



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

***Senate and House of Representatives
(Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament)***

Friday, 9th October, 2020

*Joint Sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives
Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 9th October, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.*

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**Ceremonial State Opening of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Friday 4th October, 2019, at 10:00 a.m.**

Attendance

Senate

Senator the Honourable Chester A. A. Humphrey	- Mr. President (In the Chair)
Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell	- Minister within the Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment wrf Climate Resilience and the Environment
Senator the Honourable Judd Cadet	- Member
Senator the Honourable Norland Cox	- Minister for Infrastructure Development, Transport and Implementation
Senator the Honourable Dr. Winston Garraway	- Minister of State within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Kim George	- Member
Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams	- Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Senator the Honourable Terry Noel	- Member
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie	- Deputy President
Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis	- Member
Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair	- Member

ABSENT

Senator the Honourable Tessa Alexander St. Cyr	- Member (Excuse tendered)
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Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP, JP, MBE	- Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	- Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Forestry and Labour
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	- Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs

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Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and Minister wft Hospital Services and Community Health Services
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of the Opposition

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Proclamation

Prayers

Ag. Clerk: A Proclamation by the Governor-General Cécile E.F La Grenade.
WHEREAS by proclamation dated the 17th day of September, 2020 issued under subsection (1) of Section 52 of the Constitution of Grenada, Parliament was prorogued on the 21st day of September 2020;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of Section 51 of the constitution of Grenada that each Session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Grenada and shall commence at such time as the Governor-General may by proclamation appoint;

AND WHEREAS it is further provided by subsection (2) of Section 51 of the Constitution of Grenada, that there shall be a Session of Parliament once at least in every year so that a period of six (6) months shall not intervene between the last Sitting of Parliament in one Session and the first Sitting in the next Session;

NOW THEREFORE, I Cécile La Grenade, Dame Grand Cross of the Most Distinguish Order of St. Michael and St. George, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor-General in and above Grenada, do hereby appoint the Parliament Building at Mt. Wheldale in the town of St. George as the place where the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament shall be held at 10 o'clock in the forenoon on Friday the 9th day of October, 2020 as the time at which the said Session shall begin;

AND MEMBERS of the said Parliament and all other Her Majesty's Officers and loving subjects in Grenada and all others whom it may concern are hereby required to take due notice hereof and give their ready obedience accordingly.

GIVEN under my hand and the Public Seal of Grenada, this 30th day of September, two thousand and twenty in the sixty-eighth year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second.

God Save the Queen.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members let us pray.

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Prayers

Oath of Allegiance of a New Senator

Adjournment (To Await the Governor-General)

Resumption

(House prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Please join with me as we say together the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

Ag. Clerk: Oath or Affirmation of a new Member of the Senate.

(Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair proceeded to the Clerk's Table)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I, Roderick St. Clair do swear that I will faithfully bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and successors according to Law; so help me God.

Mr. President: Is it your wish Honourable Members that the Houses now stand adjourned in pleasure to await the arrival of Her Excellency the Governor-General?

Question put and agreed to.

Houses adjourned at 10:06 a.m. to await the arrival of the Governor-General.

(The Houses await the arrival of Her Excellency, the Governor-General).

Houses resume at 10:20 a.m.

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Deliverance of the Throne Speech

Sergeant-at-Arms: His Honour, the President.

Sergeant-at-Arms: His Honour, the Speaker.

(The Governor-General arrives)

(A fanfare of trumpets is sounded)

Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise.

Her Excellency, Dame Dr. Cécile La Grenade: Pray be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms: All sit.

(The Prime Minister mounts the dais and hands “The Throne Speech” to the Governor-General)

Her Excellency, Dr. Dame Cécile La Grenade: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, our nation embarks on this Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament in a time of unprecedented challenges. As a Small Island Developing State, our country has been dealt a severe blow by the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, with devastating impacts on our economy and our way of life. My Government’s response thus far to curb the spread of this deadly virus and mitigate its economic impact has been broadly successful. We are fortunate to have had no COVID related deaths locally and there is no evidence of community spread of the virus at this time. While this is extremely good news, the pandemic is far from over. And even as we continue to face tremendous uncertainty, we must now begin to chart the way forward to a better and brighter future. With God on our side, we remain undaunted and confident that we

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will overcome our current challenges and emerge stronger and more resilient as a nation and a people.

