



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Second Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, 16th April, 2019

Table of Contents

Attendance	3 – 4
Prayers	5
Minutes	5 – 6
Announcements.....	6 – 7
Papers/Reports.....	7 – 8
Motions.....	9
Bills	9 – 19
Adjournment	19 – 30

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP	- Mr. Speaker (in the Chair)
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport and Implementation
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister wrf Forestry and Fisheries
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Agriculture and Lands
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	Minister wrf Tertiary Education, Skills Development and Education Outreach
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Member

ABSENT

Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	- Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology, Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development
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House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Attendance

Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Trade, Industry, Co-operatives and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister wrf Youth Development
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development and Religious Affairs
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

***Prayers
Minutes***

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:03 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Let us pray.

(House prayer was said).

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

(Prayers were said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, this Honourable House is now in Session.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 3 - Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a new Member.

Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business. I have a hard copy of the Minutes here, but it was sent, electronically. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Friday, 8th March, 2019, be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Minutes
Announcements

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George, on Friday, 8 March, 2019 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 5 - Messages from the Governor-General.

Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I have just a few announcements. One, I am to advise you that there is a book written by Sir Paul Scoon: Survival for Service, and this book is available and would be given to you at a reduced price of fifty-five dollars (\$55.00). It would be given to you for fifty-five dollars (\$55.00), at a reduced price. I was told here that it's a book that we must read. I intend to get one, personally.

Honourable Members, let me also advise that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is conducting courses: ***'The Fundamentals Programme on Parliamentary Practices and Procedures'***, and that would be delivered by the Mc Gill's University, for Small Branches. We are asked to make this available to a Parliamentarian, with up to two (2) years' experience of being a Parliamentarian, and the Course begins... the Application Form must be sent in by the 3rd of May. I think Senator Cox participated in this Programme. It is a Programme that is fully funded, even for the trip to Canada, because I think it's online and in-house. So, we want to make sure that we can participate this time again, so I am asking that, please, indicate your interest to attend and to participate in that Course.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Announcements
Papers/Reports

The CPA, Grenada Branch, held its first meeting... that is the reorganization of the CPA, Grenada Branch, held its first meeting on the 29th of March, 2019. I must commend the present and former Parliamentarians, who attended and for the very productive and open discussions that ensued.

At this time, I must also advise that we were not getting the communication indicating that Parliamentarians received the communication coming from the Parliament on the invitation, and so that threw us back, as to how to prepare for you, because, you know, in times like these, we don't want you come and leave here having been denourished in any way, and so this is helpful. So, we want to advise, please, when we send communication out, please indicate that you received it, just that would suffice, you have received it, and you will attend, and it's quite easy down at the bottom of the communications to have these.

Let me also say that the Chairman of the Committee of Privileges received from the Fiscal Responsibility Oversight Committee (FROC), a request for a thirty-day extension to submit its Report. This extension is in keeping with the Fiscal Responsibility Law and the extension, it was granted; that was for thirty (30) days.

Also, we did send to the Chairman of the CPA Women's Group asking for a Representative to attend a Conference in June in Trinidad, and we still await the Representative that would be attending; that also goes for the Youth Parliamentarian. We are late with the submission, so I would advise that we expedite on this. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen; thank you Honourable Members.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Presentation of Petitions.

Item 8 - Presentation of Papers & Reports from
Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

Papers/Reports

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Papers be laid on the Table:

- i. Annual Report of the National Insurance Board (NIS) for the year ended 31st December, 2017.
- ii. Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council for the year ended 31st December, 2017.
- iii. Annual Report of the Grenada Investment Development Corporation (GIDC) for the year ended 31st December, 2017.
- iv. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Financial Statements of the Office of the Ombudsman for the year ended 31st December, 2017.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, these Reports are laid on the Table.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.

Item 10 - Questions.

Item 11 - Urgent Questions under the Provision of
Standing Order No. 20 (1) Notice of Questions.

Item 12 - Ministerial Statements.

Item 13 - Personal Explanations.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Motions
Bills

Item 14 - Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS debate on the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor General on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Second Session of the Tenth Parliament on Monday, 19th November, 2018 was further deferred to a date to be fixed;

BE IT RESOLVED that the said Address be further deferred to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate on the Gracious Address further deferred to a date to be fixed.

