



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Third Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(Special Sitting)

Friday, 17th April, 2020

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Attendance

Michael Pierre, MP, MBE	- Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
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
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 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 Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister wrf Tertiary Education, Skills Development and Education Outreach
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development and Religious Affairs
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business

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Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
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)	- Leader of the Opposition

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Prayers

Announcements

The Special Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good morning, Members. Let us pray.

(House Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Let us all say together, the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, the Special Sitting of the Tenth Parliament is now in Session.

(Sound of Gavel)

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 3 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members let me extend to you a special welcome, in these very special times. Let me take this opportunity to extend a very special welcome to the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in the House. The Honourable Tobias Clement has taken the Oath, as Leader of the Opposition, in the House of Representatives, and it is a historic moment. It is the first time that I saw the Leader of the Opposition in mask while taking the Oath, and we are all in masks today. So, I want to extend to you a special welcome and congratulations and pray that your contribution to this Honourable House would be an Honourable one. Please accept my congratulations, as a Member of the House of Representatives and Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable Members, if you notice that we have our computers, so we are moving towards e-Parliament, and we are almost there. So, we all have our laptops; is

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Papers / Reports***

that what we call it, our tablets, or whatever name we give it, but we are moving towards saving the trees and the paper. And, so we trust that this move is in the right direction, and that we would be a more proactive Parliament because of this.

Today, our seating arrangement is slightly different; because of the COVID-19 and the Protocol to keep our distances from each other (the physical distance), we have extended the Chamber to include the Gallery; so the Gallery is part of the Chamber today; and so it is not a matter of seniority, it is just a matter of positions. So, we want to extend to you a special welcome for your understanding in this special situation.

Let me say that the microphones are placed... you don't have to stay by the microphone; you can go further back, if you want to. If you feel the distance is not enough, and you want to go further back, you can do that. But, when it is time that you wish to speak, you come forward towards the microphone and do your speaking.

Honourable Members, I wish us all God's special blessings, as we give thanks to Him for His many kindness and blessings to us. It is difficult times, but in difficult times, difficult decisions have to be made and heroes are recognized. Thank you.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 4 - Presentation of Papers & Reports from Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me, I, too, would want to extend congratulations and welcome to one of our Parliamentary colleague, the Honourable Tobias Clement for receiving the position of Leader of the Opposition, and I want to extend to him best wishes for his contribution, that we pray will ensure the House advances in all our endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Item 4, I wish to move that the following Papers be laid on the Table:

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- i) Minutes of the proceedings of a Meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance held via Zoom platform on Tuesday, 14th April, 2020;
- ii) Compliance Assessment Report, Supplementary Budget, 2020; and
- iii) The Supplementary Budget, 2020.

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 5 - Motions

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we take Motion 5 (b) before 5 (a), and this is for practical reasons, Mr. Speaker. Motion 5 (a) will certainly pave the way for Motion 5 (b).

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, we are going to take Motion 5 (b) and it would precede Motion 5 (a). Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion 5 (b) standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS there has been a worldwide outbreak of the Corona Virus disease, (COVID-19) and on 11th March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a global Pandemic;

AND WHEREAS on 22nd March, 2020, the Ministry of Health of the Government of Grenada confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada;

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AND WHEREAS on the 30th day of March, 2020, the Governor-General, by Proclamation, pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS Section 10 (1) of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, No. 29 of 2015, ("the Act") provides that the Minister for Finance may suspend, by Order, for a period not exceeding one fiscal year, the fiscal rules, targets and corrective measures under sections 7 and 8 of the Act, where *inter alia* public health epidemic has occurred, for which a state of emergency has been declared by the Governor-General pursuant to section 17 (1) of the Constitution, if the Minister determines that implementation of the fiscal rules, targets or corrective measures would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic or financial stability;

AND WHEREAS section 10 (2) of the Act provides that any other made pursuant to section 10 (1) shall be subject to negative resolution of the Parliament;

AND WHEREAS the Minister proposes to make such a Resolution;

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient that the Order be laid before the House of Representatives;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives that the Order, as set out in the Schedule of this Resolution, be laid.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the negative Resolution, as we all know, permits the Minister to implement, by Order, and that Order will take effect and will be carried upon and will have the weight of regulations, except that any Member, while the Order is in effect, may debate the Order, and if the House, or the Parliament so decides, then that Order will be terminated. But, if the House says otherwise, that Order will continue until the Minister makes another Order.

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In this case, Mr. Speaker, the Order is in effect and so by negative Resolution, we are laying it so that we can have the opportunity to say whether or not it should continue. But, we must be very mindful that negative Resolution means that it is in order, as soon as it is made and gazetted by the respective Minister.

Why is it necessary, Mr. Speaker? Unprecedented times, we see what is happening around the world and we recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the rules were made to ensure that we advance, fiscal stability; and when we were passing this, there were only two (2) countries we see in the Region with such an Act, Mr. Speaker. And, Grenada advanced further to put in its Fiscal Responsibility Committee, the FROC Oversight Committee.

So, what are the rules that we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, that we passed, some years back? The Primary Balance, after Grant, percent of GDP, it must not be less than 3.5%, the Primary Balance. What is happening today, Mr. Speaker? With everything that is going on, we looked at China. They went down nearly 7%, with the United States even further behind. So, when we passed this Act, we put what we call an 'escape' Clause, because all these rules must be breached, and we cannot continue to operate with them, because we would just continue to go down and down and down. So, we recognized that a long time ago, when we passed this Act.

What is it now, Mr. Speaker? It must not be less than 3.5. Remember the Minister for Finance and all the staff in Finance would say many moons now, many days, we have not collected one cent; it's not because the people do not want to pay, but because we are at a state where we do not want you to congregate, we do not want you to move around, and so we had to take certain measures. It should not be less than 3.5; and we were meeting that target, Mr. Speaker, but it was just 0.1%, so we are under it, we cannot meet it.

The other, Mr. Speaker, the Wage Bill, a lot of us don't know that, 9%, not exceeding 9% of GDP. What is it already in the short space of time? 9.9, and if continue and our GDP continues to fall, where would it be? Just now it would be 10 and 11, as a percentage, because you have to continue to pay the people, not because they

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are not working, not because they must stay home because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

Another Rule, the Primary expenditure, less capital grants, they should not exceed 2%, Mr. Speaker. You know what it is now? 21.6%. So, the Rules have gone haywire, because of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the Private Partnership arrangement, well, we never had that, so it should not exceed 5%, but it is 0; that one was not affected, Mr. Speaker. And, the Public Debt, the percentage of GDP, we are targeting 55; well, as of a couple days, when this was prepared, it was 58%, and we know that at the start of the year, it was in that vicinity, but now, Mr. Speaker, after a month or the next month, it's up in the 60s and going. So, our target is 55, so we recognize we must change these things, Mr. Speaker.

So, the suspension of the Fiscal rules that we are proposing today for targets, Section 10 (1) and subsection (2) of the FRL, which speaks to the 'escape' Clause, which state that **“the Minister may, by Order, suspend, for a period, not exceeding one (1) year.”** And, Mr. Speaker, we are asking now for the Rules to be suspended for a period not exceeding one (1) year.

We can go ahead, if this thing continues, it may require for us to go for a further year. We may have to do so. We hope and pray to God that it would not, Mr. Speaker. So, a public health epidemic was specifically mentioned in the Act, Mr. Speaker, as to a lot of other areas where we know that once these things happen, Mr. Speaker, the whole Economy goes haywire. A natural disaster is another one; a war is another point where you can suspend the Rule, Mr. Speaker. So, this must be passed, Mr. Speaker, in both Houses, and so now we are asking this Honourable House to allow the Minister for Finance, particularly, there is a Supplementary Budget coming up, and to operate outside of the norm, so that it can bring our country out of the doldrums where it is, so that we can help our people, Mr. Speaker. I, therefore, propose the Resolution, as put forward, to this Honourable House. **(Applause)**

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Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George North-East and Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me, at this point-in-time, express my heartfelt thanks for the messages that I have received from all over, friends, colleagues, family. I want to, at this moment, thank my God and my family for giving me the courage to stand here today to speak on this Motion. I know we are not living in ordinary times. Really and truly it is extraordinary.