The Economic Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, when my Government presented the 2020 Budget in November last year, the outlook for this year was favourable with the usual downside risks including the threat of natural disasters. Real GDP was expected to grow by 3.2% and the overall solid macroeconomic performance we have been enjoying was expected to continue. A mere nine months ago the complete shutdown of the global economy in 2020 on account of the corona virus was unthinkable. The fallout has been devastating, especially for small tourism dependent economies like Grenada.

Tourism and Tertiary Education, two of our main engines of growth stalled almost overnight with ripple effects on other Sectors of the economy such as wholesale and retail and real estate, rental and business activities. The Construction and Transportation Sectors also took major hits. Many of our hard working citizens faced layoffs or loss of income. Preliminary estimates indicate that our economy will experience double-digit decline this year. The significant disruption in economic activity has wreaked havoc on public finances. Government's revenue declined precipitously with the closure of our borders and the implementation of other necessary containment measures while expenditure needs rose significantly creating huge budget financing needs.

Government's Response

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, my Government moved swiftly to blunt the impact of the pandemic on our people and economy. With the safety of our citizens as its number one priority, one of the first measures adopted by my Government was reallocating spending to strengthen the capacity of our health system including facilitating the procurement of critical health equipment and supplies. My Government also took urgent action to contain the virus and safeguard the health of our citizens by closing our borders and instituting Emergency Regulations which effectively

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closed schools and businesses to reduce the potential for community spread. Thanks to these proactive efforts, my Government was successful in containing the spread of the virus here in Grenada. Unfortunately, some of our nationals overseas have succumbed to the deadly virus. My Government offers its deepest condolences to their families and loved ones.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, on the economic front, my Government was also able to mount a quick and decisive response to support the most affected persons. Thanks to the prudent fiscal management since 2014, anchored by our rules based fiscal responsibility framework, my Government was well positioned to quickly deploy accumulated fiscal buffers. These, together with additional support from the international community were utilised to close the huge fiscal and balance of payment gaps that emerged as a result of the pandemic. My Government established a COVID-19 Economic Support Secretariat to coordinate and manage the economic relief in a transparent, effective and timely manner. Through this Secretariat, support was provided to thousands of our citizens throughout Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique including:

- ❖ Public bus operators
- ❖ Taxi drivers, tour guides and tour operators
- ❖ Employees of hotels and guest houses, small travel agencies and marinas
- ❖ Tourist vendors
- ❖ Market vendors
- ❖ Hairdressers and barbers
- ❖ Restaurants and bars
- ❖ Dive operators.

This relief was effective in saving thousands of jobs and protecting livelihoods. My Government has expended in excess of EC \$22 million in direct support for those most affected. The sharp decline in revenue prevents us from indefinitely continuing this broad-based economic relief. That said, remaining aspects of the Stimulus Package including the small business soft lending facility managed by the Grenada

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Development Bank will continue to be rolled out. My Government will continue to ensure that the highest standards of transparency and accountability are applied in the disbursement of all COVID-19 related support.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, as a nation, we have demonstrated impressive resilience during crises including the aftermath of the widespread devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan, one of the worst natural disasters to strike Grenada. We will again prevail in this current crisis. My Government will like to thank all of our citizens for their part in helping our beautiful country navigate these difficult and uncharted waters.

My Government will like to especially thank the workers on the frontlines of the pandemic for their tireless efforts to keep us safe. Because of your hard work and dedication we are where we are today and can now intensify the process of safely reopening our economy. My Government assures you that consideration is being given to recognise your outstanding health care personnel at the 2021 Independence Day Celebrations. We will be seeking recommendations from the various departments and units of the Ministry of Health to award those who served selflessly during the period of crisis. My Government looks forward to your continued support as the novel coronavirus remains a clear and present danger. As a nation, we must continue to work together to defeat this deadly enemy.

