but what I saw on Saturday was refreshing.

My wife and I spent the better part of four hours at Marley's birthday party supervising about 16 young people whom our daughter invited to this party. What was most refreshing is that none of those 16 kids who were under our supervision had a cell phone.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. Michael S. Myles: No one stayed under the cabana. I found that very refreshing because, again, most of the time when you take them to these places, they find a way. What I saw was every child in that group, 16 of them, they stayed in the water for four hours. They only came up enough to get something to eat, get something to drink and they were headed back to the water.

I started to look around because there were so many children there, like is it just these children? It wasn't, there were hundreds of kids there and they were all interacting. I didn't see any cell phones. Here's the lesson that I've learnt from that. If we provide more activities, more opportunities for them to engage in a healthier way, they will take this on.

A few years ago, in 2013, I took over the skate park while working in the Ministry of Education. I took it on as a project to get young people together. It was another space that I saw where young people weren't on their cell phones. Why? They were engaged in something that they loved. The park was "the great equaliser", I called it. They didn't care who was from John Gray or Clifton Hunter or from Prep School or Triple C, they just wanted to have a good time.

I caution this House that if we do not get parents back involved in this conversation we're going to over-legislate and it's not going to go anywhere because we cannot enforce this all.

I believe that this ban is the right thing for us. I think this is the way forward, but I also believe that we have to have parents be parents. They have to take on the responsibility of parenting their young people without the government constantly saying to them, *you have a responsibility to raise your kids in the right way*.

Mr. Speaker, for far too long we've allowed social media to become the nannies and caretakers of our young people. I forgot who said it, but I think it was the Deputy Premier who said that you go to a restaurant and we don't even engage our kids there. They get an

iPad and we engage the other adults in the room. I often ask, why take your kids out if you're not going to actually engage them?

It comes back to us, as parents, as caretakers, as guardians. If we don't do this, if we don't bring this element back into the conversation, we're going to have a really beautiful law, but there's going to be no enforcement of it. I have seen it in the 90s with gangs. At 52 years old I have worked three decades now and I have seen some of the most heart-breaking things that we knew were coming. I have at least 15 to 20 reports on all of the ills of our country, [so] we knew they were here. We've denied it for many years and now it's got out of control and it's costing us millions of dollars.

We knew from the 90s that mental health was getting worse. We didn't do much until kids started to take their lives. We've almost become a country that reacts, even though we know, but as long as it doesn't affect our children, our grandchildren, or any sort of family member, we don't really do much.

I am hoping and praying that as we think about how we roll this out that the conversations involve our young people and their parents, and that it doesn't involve us sitting in here wanting the best for our country because that's what all 19 of us want. We want the best for our people. We want the best for our country, but we also have to ensure that they share the same responsibility.

We have a responsibility at times to protect our people from themselves and I want to share that responsibility, but I also want to make sure that we're joining forces with our people so we don't over-legislate because we can't legislate good or bad parenting. We have to make sure that people have the necessary tools in order to govern their own families.

I also take this opportunity to further encourage us — I know that we have activities, but when you look at a Saturday or Sunday, most of the young people whom we are concerned about are not in one. How do we get them back into these activities? How do we make activities more accessible? We have to start to look at how we spend money in making that possible. Other than that, a cell phone or a tablet is going to be the activity and we've all seen it.

We see it with our children and our grandchildren, we see it with our neighbours' children and our friends' children, we see it all the time. I live on Marina [Drive] and as I'm driving into work or going to the gym in the morning, there are youngsters out there with their cell phones. There are several of them standing around and they often don't engage each other.

When I hear my colleague talk about how our children don't know how to problem solve, we've seen it. We've had much research on this. This isn't new to us. I am not shocked that we have reached a pivotal moment in our history of working with young people that they're taking their lives because they feel most alone, and most of them feel alone because we stopped engaging them. We give them toys, we buy them gifts and

we put them in a corner and we carry on because we are busy; and quite often, I understand.

Getting back to the Member for Bodden Town [East] yesterday when he talked about the empathy that we have to start to show. I have sat with many parents who have lost young people, whether that's from suicide or from a car accident. It's a dreadful thing. I battled as a parent myself with a 13 year old who almost took her life, my eldest daughter. She's battled with a mental illness and I had to stop being a social worker and be her dad, because all I did was work. All she saw me do was work.

That process we now have to change. Our goal as we roll this out, we have to be mindful that the conversation has to include two critical components, our children and our parents. I want to congratulate, again, the Honourable Deputy Speaker for bringing this because I think it's an important conversation for us to have. As a House, I know that we will pass this, but I want to make sure that we are moving this forward without forgetting that those two critical components are very important to the conversation as we move this on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health.

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

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I also would like to congratulate the Honourable Deputy Speaker on moving her first Private Member's Motion. I think at any time it would have been a wonderful thing to put down in the *Hansards*, but certainly, just a couple of days away from International Women's Day. She's already received support from the Members on the Government side and the women supporting each other, so I'm certainly proud to stand up here today as a woman in Parliament, supporting my female colleague on the Opposition bench on a very important Private Member's Motion – Limiting Social Media for Children under the Age of Sixteen.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister for Health my primary responsibility is to ensure that we protect the wellbeing of all of our people and the most vulnerable among us, in particular. Key among them, as we all know and we've heard today, are our children. Therefore, it is strong support that I share today for this Motion to prohibit social media use for those under the age of 16. This is not about criminalising young people, it is about holding platforms accountable. It is both a child protection measure and a necessary public health intervention.

Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook, as we've heard from some of the other Members, are designed to maximise engagement. Their algorithms encourage prolonged use, constant comparison and exposure to harmful content.

These pressures affect developing brains that are not yet equipped to manage them.

Research shows that the brain passes through a highly sensitive development period between ages 10 to 19 when identity, emotional regulation and self-worth are all still forming. Studies examining the impact of social media on youth mental health report that frequent social media use may be associated with distinct changes in the developing brain, potentially affecting emotional learning and behaviour, impulse control and emotional regulation.

The consequences are increasingly visible. We are seeing higher rates of anxiety and depression, sleep disruption, body image distress, cyberbullying, and raising presentations of self-harm among young people. Even in some of the recent discussions that I've had with teachers in my constituency, they have shared how they feel that the tendency for everything to be available at the click of a finger is affecting children's patience. Children are now expecting to have what they want right away and it's affecting how they develop their skills of being patient.

Important progress has been made. Here in the Cayman Islands, the demand for adolescent mental health services continues to grow. Our health system is seeing an increasing number of young people presenting with complex mental health needs that require specialised care and support. Adolescent patients are now separated from adult patients within our mental health services, which is a critical step in ensuring age appropriate care and safeguarding of young people during treatment. Yet again, more progress that we're seeing in this space. However, capacity constraints remain. In particular, our community currently lacks dedicated inpatient space for adolescents who require acute mental health care.

It should be noted that presently HSA is currently the only healthcare provider on island offering any kind of inpatient mental health care for our children. The government recognises this gap and plans are underway to develop a dedicated adolescent mental health ward at the HSA. The facility will provide a more appropriate environment for young patients who require inpatient treatment and allow the physicians and clinicians to deliver care tailored specifically to our adolescents.

At the same time, we must be clear, the goal is not to fill the hospital beds with our young people. Strengthening treatment capacity is necessary, but more importantly, prevention and early intervention must remain our priority. Through stronger community support, earlier identification of mental health concerns and improved family- and school-based interventions, our aim is to reduce the need for inpatient care and ensure that such wards are used as little as possible. Again, why this Motion is so important, seen as being preventative.

Mr. Speaker, one troubling trend that safeguarding experts and researchers have identified is the

way social media algorithms amplify extreme and polarising content, including content that promotes hostility towards women. A study conducted by the University of Kent found that after only five days of TikTok use, there was a fourfold increase in misogynistic content appearing on the For You page of a user's account. The For You page is not content a user actively searches for, it is content the platform chooses to recommend and amplify.