Honourable Members, first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, at a time like now in our country and throughout the world, where lives are threatened, we must be mindful of our brothers and sisters. We have to find the courage to do the right things by our people.

Mr. Speaker, when the Supplementary Estimates come, I will speak more towards that, the Stimulus Package. But, even as we suspend the Fiscal Responsibility Act for now, I support the suspension, in that, I know that our Economy is decimated, and today, we cannot talk about revenues or loans or grants, but it is what it is today. And we see that it is like the bottom fell off and reasonably so, because of COVID-19 we are in this economic doldrum today.

But, even while we do so, Mr. Speaker, I will urge for us, as we suspend, we still be mindful that even the little that we have, the little that we are going to get, the little that we are going borrow, we are prudent with our people's finances, or the Nation's finance.

So, as I urge us here again, as we keep safe, and as we do right by our people, that we do the right thing to satisfy and to bring back our Economy, when the time comes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Members.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Parliamentary Representative for St. George North-West and Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my apologies for being slightly late for this Session. Just to say that I stand to, of course, support the

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negative Resolution, as moved by the Leader of Government's Business and Parliamentary Representative for St. George South-East.

Mr. Speaker, I think I would leave back most of my comment related to this and other aspects of today's important Parliament Session for the next item, which I would be moving, the Motion for the Supplementary Appropriation, that's the Stimulus Package, which I think is one of the main functions in today's exercise. So, I just want to formally say that I support, wholeheartedly, the Motion for the suspension.

Mr. President: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Finance and Prime Minister. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, noting what was earlier said, I think it behooves me now to read the Order. The Leader of the Opposition really pointed to a fact that we must not stray too far; and it is not the entire Act that has been suspended, it is only sections 7 and 8, which gives us these Rules, only the Rules that have already gone haywire. But, we must still be prudent. We must still prioritize with what we are doing, and we must, per se, steer the course, in the other areas where we can.

So, the Order says: Mr. Speaker, **"Suspension of sections 7 and 8 of the Act,"** all the rest to effect.

"The application of sections 7 and 8 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, No. 29 of 2015 is hereby suspended for the fiscal year ending on the 31st day of December, 2020, in the light of the State of Emergency declared by the Governor-General, on the 30th day of March, 2020, pursuant to section 17 (1) of the Constitution in response to the confirmation of cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the State of Grenada"; signed by the Minister, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell. So, it's section 7 and section 8. We have 10 (1), 10, (2), we have a lot of Sections, Mr. Speaker.

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The Ministry of Finance and the Government must continue to follow those, so with the good observation made by the Leader of the Opposition, we just want to take the opportunity to let the public know that the Act is in full effect except for those that we cannot meet until the first year, and, perhaps, we might have to go into a second year, God forbids.

I, therefore, recommend this Resolution to this Honourable House for its passage. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of Government's Business.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I stand to move the following Motion in my name, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Appropriation 2020 Act, No. 10 of 2019 provided for the State of Grenada for the year 2020;

AND WHEREAS it has become necessary to provide additional Budgetary support for the rest of the year 2020;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Supplementary Estimates for the period April 2020 to December 31st, 2020 be approved.

(Clerk converses with the Speaker in private)

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, as this is a Money Motion, I wish to signal to this Honourable House of Representatives that I have the consent of the Governor-General to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, before I go into this, let me first, recognize the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Tobias Clement, the Representative for St. George North-East in his new role; and I make the point that while the New National Party is partly responsible for the Member being here, he has that right in our present construct, to be in his new role, as he has so indicated and agreed to. I, therefore, like the Leader of Government Business, look forward to meaningful exchanges for the benefit of the people of this country.

I also want to recognize the rest of my Parliamentary Colleagues for their presence here today. I know the difficulties and the problems that all of them have had to go through in the last several weeks, and even being here today, the fact that we are keeping the six-feet distance in our construct, the sitting arrangement is an indication that this is not business, as usual.

I know for them, most of them have been, in fact, all of us, have been out in the field, politically, throughout our individual Constituencies for all the years of our involvement, and I have a lot of this.

So, this new environment of having to be in your homes, literally, for twenty-four (24) hours is a difficult proposition. I can tell you how difficult it is for me, and I know how difficult it is for my colleagues and for almost every citizen throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So, I want to recognize the sacrifices and contributions of my colleagues.

Also, to you, Mr. Speaker, the Clerk and the staff of the Parliament, all of you, for what you are going through. All of us have to bear the pain of the present situation confronting our country.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today, basically, for two (2) vital reasons, namely to debate and approve the Stimulus Package and all associated Parliamentary approvals

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that are required for the same and to enact emergency legislation that guide this particular period of governance of our county.

Therefore, in this presentation, we will be addressing the former issue of the Stimulus Package. Mr. Speaker, permit me to comment, briefly, on where we came from, economically, over the last six (6) years, as it anchors and puts into context our ability to provide support today.

Mr. Speaker, we will recall that Grenada was in financial peril, when we took office in 2013, and with a strong social partnership that was established, and that will even have to be enhanced today as a country, we rose from ashes and was able to experience seven (7) consecutive years of economic growth, reduced Debt to GDP Ratio from 108%, in 2013, to 57.3% to the end of 2019.

Further, Mr. Speaker, unemployment moved from over 40%, in 2013, to 15.9% to the end of 2019, and the Government realized five (5) years of consecutive surpluses.

(Applause)

These strides, Mr. Speaker, made overdraft facilities from the banks for Government a thing of the past. Fiscal space and fiscal resilience were recurring themes, as we sought to exercise prudent financial management. It is only this prudent financial management and adhering to our fundamental rules, Mr. Speaker, that could be responsible for our ability to provide some opportunity and support to our people in this period of greatest need. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, needless to say, these are unprecedented times, and in many respects, we are in uncharted territory. No one I have heard speaking in the last several weeks has said that this is not the strangest period of their lives. You talk to people close to one hundred years old and, clearly the younger ones; they always say the same thing. They have never had to go through a period like this. They went through many storms. They went through plagues and problems, but nothing prepares anyone for what is taking place in our global community with this virus. And, the evidence of this is watching the Developed Countries, with all their resources, their

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ability to print money as they wish and we can't print, they are experiencing enormous difficulties and problems.

The scourge of this coronavirus, Mr. Speaker, has, therefore brought the world to its knees. First World Health Systems are buckling to pressures of the attacks of this unseen enemy. Therefore, we have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to protect the people of this country, at all costs, and we have made every effort to do so. However, we need the support and partnership of everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I make this point because I believe this is crucial for us. I don't see how anyone would be thinking of self-aggrandizement, whether it's financially, politically, socially or otherwise.

In fact, a quote I got this morning in listening to a political Historian, and he was saying that in looking back at History, he saw five (5) periods where Leaders of this country, in the last Century and in America was being asked to lead in serious crises. And, he mentioned one specifically, Lyndon Baines Johnson, after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, in 1963, November; and he said, the morning after he became President, one of his staff came in and told him, **'we need to plan for the way forward for your Presidency'**; and he told him that the Civil Rights Bill will be his number one priority, and that the Bill, which many believed had a lot to do with the assassination of John F. Kennedy, because the South at that time, the majority of people were not prepared, the South and the Mid-West for any such change. And, it would be recalled that Lyndon Baines Johnson was the Senator from Texas and John Kennedy was killed in Dallas, in Texas. And, he said his first priority was to make sure that not a comma in the Civil Rights Bill would be changed. The gentleman said to him: **"President, remember, John was assassinated while campaigning in Dallas for Election, you have an Election to fight soon, and you know Texas where you come from."** He said to him, **"let me say this to you, if the Presidency of the country was to be treated as something just to win, then I shouldn't be here, I shouldn't accept it."** He said, **"the Presidency has to be used to improve the lives of people and to**

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protect people and to do what is right; so, if the Election comes and we didn't succeed, so be it, history would record us as doing what is right.” (Applause)

I say this today, because the team of men and women in this Parliament clearly understands this, that this is not a time to be thinking about whether you're going to win the next Election, how many political points you can score. This is not a time for a businessman to attempt to profiteer from the pain of people, Mr. Speaker. It is not a time for us to feel that we should think only of ourselves and feeding ourselves and forget our neighbours and our brothers and sisters out there, who are under pain.