Short-term Priorities

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, My Government faces an agonising choice - leave the economy closed to prevent the virus from once again reaching our shores or reopen the economy in the face of increasing infection around the world. By keeping our borders closed, we run the risk of irreversible damage to the local economy. We also stand to lose many of the hard-won gains we achieved in recent years. For example, the spike in unemployment triggered by the pandemic could be prolonged; our fiscal situation could go into crisis; our economic recovery could be slow and painful, these are outcomes that we do not want. It is clear therefore that we cannot keep our economy closed indefinitely, however, we must be mindful of the

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tremendous risk of reopening in a carefree manner. Our immediate priority therefore is to carefully reopen our economy while taking every precaution to safeguard the health of our citizens. Achieving the appropriate balance is extremely critical as the virus continues to rage in other parts of the world including in neighbouring countries and in our major tourism source markets.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, My Government has adopted a phased approach to the reopening. At the present time, we have reopened our borders to both regional and international travel. We have only recently reopened our schools for the nation's children. Significant efforts went into ensuring that our children were returning to a safe and secure environment.

My Government thanks our teachers and parents for their tremendous support and cooperation in making this possible. We also recognise the important roles of teachers in adjusting to the new online modality for instruction and that of parents who provided the critical support that help students to adapt to their new virtual learning environment. Students have since returned to the classroom and we are at this juncture where most of the restrictions on movement of people and business operations have been lifted. However, appropriate protocols including travel entry requirements, social distancing and wearing of face mask are needed to ensure that we minimise the risk of a second wave of infections associated with the resumption of commercial flights. My Government strongly encourages all our citizens to continue to adhere to the protocols and to be our brother's keeper in the continued fight against this deadly disease.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, as we move to stimulate greater economic activity in the near term, our focus will shift from providing relief to getting our citizens back to work. Over the next three months, my Government will focus on stimulating economic activity in key Sectors that have the greatest potential impact on growth and employment creation. My Government will therefore devote attention to boosting Construction and Agriculture and supporting small business development. Emphasis will also be placed on laying the foundation on the rebound of other sectors including Tourism and Tertiary Education, to bolster their recovery.

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Mid-term Priorities

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, as we look beyond the near term, My Government will shift its focus to putting the economy back on a sustainable growth path that is both robust and inclusive. My Government's framework for policy implementation remains our National Strategic Development Plan 2020-2035, which articulates the following shared vision: ***“Grenada, a resilient and prosperous nation, with a conscious and caring citizenry, promoting human dignity and realising its full potential through sustainable economic, social and environmental progress for all.”***

In the current COVID-19 context, the following areas will be accorded priority in the medium-term consistent with our vision:

- The reinvigoration of our main engines of growth, supported by efforts to boost our competitiveness, diversify our export base, and create sustainable jobs.
- The continued investment in the health and education of our people.
- The continued investment in leveraging information and communication technology.
- The continued investment in Agriculture and light manufacturing sector to boost food and nutrition security and to reduce our huge food import bill.
- The rehabilitation and maintenance of our road network and other physical infrastructure.
- Continued efforts to build resilience against external shocks such as global public health emergencies.
- The continued protection and empowerment of the poor and vulnerable among us.
- The continued efforts to protect our environmental assets from human and climate change impacts.