Motion approved.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Ag. Clerk:

A Message from the Senate:

To the Speaker and other Members of the House of Representatives:

"Mr. Speaker, and other Members of the House of Representatives, the Senate, at its Sitting on Thursday, 21st March, 2019, considered the Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Grenada Citizenship By Investment (Amendment) Act, 2019, and made the following amendments:

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

Clause (2) was amended as follows:

Amendment of Section (2) of principal Act

(2) In subsection (a), (c), delete the word 'fully' before the word 'supported'.

Mr. Speaker: Because we have a number of amendments, we would take each amendment and address them, as we proceed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The House concurs, Mr. Speaker, with deletion of the word 'fully'.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ag. Clerk: In subsection (b) (e), replace the words 'living with the main applicant' with the words 'fully supported by the main applicant or his or her spouse'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The House concurs, Mr. Speaker, with this amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ag. Clerk: In subsection (b) (f), delete the words 'living with'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.*

Bills

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The House concurs with this amendment.

Ag. Clerk: Clause (5) was amended as follows:

Amendment of Section 11 of principal Act

In sub-section (2), delete the word 'not' after 'shall'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the case when the House does not concur, Mr. Speaker, would you permit something after, or we just go through with this, if the House does not concur with this?

Mr. Speaker: Once the House does not concur with it, do we have any debate, any description, any argument why we should or should not?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Removing the word 'not'... in all the other things, Mr. Speaker, we see some form of enhancement to the product being sold in the competitive environment, as we said during the debate, or, at least, it was not heavily affected, or it would not be heavily affected. In this case, Mr. Speaker, we were advised by the Legal Department that a person, who bought a unit under the intention and the prevailing environments, that they had three (3) years within which to operate and now we're telling those people, we're bringing them into the loop. This Act, in contemplating, should be for those persons coming after. They've never made an application, so they will be now making an application under a new environment. But, to tell those who have applied before and we have gotten the benefits out of the Unit, there

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

is an expectation, I am advised by the Legal Department, and so we could be exposing ourselves.

And, so the intention that everything that went before, maintain the environment under which you got it, so that at the end of the day, while we're trying to sell a product, we are not faced with some persons who would want to take legal thing; the legal people will call it, legal expectations, etcetera. So, we're saying it does not have that much to add to the project, because it is not a decision of the pros and the cons, and so the pros so much outweigh the con. So, you would say, well, let them do what they wish, but you're getting a great deal of benefits. So, in that context, Mr. Speaker, we would say what we do now, let it affect those from now, because the cons could be that we get a lot of, you know, legal embarrassment and that is the reason why, Mr. Speaker; because what we did at the last Sitting here was try to enhance the project in the face of competition.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Members, for that amendment, the House does not concur. Is there anyone who is against that decision? No. Then, that is the decision. The House did not concur with that amendment, so we would have to respond to the Senate, accordingly. Any other?

Ag. Clerk: Clause (6) was amended as follows:

Amendment of Section 11A of principal Act

In subsection (1) (a), subsection (2) (c), delete the word 'or'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, the House concurs with this amendment.

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

Bills

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ag. Clerk: In subsection (1) (b), (5A), replace the word 'three' with 'five'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory y Bowen: The House also concurs with this amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Ag. Clerk: In subsection (2), delete the word 'not' after the word 'shall'.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, the House does not concur with this for the same reason being given before that the 'not' there was really to say that these provisions do not, or shall not bring those persons who were before under the purview of the Act, because that's their expectation. I was there before, etcetera, I got these things; maybe we could put it in, maybe nothing will happen. But, in a litigious world, Mr. Speaker, we do not want to expose ourselves, when it would not, in any way, help us to sell more.