Mr. Speaker, it is a time for all of us to batten down and come to terms that we are here, at this time, for a reason and for different persons in positions of leadership, whether it is in the Parliament, whether it is in business, whether it is in the Trade Union Movement, in the Church Organizations. It doesn't matter where, Mr. Speaker, you lead, we are all Leaders in our own right, and all of us have to come to this Table to worship. Mr. Speaker, that worship is about the people of our country, saving the people of this Land. So, who want to play games, play games; whether they play games in Grenada, or outside of Grenada, they can play games. This is about safeguarding the lives of the people of our country.

Mr. Speaker, the virus did not bring along sickness alone to our shores. It brought us serious, serious economic challenges, as we have been forced to close our borders. Mr. Speaker, we had to close our borders, and, therefore, the economic pain that that has caused is quite enormous. This has resulted, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, in mass business closures and complete shutdown of the Tourism Sector, in particular. The lives of our people are tremendously affected, and as a responsible Government, while we cannot support everyone, we must provide relief to those hardest hit.

Mr. Speaker, I make this point and I want to elaborate, because there is a perception, Mr. Speaker, that the Government must help and give all of us what we want; and those of us, who are in positions to deal with the problems of the day even turning to Government and saying what is there for me? There are some of us, who have done well, financially, in the last several years, whether it is in the business field, in

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the Construction Sector, the Retail Sector, but you are calling to ask, what can Government do. Do like John Kennedy, **“what can I do for my Country at this stage?”** I would expect this is what we will be talking about, Mr. Speaker. We have to come to terms with this. We have to zero in on the poorest of the poor. I have heard people, and that is a good sign, who are asking, and want to know whether we have established an account, so that they can make a contribution, and these are not rich people, ordinary folks, they are not asking for what position I could get, or what title they can hold at this time, that's irrelevant; what can I do to save people at this time? This is what all of us should be thinking of.

Mr. Speaker, on the 20th March, 2020, I gave a National Address, presenting the Government's intention to provide relief to Sectors hardest hit, and the people that were marginalized by the effects of COVID-19.

It is important to recognize that while persons are at home due to lockdowns, there are persons, who will have no income after we re-open due to the impact of the Tourism Sector closure, which would last long after, for that period after we have gone back, hopefully sooner than later, to business.

Mr. Speaker, this is, therefore, the purpose of the Supplementary Estimates brought before all of us here today. Mr. Speaker, before I delve into the substantive elements of the Appropriation Bill that seeks to offer some relief to the people of this country, I must say this; the ability of the Government to pay Public Officers in this time, most of them, who are home for the last several weeks, through no decision of theirs, to meet all our Public Sector Wage Bill to the tune of twenty-two million dollars (\$22 m) a month support, and to support the Social Programmes, which, Mr. Speaker, we expect to be even more than before, because even in the United States, people are seeing long lines of people going to Food Banks, and people are saying it is the first time they have seen most of those persons. Some of them, they are glad they have the mask in their face, because they don't really want people to see them, that's how bad the situation is, but they need Food Banks at this time.

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Mr. Speaker, another mandatory expenditure to support key Sectors of the economy in this time, we have to do so. Now, the question is, where is the revenue? You know, it is amazing, even revenue that people collected for the Government, they are asking whether they can hold it back. Now, if you don't pay what Government normally gets, and you collect from the Government, not some tax as Corporate Income Tax, if you don't pay it, then where is the Government going to get money? In an economy where the taxation on income is very limited, or almost non-existent, if that is not paid, then where is Government going to get the money to meet the payroll of twenty-two million dollars (\$22 m), in three (3) months that would be sixty-six million dollars (\$66 m) and counting, and I am only talking about Public Sector payroll not the other commitments of Government; and some people are asking, as someone indicated to me, that we should not just be paying the workers some of the salaries, we should include in that calculation the service charge that they normally get when they're working. It is amazing, Mr. Speaker. I say this for what it is worth.

So far, Mr. Speaker, for a normal month, the Customs averages about thirty-something million dollars. Today is the 16th of the month, so half of the month has gone already. I don't think the Customs has reached five million dollars yet. You see what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker.

The Inland Revenue that normally brings in over thirty-something million dollars, in fact, this month, it was thirty something million dollars, thirty-two or thirty-three; only eight million dollars, when I checked this morning. So, Mr. Speaker, you see the deficit, what it means. So, if we project that they reach about fifteen million dollars each, we are talking about thirty million dollars just in revenue for the month in just two areas.

I have to say this, Mr. Speaker, to, at least, reduce people's expectation that the Government has some bank, or some tranche where they can just go and pick up some money. It is not so. We, all of us, must concentrate on helping the most marginalized.

We will get out of this, Mr. Speaker. I am confident. And, the time will come, when we will do some stimulus to provide more opportunities and more development and more jobs and more income and people will benefit from this. So, the days for

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business activities and other areas of normal successes and making the genuine profits (and they have that right), that will come back, Mr. Speaker. But, this is the time for sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, at the last Budget Presentation, I listened to some persons, who are aspiring to be Leaders of this country, questioning the relevance of the downward trajectory of the Debt to GDP Ratio. I heard those calls. And, the only reason I am making this point today is to demonstrate why we are here today and why we are doing what we are able to do; so, they were criticizing the Debt to GDP Ratio.

I was even more concerned, Mr. Speaker, when certain other Leaders that should know better, were calling flippantly for the amendment of the Fiscal Responsibility Law, to merely facilitate increased payment to certain Sectors of workers in the country. Mr. Speaker, while I understand it is always easy to speak, when you do not have responsibility, leadership, Mr. Speaker, is not about doing and saying what is popular, but it is doing what is right in the interest of all concerned.

Fiscal responsibility has been and will continue, Mr. Speaker, to be the watchword of this Government, as it allows for the building of buffers that are required in times like these. It is in my view that fiscal responsibility should not end with this Government's time. Future Governments of this country, Mr. Speaker, and future Oppositions will have no choice, but to support the Fiscal Responsibility Law, because it brings with it significant opportunities, even in the worst times, for this country.

Mr. Speaker, with all the noises, this Government has stood firm, because we have a responsibility and we take that responsibility very seriously, and because of this, today we can provide payroll support to qualifying hoteliers, restaurants and bars, small Travel Agents, funds that are directed to assist in paying the salaries of the averaged workers in those business categories for a period of three (3) months in the first instance. And each of those businesses, Mr. Speaker, is supposed to fill out the forms that are online and available and most of them have done so, Mr. Speaker. I would, in fact, give the total here today before I finish this presentation, and they have to indicate what their payroll is like, and that workers are the ones, at certain categories would be

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paid, and that goes for every business, Mr. Speaker, that has, in fact, in the Hotel Sector, speaking specifically, who are having difficulties, because of the present situation, and they would fill out the form, Mr. Speaker, and the payments, hopefully, we are thinking that we want to make sure we can pay it later this month, maybe in the next four/five/six days, maximum, because we have staff that is working night and day. And, the amount of work that has been done by these committed Public Servants need to be given a special medal for that, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, additionally, income support, and by the way I need to make the point, Mr. Speaker. The Government, based on the numbers we have seen, have agreed to pay forty percent (40%) of the salaries of those workers because as I would point out later, we expect the Business Community, the business involved would also have to make its contribution, that is, paying workers for holidays. In other words, the Unions would have to be involved in that process because everybody has to make sacrifices. And, Leave that workers earned would be expected to be paid before Government chips in with its contribution for those workers. In other words, some hotel staff might be supported by Government, maybe in the second month, some might even be the third month, not necessarily from the first month, Mr. Speaker, based on what the workers in that business are entitled to, as far as days are concerned that they have earned.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, income support will also be provided to the Tourists Vendors. That's a big headache because trying to get all the Tourists Vendors who are attached to the NIS and paying their, meeting their responsibility, that's been a major problem. It was much easier with the Hotel and Business Sector in getting the data to work with. But, it's been a trial effort, major effort, Mr. Speaker, in getting. Taxi Operators were not that difficult either, most of them are associated with some Body or official Union. Bus owners also would be supported, but the monies must go, specifically, also to pay the driver and hopefully conductors, and other hospitality related services. Special consideration is also given to the Market Vendors for the period of disruption during the state of emergency. Hopefully, based on what the Ministry of

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Health would be advising, as this ends, then of course, the Market Vendors would be able to earn their livelihood as usual. So, we don't expect this would be a monthly support. It most likely would be a one-off support that they will be getting. Again, trying to find out the list of Market Vendors has been a major, major, trial effort.