We have seen in recent years, online personalities building enormous followings by promoting messages that diminish women, glorify dominance and distort what healthy relationships should look like. These messages do not remain confined to screens, they influence how our young people think about gender, respect and relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark the fifth day of honouring women's month, we must acknowledge a difficult truth: online gender-based violence is increasingly normalising real-world harm. The content that our young people consume shapes attitudes, language and expectations about women and girls — and I think we could go far enough to say that it also does that to adults. When social media platforms amplify voices that demean women or men or trivialise abuse, they contribute to a culture in which disrespect becomes entertainment and degradation becomes influence.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, it is not a question of whether these dynamics will appear more visibly in our own communities, it's a matter of when. The risk to the physical, social and emotional health of children is widespread [and] when those risks become more apparent in the health system through rising mental health needs, they become a public health issue that demands action.

As I was saying earlier, prevention is possible, it requires a coordinated effort across government, education, health services, families and also our communities. It requires patience, resources and sustained commitment.

This Motion follows the lead of other countries confronting the same challenge. Australia has legislated restrictions on social media access for children under 16, placing responsibility on platforms. Across France, Norway, Denmark and Poland, governments are advancing similar age restrictions and stronger verification requirements. There is growing international recognition that the current digital environment is failing to protect our children; legislation alone will not solve that problem. It must be accompanied by public awareness campaigns, digital and media literacy, education for both students and parents, parenting support and expanded mental health services for our young people.

I think what's also very important and hopefully we will see much more of that going into the future is involvement in our communities with our parents. As my colleague, Minister Myles spoke about, simple things like taking your kids to the beach, when they do

things like that they have no interest in being on a device. Equally important is creating more opportunities for young people to connect in real life. Safe spaces, youth programmes, sports, arts and community activities provide the social interaction and sense of belonging that all of our young people need.

We regulate alcohol and tobacco because of the risk that they pose to our young people. Expecting digital platforms to meet a comparable standard of responsibility is consistent with our duty to protect our children. This Motion is about safeguarding childhood, strengthening child protection and acting decisively in the interest of public health. I thank the Member for George Town West for bringing this Motion and I urge this honourable House to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, I'll be real quick.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great day for our beloved Islands. Sitting here and seeing everyone working together for the betterment of our people is inspiring. We should all be very proud in this Chamber today. Really proud.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Mr. Speaker, this is likely not to be very popular with everyone, but we were not put here to be popular, it was to do the right thing. I want to join Members in thanking our Deputy Speaker for bringing this Motion. It is timely, it is necessary. Matter of fact, I think it's absolutely necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we have to accept that the world that we grew up in is over. I spent all of my days outside for years and even when television came along, I was still outside for the most part of it. Some of my fondest memories as a father is teaching my son and daughter how to make a calavan and to fly kites, and I hope the good Lord will give me the opportunity to do the same with my grandchildren, but we have to be aware that technology has changed.

I went to a conference a few years ago and the speaker was talking about how we should embrace technology, use it to our advantage. He said that his son was I think five years old and he took him outside to take pictures with some flowers and the animals that he would see outside in his garden, and during that time with his son he tried to explain to him about one-hour photo and his son could not come to believe that there was such a thing as one-hour photo. I remember when one-hour photo came — before, it was two weeks. You'd get your roll of film and go down to the photo shop and you'd get your pictures back [two weeks later]. Today, as was said earlier, the people expect it

now. The Minister of Health made that point very appropriately.

I think what the Mover of the Motion said is that this is not about trying to ban technology. Technology, if used appropriately, I think can help our young people. I watched a programme a few nights ago about how you can use technology now to teach your children different languages and how much easier it is because of the advancements of technology. That's really what we should be doing, we should be using technology to teach our children, not to allow them to get on to some of these sites.

Mr. Speaker, I cringe sometimes. I made a mistake to pause on a site where I saw a shootout in Brazil on, I think Instagram or one of those, and now every time I go on to that social media platform a similar thing comes up. I never asked for that!

[Laughter]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: I never asked to see that, and if that's happening to me, it has to be happening to everybody. I simply just paused on the site.

Mr. Speaker, this is serious. In a statement that I will give tomorrow, I'm going to talk a little bit about juvenile crime. I remember saying that to the Minister of Caymanian Employment and he agreed with me on some positive trends that we are seeing in juvenile crime, but the Minister said to me, *yeah DG, we are doing better with juvenile crime, but attempted suicides and suicides are up*. That's true! What's causing that?

This is absolutely the right thing to do. I always say, bad things happen when good people do nothing. We have an opportunity here to do something that could change our people's life for the better.

I am married to an educator, Mr. Speaker, and what she sees today is not what she saw 10 years ago in terms of our children's development coming into school. Mr. Speaker, everyone in here, I'm sure, spent time with their children teaching them to count, the sounds, the shapes — some children are not coming with that basic education, but I guarantee you they can use social media.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now. I commend again, the Deputy Speaker for bringing this Motion. If I could vote, I would vote for this. I can't, but I'll nod my head. I think it's the right thing to do, it's the right time to do it and I am inspired here today to see all of us coming together for the betterment of our people and more importantly for the betterment of our children.

I thank you.

The Speaker: Minister of Education.

An Hon. Member: Two hours now...

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have to beg for you to protect the rights of the majority, especially a Minister, because as I rose I picked up some abuse, Members making commentary around the fact that I'm going to speak for two hours.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind honourable Members. As I tell people in our Caucus, I'm the historian/librarian.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Lots of history and I know where all the good books are hidden. However, I was here at a time when I could speak for four hours.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I moved the Motion! As then I moved the Motion to limit myself to speak, I support this incredible Motion to limit children from hurting themselves unknowingly.

Mr. Speaker, I can say safely that today is one of my proudest days as a legislator. I know the Member for George Town West and Deputy Speaker, probably better than everyone else in the House. I know how long she has wanted to make this sort of impact for her country. To have watched her journey to get here and for this to be her first Private Member's Motion, I had to wait a while to speak because I can say literally she blew me away.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: This delivery Mr. Speaker — this will be my fourth term here and I've followed politics from listening to the radio, when my daddy and my uncle used to row about everything that was happening between unity and dignity, that'll mark my history with politics. I can say without fear of contradiction that today is one of the best presentations I've ever heard on a Private Member's Motion. It is a topic that is of relevance and great import and can potentially have hugely positive impact, and it's delivery by the Member, the content and the depth was second to none. I congratulate the Mover of the Motion on a job well done.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I knew that all Members were going to support the Motion, but even if anyone came here today, either saying they weren't going to support it or they were on the fence, after that delivery, you would've had to have supported the Motion.

I can say openly that when the Member first broached me about this — this sort of motion in our small community takes guts, because initially I paused. I admit, I paused. I paused because I know how difficult change is for humans, much less in small communities; but as I reflected and I asked a couple of colleagues, it

was very obvious that the support was there, that the support was going to be there because everyone understood how important and timely this issue is for our country.

Mr. Speaker, social media is no longer peripheral to young people's lives. Sadly, it is the babysitter, it is the nurse bottle, [and] it is everything for many children. Many parents lean on social media in ways that we cannot imagine or measure.

Mr. Speaker, central to some children's ability to communicate, learn and form social connections is how they are socialised at home; therefore, if parents are not going to be engaged as partners in this and we in this House stand together in unison when the pushback comes, when the questions come, this will not succeed. I join voices with the Minister responsible for Caymanian Employment because clearly he was not speaking against this Motion, he was raising a flag to all of us, planting a flag of concern of this initiative, this feeling that we have here today of it not having the impact that we want it to have and that our children need it to have.

Mr. Speaker, education systems cannot treat social media as an external issue. It has become part of all students' wellbeing, it has become part of all students' risk, and therein lies that double-edged sword because on the one hand technology is a key part of our lives and the way forward, but equally, technology and the misuse of technology poses one of the greatest risks and one of the greatest challenges in terms of our safeguarding landscape.

Mr. Speaker, excessive social media use has been linked to sleep deprivation, anxiety, [and] reduced concentration among young people. Schools are also dealing with online bullying, peer pressure and harmful online trends which can significantly affect student wellbeing. As an education system, we must support students in developing healthy digital habits and resilience online, but Mr. Speaker, it will fail if parents are not partners and held accountable.

Social media introduces new safeguarding risks for us including cyberbullying, exploitation, inappropriate content, and online grooming. Schools play an important role in educating students about online safety, responsible digital behaviour and protecting their personal information. Clear policies will be developed to help schools manage incidents that originate online but affect students in the school environment. This is why when the Minister of Health and I were chatting about where responsibility for this Motion will lie we saw that it cuts across a myriad of ministries, and so the Ministry of Education will stand in the gap to ensure that what we have to do from a school standpoint will be robust to support the spirit of this Motion.