As I said earlier, if this would help us to sell five million, some people may decide... five million units, some people may decide well, that is not too good, or not so much a religious principle, but we will say, okay, we get something, so they take us, and we have to give up one million, we still benefit four (4), but it does not help us, in any way, to sell more. But, at the same time, it is exposing our flank for the legitimate expectation, you know, of persons. Not that they may do anything, but it is our right and duty here to protect the people. And, I think that is our main concern in not accepting the amendment.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Let us move on. Honourable Representative for the Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that has exhausted the issues related to the bill and the proposed amendments. So, I just wanted to make some general comments on the bill. Although I spoke on the last occasion, just for this occasion, I just wanted to make some general comments on CBI, again, as we bring it. And, I do apologize, but I will use every opportunity I can to speak what I believe, on a very important subject for the development of the country, and that is the CBI Programme, for two (2) reasons; one is that there are many misconceptions out there, and secondly, that I think it is important that we all come on board with what this programme is.

You know, I met with a gentleman this morning, who is in a very important Sector in our Economy, and I know he won't mind me saying who he is, but I won't at this stage, and he said to me that his view, and he is in the Private Sector, and he said that his view and he used these words that, "CBI is a new emerging Economic Sector." And, I think that was profound for me, because I believe that, as a country, we must embrace it, not only, as Members of the Political Directorate, or the Executive, but at every level of our society, we must embrace it, because, as he says, it's a new emerging Economic Sector. And, I think the importance of this programme to the Grenada economy and to the governance of the country must not be underestimated. We have two (2) limbs of the CBI Programme. There is Section 10, which contributes to the Transformation Fund and the Section 11, which adds to our Productive Sectors, be it the Tourism Industry, or the Agricultural Sector, or Manufacturing, the potential is there in Section 11 to do just that.

With respect to the Transformation Fund what occurs, and, again, I believe we have to educate our people, as to this Programme. Too many times, our people see it as a programme where people are buying passports; that's not what CBI is about, that's

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

not the essence of the CBI Programme. And, for as long as we continue to treat with it that way, we are going to limber along with it. So, I just wanted to make some comments that will help embrace it.

With respect to Section 10, the Transformation Fund, that is the limb of the CBI Programme that allows persons applying for Grenadian citizenship to make a contribution to a Fund that is there for developing the Transformational Sector. So, for example, when somebody applies for citizenship and they make that contribution that monies can go to Health, it can go to Housing.

I know, for example, in Dominica, Mr. Speaker, I was just looking this morning at a small video where an entire Housing Project was done on the basis of the CBI, the equivalent of our Section 10, so that in the rebuilding of Dominica, and the building of houses for the Dominican people, their CBI Programme was used to assist in that regard. It can be used to develop the Health Sector, for example, you can have Health Clinics built around Grenada coming out of that Transformation Fund. In other words, it's going to be used to transform the lives of our people and transform our economy. It can be used for Education. You know, I have said, and I repeat it here today that I think our Public Library, for example, is a good candidate for reconstruction through that kind of Fund, or other such Educational Institutions. The point is that the CBI Transformation Fund can be used to help the communities, and it can help the villages, it can help transform the lives of our people.

With respect to Section 11, and, again, I do this for the purpose of helping our people understand what CBI is about. With respect to Section 11, we can use it to build hotels, we can use it to build farms, we can use it to assist in manufacturing. For example, the Prime Minister recently announced a new Hotel Project in La Sagesse, St. David. There are hotels in the south of the Island. There are hotels in the north of the Island that can benefit and are benefitting from the CBI Programme, Section 11. So that, persons who want to become citizens of Grenada can contribute to Section 11

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

through which our hotels, our farms, our manufacturing sector can benefit. Again, it tells us the benefit of the CBI Programme.

You see, the question arises why does somebody want to become a citizen of Grenada, and why does somebody want to have another passport. Many of us in Grenada have several travel documents. There are people, who want ease of travel. There are persons who want to contribute to the Grenadian Economy. There are persons who want to become Grenadians, because it assists them in contributing to businesses, and there are people who want to invest in the Hotel Sector in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, you know, there is this view that persons, you know, that CBI is a bunch of people outside there who are hiding from somebody; to the contrary, Mr. Speaker. I have attended several of these Seminars and so on out in Switzerland, in China and several places, and the fact is that the persons who are desirous of becoming citizens of Grenada are the same kinds of persons, who are desiring to become citizens of the US through their CBI Programme. We forget that the US has a CBI Programme. The Canadians have a CBI Programme. Malta has a CBI Programme, many other European States have CBI Programmes; several Caribbean countries have CBI Programmes. In other words, all of these countries including the United States where you can make a contribution or you can open a business and get a Green Card, or get to live there for an extended period, because it contributes to the economic development of the United States.