Consistent with the foregoing, our theme for this new Session of Parliament is **“Towards Vision 2035, Recovery, Transformation and Resilience.”**

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Economic Outlook

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, prior to the onset of the pandemic, Grenada had one of the strongest performing economies in the Caribbean region. My Government is projecting a strong recovery in 2021 with growth of approximately 6% supported by a robust rebound in the Construction and Agriculture Sectors. The rebound of Tourism and Tertiary Education Sectors is projected to be somewhat slower and will depend to a large extent on how quickly the global economy and travel industry recover. That said, my Government will deploy all available policy tools to stimulate a strong job rich recovery in 2021 and ensure that we return to a robust sustainable and inclusive growth path. To support the growth and transformation of our economy, my Government intends to pursue an ambitious programme of action. A Cabinet-appointed Advisory Committee is currently evaluating and refining recommendations from various sub-committees to help shape my Government's agenda in the coming period. Additionally, my Government has undertaken broader public consultations to further inform its plans, programs and policies.

Fiscal Policy

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of sound fiscal management. The significant erosion of our fiscal revenues coupled with increased expenditure demands due to additional health and COVID-related spending, have created an enormous challenge. Thanks to my Government's sound fiscal management since 2014, Grenada was in a much better position to respond to the current crisis than many of its regional counterparts. Due to its strong fiscal position going into the crisis, my Government was able to draw down on its accumulated fiscal buffers and to quickly mobilize additional emergency financing from the international community to close the financing gap. My Government has been able to meet all of its basic obligations in a timely manner, including expenditure on salaries, pensions and assistance to the needy, while continuing to provide support to those directly affected by the pandemic.

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This attests to the sound nature of the fiscal policy pursued by my Government in recent years. Fiscal discipline will therefore continue to be a priority for my Government going forward. However, to support the economic recovery in the period ahead, my Government will extend the invocation of the Escape Clause under the Fiscal Responsibility Law to the end of 2021, to allow for additional recovery spending. Once the recovery process is on a sound footing, my Government reaffirms its commitment to return to the rules and targets under the Fiscal Responsibility Law.

Education

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, a well-educated citizenry lies at the heart of our Vision 2035. For this reason, my Government will continue to prioritise the educational empowerment of our people to support growth and productivity as well as human dignity. My Government therefore remains firmly committed to transforming the education system so that it reflects the demands of today's technologically advanced world. In the period ahead, the key focus areas will include schools infrastructure, continued infusion of ICT within the school system, curriculum reform and institutional strengthening of the education system.

Admittedly the COVID-19 pandemic has presented immense challenges but at the same time there are examples of persons facing those challenges head on. It is important here to commend our students for their excellent performance in the 2020 CSEC examinations. The level of success recorded speaks to your resilience and your ability to overcome the challenges brought about by COVID-19 at a very critical juncture in your preparation for these exams. My Government congratulates all students who were successful in their examinations.

In the area of tertiary education, St. George's University is a major contributor to employment and economic activity in our country. This subsector will therefore play a vital role in our economic recovery. My Government is currently collaborating with SGU to facilitate a full return of all faculty and students in the shortest possible time.

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My Government will also support the education of our students through various scholarships at SGU and other regional and international universities.

Health

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, my Government continues to espouse the philosophy that the health of our nation is the wealth of our nation. Over the years, my Government has invested heavily in addressing the fundamental challenges of our health system including issues related to human resources, infrastructure, equipment and critical supplies. In 2019, with external support, several initiatives were undertaken to further strength the human resource capacity, infrastructure development and resilience in the sector. Key activities included the resumption of the Nursing Training Programme, the reconstruction of the Gouyave Health Centre, the retrofitting of the Princess Royal Hospital and the Hillsborough Health Centre, the rehabilitation of health centres and medical stations across Grenada and the replacement of the elevator in the phase one building of the General Hospital.

My Government was also in the process of implementing the World Bank supported OECS Regional Health Project aimed at improving preparedness of our health system to respond to public health emergencies. The onset of the COVID-19 has underscored the importance of this project which is designed to strengthen health infrastructure, surveillance, laboratory systems and health emergency operations. With additional support under this project, my Government was able to quickly respond to and successfully manage the spread of COVID-19 through measures including the procurement of protective equipment for frontline workers, the procurement of essential medical equipment and the retrofitting of isolation centres. The additional financing support will also facilitate the procurement of a medical oxygen plant, given the importance of oxygen in the delivery of health care and in the treatment of respiratory diseases.