Constant access to phones and social platforms can affect concentration engagement and classroom participation. Many education systems are reviewing mobile phone policies and digital device use in

schools to ensure learning environments remain focused and supportive. Mr. Speaker, the goal is not to eliminate technology, but to create appropriate boundaries that support learning.

I pause there, Mr. Speaker. Right now, we have varying policies across our education landscape. We have some schools in the private sector that ban cell phones and cell phone use. We in the government system have given in to the cry that oh, our children need to have access to cell phones in case of an emergency. We need to balance. How often, when you look at the average school year, has a student needed to have a cell phone in a case of emergency versus the risk that they pose and the bad that they do?

I can tell you, I got a call from a parent — this was in September, school had just started — and she was irate as could be. She asked me if I had seen some messages she had sent, but I had been in meetings and I didn't have her number programmed, so, I quickly then went into WhatsApp: she was screenshotting, in the middle of lesson time, her looking at her son's account showing him online.

Mr. Speaker, this House and Members, I hope as well as we feel today, as united as we feel today, you are going to support me when I ban cell phones in schools in the Cayman Islands.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: The complaints are going to come. The people we go to beg for a vote are going to be the same people who are going to give us the pushback and the *feyah-feyah* story about how their children need to have a cell phone in case of emergency. Yet in the average school year, how many times has a student genuinely needed a cell phone in any case of an emergency?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: We cannot, Mr. Speaker, open up our schools to this level of risk and inappropriate use of technology for such a miniscule time that any child is going to need to have access to any cell phone during school time.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, it was said earlier, we need to understand when we are dealing with risk that we band together because there are times when we must protect our society from itself. There is a reason that the 19 of us have been sent here. We've been sent here to bring major issues like this, bring difficult conversations like this to the Parliament, but most importantly, act. I'm not in this for feel good exercises. If we're not going to have a positive impact, then why come here?

Mr. Speaker, we must ensure that as we roll out all of our policies that we are informed by the most recent research. The research is clear, it is clear, most human beings, including adults... but we're talking about the risks that this poses to all young people, technology is having a hugely negative effect on brain development, a hugely negative effect on outcomes of your learners in school.

When we look and we see this significant up-tick in ADD, ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] and all sorts of attention and behavioural issues by the students that come from lack of attention — this is not happening in a vacuum. I don't need any research to tell me it's directly linked to social media and the misuse of screen time. It is as obvious as I am standing here talking to all of you. We know that it's contributing negatively. We don't need any longitudinal study to tell us that. We don't need what's happening in other countries to tell us that. The evidence is quite clear.

When I hear about the percentages of children who are being diagnosed and you look at what we are doing differently, in my mind, Mr. Speaker, two things: the misuse of technology and the fact that we have absolutely, positively been derelict in our duty as parents (and I said parents because all of us are in this together) as it relates to the food and nutrition that we make our children consume.

I can say, 16 years ago when I took over as Minister of Education, I made the unpopular decision to ban unhealthy foods in schools. I don't care what anybody tells me, I am going to reinvigorate the policy around healthy choices in schools. We [provide] fruit juices with high sugar content and we are pumping that poison into our youngest children, reception-aged children, and then we expect them to be able to concentrate. You are on a sugar high but you're supposed to concentrate.

I hear us talking about alcohol and tobacco and all those things that are bad for us, look at the content of what we are buying as parents and are allowing our children to consume. We can encourage parents to do the right thing at home. We can control what happens at schools. I know that I'm going to hear some moans on this one, because one thing that I did 16 years ago that drew many, many moans was when I banned pat-ties, one of the worst things. Look at the nutritional [values], look at what it does to the human body and look at what it has in it.

You could hit rewind Mr. Speaker, because I delivered this same speech in this Parliament in a statement to the House. How can we expect to bring down NGS 55 and HEA 2 if we're setting up future recipients for the programme? You know how quickly 12 years go? I got elected here 25 years ago and I can still remember as though it was yesterday, the first day I entered this Chamber. That's 2.5 decades later of us, other than a small gap, pumping poison into our children at school canteens. We are going to re-implement

a healthy standard in school canteens and we're going to encourage every private school to do the same.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: If the private schools don't follow suit, I will cut their funding.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be serious about how we govern our country and do the right thing for our children long term, fostering the adults of tomorrow. Do we realise that in three short terms in this House, a child goes from reception to graduation? Member for Bodden Town West, you said you're entering your third term; by the end of this term, the people who you campaigned to who had a four-year-old child will be inviting you to their graduation, sir.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: That is how quickly these things happen.

I apologise if that's how the Member for Bodden Town West got fat.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. All of these things impact learning. If you have access to fatty foods, sugary foods, sugary snacks, how is it that you are expected to then perform optimally after lunch time?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, everything affects everything.

Let us get back to social media.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Schools have an important role in helping students become responsible digital citizens. This includes teaching students respectful online communication, recognising misinformation — let me repeat that again, Mr. Speaker, recognising misinformation — protecting privacy and understanding the long-term consequences of digital behaviour. It is up to us as adults to have this difficult conversation with young people, to ensure that they understand that we are not doing this to be punitive toward them. This is not a punishment towards young people, this is about us looking on as responsible stewards trying to ensure that they have the best possible life chances.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there will be [pushback] and there will be many people who will grumble and groan, but what I've learned about human beings is when you do the right thing, in the long term they come back and thank you. In the long term they come back and thank

you, because by then they will have become either mature enough or enough time will have passed that they will then see the benefits of what it is that you were doing.

Mr. Speaker, we must have partnership with parents. The most effective approach involves a strong collaboration between schools and families. Parents play a key role in setting expectations around screen time, device use and online behaviour at home. Schools can support families by providing guidance and resources on digital safety and wellbeing. Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to repeat myself but repetition bears emphasis — it was brought to the fore quite eloquently by the Minister responsible for Caymanian Employment. We must have parents as the front line.

We can talk about digital providers, we can talk about URCO [Utility Regulation and Competition Office] and platforms and what we'll have to do legislatively, and we will do that part of it; however, if parents don't support this, if parents do not buy in, if parents still allow students to be online doing whatever they want during the 16 hours that they have children in their care and protection, then what we're doing and what we're talking about here will be for naught. Let's face it, for everything that you do there will be someone looking for a workaround.

Mr. Speaker, I've started my school visits and meetings with all principals and teacher groups and it was one of those things that has already come to the fore, teachers complaining about children's access to not only social media but inappropriate sites, and not just when they take a laptop device home, but also at school. Children will find a VPN. The education technology unit blocks the VPN. A new VPN is discovered and passed around by students. The technology unit finds the VPN and blocks it, and it's basically like a puppy chasing its tail.

That is how difficult this task is going to be and I'm making sure to let us stay sober minded about this. This is a serious undertaking, so yes, we will be able to work with platforms, we'll be able to work with service providers, and we'll be able to work with the Utility Regulation and Competition Office, URCO (or OfReg as it used to be called); we can work with that. We can do all of the things we need to do legislative wise, but let us be clear, there are going to be persons out there who are going to be finding workarounds, finding ways to get on to platforms that we are hoping to avoid them getting on full time or certainly trying to limit how much use and access they get.

This is not going to be a walk in the park, but we are taking the most important first step here today, which is acknowledging that this is a national priority so much so that it is being debated in our Parliament and, from what I can see, going to garner unequivocal support from every single Member.

The role of the education system is to provide clear guidance to schools on social media, digital safety and device use. This will have to include enhanced

online behaviour expectation, a revamped digital literacy education policy and ensuring that we have robust safeguarding protocols for online incidents. That is the work that I can commit from the Ministry of Education to support this initiative.

Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, when the complaints come, I am going to tell all 18 of my colleagues in advance (I think a few are missing, but we will get the message to them who are not in the Chamber right now), when you get complaints from parents, do not call me. If we are going to be serious about this, we have to do what's right and we have to bring parents along.