Similarly, with Canada, Canada has such a Programme. I remember when I lived in Vancouver and Hong Kong was returning to China, many persons from Hong Kong used the Canadian CBI Programme to get into Vancouver and other parts of Canada. In other words, there is nothing about the CBI Programme than in and of itself makes it a bad Programme.

Now, why are we skeptical? Why are there many skeptics in Grenada, because of our bad experiences of the past. But, Mr. Speaker, we have learnt from those. The Industry has matured. Grenada has one of the strictest due diligence processes for

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

CBI. In fact, we check CBI applicants for citizenship more than we check persons who get married to a Grenadian to become a citizen. If you want to become a citizen tomorrow and you get married, as what they call Green Card marriage, you don't have the kind of substantial checks, as you have if you become a CBI citizen. The fact is, our Government and our Prime Minister has done enough to ensure that every single applicant goes through a rigorous check, to ensure that these persons are of the caliber that they can be Grenadians Citizens. So, while we cannot affect what happens to somebody after they become a citizen; so somebody becomes a citizen and then they commit a crime, you can't do anything about that, but that's the same case with somebody got married to a Grenadian and they commit a crime you can't do anything about that. But, certainly, we do rigorous checks. In fact, many people complain sometimes about the rigorous checks that we make on CBI applications, and that is because of our experience.

Our experience has been that we need to focus on due diligence, and I must commend our Prime Minister for being very, very, very careful to ensure that persons who should become citizens of Grenada through the CBI and through any other mechanism are of the quality that we believe comfortable. We have one of the lowest crime rates in the Region, if not the lowest, and we want to maintain that. Plus, we want to maintain the integrity of the programme. I have always said that our programme has compared to other Programmes. In fact, I say when I go out and speak that our Programme is the Ferrari of CBI Programs, because it might be a little more expensive, but the quality is good. You can go outside and buy a (I don't want to say a Toyota, my friend will be upset), but you can go outside and buy a Sqauda, you will get a car, but you would not get the quality that you wish. Toyotas are in range of the Ferraris, my dear brother.

So, I am saying that to say, that we focus on quality and due diligence and that is why the Grenada Programme has integrity. And, this attempt here today, what we are doing here today is aimed at improving the quality of the Programme while, at the same

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Bills

time, not compromising on the issue of due diligence, to ensure that we don't have persons coming here who we do not want. Of course, people slip through the racks, that happens every day in every Programme; in fact, in the US it happened with all of their attempts to make sure that everybody who is coming to the US is clean and happens from time to time, and every time it happens we improve on the due diligence process. And, what we have today that the Prime Minister as the Minister responsible for CBI, he has ensured that the CBI Unit is up to speed, that there is efficiency in the process, to ensure that we stick by the Law, with respect to speed, but we also never compromise on due diligence, quality and efficiency; and those are the watchwords of this Government. So, what we are doing here today is improving the quality without, in any way, in compromising on the question of due diligence.

So, I want to stand, again, in support, as I did before of the changes that are made and to thank the Senate for pointing out some for the things and some of them we accept, some of them this House didn't accept, but I think it shows that the debate and quality of the debate in both Houses, and the fact that people are paying attention. But, also I want to, again, repeat that the CBI Programme is a new emerging Economic Sector and all of us, not only the Political Directorate, not only the Executive, but all of us must embrace it, because, as we embrace it and we understand it, we make more contributions to its development. We have criticisms and we have listened to the criticisms, we make changes as these changes become necessary. But, we ensure that the CBI Programme continues to contribute, not just to building in the Tourism Sector, not just to hotels, and I have said this time and time again, but it goes in the communities, that the monies end up in the communities. The people of this country have to benefit from the CBI Programme, and its importance for economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for belaboring the point, but I just want to point out, again, so that our people understand, so that we understand what we are doing here today is not just making changes to a bill with respect to passports and all that, it is

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019 @ 9:00 a.m.***

***Bills
Adjournment***

ensuring that a very important emerging Economic Sector continues to be of high quality with no compromise on due diligence. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for the Town of St. George.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 16 - Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the House on Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it will be remiss of me not to make some brief comments on matters of concern with regards to procedure, as to how we go about with the business of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Just before you proceed, is it in relationship to the Bills.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: In some way, yes, but I thought it was necessary to raise it now rather than in the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Or would you want to, since we are moving to the Adjournment, would you want to do that at the Adjournment?