Mr. Speaker, the expenditure in this area is expected to be approximately twenty million dollars (\$20m). To date and you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, we said twenty two million dollars (\$22m) every month for public workers, so you keep adding, Mr. Speaker, and you would see what the problem is. To date we have received applications from two hundred and sixty-eight (268) businesses. I assume that some still would be coming through in the next few days for payroll support and eight hundred and seventy-five (875) individuals applying for income support and that's the status of where we are and that include, of course, the bus drivers and owners and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I must make this point, the Government is unable to pay the full salary of those workers and should not be expected to do so. It's our expectation therefore, that the NIS contribution would also, with the workers, would be part of this process because these are the workers resources and with the help of the Minister responsible on the NIS Boards, discussions, and the Ministry of Finance, discussions are being held to look at ways in which the workers would be able, those who are not, who have to be home and unable to work would be given some sort of compensation and there would be some legislation enacted to allow the NIS to be able to do precisely this.

The Moratorium, Mr. Speaker, provided on debt to the Financial Sector and that's where the businesses come in, the Banks have agreed to that, married with other financial opportunities that the Government will make available, should provide some serious financial space for businesses in the interim. In other words, not all businesses will get payroll support, people like the hairdressers, barbers and so on, they're not required to have major staff, so they will be able to benefit from the Small Business Loan which conditions would be lower than the present condition for qualifying for those loans and they can use it to meet some payroll support also to their staff. The

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objectives are to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the workers are given some income during this time. We wish also, Mr. Speaker, to encourage all businesses in the listed Sectors who can support their workers to do so, because we will be evaluating the request based on immediate financial standing of those Entities.

Mr. Speaker, we are increasingly concerned about the survival of our small indigenous hotels that do not have the backing of the International Partners. Every effort within the Government powers must be made to protect them from failure during this time. It's extremely crucial that we do so.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, added to the payroll support, we have expanded the small hotel facility at the Grenada Development Bank by seven million dollars (\$7m) under the following relaxed terms and conditions to provide short term financing to these Entities to meet their immediate needs. The basic terms of this facility is as follows: the interest rate would move from 3.5% to 2% in the first year; there will be a waiver of bank and legal fees for the period April to June 2020; the funds also, Mr. Speaker, can be used for payroll and other operational expenses.

Mr. Speaker, we have also expanded the soft financing facility at the Small Business Section of the Grenada Development Bank by 5 million dollars on the following conditions: unsecured loans, now it's up to \$7,000, persons can now apply for unsecured loan without the kind of security required normally up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000); the maximum amount accessible under this fund used to be \$25,000, we're now raising it up to \$40,000; reduction in interest rate, interest rate used to be 6%, it will now be 3% for the development and expansion in key sectors. This, Mr. Speaker, is geared at supporting a small business owner, be it a hairdresser, a barber, nail technician, a farmer, fisherman or clothing store to obtain funds to help support their families during this time.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to highlight that everyone in some way has been affected by the effects of COVID-19, but the support cannot take the same form for all concerned. To the person that has become unemployed due to COVID-19; the

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unemployment benefits package of approximately 10 million dollars to be rolled out by the National Insurance Scheme would address some of those needs.

Another form of relief to the people of Grenada is a thirty percent (30%) reduction in their electricity bill for three (3) months. Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that electricity cost in this country is a burden to the people of Grenada who are forced to bear. All efforts to liberalize that Sector has been met with rebuke from opposing political forces, and I would say, some people who care not to understand the significance of utility bills in the whole question of development, employment, education, health, every aspect of life, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's crucial, I cannot help every time I get this, I reach this point to talk to this because there is an element in our own country, an element, some for obvious selfish reasons, and we have to call it for what it's worth, but some who obviously not understanding of the importance of this, who see this issue as an issue of this Government versus WRB or some Company. This is so far from the truth Mr. Speaker. What we are talking here about is the lifeblood of the country, the security of our country, and therefore, no company should have the sort of liberal conditions where they can raise rates as they wish, and this is not an attack on the Company, it is what we signed to. This is about own self-respect. I'm not here, dealing with WRB, in fact, I say, if I was in their position I would do it. If some people could be that foolish to sign off to something to allow me to do them all this thing, just for my benefit, then I cannot blame them. So WRB, I have no fight with you. Gregory Bowen, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. George South-East, who has been also maligned whenever he raises the issues, I am sure, has no problem with WRB. In fact, WRB could have modified those clauses that give them the right to control all aspects of electricity in this country, even a man trying to do something in his own home, with his own innovation, he has to report it to them, just liberalization, if they were prepared to do that, WRB we want you here. You don't have to go anywhere.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it must be pointed out that the reason for we having to face the International Court is because the Government of 1994 then who is the main Opposition Party today, signed onto the Bill that gave them that right. They should be

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the last people to be speaking. In fact, they should be apologizing to the people of this country for having signed onto this, Mr. Speaker. And, I make the point, colleagues, I'm only making this point, I do not want to be sounding political today, but this is such an important issue because it affects us all. And, that is why, Mr. Speaker, we said, look, we want to be able to provide some relief at this time, while we are negotiating the question of the control of the Company because we have been ordered to buy back the Company because of the attempt to change the rules. So, we are looking, Mr. Speaker, hopefully soon to conclude this arrangement. And, this is not about using funds given for other purposes, Mr. Speaker.

We've made it very clear, Mr. Speaker, the Government has no interest in managing and owning and managing the Electricity Company. I have supported liberalization of many of these Institutions as a Member of Parliament, while, in Opposition and as a Member of another political... Government time as an ordinary Member, I supported the formation of Government Entities, moving them away from direct Government control. So, I have a fundamental, philosophical approach, to letting Private Sector people run business activities. And therefore, whatever happens after this, Government will not own the Electricity Company in any length of time. So, if Government has to as the Act or the decision has said, take control, this would be for a temporary period, let me make it clear, temporary period. We hope to give out shares to business persons in this country or Private Sector persons because we believe GRENLEC is in fact, a very profitable business. So, anybody investing in GRENLEC will do well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also say this, as we move forward, we have to seek to address the workers and businesses alike. And therefore, we must invest additional funds in the health infrastructure, to fight this pandemic; all businesses are affected, all persons have been affected. Towards this end, therefore, in this package, 10 million dollars is added to the budget of the Ministry of Health to procure protective gear and equipment for our Frontline Workers and additional testing materials and other items that may be necessary. I'm sure the Minister responsible for Health who has been

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leading the Cabinet appointed sub-committee on COVID-19 will elaborate on many aspects of what is taking place there, and so he will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this country owes a great debt to our essential workers like that of our Healthcare Practitioners, those who have come forward in this time, not all have done it, but those who have come forward, we owe them enormous amount, we cannot pay them for their sacrifices. And, all other categories of workers, Mr. Speaker, who are so classified, that wake up every morning to ensure that this country is healthy and safe. Mr. Speaker, we must applaud their efforts and ensure that they are protected. Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a couple others, the Police Officers, who have, some of them have hardly been able to spend any time with their families, out night and day. In fact, I heard one radio programme last Sunday where the DJ was calling on the Government and calling on me specifically, he mentioned Chief about one hundred times, take care of the Police Officers, please take care of the Police Officers, and I thought, my God, he's ain't tired call my name because he was referring to me. And, they really, he was talking about all the sacrifice of going home and turning before they reach home to shower and back to provide additional services. We have to thank them, all of them. And, the Commissioner is now moving to correct some of the weaknesses that exist and he has identified some of them, and therefore, he had heard your cry Police Officers, we have heard your cry and the people have heard your cry. So, expect to see some changes in that area.

But, an area of work, Mr. Speaker, that we don't talk a lot about, Mr. Speaker this country has remained cleaned. This is a period colleagues that everybody afraid to be outside, but the garbage collectors, the garbage collectors, we need to give a lot of praise, and as I pass them, **(applause)** they wave and shout to me as if they are so proud to be out there, masked appropriately, but it's still a dangerous exercise. So, we have to applaud the contractors and their workers because if they didn't keep us as clean as possible, we would be contracting other problems, other diseases that could in fact impact our health negatively, while, we are trying to deal with the whole question of the virus.