I would believe and hope that the majority of parents will see the benefit, but the fact is for those who don't... I come from the old school, Member for George Town Central, I'm not as eloquent as you younger guys and the little man from the West.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: There are times where we have to bring along people whether it's voluntarily or kicking and screaming. I don't care how we got to bring them along, this train needs to leave. We need to do our research, get the package correct, have it as robust as we can get it, and get as much legislation and policy changes as we need; let us be joined together and get the job done.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, with those brief remarks, I offer my unequivocal support to this most important Motion and I thank and congratulate the Member for bringing it.

[Desk thumping]

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

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Sorry Mr. Speaker, do you want to suspend 14(2)?

[Crosstalk]

Suspension of Standing Order 14(2)

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just, as you would say, belts and braces.

I move to suspend [Standing Order] 14(2) to allow the business of the House to continue until 6pm and we'll take the break then.

The Speaker: The Motion is that Standing Order 14(2) is suspended so we can take a break at 6pm instead of 5pm.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 14(2) suspended.

The Speaker: Member for George Town Central, continue.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to rise to be a part of this conversation. I think that we covered almost everything in respect to this but let me first start off with the amazing Mover of the Motion.

I have the honour of working closely with her, closer than her friend from West Bay, the Minister of Finance.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I noticed he's been trying to send gestures, trying to steal her and bring her over by the government, but that's not going to work partner.

Mr. Speaker, it is worth repeating. The honourable Member has done what I wasn't able to do when I first started, and delivered an outstanding Motion that is so compelling that every Member will have to say yes. That's a good way to start your political career.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to just talk a little bit about the human being that is bringing this necessary motion. It takes me back to the campaign. It's a lady who ran before and went back to her professional career as a young Caymanian woman with strength, vigour and boldness even after not being successful at the polls, one who decided to go back at it again and then was successful. The Mover of this Motion displays an energy, not quite like any other female Member of Parliament I can certainly say that I've known in Parliament before, one that is bold and not afraid to be a strong woman of today, a woman that is not afraid to stand up and say the things that need to be said.

You heard Mr. Speaker, some Members even had second thoughts on tackling this very complicated and sensitive issue, knowing the pushback that there would be. She proceeded as if to say, *I don't care what they think, I know what is right and I will move forward.* I, like other Members, were blown away. I like to sneak outside—

The Speaker: House is suspended for five minutes. Please do not leave your seat.

Proceeding suspended at 5:26pm

Proceedings resumed at 5:29pm

The Speaker: This honourable Parliament is back in session, please be seated.

I don't keep my cell phone in here with me so I had to go to make a phone call because I have a commitment at the community college to speak to 40 graduates at 5:45. I had to call them and tell them I'd be there at 6:15.

Sorry about that. I didn't mean to interrupt.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

The Speaker: It's been a good day because, you realise, I have not once had to say, "Does any other Member wish to speak?" Now that does my heart really, really good. That's where we want to get.

Sorry for the interruption Member for George Town Central. A commitment is a commitment with me.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: You're 100 per cent right, sir and as the good Member and good Minister of Finance would say, *don't you fall for misinformation that is being thrown around.*

Mr. Speaker, the Lord works in mysterious ways, Mr. Speaker. It's as if he knew to delay the need to make that call after I made a big boo-boo in my delivery.

Mr. Speaker, I've done the one thing that most men have always done in their lives, which is not to acknowledge the many women within their lives who have been there for them whether it be the wife, the mother, the daughter, the best friend, the auntie, and I earlier said that the honourable Mover of this Motion is quite like no other that I've worked with before. That was not the intention. My intention was to say she is in a very unique space of her own. I've worked with many female MPs, and they all bring their own unique value and proposition to the governance of this country and just to ensure I highlight one of the ones I'm speaking about, who gave me much glory and opportunity to shine as a Minister, was the honourable Ms. Heather Bodden, who has her own category and I am certain no one can walk in those shoes.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, as I get back, hopefully, I have accomplished the goal, the trap many men fall into, and I'm out of the trap now, hopefully.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the Mover of this Motion and what she brings to the discussion, and I was saying right before we went to the break that I, like others, was blown away by the detailed examination, analysis, and delivery of the contribution to this very sensitive topic; but why am I surprised? I shouldn't be. I actually had to snap myself out of it and go, *Kenneth, do you see how diligent she is with everything that she does? From the way that she argues, she prepares, in our caucuses, in every meeting she's always the first one there...*

Matter of fact, in the Opposition she reminds us about every meeting 15 minutes before saying, *are you on your way?* She's a very detailed individual. It tells me about the substance of who she is, and I won't get into the magnificent outfits she wears in detail because it is not necessary, but we all see it. It's a characteristic of her commitment to the role of bettering the lives of the people she governs and represents. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to work with her, and I am pleased to contribute to the discussion today about protections for young people below the age of 16 from the dangers of social media.

Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of contribution, I will not reiterate what other Members have already done. I am very happy that the Government and all Members have given their commitment to supporting this Motion but in the interests of totality, I want to bring up some of the areas which we will have to dive into in order to accomplish the goal the honourable Member presented in her Motion.

Mr. Speaker, there's no way of getting around the topic of bullying, not only for young people, but for everyone on social media platforms. Cyberbullying is not only a problem for children; it is a problem for all of us. We continue to see the use of platforms on the verge or the thin line of what freedom of speech is compared to that of intentional cyberbullying that is causing mental health [issues] for many people in our society. If you look at the current legal trends across the world like the UK with their Online Safety Act, or the United States' anti-bullying laws, you'd see it's a recognised problem whereby it's complicated to allow what we consider freedom of speech compared to defamatory comments, intentional bullying, or cyber harassment.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much psychological trauma caused not only for children but for adults as well, and though we are focusing on children under the age of 16 where we have legal control, we have to examine the ICT (Information and Communications Technology) legislation to accomplish that, but we're going to have to look at it across the board because the same principles will apply for adults as for children. Cyberbullying has caused a worrying trend of psychological and physical health declines across the world — do one Google Search and you will see; and Mr. Speaker, we have a duty of care to examine this space because it's real and in preventing this from getting any worse, I'm very proud of the Member for examining this space.

Mr. Speaker, it is going to be very, very complicated to address, and I'm happy that the Honourable Minister responsible for Education has taken the bold step to say that we are going to have to make some hard decisions, because going against major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube even, and I don't think we can get away from the reality of Meta and now their acquisition of WhatsApp, so WhatsApp is probably going to be included in that...

I want to take this moment for those who may be listening internationally. Mr. Speaker, I want to

speak directly to the phone companies across the world — Apple, Samsung, Google, Vivo: You are the predominant phone makers in the world. I am begging you to make a child-friendly phone without the platforms on it that parents can acquire and give to their kids that will ultimately allow them to communicate because, Mr. Speaker, in a space like today, parents are not going to give up on communication or tracking.

We are going to need multi-million-dollar companies like yours to help us. Help the parents of the world. Build better phones that we can feel comfortable [with] that will do all the good things without the platforms. Let the platforms deal with their money making. You're in the business of making phones, give us an option. I hope this goes viral, Mr. Speaker, because this fight can only be won with the parents' [participation] as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I recall, and I know the honourable Member for Bodden Town West, who was elected at the same time as me, would recall when I tried to bring up this topic — and it's going to be a little sensitive, but as the good Minister of Finance and Education said, we got to bring it out, we got to talk about the realities of this. When I was in Opposition in my first term, I brought up how we should examine the ICT Law and OfReg about controls of access to pornography.

In the UK, there is legislation already available. When I brought it up then it was a taboo thing — “*You can't talk about that in Parliament*” as if to say a child can't have access to internet right now and write XXXX and a slew of things will come up on it, and what it does to a young person being exposed to such explicit — and I am talking about some serious things. We're not talking about old-school stationary positions either. Like some things that go far and beyond one's mind. Imagine a 12-year-old girl or 10-year-old boy just picking up a phone because we want to ensure they have access to play a game or what have you, or just keep in touch with them... and there's nothing in our law that prevents them from just going www.xxx.com and that's it. Damaged forever. There's a reason why they shouldn't be exposed to that at that early stage. I'm not going to go into it because we're all adults in this room. We can imagine what it would do, and I'm almost certain all of us are parents; maybe one or two are not. Mr. Speaker, that's another area that we have to focus on that is damaging or potentially damaging to our kids.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of my colleague, the Honourable Member for George Town West, and forgive me for misusing the Standing Orders, but the Honourable Pearlina McGaw-Lumsden has started off her race with good speed. I'm proud of you; if we do this right, it could be the game changer. The difference of the future of Cayman, of a generation of people with ethics, strength, morality — what our forefathers built for us, and the difference why the rest of the world may have lost themselves; and Member, you should be proud to say that you were the catalyst to start this conversation.