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Oh, I thought we were under the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, we did not put the question yet.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Oh, sorry, yes, okay.

Mr. Speaker: Alright. Good. Okay. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the Adjournment of this Honourable House **sine die**.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member for...

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think I have the right time. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this is an Ordinary Sitting of the House, is it? And, as such, Mr. Speaker, if we are guided by the Standing Orders, Section 6, subsection (5), it clearly speaks to 'Notice of Meetings'; and for Ordinary Meetings, I believe the time is five (5) days, but we have been very flexible with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I must express my concern with regards to the inadequate Notice being given for such meetings, especially when one is expected to make informed contribution to the debate. And, maybe this is one of the reasons why we are getting those amendments from the Senate, because they have time to look at the bill, study it, scrutinize it, whereas some of us have had no time, at all.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that only yesterday I received Notice that there is a Sitting of the House, today. And, when I noticed that through my e-mail, which sometimes, based on the service of the Internet, you may not even have access to the Internet, and then to even look at your e-mail. I called the Clerk to inquire whether there is indeed, a Sitting of the House today, and the purpose of the meeting, and he indicated that it might be to deal with some amendments from the Senate.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

Mr. Speaker, this is totally unacceptable, and it is not the first time that I have been asking for documents to be made available at a reasonable time. I am not saying six (6) days, but you can't tell me to come to a meeting... As a matter of fact I told the Clerk I would be absent and to tender an excuse on my behalf, because I felt inadequate coming to a Session where I have to speak, because here we have issues being raised by the Senate, no time to look into those issues, to determine, as the Leader of Government's Business did, whether they were relevant or not, and we are here, I am here; to just, what, to make a quorum? I do not believe this is the reason why I am here, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I want to implore that adequate Notice been given with the Order Paper being circulated. We cannot rely on sending something through the electronic media. We do not have an E-Parliament, as yet, and there is nothing in the Standing Orders that said that communication must be done through electronic media.

I have asked for paper documents, I like my paper documents regardless to the state of technology, so I can read and make my comments. Mr. Speaker, it has happened before, it's continuing to happen, and I am asking, please, that if I am to make any reasonable contribution and sensible contribution to the debate in the House, I will need to get my documents on time. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.
Honourable representative for St. Andrew North-West

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand to report to this Honourable House that the Government of Grenada will continue to put resources, personal, organizational and financial into the outgoing fight against child sexual abuse. It is a matter that continues to garner our attention, and our very deepest concerns. One of the latest cases, which have been very much in the public domain, is one of cases to many.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

We are aware that there have been some widespread comments about the results of the particular case in the Court. Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate that it will be reckless and irresponsible for the Executive to make public comments on Judicial matters. The Ministry, rightfully, has no say, no influence on the Judicial process. Our mandate is to work in the interest of families particularly children and to try to assist families, guardians and the wider community to make safer communities for all our children.

Our Ministry will provide the resources, finances, the counseling, whatever necessary to also help rescue children from troublesome situations, and to help bring perpetrators to justice. We will never be satisfied until, no child is at risk.

We are aware that we are in a difficult struggle, but warn nonetheless, we are prepared to take up with energy and purpose. It is a responsibility we undertake and it is a responsibility that we hope the wider community will share with us.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will like to also say that while I understand that it is a vexing issue and, as mothers we are also upset, but with all the emotions, we have to ensure that while we are speaking in public domain, that we do not create more harm than good on the child. And, therefore I urge our people who are writing in social media, who are commenting, let us also think about the child and the effect we can have on her by what we are doing at present. Thank you, Sir. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North-West.
Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Clarice Modeste- Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too beg your indulgence to speak on the matter that was spoken to by the... by my colleague in the Ministry of Social Development.