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Mr. Speaker, in my view COVID-19 has revealed that lifestyle choices are important. Statistics, Mr. Speaker, had shown that persons with underlining conditions are susceptible to succumb to the virus. Mr. Speaker, what it in fact is saying, is simply this, any one of us can be born with certain basic complaints or health issues and a tendency to certain types of disease, but there are things in many cases that could be controlled and there are others where if we do the right thing, the tendency to become affected will be much lower. It seems to me that COVID-19 may have taught us one lesson, important lessons, to watch what we eat, and exercise regularly, and have appropriate sleep and other related things and eat a lot of natural stuff that we have here, whether it's cinnamon with our coffee, whether it's ginger, garlic, Mr. Speaker, and other natural products that we have in abundance here. We have the leaves to make the bush tea, and we're buying all the packages from outside that passed through all sorts of chemical orientation to reach here and we prefer to go and spend a lot of money.

Mr. Speaker, the virus therefore has provided us with a perfect opportunity for our people to eat more local which support our healthy lifestyle much better. Mr. Speaker, towards this end the Government will spend therefore no effort to assist the farmers through the reallocation of resources from the existing budget envelope to ramp up production. I know sometimes people get tired of hearing us say, 'eat what you grow, grow what you eat.' It seems to me we must stop talking about this and really act it. So, Minister for Agriculture and her team in the Ministry of Agriculture, we have to put some serious effort in ensuring that we can increase the production at all levels in agriculture, so that people can be able to eat better and to have the necessary products that are helpful for a much more healthy lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, be assured that we are aware also of the plight of the fisher folks. They're not mentioned directly under the package, but we have not forgotten them and some work is going to be done, the time period didn't allow for effecting any of this for discussion in that area for those who might need, although the period might not be as long, because some of them already are able to go out and to earn their livelihood,

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although there are some conditions and problems associated with that, which, of course, the team would be dealing with.

Mr. Speaker, the debushers, there are people who depend on a few days, a few weeks of work on the road, it's almost four months, a quarter of the year, a third of the year has gone already, almost have gone already, and they have not received a cent yet. And, that's why, we can't forget them, Mr. Speaker. We can't pay just one set of persons in the country and forget the most marginalized, those who depend, the ladies who have the five (5) children and others to take care of and grandparents and others to help and depend on the few dollars, so, we have to do something special for them.

The Special Project workers and contractors who by now would have been earning a livelihood with several projects around the country, that's the small village projects, small roads and walls. They also, Mr. Speaker, we have to do something for them. So, the Government work has just started so the resources that we will get cannot be spent just in one area, Mr. Speaker, all areas, must be helped. We are currently, therefore in discussion with the substantive Ministry of Fisheries, and of course, the Ministry of Works, relative to the debushers and the Special Projects.

Mr. Speaker, yes, the initial announcement of additional spending has caused some stir for those persons, some active political persons who are hiding behind in all sorts of names and titles, Mr. Speaker. I have heard it, questioning the legitimacy of spending funds that are not appropriated. People who are supposed to be Economist will not even do a basic research, but speaking from a political platform, not an economic platform. Mr. Speaker, I merely wish to refer them to the Contingency Fund as mandated by the Public Finance Management Act, and duly recorded in every Budget. So, you didn't have to do much research to know that the Government could afford to spend a lot of money because the two percent (2%) of the total revenue earned by Government for the year supposed to be in the Contingency Fund, two percent (2%). So, if you just go to the Government document and see how much monies that the Government earned in a particular year, last year, for example, 2019, you will see what was supposed to be there in the Contingency Fund and you would

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know therefore, the Government has some room to operate from because the money has been allocated and if we didn't do it, many of the resources we're getting from IDA, to do a lot of the things that we are doing we would not have got a cent. That's why many countries in the Caribbean have not been able to benefit from those loans because they have not had that Contingency Fund that we have established.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted people to understand, if you want to be in politics, take off the economic hat and jump in the field, that's the only thing I can say. Don't use the perception of being an Economist or whatever it is, and I am speaking broadly, I am not referring to a specific individual, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking to everybody, to all concern.

Mr. Speaker, I could also say to others, some who say that they are not able to sleep in the night because of this Government, even those persons, Mr. Speaker, would benefit from the electricity reduction, everybody, toot moon, would benefit from those reductions that we're talking about.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, the expenditure that we commit to this House today is the first tranche to providing some ease to affected persons across all Sectors in some form or the other. The package touches every aspect of the economy, particularly the working class. Mr. Speaker, we are doing our best with the resources that are available, understanding that Government still has to meet its obligation to its workers, having just had salary increases in a time where little and no revenue is coming in. The Supplementary Expenditure will be financed by resources from the development partners to augment local resources to meet two strategic objectives. One, prioritize COVID-19 related spending, exclusively, and two, to ensure sufficient buffers to meet potential adverse shocks, such as natural disasters.

Regarding, the first objective, resources received from our development partners would be earmarked to COVID-19 related expenses as identified in this presentation. With respect to the second objective given the upcoming hurricane season, the Government deems it prudent, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that adequate buffers are maintained to address any emergencies that might arise. The World Bank Cat DDO,

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as well as, other resources, received from the International Development Partners will complement local resources in this regard. Aside from the above, two strategic objectives and the needs of the recovery plan; the Government will tightly manage its liquid resources and refrain from non-emergency related spending in the remainder of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I wish to highlight that a support initiative of the Government relative to this package, a Compliance Assessment Report, which was laid here this morning, indicating the projected fiscal position the country will be in the short term, is laid before this Honourable House. More importantly, the magnitude of the economic shock of this pandemic has forced the triggering of suspension of the Fiscal Responsibility Act/Law according to section 10 of the Act. Mr. Speaker, while the rules would be suspended, the Law mandates the preparation and subsequent submission to the Houses of Parliament, very important, for approval of a Recovery Plan. Conversations have started at the regional level on this issue, however, the Government would be engaging key stakeholders and our social partners with a view to charting the way forward for this country, post COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, already we're looking at the Task Force combined of persons in all Sectors of the society, the Business Community, Retail Sector, Hotel Sector, and other Business Sectors in the country, the Farming Community, the Trade Union Movement, the Churches, Non-governmental Organization, we are going to broaden, not just the social partners that we know, broad Sectors, we're going to be calling on people soon to meet with us. The political Opposition now in Parliament would also be invited. The largest political force in the country, party, would also be invited to be part of a planning for the way forward. We need all hands on board, Mr. Speaker. This Government has never claimed no matter what the intentions and some of the languages that have been out there, dictators and all kinds of. I have heard languages being used and sometimes I just laugh, me, dictator. **(Chuckles)** Mr. Speaker, I love when I'm called so because, you see, it's not what a man says about you, it's what the people see from you. If they want to see what a dictator is they must just watch television every day and they would

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understand what a real person with dictatorial tendencies may look like. I don't have a little bone in my body about this, but that's the nature. So, the Task Force, Mr. Speaker, definitely will be established because we want to look how we're going forward, Mr. Speaker.

At the meeting of the CARICOM Heads that we had a couple days ago, I reminded my colleagues that to get the Tourism Sector back up, a number of things would have to be done. This taxation issue on Airlines, particularly Airlines travelling in the Caribbean is an issue. It has in normal times affected the small Hotel Sector. When we should be encouraging Caribbean people to travel, our taxes have really affected. We have been partly responsible, LIAT is not managed properly. That's a fact and that's the number one issue with LIAT, but we have contributed to LIAT's demise because of the taxation and the lack of travel among countries in the region by our own citizens, while we're preaching freedom of market, Single Market and Economy, people are not able to travel. I said we have to do something about this, reduce the taxes, and we're not going to lose money, Mr. Speaker, we might probably get more monies because the amount of more people that would travel, will make up for the loss an individual tax that we impose on individual persons coming in.

But, in this time, we have an additional problem, the larger Airlines coming in from all over may insist that they need a few months at least, given that they have taken a tremendous hit, that they would want some reduction in taxes for a certain period; clearly it can't be for too long because we need the taxes on tickets to help to run our Airports, so, clearly they have to deal with this. But, there are a number of other issues that we have agreed on.