Let us not be afraid to be trendsetters. As we've always done, let us be the one island stepping out in front and showing that we can do it. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we're small enough to do it as the old people used to say, [if] you got a small room it is easy to get dirty, but it's easy to clean up and we can clean this up. We can make the changes, we can convince the parents why this is important, but we have to help the parents have other activities because parents are busy, Mr. Speaker. They're working harder than they ever did 50 years ago — and Mr. Speaker, I hate to tell you this but when you said you're leaving at six and getting there by 6:15, I don't think you can get there by 6:15 today.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Oh, you got lights on the — lights. Okay. Fair enough. Fair enough; once you have got lights on the vehicle you can get there.

However, when you think about the traffic, the amount of extra time that parents put in at work, they need other options [and] we the Government can put policies in place to have safe, healthy spaces for them that they can operate in because kids need to be entertained. Parents are not as comfortable as they used to be to say, go outside in the bush. I'll be honest with you, I was the biggest bushwhacker you can find—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Bushwhacker. That's what my mother used to call me, "You little bushwhacker".

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Right, and as much as I tried my *endeavour* best to pressure from a bushwhacking perspective with my daughters, I felt the worry that, today, *I don't know who is outside. I do not know who out deh*, so although I knew that I didn't want them inside too much on social media or on TV, for my own comfort I gave into some of those things so as to know they were safe and I'm telling you, parents will make the decision to say no, no, no internet, no this, no that, no technology — if we provide them with safer opportunities for their kids. That means a significant investment.

When we think about the mental health [issues] children are dealing with, that's the premise this Motion comes from, Mr. Speaker. It is protecting our children from too much at one time while the brain develops. It's not about taking away exciting opportunities because technology is a part of a learning curve but in moderation and with supervision. We're not saying to take out

smart boards out of the classroom; what we want is supervised understanding of too much information at one time.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it doesn't even have to be negative things that they are exposed to, you know. You know that you can damage a child by forcing them to study too much, too often all the time, all the time? They need mental health breaks. Some children who came from good, good Christian parents, whose parents are teachers and everything you can think of — the epitome of a good family. The child is in the books, in the books, in the books, in the books all the time; so much so they don't even know how to socialise. Then you create a different problem because life is about balance. Too much of anything, the Bible tells you, is not good for you. If there's anything you want too much of, it would be a good education but even then, they need to go buck their toe a bit.

Mr. Speaker, again, trying my best not to repeat what so many Members have said, and I know you've given much leeway because of the importance of this, I just want us to remember that the negative things we're trying to stop do not stop at age 16. As a matter of fact, some of the most significant things that cause mental health issues across human-to-human behaviour are done by adults. I'm glad the Member recognises the key component in all this is the brain's development from age 0 to 16 and that's backed by the global research evidence she presented as to the importance of development then.

Yes, once we succeed with this they'll have to, as the old saying goes, *fend for yourself*; now you're in the big world. Kind of the same thing in the car. My daughter is about to get her driving licence in April. She's turning 17 and I'm freaking out. I goin' put a big old sign saying, "Kenneth Bryan's daughter driving, be careful, please".

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Because parents worry, but we have a duty of care to do everything we can in a world that is evolving and advancing, particularly in the world of technology and communication and information to adjust because with the digital world, there's much good but there is much bad, and I'm not even going to get into AI because we haven't even touched the potential negatives of AI yet. You may have an innocent young child who is not even on social media, and you can take a snapshot of their face and put it on the most disgusting image in the world and spread that around and the child's life is ruined forever. Afraid to go outside and God knows what goes through their minds, to do something. We got to get a hold of this before it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, my Honourable Leader highlighted some amazing things about the Mover of this Motion, the Member for George Town West, the Hon-

ourable Pearlina McGaw-Lumsden, but what he probably just forgot to highlight [is that] she's also one of the Youth Parliament Committee's guiding leaders. As a matter of fact, she is the one female on that committee and a key component to the Motion that is coming, and my Honourable Leader spoke about that earlier; but it's so interesting that while she continues to fight for the young people today, the same mental health concerns for young people are actually what's going to be a part of the discussion on Monday, 9th March.

For those who are listening, tune in to Parliament; come to Parliament — you're welcome; and see what the next generation is talking about in respect to mental health, technology, social media platforms and the abuse and bullying [there] and what it does to the mental health space and what government can do to [curb] that. It's going to be an amazing discussion. Her commitment, her support, her contribution to that tells you everything, and I don't even know why I was surprised. No, I wasn't surprised. I was just blown away. I mean, I don't know how much work you did. You must have been at it for at least 2.5 weeks because you couldn't have done all of that speech in two days like what most of us do. I'm proud of you Member.

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

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I'm really proud of you.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour to give a contribution to this. Though it may be a difficult task and I know the Government has many priorities, I dare say this one should be in the top five as they go forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's my contribution to this Motion.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will be particularly brief.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: I will be finished long before that, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I must be one of the few who hasn't spoken in relation to this Private Member's Motion and I believe I cannot let the night pass without having said something and at least letting the country and everyone know that I am fully in support of what is taking place here today in terms of supporting this Motion.

Mr. Speaker, I'm long past raising children, but I have that second generation of grandchildren coming up now, two young boys and two young girls, one of whom has just a few more years before she's into the teenage years and becoming influenced amongst her

friends with the things we are discussing today in terms of social media, so it is still very relevant to me; still very important to me. I know my two daughters will have their challenges in raising their children and regulating their use of social media. They're going to come under much peer pressure and it's going to be great for them, but in talking with both of them I know they have started off on the right foot in terms of controlling their access to social media at this point in time. They have no presence whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to and commend the Mover of the Motion, my colleague, the Member for George Town West. It was beautifully put together and very forceful. She delivered it with conviction — no question; she was very passionate about the way she delivered it and I think that's one of the reasons why it affected all of us so much this afternoon. I also wanted to mention and congratulate the Member for Red Bay, who seconded the Motion. He too spoke with passion and—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: —a zeal that I know he has because I had at least one conversation with him about the subject matter, so I know his passion for it as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by congratulating them both and everyone who has spoken and to record my genuine, 100 per cent support for this Motion. I look forward to shouting Aye when we take the vote.

The Speaker: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious of the fact that you need to be out of here in a hurry, so I shan't detain you. I would just like to be on record as supporting the Motion and associating myself with everything that has been said so far. I will avoid tedious repetition, but would also like to congratulate the Mover of the Motion for a very well researched and well-presented Motion, sir.

I thank you very much.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Members, I really appreciate that you would indulge me to fulfil this commitment at the University College — I think there are 40 students who are graduating from an upskilling programme they have at the college — and also that we come back at 7 o'clock. We are going to do a new Order Paper because we need to break by 4 o'clock tomorrow; because what you all don't know, is that I have confirmed attendance for 345 women to come here at 5 o'clock—

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: —tomorrow afternoon for the launch of the Cayman Branch of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, and that is a historic event in this country. I'm sure that you all want to be a part of it, so you will get your programmes in a little while.

The House is suspended until 7pm.

Proceedings suspended at 5:55pm.

Proceedings resumed at 7:18pm.

The Speaker: This honourable House is back in session. Please be seated.

Once again, let me express my gratitude for allowing me to go and speak to those graduates. Thank you very much.

Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I think everyone has said what needs to be said, but I just wanted to go on record to congratulate the Honourable Deputy Speaker, Member for George Town West for a very compelling moving and a very professional tribute. I want to say it to her separately. I know we're to address you by title, but I want to say Pearlina, well done.