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

Adjournment

Mr. Speaker, I speak as a concerned Grenadian, and, perhaps, I should say first, as a human being, and also as the Parliamentary Representative from the area, which the matter is alleged to have taken place. So I feel I have a personal stake in this matter and also as the Chairperson of the Caucus of Women's Parliamentarians, especially as we have come together in that Caucus with concerns not only that, but one of our main focus would be on the whole issue of sexual abuse; not only of female, women, little girls, but also little boys, and sexual abuse of any, any person in our Tri-Island State.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier on in a meeting that we had, not in this very Place, but in this very building that we soon would be presenting a bill on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, and this is not our only concern, but sexual abuse in general is of concern to us, Mr. Speaker. As said by the Member, I cannot speak to the particular case, but the fact that it has generated discussions in various media, and because it touches us in one way or the other, I feel that while we cannot speak on certain issues, we need to raise the concern.

Mr. Speaker, at one time, not very long ago, I saw in a Tourism Advisory that Grenada was sighted as one of the countries where you had to be careful about being raped or sexually abused, and we were named among a few other Tourism destinations, as though other destinations were prefect in that regard. And, while it raised concern with me, I thought about it and I realized that, perhaps, it's because, not because we have more cases than others, but because through the Ministry and other concerned Entities, victims are been given a voice. We are no longer silent on the matter, we speak to it, because we realize that it is a scourge that has to be addressed. It is an embarrassment to us, but nevertheless trying to keep it secret would not handle the matter. And, therefore, the Minister for Social Development and her team and other stakeholders that have worked either with them, or independently, who have raised their voices, I want to compliment and commend them for being the voices of people who are

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

voiceless, people who cannot speak for themselves and, therefore, in some instances are defenseless.

Mr. Speaker, I believe since Laws come to this very Honourable House and they are determined right here, in terms of merit and what should happen within the area of discussion under the Law, I believe that there are some Laws in this country that need to be reviewed, with great urgency, very seriously. The manner in which things are done need to be looked at. There are various Entities, various Ministries that have more stakes in doing that than others, and I think it is a wakeup call for everyone, who has a responsibility to do more effectively and efficiently, so that justice can be served. Whether it's on one side, or the other, we are not taking sides. But, we believe that the scourge of sexual abuse has to be dealt with more effectively in our country. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Mark. Honourable Representative for St. George North-East.

Hon. Tobias Clement: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise in this House today, to express some concerns that I have. The Member for St. Patrick West raised a few of the issues that I have. And, probably he is going through the same thing in his mind that I have gone through for years.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity of visiting this Parliament while the Youth Parliament was being held here. And, from our youth, the level of debate that issued, I'm thinking, am I in the House that I know I am? And, a couple people after, Mr. Speaker, really spoke about the depth that the youth presented in this Parliament.

And, here we are, in this House, Mr. Speaker, can we, or should we and I think we do have the genius of our youth too, but if we are given Notice a day or two before, can that really give us adequate time to prepare and bring justice to this House? I

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

mean, if it is almost done in an *ad hoc* manner, it means, therefore, it's almost piecemeal in presentation, and then after you go to your home, you will sit and you would think, oh, my goodness, maybe this point should have been raised. So, from time-to-time, we see bills leaving this House, going to the Senate and then have to come back here, and I do believe, Mr. Speaker, you have been sitting in that Chair now for over six (6) years, and I have raised it on numerous occasions. And, now my brother is there and probably he is thinking, well, that is what I was talking about.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have another concern that I must raise in this House, and today I feel compelled to raise it. And, this is the issue to deal with the Constituency Offices. Mr. Speaker, I am almost feeling as I am at my wits end, because I do believe, Mr. Speaker, in the separation of powers. You have the Executive Branch, you have the Legislative and you have the Judiciary, and we are almost there, as checks and balances to each other.

Mr. Speaker, when I stood a long time ago, I stood, because I believe in democracy. You know, it is thirty (30) years, almost to the day that I stand when our Prime Minister took over leadership of the New National Party. And, as a child, I stood in Carriacou, my family and I and a few friends.