We cannot, if we are serious about getting back to business, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, things have changed. The world would never be the same again for a long time. There is no doubt, just like when we're leaving here to go to some countries, in Africa and other places you may have to take Smallpox Vaccination and other related vaccinations for things that are prevalent in most countries and until the Airline has this, they can't ticket. It is going to be, in our view, the order of the day, the future, that the

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Airlines would have to have a clearance certificate, COVID-19 certificate which verifies that you have tested in a certain period of time and re-tested too before they can take you to travel, that is even before a vaccine is found. When the vaccine is found of course, then we have a more permanent situation in our hands. But, that must be, and therefore, we cannot do it here in Grenada and another country does not do it. We cannot do it in all parts of the region and Grenada does not do it because they will make a talk of the whole thing. So, all countries in the region would have to agree on a protocol established for re-establishing serious tourism activity in the Caribbean region. Discussion has started, and all countries have agreed, we cannot close our borders and next door another border is open. No matter what people say, that can't happen, and if it happens, it makes a joke at the whole thing. And, no language and nice words can in fact take away from this. We just have to come to terms. We have a responsibility to the people, not ourselves individually, but all the people of our countries, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, in my view, and this Government's view, adversity is no stranger to the Grenadian people. We have proven time and time again that we are a resilient people. Together we have partnered with stakeholders to support the Structural Adjustment Program, as we rode the tide of financial crisis. We also recovered after Ivan, when some people came back here a few months after Ivan they could not believe that was the country that was flattened to the ground. We've done it before, and we know we can do it again. I look forward therefore to similar engagement with renewed vigour as we welcome the 'New Normal' that is expected post COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, allow me therefore, to register my profound thanks to the people of Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique, for their patience, their continued patience, I should say, and adherence to the protocols established by Government to safeguard their lives, our lives. For the businesses, the churches and artistes across the country and to our cultural brothers and sisters who have lent their voices. I have heard so many calypsos or songs in this time, very appropriate in supporting the physical distancing and other protocols; we applaud all your efforts and thank you for using the

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platform to help safeguarding all of us. The virus has no legs; it is our actions or inaction that would determine the faith of this country at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say this, I received, well, sometimes when I get up in the morning, I don't really, WhatsApp, I cannot go through the WhatsApp messages, hundreds of messages on the phones, but sometimes some things, there are some of little ones that catch you. I got, so a little old lady would write and say, praying for the leadership of the country at this time and offering a specific prayer that touches you. I also received from three (3) persons, amazing in two (2) days, a same message or photo, and it is about, it is said, I know you're under a lot of pressure at this time, I know what you're going through, and I know you love cricket, so listen to this video and they played the video of Brian Lara's innings in Barbados in 1995 or something like this and he was saying that is his finest innings in test cricket where he made one hundred and fifty eight (158) runs to help West Indies to beat Australia in the Match where Walsh was his last partner, and everybody was hyped up around the Caribbean, I never forgot that one and he said, that was his finest innings. So, they asked me, take some time off and just watch Brian Lara in the last half hour of play, what he consider his best innings. I say this because in all that is happening, in all the pain and the problem, we have to have a sense of humour, if we don't, one of us will choke in this period.

So, Mr. Speaker, I therefore take this opportunity to commend this Motion to this Honourable House, and ask all of us to give our support. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is not a perfect allocation, it is not perfect. I don't know anything that could be perfect in this time, it's a trial, it's an effort. We welcome advice with suggestions in going forward. This might just be as I said the start of the process of correcting the problems that we face and dealing with the problems ahead of us. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Finance. Honourable Member for St. Patrick West.

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Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my unqualified support to the Motion as presented by the Member for St. George North-West, and the Minister for Finance. But, before I go into debating the Motion, Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Member for St. George North-East, the Honourable Tobias Clement, on his elevation to the high post of Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding his elevation, it is always a sad moment when a member of a team decides to choose his own path. It is also sad, Mr. Speaker, and I do believe the Member is indeed harbouring some sense of sadness because let us not forget he was cradled in the bosom of the New National Party, a child of the New National Party, and I believe that the decision he took was certainly not an easy one, but I do hope that he gave full consideration to the move. I am looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to more lively debate in the House because he will bring an alternative viewpoint on issues. But, I would admonish my friend to be constructive in his criticism because it is always easy to criticize, but far more difficult to come up with alternative solutions. But, given his intellectual capacity, I'm pretty sure that he will do justice to his new position.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance was quite eloquent and quite comprehensive in the presentation of the Motion. And, really it was not my intention to repeat what was said, however, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you listen to certain radio programmes you tend to get the impression that we are not all living in the same world because even at a time, Mr. Speaker, when our country is under serious attack by an invisible enemy, I'm still hearing words like, the economy booming. I do not know what economy could be booming in such conditions. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we cannot overemphasize what the Member or the Minister for Finance said because there are some people who will definitely tend to mislead others into believing that what the current situation really is, is not what it is, Mr. Speaker. And, it behooves us all to educate our people, so at least they will know the truth because it is said, know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

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Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance, highlighted the state of our economy prior to the onslaught of this COVID-19 virus. And, I just want to summarize again the key elements of our macroeconomic performance prior to that event. Mr. Speaker, we were enjoying an economy where economic growth was almost 5% and that's a fact. We were enjoying an economy when unemployment rate, Mr. Speaker, had declined to almost eighteen percent (18%) and it was on a downward trajectory. All of the major sectors of the economy, Mr. Speaker, were performing relatively well, Tourism, Construction, Education and Health Sector, led by St. George's University. All of our major fiscal targets were met, primary expenditure growth, less than two percent (2%), the benchmark established, the primary balance was in excess of three point five percent (3.5%) of GDP, and the wage bill was below the nine percent (9%) of GDP as stipulated. The Debt to GDP ratio, Mr. Speaker, was relatively good at fifty five percent (55%), way ahead of the target set by the ECCB, yes, the ECCB, Mr. Speaker. However, Mr. Speaker, with the onslaught of this virus which no one expected, I will say from us here in Grenada, I don't know about overseas, but we did not expect such a major disaster to hit our country, but it did. And, everything, Mr. Speaker, has turned as we say, upside down, that 4.5% growth that we envisaged or projected is now being transformed temporarily to what most Economists consider to be maybe at 7% negative growth in going forward. In my humble estimation because of the significant contraction in economic activities in the key Sectors, I will conservatively estimate that unemployment right now might be over fifty percent (50%). A lot of people are out of work; it could be more, Mr. Speaker. All of the benchmarks, except one has been breached and unavoidable so.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget had projected total revenue in excess of one billion dollars, now we might be lucky if we get as much as eight hundred million dollars because there is all possibility that there might be a twenty percent (20%) shortfall in revenue because of the contraction in the major sectors of the economy and the Minister for Finance was quite eloquent in identifying those key factors, Mr. Speaker.

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The wage bill, Mr. Speaker, has now exceeded nine percent (9%) of GDP, not because wages have gone up, but there has been a significant decline as I mentioned in our Gross Domestic Product, so obviously that ratio will change, so it will exceed the nine percent (9%).

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding, those grim statistics, I am extremely happy, I'm extremely proud, Mr. Speaker, that this Government was able to mobilize fifty million dollars (\$50m) initially to help rescue the present situation. This money, Mr. Speaker, as again stated by the Minister for Finance will provide much needed income and wages support to a wide spectrum of the Private Sector. These funds, Mr. Speaker, would be used to help our small industries to get back on their feet.

Mr. Speaker, another major achievement is that our people would benefit from a thirty percent (30%) reduction in electricity rate, at this time. It will be highly welcomed, Mr. Speaker, at a time when the income of our people has diminished by such significant amount, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, what is even more astonishing, and again the Member for St. George North-West highlighted those, notwithstanding all of those negatives, Mr. Speaker, there was no reduction in the Public Sector wage bill. **(Applause)** Public Servants have all been paid, Mr. Speaker, and been paid on time as well. Pensioners have received their monies, recipients of the Public Assistance Programme, the SEED Programme, Mr. Speaker; they all received their monies or will receive their money.