In this new Session of Parliament, my Government will continue in its efforts to strengthen existing systems to sustain core health programmes, build resilience to

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respond to health emergencies and transform the Healthcare Sector to better meet the needs of our people. Additionally, my Government remains committed to the sustainable financing of our healthcare system. In this regard, work will continue on developing an appropriate framework for a sustainable National Health Insurance Programme. It is clear that a lot has been accomplished but we must recognise that much more must be done as we continue to effect much needed improvements in our healthcare system.

My Government remains committed to this process and we acknowledge the health workers who routinely demonstrate their commitment to improving the delivery of healthcare across the country. There are weaknesses too and we commit to addressing the factors that are within Government's control while at the same time appealing for attitude adjustment where necessary among our healthcare team. Together, we can ensure that the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique are receiving the best possible healthcare in the best possible environment.

Agriculture

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, my Government fully recognises the Agricultural Sector as the bedrock of our economy. A strong and vibrant Agricultural Sector, it's not only essential for food and nutrition security but also for economic growth, employment and foreign exchange earnings. In this regard, my Government reiterates its commitment to continue to support the revitalization and growth of this Sector for domestic consumption and exports. Several reforms and initiatives currently underway in the Sector will be expanded or accelerated as needed to give our farmers the tools and resources that they need to succeed in the industry.

Some of these reforms and initiatives include:

- The rollout of the Agriculture Feeder Roads Project;
- The expansion of the Farm Labour Support Programme;
- The rehabilitation of the Tissue Culture Laboratory;
- The expansion of the Plant Propagation Programme;
- The promotion of backyard gardening and youth in agriculture;

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- The promotion of new production systems and technology in the Sector including efforts to support aquaponics and agroponics;
- Further strengthening of the Sector's resilience to natural disasters and other threats including appropriate insurance mechanisms and,
- Supporting the revitalisation of the Cocoa and Nutmeg industries.

A major Private Sector initiative currently transforming our Agricultural Sector and rural communities is the CaneCo Renegade Rum Project. This important initiative is currently providing hundreds of jobs to our people and will soon provide a major boost to our exports.

Government's plans and initiatives for revitalising Agriculture must take into consideration an issue that has plagued the industry for many years; Praedial Larceny. Government has already taken bold steps to amend the Praedial Larceny Act, initiate the installation of security cameras on farms and launch a Praedial Larceny hotline. My Government will continue to take proactive action that will serve to deter persons from stealing agricultural produce and ensuring that our hard working farmers are not disillusioned by the perpetrators of this practice.

Tourism

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, our Tourism Sector which accounts for approximately 25% of our Gross Domestic Product was the hardest hit by this pandemic. With global travel grinding to a halt in early March, the Tourism Sector experienced a similar fate. This has brought into sharp focus, three important considerations, first, the need to ensure that the Sector quickly adapts to the new realities created by the pandemic; second, the need to diversify and expand our economic base; third, the need to make the Tourism Sector more resilient to shocks to ensure a stronger and more resilient recovery. To this end, my Government will aggressively pursue policies, projects and reforms to advance these and other priorities.

Regarding airlift, my Government will continue to collaborate with major airlines to see a full return of existing airlift by the end of 2021. In addition, my Government will engage other airlines with the aim of moving into new markets and filling the gap left by

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the closure of LIAT. More broadly, my Government will continue to collaborate with other industry stakeholders to facilitate the reopening and rebuilding of a stronger more sustainable and resilient Tourism Sector. In this regard, my Government applauds the Sandals Group in their initiative in reopening of the Hotel Sector. We also welcome their willingness to share their service protocols with other hotels to create consistency in the Sector's protection of the health and safety of guests and employees.