Mr. Speaker, those were difficult days, but I stood, 1989 to 1995; and, Mr. Speaker, those were the days, when I knew fear, because at the time in Carriacou I always hear the Political Leader said, he always remembers that in the 1990 Election in Carriacou, NNP got fifty-nine (59) votes. I stood the test of time there. It was Sir Nicholas Braithwaite; it was Dick Lenny; it was Joan Purcell; it was Michael Caesar; it was Honourable Elvin Nimrod, but I stood, because I believed in our Democracy, and I believed that if I took a stand, at that time, that we would rise to the occasion.

But, Mr. Speaker, I rise today here with a profound sense of regret that I have to speak that the way that our Parliamentary Offices are being administered that I have to call it into question. I do not know if it's vis-à-vis, or it's St. George North-East alone, but it seems that we are going through a very difficult and trying time, and it is, maybe, Mr.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

Speaker, that I might have to call this bluff. Mr. Speaker, I do not know, but, maybe, I should put this House on notice that probably when I come back here on another occasion it might be from a different standpoint and that is really being contemplated by me today.

Mr. Speaker, you know I spent ten years in Texas and one of the favorite games that we learned to play is 'Texas Hold 'Em'. It is a game of Poker, a high stakes game. Mr. Speaker, I believe we are at the point now, when I might just have to call that bluff. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. George North-East. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on some of the contributions made by the Members, in particular, to 'Notice', Mr. Speaker. We do apologize that the two (2) Members being in the House, maybe, not maybe, Mr. Speaker, at times, we ourselves know the urgency of certain matters, and we do meet and try to reach here. And, we ourselves, Mr. Speaker, do, at times, do give up with respect to the Standing Orders. Yes, we must conform to it, and the one day and two days' Notice, Mr. Speaker, we must apologize to certain Members, who, Mr. Speaker, perhaps, really feel aggrieved of the fact that they are not given the full quantity of days' Notice, as the Member for St. Patrick West indicated, Mr. Speaker.

We are moving to amend the Standing Orders, accordingly, with respect to the second item, Mr. Speaker, electronic distribution. And, the Members of this Honourable House did make a commitment that we should so amend the Standing Orders to provide for all distribution of documents to be electronically driven.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, many of the same Members went out on the international Seminars and they would realize that we are way behind, with respect to electronic distributions of data. In many Houses of Parliament throughout the world,

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

Adjournment

those under the British system, those under different systems, they distribute everything electronically, Mr. Speaker. The only thing you may see in the House is a piece of document where the person will write themselves in order to collate their memory and to deliver on their contribution.

We are far into this, Mr. Speaker. At the last meeting, I do believe that the Member for St. George North-East was also present at the last meeting that we had on the Standing Orders Committee, where we reiterated the move to electronic distribution of data.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we are ready, and he is a Member of the Standing Committee, and I believe we are ready to come to this Honourable House with the Motion to amend the Standing Orders and we do believe, at that point-in-time, Mr. Speaker, everyone will be aware that documents will be submitted electronically.

Of course, there are provisions in those Standing Orders, the amendment to come, to supply those who really need it; and who can't move on with the electronic system, perhaps, they can't read the computer screen, it may be affecting their eyes and so forth, so provisions will be made there, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the other sentiments, Mr. Speaker, we do wish that, you know, all of our Members, we do have our individual rights, and our individual thinking, and as Leader of Government's Business, and even my relationship and the position that I hold within the Political Organization, I am privy to a lot, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to urge all of us, you know, really, to think of the Nation, think of our actions and so forth, and to think of the Constituents, in particular, and everything we do should be the benefit for our people, in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for St. George North-East mention about certain issues, hardship borne and hard times endured. But, I, Mr. Speaker, could not only write a book, Mr. Speaker, I could write a set of books on sacrifices made and pounding given, in particular, Mr. Speaker. And, the way I respond is simply to say that I have a Constituency, and I always look back, Mr. Speaker, to what Grenada... what

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.***

Adjournment

Grenada did for me, Mr. Speaker. And when I say Grenada, the poor people throughout Grenada, those in St. Mark, St. John, not because I am from a different Parish, or a different Constituency, but they laboured, Mr. Speaker, to set the groundwork. And, everything I am today is because certain people endured and endured difficult times, Mr. Speaker.