Mr. Speaker, it speaks to a Government that is people centered, putting people at the centre of the development thrust, Mr. Speaker, because regardless of what you may do, you could spend on any project, but if the people do not benefit, if the people are not at the centre of such programme, the effects would be not as significant. And therefore, I must applaud this Government for putting their people first in this difficult and challenging time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a time for shared sacrifice, it is now. And, I fully support the Minister for Finance in his call to have all hands on deck. Government cannot help everyone in this condition, Mr. Speaker, it is just impossible. And therefore,

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those who can make a contribution should not be depending on Government to do it. I know that there were some Sectors or some businesses that could help themselves, but yet at this time everybody coming to Government, their Godfather to give them everything. Mr. Speaker, it can't happen. Our first obligation must be, to help those who cannot help themselves, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** and this is what I will support. I haven't seen the total allocation, who will get what yet, but I'm pretty sure that we will take a people centered approach and help those who are less fortunate in this time, Mr. Speaker. And, I want to conclude on the same statement that the Minister for Finance made by echoing the sentiments of the late John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America, '**ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.**' I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.
Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are really in unusual times. I never thought I would be speaking from the Gallery. But, I welcome the opportunity to be here and to be alive. Well, all of us here must be thankful to God for this opportunity to be here. **(Applause)**

I want to address the issue of the Leader of the Opposition, my good friend, I don't know if you could say congratulate because we are all elected on one party ticket and we were working together as one, as one team, and now my friend chose to be the Leader of the Opposition. It is the first time in my seven (7) years in Parliament; we would have an Opposition Leader. When I was elected for the first five (5) years, no Opposition Leader, spend two (2) years in the second term, no Opposition Leader. Finally, we have an Opposition Leader, which I'm confident would bring some merit and add value to the debate, and I'm looking forward to the contribution of our brother, Honourable Tobias Clement.

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Mr. Speaker, I would not be long, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister for Finance went into great details, and the Member for St. Patrick's West as well. So, I want to highlight just two (2) really important issues because I have been getting a lot of calls about support for micro, that is sole enterprise, micro, small enterprises that we have in Grenada, like the hairdressers, the barbers and so on. Let me say, this additional \$5,000,000, Mr. Speaker, is an additional, you remember in the Budget, we put \$5,000,000 for this year, we put an additional 5 million under the Stimulus Package, so that these people could benefit. So, that is where the benefit will come from, the interest rate has dropped from 6% to 3%; the unsecured loan moved from 7000 to \$10,000, you get up to ten thousand unsecured; the ceiling, the amount moved from \$25,000 to \$40,000, that's where you're going to benefit, Mr. Speaker. That is the Stimulus Package that we are offering to micro, small and medium. And, I felt I must highlight that because I've been getting a lot of calls from the Micro Sector about what it is that Government has. And, when I explained it, they say, well, that's very good, you could do with 40,000 at 3% or 25,000 at 3%. As one tell me, all I need is \$10,000, and that is restart because the purpose of the Stimulus Package is to help business to get back on their feet, and the guy was telling me, all he need is \$10,000 and he will back in his position.

So, this is a real welcomed, welcomed initiative, and in addition the 7 million to small hoteliers, the facilities at GDB, again, small hoteliers have access to this facility that will help them to rebound in the quickest possible time because what we want to see in the economy is a rebound in the quickest possible time. And, this is a three-month Stimulus Package. I have heard some people criticizing the 50 million you know, they say, 50 million well what that could do. If was not for the sound management of the economy, we will not be able to even give 5 million. It is over the years, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, Mr. Speaker, that we have introduced with all this macroeconomic indicators that we have set ourselves and able to achieve it over the last five (5) years, that is what have us in this sound financial position today, you know. I doubt I would hear a call to move, to make changes to the Fiscal Responsibility Act, again. You know

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during the Salary Negotiations, I was told that we could go to Parliament and change it, you know, forget about this two percent (2%) of public expenditure, increase it. Mr. Speaker, not a good thing we didn't do that, so we could have money in the Contingency Fund, that we could have money? We have to be responsible as a Government you know. We can't just react to every call we hear outside there. We are in leadership. We are the decision makers, we work as a team and we do what is best for the country, and for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to move to one other issue before I take my seat because I said the Minister of Finance really went into detail. So, we have heard about the Fiscal Policies that the Government is undertaking. We do not have control over Monetary Policy because we do not have our own Central Bank, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, one Central Bank serving nine (9) Member states, and therefore, only Fiscal Policies that we can use. So, when you hear other countries announce that they could put millions or trillions in some case into circulation, they could print money, but if you print EC, you know what is happening, you're using all the EC to buy US dollars, you know, so there would be a run on the bank for US dollars. And, as a result, if you have a shortage of the US dollar then that could lead to a devaluation, and of course, with too much money in circulation could lead to inflation. So, we are in control of Fiscal Policies and not Monetary Policies, that is in the remit of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, that has been doing an extremely good job. In fact, the last report, I heard from the Governor is that the backing ratio for the EC dollar is now one hundred point seven (100.7), the backing ratio, that is the strongest currency in the world, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** you have, all you need is sixty percent (60%) backing ratio to keep the dollar at 2.7169 to the US, you know, we reach one hundred you know, percent. We have a very strong currency and because of the way it is managed you know with this Pandemic there is no threat to the dollar, no immediate threat to the dollar, Mr. Speaker.

So, we're at solid grounds with the EC dollar, and I just felt I wanted to make this point because some people had expressed concern to me that they feared that there might be a devaluation and other things. There is nothing to fear about devaluing the

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currency because the backing ratio as I said, is one hundred percent (100%) whereas all that is required to keep it at that fixed rate, and it's been fixed since 1983, you know, Mr. Speaker, fixed rate currency. So, you have a really stable currency that has worked well in our favour and as part of ECCB we have been offered assistance. The ECCB has dropped their lending rate from 6.5% to 2% to Government and Commercial Banks. You may not see Commercial Banks even accessing it because they are so liquid; they have enough customers' deposit. These are our money, you know, Mr. Speaker, your money they're taking and lend other people you know. They're paying you .5% interest and they're lending it at nine (9) or six (6), so a mere 2% may not even be attractive to Commercial Banks to go to the Central Bank at 2% when they have so much deposits on hand that they could use and make more money from it. But, for Government, 2% is a concessionary rate, and therefore, the other measures announced by the ECCB as Monetary Policies will go a long way in helping us to deal with this current situation. And, therefore, I'm pleased to give my support to the Motion as moved by the Minister for Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. David. Honourable Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Resolution as moved by the Member from St. George North-West, our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, let me start by also joining my other colleagues in congratulating, Honourable Tobias Clement, on him assuming the position of Leader of the Opposition. And, I too look forward to him making meaningful contribution in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the health of a nation comes before the wealth of a nation always. And, I can proudly stand here to say that our Prime Minister and Minister for Finance from day one on this, has put the health of our people first and foremost, has publicly made statements that the lives of our people come first. And, as such we've been able

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to make certain proactive positions and take certain proactive position, sorry. The recognition simply is that a sick people cannot produce.

Mr. Speaker, also because of the measures that we have taken since coming into Government, which have also been bitter medicine and a hard medicine to take, has put us into the position that we are now. But, Mr. Speaker, the position we are now is that we have taken proactive steps, we have closed our borders, we have been able to identify those who have come in contact with individuals who came into Grenada. Mr. Speaker, and while I'm not wearing the red jacket today, I do have an announcement to make and it is indeed positive. Yesterday, we tested eleven (11) more individuals or received results for eleven (11), all eleven (11) were negative, **(applause)** but, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, of those eleven (11), six (6) of them were individuals who were previously tested positive. **(Applause)** So, we can most definitely declare that of the fourteen (14) individuals who tested positive in the State of Grenada, six (6) of them have officially recovered. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank those who treated and dealt with those individuals. **(Applause)** The individuals who found them, who went there to test them, at risk, but that was part of their job, individuals that belong to the team of Dr. Francis Martin and Dr. Sean Charles, the community doctors and nurses who continue to go out there and deal with those who have been afflicted or those who are at risk or those who are still in quarantine, the team at the General Hospital led by Dr. Dolland Noel, Dr. McIntosh and Dr. Donald, and sister Bhagwan and the nurses who are dealing with those patients who unfortunately have needed hospital care, our Cuban contingency who was there too, standing side by side with us in this struggle when they themselves could have been home looking after their own in their nation. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, the next question I think on everybody's mind is when do we open? When do we make sure that the Stimulus Package begins to produce? But, Mr. Speaker, like any course in medicine, whether it's antibiotics or others, it must run its course. It has to go a prescribed way, a period, you come off antibiotics too soon you can get a relapse, you leave the hospital before the doctors are finished caring for you,

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it can be to your detriment. So too, is our country with respect to dealing with this COVID-19 threat.