The Maurice Bishop International Airport upgrade is key to increasing the Tourism Sector's contribution to our economy. My Government through the Grenada Airports Authority will continue to roll out this important project in the coming year. The realisation of this project will see the expansion of the Maurice Bishop International Airport to include a new cargo facility, rehabilitation of the runway and bypass road, an upgrade of the passenger terminal to enhance disaster response capabilities.

Infrastructure Development, ICT and Public Utilities

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, in the current environment, construction in both the Public and Private Sectors offers the greatest potential to spur economic activity. Thousands of our young people work in the sector and will once again be able to find gainful employment. In this regard, my Government will move to expedite the implementation of its Public Sector Investment Programme focusing in projects with the greatest employment potential. Our current project portfolio has a listing of 65 projects with a total of over EC 500 million dollars. Of this amount the lion's share involves externally-financed projects for which funding has already been secured.

One of the major constraints in the area of project implementation is the lack of capacity. My Government will take immediate steps to boost the project implementation capacity in various Ministries and Departments to maintain a target implementation rate of at least 85% in the coming period. Some of the major Public Sector Projects with huge employment potential and other economic benefits that are on-going or will commence next year include:

- The St. Patrick's Road Network Upgrade;
- The Western Corridor Project;

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- The Agriculture Feeder Road Project;
- The refurbishment of the Police Barracks on Melville Street;
- The construction of the Grenville Commercial Complex;
- The reconstruction of the Simon (Seamoon) cultural centre;
- Several projects under the World Bank supported disaster vulnerability reduction project including the St. John's River Defense System; and
- The EC 125 million dollar Grenada Climate Resilience Water Project funded by the Green Climate Fund and the German Government.

In addition to these major projects, the repair and maintenance of roads, schools medical facilities and police stations will also be prioritised in 2021. Several sub-projects will also be undertaken under the Climate Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme and the Basic Needs Trust Fund including the rehabilitation of several schools.

Mr President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, as alluded to earlier the Private Sector will also play a major role in the recovery and transformation of our economy. Through the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation and the Grenada Development Bank, my Government continues to facilitate local and foreign investments aimed at boosting private participation in the economy. Currently, there are over 30 local and foreign projects with a value in excess of EC 12 billion dollars that are at various stages of implementation. These projects, covering tourist and student accommodations, medical tourism, manufacturing, agribusiness and energy will provide a major boost to our economy including the generation of approximately 4,700 construction jobs and over 3,300 permanent jobs upon completion.

Several of these projects are new developments including:

- The Grenada National Resort in Levera;
- The Range Developments Project in La Sagesse; and
- The second phase of the Silver Sands Project and Beach House Development.

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Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 9th October, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.***

Deliverance of the Throne Speech

Other fairly advanced major projects which halted during our lockdown period have now restarted. These include the CaneCo Renegade Rum Project and the Kawana Bay Resort in Morne Rouge.

My Government will continue to work assiduously with local investors and will provide financial and technical support to micro, small and medium Enterprises to actively promote growth and employment in this Sector.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, my Government will continue to pursue its digital strategy to ensure that as a country we keep abreast of developments in the ever-changing digital world. Through various projects including the Digital Government for Resilience Project, my Government will continue its efforts to harness and leverage information and communication technology to support the economic and social transformation of our country.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, in the area of energy development and public utilities, my Government will continue its efforts to diversify Grenada's energy mix into renewable sources and to reduce the cost of energy. This is crucial to improving competitiveness, enhancing the business environment and reducing our carbon footprint. The restructuring of the Electricity Sector therefore remains critical. My Government will continue to seek a pathway to reducing the cost of energy and the cost of doing business in our country.

The provision of safe water, sanitation and waste management are critical to economic development and the overall health of the population. As noted earlier, the Grenada Climate Resilience Water Project supported by the Green Climate Fund and the German Government is a major initiative for the upcoming period. This critical project will not only boost our water production but will also help guarantee a reliable supply of safe drinking water throughout Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Also, My Government will continue to roll out the CDB funded Integrated Solid Waste Management Project aimed at enhancing solid waste management in Grenada, which will see major upgrade works at the Perseverance landfill site.