I just want to say that Mr. Speaker to congratulate her and thank everyone who spoke. I think everything has already been said. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: I think all Members have spoken. Once again, I want to congratulate you all, I never had to call once for which Member wants to speak. That's how it should work. I therefore call on the Mover to exercise her right of reply.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: I'll be brief.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to each and every Member of this House for their thoughtful contribution to this debate and for their shared commitment to the wellbeing of our people. Regardless of where we sit in this Chamber, we are all here for the same fundamental purpose, to protect our citizens, to safeguard our children and to make bold and responsible decisions that serve the best interests of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the question before us is very simple: do we accept that the design of algorithm-driven platforms pose imbalanced risk to our younger adolescents? If the answer is yes, then responsible governance requires action. This is not fear of technology, it is a maturity in governance; it is not a permanent

denial, it is a development delay; and above all, it is not about limiting freedom, it is about ensuring that freedom grows with readiness. The best interests of our children are not optional, they are paramount. I therefore commend this Motion to this honourable House and urge Members to stand on the side of evidence, proportionality and the protection of Caymanian children.

Mr. Speaker, if this House agrees that childhood deserves protection in the digital age, then today is the moment for us to act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank all Members in advance for what I believe will be remembered as a historic moment for this country. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question now is BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers the introduction of legislation to prohibit access to social media platforms by persons under the age of sixteen years within the Cayman Islands as a child protection and public health measure;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that any such legislation shall place primary responsibility for compliance, age verification, and enforcement on social media platform operators, and shall not criminalise or penalise children or young persons;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that "Social Media Platforms" shall be defined as digital services for social interaction and content sharing, and shall exclude:

- Educational platforms;
- Messaging services used primarily for private communication;
- Essential services required for school or public services;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that the proposed framework shall include proportionate regulatory sanctions for non-compliant platforms while ensuring safeguards for data privacy, user rights, and constitutional protections;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers accompanying the legislation with public education initiatives, including digital literacy programmes for parents and accessible mental health resources for young people;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers that the legislation shall be subject to periodic review, to ensure it is consistent with constitutional protections, and remains consistent with human rights obligations and the principle of proportionality;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers commencing stakeholder consultation and legislative drafting without delay, recognising the urgency of protecting children from demonstrable and preventable digital harms, and affirms that

this resolution shall not be construed as an endorsement of censorship, surveillance, or content based regulation, but as a child protection and public health measure grounded in evidence, proportionality, and the best interests of the child.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2025-2026 passed.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Before we take a short suspension to circulate a new Order Paper to deal with some Government Business, I just want to take the opportunity to remind the Premier and the Deputy Governor of Standing Order 48; that is —

- “(1) **Every Private Member's Motion passed by this House which requires action on national policy issues shall be sent by the Clerk, within one week of the date of approval by the House, to the Cabinet Secretary for submission to Cabinet for the consideration of Cabinet.**
- (2) **A report on the Cabinet's decision in response to the submission made pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be tabled at the next meeting of the House by the Premier or by a Member of the Government assigned by the Premier.”**

The House is suspended for five minutes.

Proceedings suspended at 7:26pm.

Proceedings resumed at 7:30pm.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

FIRST READINGS

VIRTUAL ASSET (SERVICE PROVIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

MUTUAL FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

PRIVATE FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

SECOND READINGS

VIRTUAL ASSET (SERVICE PROVIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good evening and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move the Second Reading of a Bill entitled the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly moved. Does the Mover wish to speak thereto?

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on behalf of the Government. The Bill amends the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) Act (2024 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, this Bill and the two that follow it on the Order Paper deal with the issue of tokenisation of investment funds which is now an emerging feature in the global investment funds sector. Tokenisation enables the equity interest, for example, shares in a mutual fund and investment interest in a private fund, to be represented in a digital form using what's called the distributed ledger or Blockchain technology while preserving the underlying legal nature and rights attached to those interests. In other words, Mr. Speaker, it's the exact investment product that we have today, but instead of an Excel spreadsheet or some other similar type of electronic form it is now moving to this latest technology which is called Blockchain technology. This Bill is the first of two to complete the package.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends as I said, the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) Act, which I'll refer to here as the principal Act, to refine certain definitions and introduce new definitions relating to tokenised mutual funds and tokenised private funds. These amendments align the terminology used in the principal Act with the corresponding definitions introduced in the Mutual Funds Act (2025 Revision) and the Private Funds Act (2025 Revision).

Importantly, the Bill clarifies that the issuance, creation, sale, transfer and other disposition of to-

kenised equity or investment interests by regulated mutual funds and regulated private investment funds does not constitute the issuance of virtual assets for the purposes of the principal Act where such an activity occurs solely within the context of a regulated fund structure. To put that into plain English, it means that the problem that we are seeking to solve is that despite the fact that investment funds are beginning to use Blockchain technology, which is the same technology used for cryptocurrencies, this is not a cryptocurrency. This is using the same technology but for a different purpose.

This clarification avoids regulatory duplication, because without it our same investment funds that have a specific registered process were having to go through a more onerous process for cryptocurrency, which is appropriate for cryptocurrencies but is causing confusion and unnecessary delay for our normal investment funds. This ensures the tokenised funds will remain regulated under their established funds framework while preserving the application of the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) Act to any entity that conducts standalone virtual asset services. Importantly, the Bill also repeals the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is arranged in three clauses.

Clause 1 provides a short title of the legislation.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the principal Act to amend the definition of the words “issuance of virtual assets” and to insert new definitions in respect of the words “digital equity token”, “digital investment token”, “tokenised mutual fund” and “tokenised private fund”.

Clause 3 provides for the repeal of the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my presentation on the Bill. For all those reasons to continue to keep our world-renowned investment funds product cutting edge, I therefore commend the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 to this honourable House for its second reading.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to express our support for the amendments to this Bill and for them to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm particularly grateful to the Premier for giving a more fulsome explanation of what tokenisation really is and what tokens are. While I had always associated the Blockchain technology with crypto, I did not appreciate that it was now being used in this regard in order to record, essentially, shareholder transactions. That created a bit of a misunderstanding on my part when I had, in discussing this, suggested to the team that we were really speaking of crypto, so I'm particularly grateful for that and to say that we do support this.

What I do know as well, Mr. Speaker, is that CIMA will have responsibilities under the amendments with regard to this to make sure that things are dealt with on the up and up and that everything is accounted for with the issuance and redemptions of these tokens. In his winding up, I would ask the Premier, if he's able to say, whether this will require any additional staffing by CIMA in order to perform their functions under the law. It is a very important function that they are doing. Normally, when we talk of tokenisation there is no paper trail, everything is truly virtual or digital.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Bill as well to the House and say that we have no objections to it at all.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thank you. On behalf of my colleague, the honourable Member for Bodden Town East, I rise to also lend our support to this Bill. I think it's timely.

I was listening to the Member for George Town East who spoke a while ago, and when you look back you can see how far this has come. Before, we were talking about Bitcoin and now most people don't realise that there's something called synthetic Bitcoin, where Wall Street has captured Bitcoin and basically carried it to a different level and have collateralised it, et cetera.

I just want to lend our support to it and thank the Honourable Premier and his team for at least keeping the Cayman Islands at pace with all of this current legislation and what is going on in this industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] If not, I would invite the Mover, if he wishes, to exercise his right of reply.

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

I thank the Member for George Town East for rising on behalf of the Official Opposition to lend support and also the Member for Bodden Town West for the independent Opposition support.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for George Town East can well be forgiven for his misunderstanding, and I'll explain why, because the misunderstanding took much work between the primary regulator, CIMA, industry and Ministry to get to the root of this.

The Member's misunderstanding caused quite a deal of stir in the investment fund sector, so there was an initial informal consultation last year in 2025 that put several belts and braces all over it because of the misunderstanding, and industry practitioners then came furiously back.

At the beginning of this year, we took a time out and created a small group, which, Mr. Speaker, fits with the theme of this Meeting of the House. It took a cross

section between Cayman Finance, the Ministry and CIMA to take a time out, stop firing at each other, sit down and talk about it so that we could try to collaborate to innovate this product and thereby innovate the country. It's in that same spirit that we're working here tonight, [that] these Bills find themselves here.

It should not require any additional staffing from CIMA because when we got down to the root of it, it's the exact investment fund with the exact mechanisms and controls that exist in the legislation today and all of the operators of the funds and service providers have the same obligations.

With that, Mr. Speaker, the only thing left for me to do is to thank those working groups from the Ministry — well, I'll end with the Ministry because I'm going to embarrass one staff in particular who's here tonight, with much praise. From CIMA's policy unit, they sent persons from their legal division, from their securities division; Cayman Finance sent someone, I think it was Haymond Rankin; and then, industry sent representatives I believe from Walkers and from Maples. In the Ministry, who's here tonight, Karen Stephen-Dalton.