I know, personally, Mr. Speaker, we would not be in the economic position that we are in today, if I did not stand up, Mr. Speaker, and went up to London to defend this beautiful Nation, Mr. Speaker. We would have been derived \$1.5b, Mr. Speaker, and in other Jurisdictions and, in other places, I defended this Nation to the ridicule. And, even today, Mr. Speaker, you hear some people saying that, oh, it was others who were responsible for certain decisions. And, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, I would be repeating the same thing again, Mr. Speaker. I will be defending, God's willing, this Nation again, abroad, together with a couple of our other citizens. We would be defending this Nation abroad, again, not because of things we did, but because we have to make the sacrifice, and we continue to get the blows.

So, I just want to remind all my colleagues, to let us think, sacrifice. And, in that context, Mr. Speaker, we can say no more except to accept our responsibilities, with respect to the short Notices, but, again, that is a blow we have to take, because what we did here today, in particular, Mr. Speaker, is something that the Member for the Town of St. George mentioned that we are in a position, an economic position, and we must try to move, speedily. Yes, so when it is necessary, we must take the blows and show that we move forward. This now must go back to the Senate and the world, the environment out there has been waiting on this for over one year. So, we thought that we must move, Mr. Speaker, so I do apologize for the short Notice in this particular case, and in all the other cases. And, I empathize, knowing the standing of the two (2) Members, you know, outside the Executive. And, so while we, therefore, will give up and we know exactly, we must always take their position into consideration that they are outside the Executive and they must know.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

I meet with them, Mr. Speaker, regularly, not over the last two (2) weeks, because we were very busy, but every Tuesday, so that they can be updated. They were busy, I was busy, but I always make it my duty, once one could attend, I would meet with them to bring them up to speed, Mr. Speaker, as Leader of Government's Business, in the House of Representatives.

So, we are making no excuse. We will be looking at the Standing Order, we will make the necessary amendment to ensure that electronic, the distribution of documents is an order in the Standing Orders, and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we will do what we have to do to improve the Notices given, particularly, for the two (2) Members who are outside the Executive. We appreciate their concerns, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time, we are saying that we are here for Grenada, and sacrifices are all part of it. In this Easter Season, who made the greatest sacrifice? I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Members, I too share the concern of the urgency with which we sometimes have to move to have Sittings of the House, because I believe that you want to have healthy debates on all the issues relating to the House, and have enough time to speak to the Ministries that you head, and have enough time to speak to your Constituents, who caused you to be here, and we would not be able to do that, if we did not have enough time to prepare.

So, we are hoping that we would find the way to follow the Standing Orders, where we would be able to set specific times for our Sittings, so we know beforehand, that even if a bill is not to be debated, we can still have the Ministerial Statements, and we can still have the Parliamentarians having a time to speak to their Constituents, so that we can keep the people that we represent informed.

So, I would be fore-holding further discussions with the Leader of Government's Business and to see how we can ensure that we give enough time to have things done according to the Standing Orders, which we are in the process of amending. So, I

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 16th April, 2019.

Adjournment

heard your concerns, and I share the concerns. And, we will do all in our power to improve on the delivery of our function of this Parliament.

Honourable Members, I must take time to wish you Holy Easter. I think, to some, we are now in the Holy Week. There is a Holy Week, you know, the whole week is supposed to be Holy. You are supposed to be Holy for the whole week, and continue this holiness afterwards. We have no criteria to measure the level of your holiness, so we say to you, just look at the man in the mirror, and determine for yourself how holy you are from now on. It is a good time to do some deep reflection and to commit to the will of our Creator. His love and mercy for everyone is demonstrated in the great gift of His son Jesus Christ. So, as we roll the stones away, the stones that lock us in, somehow, let us lift our eyes from whence cometh our help. I wish you all the best for the Easter Season.

At this time, Honourable Members, the question is that this Honourable House now stands adjourned **sine die**.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned at 10:13 a.m.

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