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Youth, Sports and Culture

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, with close to 40% of our population under the age of 25, our young people are our greatest asset. It is imperative therefore that we harness the potential demographic dividend of this large, vibrant and creative segment of our population. In this regard, my Government will continue to invest heavily in our young people including through education and training to fully integrate them into the economy. Our young people must be empowered to participate fully in our national development and in reshaping the future of this beautiful country.

A major undertaking in the coming period will be a comprehensive review of my Government's flagship youth initiative, the IMANI Programme. In our interactions with our young people, the issue of transitioning from the program into sustainable jobs was highlighted. My Government will move swiftly to address this key concern, as well as, other shortcomings upon completion of the review. Regarding the transition to sustainable jobs, my Government is already exploring possible solutions including the establishment of a Youth Sewing Cooperative that would be involved in the manufacture of school uniforms and other clothing products. In addition, several other youth initiatives that are currently positively impacting thousands of our young people will be enhanced and or expanded as necessary to create opportunities for empowerment. My Government will also invest in the development of Sports, Culture and the Arts given their significant role in the development of our young people especially the youth.

Public Sector Modernisation

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, the Public Sector plays an important role in supporting Government's Development Agenda. In this regard, my Government intends to build on the progress already made in improving the efficiency and productivity of the Grenada Public Service. The Department of Public Administration will continue to drive the process of Public Sector transformation via several initiatives. A key initiative in this regard is promoting the digital transformation of the Public Service by leveraging technology to work smarter and build resilience across

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the entire Service. This process is facilitated by the World Bank supported Digital Government for Resilience Project.

Mr. President, Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament, regarding Public Sector Pension, my Government reiterates its commitment to working collaboratively to find practical solutions to this burning issue given its continued negative impact on the moral and productivity of the Public Service.

Housing and Social Protection

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, while significant progress has been made in reducing poverty in our country, there are many in our society who cannot provide for themselves or their families. My Government remains committed to providing adequate social safety nets for those who are deemed to be poor and vulnerable. This is consistent with my Government's philosophy that no one should be left behind. During the current crisis period, my Government not only sustained the level of benefits under its Social Assistance Programmes but it has also made it easier for persons to access those benefits by bringing the assistance to the communities and directly to the homes of the needy.

In the period ahead, my Government will maintain the improvements in the delivery of the social safety nets while ensuring that these benefits are better targeted and expanded as necessary. My Government will continue to provide support to our citizens with their housing needs, particularly the less fortunate. With support provided by the People's Republic of China, a total of 647 low-income housing units will be available for distribution during the course of next year. Added to that, my Government will continue to provide assistance under all other major housing programs including the House Repair and Soft Loan Programmes. My Government will also continue its efforts to improve gender equality and women's empowerment as well as to protect our children from neglect and abuse. My Government intends to launch a special program in the coming period to provide support to unemployed female headed single parent families.

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Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed certain gaps in our Social Protection System including the need for an Unemployment Benefit Scheme. My Government will continue to explore the feasibility of introducing such a benefit to protect our workers during crises.

Safety and Security

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, a stable and peaceful society is a necessary condition for growth and development. More importantly, my Government has a duty and a responsibility to ensure the safety and security of all its citizens and visitors alike. As a people, we have worked extremely hard to earn our country's reputation as a safe and secure place to live, work and visit. We must continue to work together to protect this hard-won achievement in the face of existing and emerging challenges to our safety and security. My Government reiterates its commitment to support the work of our police and prison services to ensure that they are fully equipped to adapt to the ever-changing challenges in the criminal and prison rehabilitation sphere.

In the period ahead, our focus will include strengthening community oriented policing, suppressing transnational criminality and enhancing border security and well as leveraging ICT in law enforcement.