I would consider Karen the lead negotiator in this small civil war. It would not have survived and been brought forward without her. Karen is an absolute star in the Ministry. She not only works on complex legislation, she takes the time to help young Caymanian policy officers sharpen their skills. You're an absolute asset to the Ministry. Thank you, Karen.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Also, Ms. Maureen Benjamin, [we] can never leave out legislative drafting. As I said earlier today, we literally could not work without legal drafting.

With that Mr. Speaker, the only thing left for me to say is to have a bit of anticipation that the next two Bills should go much quicker because it's the same theory throughout. Thank you.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a second reading.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a second reading.

MUTUAL FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Premier.

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

I beg to move the Second Reading of a Bill entitled the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The Speaker: [The Bill has been duly moved. Does the Mover wish to speak thereto?]

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

I rise to present the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on behalf of the Government. The reasons for the Bill are in keeping with my explanation on the prior Bill; therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will push forward to just setting out briefly the clauses of the Bill for the purposes of the *Hansard*.

The Bill is arranged in four clauses, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 1 provides the short title of the legislation.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the principal Act to amend the definition of the words “debt” and “equity interest”. The clause also amends section 2 to insert new definitions in respect of the words “digital equity token”, “partnership interest”, “tokenised mutual fund”, among other definitions.

Clause 3 amends section 16 of the principal Act to include matters that a licensed mutual fund administrator in providing mutual fund administration to a mutual fund needs to be satisfied of in respect of a tokenised mutual fund. The licensed mutual fund administrator needs to be satisfied that—

- (a) all records relating to, among other things, the issuance, creation sale and transfer of an equity interest that is represented by a digital equity token are securely maintained by the tokenised mutual fund and are available to the Authority within such period of time as may be specified by the Authority; and
- (b) the tokenised mutual fund has complied with any other requirement that is applicable to a tokenised mutual fund.

Therefore, that touches on the question by the Member for George Town East on the last Bill that those are the additional requirements that an administrator of these type of funds has to maintain to maintain safety and stability.

Clause 4 amends the principal Act by inserting proposed new Part 3B which deals with tokenised mutual funds and contains proposed new sections 22I and 22J. The proposed new section 22I sets out the specific requirements for tokenised mutual funds. The specific requirements for tokenised mutual funds include —

- (a) the requirement for an annual confirmation by the operator of the tokenised mutual fund that all records relating to the issuance, creation, sale,

- transfer and ownership of an equity interest that is represented by a digital equity token have been properly kept and maintained in compliance with the requirements set out in the legislation;
- (b) the requirement that an equity interest that is represented by a digital equity token is only transferrable with the approval of the operator of the tokenised mutual fund in accordance with the offering document;
 - (c) the requirement for the disclosure of identified risks specific to the digital equity token to be provided in the offering document; and
 - (d) the requirement that the offering document sets out how the risks identified are addressed or mitigated for investors.

The proposed new section 22J provides that the Authority (CIMA) shall exercise supervisory powers over tokenised mutual funds to ensure compliance with the legislation and the protection of investor interests.

Mr. Speaker that concludes my presentation on the Bill. I therefore commend the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 to this honourable House for its second reading.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to indicate our support for the Bill. Nothing much really different from the previous Bill. The Premier has made a satisfactory explanation of the issues that I had identified and discussed with him previously, so we are fine and okay with the legislation. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the independent Opposition and my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town East, to also lend our support to this Bill. The Premier will be aware that some of the people whom he consults with, I get those emails too.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, he's sometimes copied on them. I think our support of this is also nothing that should be a surprise to the Premier. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] If not, I will invite the Mover of the Bill, if he wishes, to exercise his right of reply.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only for a matter of record to thank the Opposition represented by the Member for George Town East for the support, and also the Member for Bodden Town West for the independent Opposition support, and all of those whom I mentioned previously who helped organise the legislation. Thank you.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a second reading.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a second reading.

PRIVATE FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to move the Second Reading of a Bill entitled the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly moved. Does the Mover wish to speak thereto?

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

I rise to present the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on behalf of the Government. The reasons for the Bill are exactly the same as the two prior Bills on the Order Paper. I'll therefore, Mr. Speaker, just for the record, set out the clauses of the Bill.

There are four clauses, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 1 provides the short title of the legislation.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the principal Act to amend the definition of the words "debt" and to insert new definitions in respect of, among other things, the words "digital investment token", "partnership interest" and "tokenised private fund".

Clause 3 amends section 6 of the principal Act to provide that a tokenised private fund that applies for registration under the principal Act shall comply with specific requirements. All of those requirements are the same in terms of the issuance, creation, sale, transfer and ownership of an investment interest as I mentioned on the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill.

Clause 4 inserts proposed new 19A and 19B in the principal Act. The proposed new section 19A sets out the requirements for tokenised private funds to

have specific requirements; to have the annual confirmation that I mentioned in relation to mutual funds; and the obligations in the offering documents on the operators as I mentioned in the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill.

The new proposed section 19B provides that CIMA shall exercise supervisory powers over tokenised private funds to ensure compliance with the legislation and the protection of investor interests.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes my presentation on this Bill and I therefore commend the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 to this honourable House for its second reading.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, as with the previous two Bills, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to express our support for the amending legislation to be passed. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I rise on behalf of the independent Opposition Member, my colleague, for Bodden Town East to also lend our support to this Bill and thank the Premier and his team for keeping us at pace with all that's going on in the financial services industry.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] If not, I will call on the Mover to exercise his right of reply.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, briefly, once again, just to thank the Member for George Town East for also lending the support on behalf of the Official Opposition to this Bill just like the prior two; and same goes for the Member for Bodden Town West on behalf of the independent Opposition.

I'll only leave [with] the Member for Bodden Town West that yes, we have the same commentators and a gauge that we know we're going right is that we haven't heard from some particular commentators. Silence is acceptance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to all who organised the Bill. We continue to exhibit cutting edge, responsible excellence in financial services in this country that we should all continue to be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a second reading.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a second reading.

The Speaker: The House will now go into Committee to consider the Bills.

House in Committee at 7:59pm

COMMITTEE STAGE

The Chairman: The House is now in Committee.

With the leave of the House, may I assume that as usual we will authorise the Honourable Attorney General to correct minor errors and such in this Bill? Everyone agrees to that?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Okay. Would the Clerk read the short title?

IMMIGRATION (TRANSITION) (AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

Clause 1	Short title and commencement
Clause 2	Repeal and substitution of section 27 of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) - Caymanian as of right
Clause 3	Insertion of section 71B - express fees
Clause 4	Amendment of section 72 - regulations
Clause 5	Amendment of section 83A - further transitional matters
Clause 6	Validation
Clause 7	Orders or determinations by court not affected

The Chairman: Are there any questions on clauses 1 to 7? If not, I will put the question. The question is that clauses 1 to 7 do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 1 to 7 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) to provide that persons

born in the Islands on or before the 26th March, 1977 are Caymanian as of right; to provide for the charging of fees for expedited services; to provide for transitional matters; to validate the charging, payment and collection of fees, without statutory authority, for expedited services; and for incidental and connected purposes.

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Title passed.

HEALTH INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

Clause 1 Short title

The Chairman: Are there any questions to clause 1? If not, I will put the question. The question is that clause 1 do stand part of the Bill.

All those in favour, please say Aye, those against no.

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clause 1 passed.

The Clerk:

Clause 2 Amendment of section 2 of the Health Insurance Act (2021 Revision) - definitions

The Chairman: We have notice from the Member for Bodden Town West of an amendment to that clause.

Amendment to clause 2

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

Mr. Chairman, in accordance with Standing Order 70 of the Parliament Standing Orders, 2025, I, Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West give notice to move the following amendment to the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2026—

1. That the proposed amendment to Clause 2(c) **“medically indigent person”** be amended in subclause (b) by deleting the words “acting on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer” and adding: “after consultation with the Chief Medical Officer or his/her designate”:

So that the subclause 2(c) (b) reads:

“in the opinion of the Minister responsible for health, after consultation with the Chief Medical Officer or his/her designate, is unable to pay for the person’s health insurance or medical services by reason of inadequate financial resources;”

Thank you.

The Chairman: The question is that the amendment to the clause be approved. Does anyone wish to speak to the amendment?

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

Mr. Chairman, I touched on it already in my debate. I've discussed it with the Honourable Minister and the Premier and I think we're in agreement with this language. I don't know if there's anything that the Government side would like to add.

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

I'd like to thank the Member for Bodden Town West for this amendment. It was an excellent point, it helped to improve the legislation and to modernise our way of thinking of Ministers, so on behalf of the Government, we accept the amendment.

The Chairman: Okay. The question is that the amendment do stand part of the clause.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Amendment to clause 2 passed.

The Chairman: The question is that clause 2, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clause 2, as amended, passed.

The Clerk:

Clause 3 Amendment of section 5 - compulsory health insurance

Clause 4 Transitional provision

The Chairman: The question is that clauses 3 and 4 do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 3 and 4 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Health Insurance Act (2021 Revision) to delete the definition of the words “indigent person”; to introduce a definition for the words “medically indigent person”; to delete references to “indigent person” and references describing persons as indigent and substitute with references to “medically indigent person”; to provide for transitional arrangements; and for incidental and connected purposes.

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Title passed.

HEALTH INSURANCE COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

Clause 1	Short title and commencement
Clause 2	Amendment of section 2 of the Health Insurance Commission Act (2016 Revision) - definitions
Clause 3	Amendment of section 8 of the Health Insurance Commission Act (2016 Revision) - segregated insurance fund

The Chairman: The question is that clauses 1, 2 and 3 do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 1, 2 and 3 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Health Insurance Commission Act (2016 Revision) to delete the reference to the words “indigent persons” and substitute the words “medically indigent persons”; to provide a definition for the words “medically indigent person” by reference to the definition of those words in the Health

Insurance Act (2021 Revision); and for incidental and connected purposes

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Title passed.

VIRTUAL ASSET (SERVICE PROVIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

Clause 1	Short title
Clause 2	Amendment of section 2 of the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) Act (2024 Revision) - interpretation
Clause 3	Repeal of the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Act, 2025

The Chairman: The question is that clauses 1, 2 and 3 do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 1, 2 and 3 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) Act (2024 Revision) to amend the interpretation section to provide definitions for, among other things, “tokenised mutual funds” and tokenised private funds; to repeal the Virtual Asset (Services Providers) (Amendment) Act, 2025; and for incidental and connected purposes.

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Title passed.

MUTUAL FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

Clause 1	Short title
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- Clause 2 Amendment of section 2 of the Mutual Funds Act (2025 Revision) - definitions
- Clause 3 Amendment of section 16 - licensed mutual fund administrators to be satisfied in respect of mutual funds
- Clause 4 Insertion of Part 3B - tokenised mutual funds

The Chairman: The question is that clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Mutual Funds Act (2025 Revision) to provide for specific requirements for tokenised mutual funds; to provide definitions for “digital equity token” and “tokenised mutual fund”; and for incidental and connected purposes.

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Title passed.

PRIVATE FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Clerk:

- Clause 1 Short title
- Clause 2 Amendment of section 2 of the Private Funds Act (2025 Revision) - interpretation
- Clause 3 Amendment of section 6 - application to be registered
- Clause 4 Insertion of section 19A – specific requirements for tokenised private funds

The Chairman: Are there any questions on the clauses? *[Pause]* If not, I will put the question. The question is that clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 passed.

The Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Private Funds Act (2025 Revision) to provide for specific requirements for tokenised private funds; to provide for, among other things, definitions for “digital investment token” and “tokenised private fund”; and for incidental and connected purposes.

The Chairman: The question is that the Title do stand part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Title passed.

The Chairman: The question is that the Bills be reported to the House.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Bills to be reported to the House.

House resumed at 8:15pm

The Chairman: The House is back in session. Please be seated.

REPORT ON BILLS

IMMIGRATION (TRANSITION) (AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Caymanian Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to report that the Bill shortly entitled the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for a third reading.

HEALTH INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that a Bill shortly entitled the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with amendments.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for third reading.

HEALTH INSURANCE COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the Health Insurance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026 has been considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with no amendments.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for third reading.

VIRTUAL ASSET (SERVICE PROVIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I am to report that a Bill shortly entitled the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for a third reading

MUTUAL FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I am to report that a Bill shortly entitled the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for a third reading

PRIVATE FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I am to report that a Bill shortly entitled the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly reported and is set down for a third reading.

THIRD READINGS

IMMIGRATION (TRANSITION) (AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Caymanian Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

HEALTH INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

**HEALTH INSURANCE COMMISSION
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Health Insurance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Health Insurance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Health Insurance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

**Suspension of Standing Order 65
(Bills to be read three times)**

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

I move that Standing Order 65 be suspended to allow the final three Bills on the Order Paper, namely, the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026, to be read a third time.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 65 be suspended to allow the [final] three Bills on the Order Paper to be read a third time.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 65 suspended.

**VIRTUAL ASSET (SERVICE PROVIDERS)
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026**

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Virtual Asset (Service Providers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

MUTUAL FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Mutual Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

PRIVATE FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to move that a Bill shortly entitled the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled the Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 be given a third reading and passed.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was given a third reading and passed.

The Speaker: Before I invite the Premier to move the Adjournment I just want to appeal to the male Members of Parliament to please, please— I bring you a special, special, invitation from the five women Parliamentarians asking you to please attend the launch of the Cayman Branch of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians tomorrow afternoon, starting at 5pm and finishing at 7pm.

Second request: Please wear something purple or at the very least pink, because International Women's Day is on Sunday and that is the colour, so we expect all the men to show up tomorrow in pink suits.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: In all seriousness, by the way, I am fairly confident in saying this has to be— and I've been around this place for a little while—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: No.

—the only Sitting of Parliament that I am aware of, when there was not a single “No” vote on any item on the agenda. Congratulations!

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: It demonstrates true cooperation and that's what I like to see. Thank you all very much.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, I don't know whether we should move an Adjournment. I think we should just go right into tomorrow's business and keep the record going.

Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I'll be guided by Members, if they want to continue past 8:30pm, but I doubt it.

The Speaker: No, no, no, no, no, no.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Keep it going?

The Speaker: No, we have to...

An Hon. Member: I'll watch it on TV.

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

The Speaker: We'll have to get a new Order Paper and all that and we have questions, et cetera.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It is a nice idea.

The Speaker: What I'm interested in is that we carry forward the spirit of cooperation into tomorrow so that—

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

The Speaker: —we men can demonstrate to those 300-plus women who will be here tomorrow evening for the launch of the Commonwealth Women's Parliamentary Branch in Cayman that we can work together with the five women in Parliament and form a good Government.

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

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I would only caution you, as you invite the fashion of pink among men, what you might get tomorrow.

The Speaker: No, it is really purple, you know.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I know.

The Speaker: Pink is the alternative.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It is the alternative. Careful what you wish for.

The Speaker: No, no, no.

I can tell you a story that goes back to the 80s, right? Whenever we saw the national hero, Honourable Jim Bodden walk through that door with his cream-coloured full suit on we knew we were in for a rough day. I think he set the record. I think he debated the budget for six days once. Sorry for interrupting; you know me and my stories.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, we enjoy your stories. Thank you, sir. Even more importantly, we enjoy your recognition of what occurred in Parliament today.

I'd like to thank all Members of the House. I think we would all agree that it is something special, that you have said in your experience you have not heard a single “No” [to any item] on the Order Paper. I think it was the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman — I'm not going to use the term we've been using — who said, let's make sure that it carries forward to tomorrow and beyond.

Suspension of Standing Order 14(1)
(Hours of sitting)

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: With that Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I know, Madam Clerk. You keep us on our toes.

Suspend Standing Order 14(1) to allow the House to resume tomorrow, 6th March, at 10am rather than 2pm.

The Speaker: The question is that this House suspends Standing Order 14(1) to allow tomorrow's meeting, Friday, 6th March, to start at 10am.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 14(1) suspended.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With a sense of unification and harmony I move that this House do stand adjourned until tomorrow, 6th March, at 10am.

The Speaker: The question is that this House do stand adjourned until tomorrow, 6th March, at 10am.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

The House is adjourned until 10am Friday, 6th March.

Thank you all.

At 8:31pm the House stood adjourned until 10am Friday, 6th March, 2026.