Job creation

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, job creation will continue to be a top priority for my Government in the coming year. The pandemic has interrupted the steady decline in the unemployment rate. After declining by more than 15% points in the last 6 years, the unemployment rate has spiked due to the temporary layoffs triggered by the pandemic. In the coming year, my Government forecasts a reversal in this temporary spike and expects further progress in driving the unemployment rate downwards. As noted earlier the implementation of various major local and foreign investment projects will generate significant employment over the next few years.

In addition to promoting job creation and a safe work environment at the local level, my Government will continue to collaborate with the Government of Canada to

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increase participation of Grenadians in the Canada Seasonal Agricultural Program. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, my Government is confident that over 4,100 jobs will be created next year.

Strengthening Resilience

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, this year's hurricane season has proven to be a very active one as predicted. Thankfully, we have been spared any direct major impact to date. The impact of natural disasters has the potential to increase economic volatility, reduce growth potential, hinder social progress and contribute to high levels of indebtedness. Building resilience to natural disasters and climate change is therefore critical. Prior to the onset of the current pandemic, my Government was making significant progress in strengthening the country's resilience to external shocks.

As noted previously, thanks to these efforts, my Government was able to mount a decisive and comprehensive response to the current crisis including by providing critical support to affected households and businesses. My Government therefore reaffirms its commitment to further strengthen our country's resilience to climate change and other external shocks including public health emergencies. With continued support from our international partners, my Government will advance work on the development of a three pillar disaster resilience strategy covering structural, financial and post disaster resilience. The key elements of this strategy will include climate resilience infrastructure, fiscal buffers, insurance mechanisms and institutional strengthening of our crisis response framework.

Legislative Agenda

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, before I conclude, I would like to touch briefly on my Government's legislative agenda for the upcoming year. This agenda is driven by my Government's policies and priorities and outlines the key legislative actions necessary to achieve its main focus of recovery, transformation and resilience. The proposed legislative agenda will cover the following areas among others:

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*Deliverance of the Throne Speech
Motion*

- Energy development;
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Child protection;
- Business climate enhancement; and
- Labour relations.

Conclusion

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted a period of solid macroeconomic performance in our country. Notwithstanding this unfortunate setback, the pandemic has presented a window of opportunity for us to rebuild in an even better and more resilient manner. It is imperative therefore that we seize this opportunity for the continued development of our country and benefit of all our people. In this context, my Government reaffirms its major focus for this Session of Parliament as **“Towards Vision 2035: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience”**. My Government will provide additional details on its policies and programs during the 2021 Budget Presentation.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, in closing, let us pray for continued guidance and protection during this period of unprecedented challenges and go forward with the knowledge and comfort that behind every dark cloud lies a silver lining. For our Holy Scripture says, **“Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous hand”**, Isaiah 41:10.

It is therefore my distinct pleasure to declare the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament open. Thank you and may God continue to bless us all. **(Applause)**

(The Acting Clerk of Parliament collects the Throne Speech and lays same on the Table)

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I stand to move the following Motion in my name; it reads as such:

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Motion

BE IT RESOLVED that the Honourable Houses of Parliament record their thanks for the gracious address delivered today to the Houses by the Governor General;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the debate on this Address be deferred to a date to be named.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion moved by the Prime Minister.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the Senate would like to associate itself with the Motion moved by the Prime Minister.

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I associate this Senate with the sentiment of the Motion.

Question proposed by Mr. President.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Question proposed by Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Sergeant-At-Arms: All rise.

(Fanfare of trumpets)

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***Departure of the Governor-General and Accompanying Party
Adjournment***

(The Governor-General bows to the right and to the left and takes leave of the Houses, together with her ADC, Lady-in-Waiting and the Commissioner of Police)

(Inaudible comment by Mr. President)

Sergeant-At-Arms: All sit.

Mr. President: Honourable Members the House of Senate now stands adjourned, ***sine die***.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the House of Representatives now stands adjourned, ***sine die***.

The Houses adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTER

Ms. Shanta Joseph

EDITORS

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Acting Clerk)

Ms. Daniele Blackman (Administrative Secretary)