Mr. Speaker, the last case that we identified was April 10th. We do have some time still in order to be sure, but, we have been doing testing, and while those tests like most of the other tests that exist, rapid test, are not fully certified, we use them as a screening process, not the definitive conclusion, but a screening process, and we still as I announced continue to do the PCR testing that is accepted by WHO and PAHO. So, these tests that we received are used to screen in the same way that in the beginning, we were screening based on persons' temperatures and symptoms. We now have an additional tool to help screen our population. We do have other tests on the way that will be the authority that we can use to confirm, and not just a screening test, but just as reliable as the PCR test that we are using, and those will be used widely throughout.

But, within the coming weeks because of the discipline that we have had because of the sacrifices that we have all made, we can expect an easement, we can expect to recirculate, we can expect to be able to come out, we can expect, most importantly as a nation to celebrate and give thanks for the sacrifice that we have made as one people, so that we can move forward. And, I do look forward to the nation, giving thanks to the health care workers and RGPF, and all of our essential workers, Private and Public Sector essential workers who have paid and played an important role and paid a significant price in terms of giving their time during this previous period.

So, Mr. Speaker, the better days are ahead, we are just about over the mountain, but we cannot take this period for granted, we cannot, otherwise all of our sacrifices will be for naught. So, we will continue with the discipline, we still have the same Prime Minister and Minister for Finance who recognized in the beginning the need for that sacrifice and will continue to find that balance that we found as we got to where we are and we will continue to have as we are going to wherever, with the guidance of God, we will get to Mr. Speaker.

So, just in closing, again to say, I cannot say enough the gratitude to the team, Ministry of Health, and RGPF, and also to the nation to reiterate that six (6) of the our

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individuals who were positive have recovered, that by the grace of God and the professionalism of the team at the General Hospital, and the Ministry of Health, no one has died in Grenada from COVID-19. **(Applause)** The team still needs to remain diligent and the nation needs to recognize that as we move forward, once we maintain our discipline, I will be able to come on television wearing the red jacket, but with good news as we move forward. But, we need to have that discipline, we are almost there. Let us continue as one people, as one nation, getting through this, and looking forward to our future. Thank you. Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. George South and Minister for Health, good news. Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Resolution as presented by the Member for St. George North-West and Minister for Finance. Mr. Speaker, as said by persons before me, especially the Minister for Health and the Member for St. George South, quite a lot has been done in this country. Many people have stood up, heroes are emerging in our country and a lot of persons are learning different skills. We have seen people making fancy masks and other things and I am sure that Grenada, just like the world, would never be the same. Mr. Speaker, with all this good front-liners and all of these good things that have been done, we're also seeing people who seem to love to wallow in the gutter and bring out negatives and to create panic in this country, for I do not know, I cannot think of a reason why you would want to do that, because our Nation at this time is already overburdened. And I want to take up a matter, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that I do not forget this. It is not, it is not the best thing, it is not the most important thing I want to say, but it is important because I want to allay the concerns of our people in this Tri-Island State.

Mr. Speaker, once or twice I have received messages from a particular source, a particular media source and every time, it provides information that produces a lot of

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discomfort, a lot of worry on our people and so my first duty here is to allay the fears of our people. Mr. Speaker, when this country was put on lock-down, there was a Public Statement made by our Prime Minister that our borders are going to be closed and he was with the Minister for Health and other people and it was made a Public Announcement.

To date, we have continued in that vein and the airport has only allowed flights to come in that bring in supplies, whether it is supplies for the Ministry of Health or supplies for entities that need them and that is all we are doing, except that, there have been requests by airlines and other Governments to allow them to repatriate their citizens into other countries. So, the flights have been coming in empty and have been taking out, as most other countries have been doing. We respect and we have great confidence in our partners, in the airlines and other entities, but they operate on their own, they make decisions for themselves, but they do not make decisions for our country. And so, there was something put out, a scheduling put out by a particular airline and that went viral and we understand the nervousness of our people, once they hear about borders being opened. So, I just want to assure our Nation that no decision has been taken in that regard. Yes, a schedule was sent and it probably has been... it has been publicized and the airline has its prerogative to do that, but up until this time, we do not see that we are ready to open our borders.

We are guided, as we say, by the Scientists, the healthcare professionals and the Minister for Health named some of them who are spearheading this, but I know they consulted with others and until we are satisfied that the safety of our people can... we can secure that safety, the health of our people, then our borders regrettably will remain closed. This is affecting our industry; this is affecting the economy of our country, but nevertheless, the health of our people come first. So, I wanted to, through this medium, Mr. Speaker, assure our people that such a decision has not been taken. We value the partnership of our cruise lines, we value the partnership of our airlines, but everything has to go according to a certain process and we are not there yet.

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Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Industry employs, indirectly and directly, over 10,000 people in our small Tri-Island State and before we were hit by this pandemic, COVID-19, caused by COVID-19, we were growing. We had reached over half a million and over... the season, for that season, in which, in the middle of that, we got hit and perhaps earlier than the middle, we were expecting half a million and more to have visited our shores and this was not to be. So, we know that the fallout will be considerable and my heart goes out to everyone in the Industry. But, Mr. Speaker, as responsible Members of this Honourable House and of Government, we are well aware that it has impacted negatively on everyone, every industry, every job, every worker. And I am well aware that the Minister for Finance and his team and the COVID-19 team that were looking at the economic support, that they really worked, they spared no effort to get to crunch their figures and to determine who was the most negatively impacted. And I know there are, the lists are long. They have been very extensive, very comprehensive. We know it does not include everybody that perhaps, we think, if not ourselves as Members may need to be included at another time, but I am aware that there was a five million that is allocated for certain things and I am sure that some of the persons who are saying, they have been left out, they will find out sooner or later, they have been included. So, I am very happy with what I am hearing at this time.

One, it will support, it is a care package, but it is also a stimulus package. So, at the moment, the care package for the support in the payroll would go a long way to assist many citizens in the Tri-Island State, but also in the Industry and since I represent them at this time, I am happy to see that certain categories in the hotels will be supported, our Taxi Drivers, our Vendors who perhaps live on a month-to-month basis and even the Vendors in the Market Square, while they are not directly Tourism Vendors, but the Tourism Industry, does benefit from that activity in the Market Square. And the list is pretty long and I do not want to, a lot of it has been said by the Minister for Finance and I would not want to go over it, but I think it represents a very significantly comprehensive package that will help quite a lot of people in the Industry.

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I just want to mention a word of caution, that this information for the persons in the Industry would have been taken from NIS (National Insurance Scheme) and also from Grenada Tourism Authority, where each Vendor and each other person involved in Industry, is expected to be registered. And we are being guided or, not... well, I am not involved in the financial calculations, but the persons who are doing that, they are guided by that. And it is time that we in our country, we adopt a more structured way of doing things and we heed also, the calls, get registered. And sometimes, it does not take you anything to be registered and sometimes, compared to what you expect to make, what you pay to be registered is very small. So, for persons who may find that their names are not there, I encourage you, for the next time around and God forbid and on the other side of Ivan, sorry, the other side of this pandemic, that we ensure that all are registered and functioning.

Mr. Speaker, just allow me mention a few of the items on the package. I am extremely pleased for the injection of an addition of \$M7 for small hoteliers. Some of them have been reeling even before this pandemic. They have experienced difficulties in managing their businesses and at very concessionary rates. I am sure that will go a long way to assisting those persons. Even the \$5m and I know that there are priority targets for that \$5m, for the other GDB (Grenada Development Bank) loan, but we in the GTA (Grenada Tourism Authority) and the Ministry of Tourism, we're looking at new ways that persons can invest in the Tourism Industry, get into small businesses, create more experiences for the people who are going to come create more experiences for the people who are going to come, create more avenues for persons to enjoy themselves in our Tri-Island State, And again, it was mentioned what the terms and conditions are and I know it will create a great avenue for some of the persons who want to get into the Tourism Industry. So, it is not a matter of Doom and Gloom, the stimulus package and I know a lot of discussions are being held with a number of financial entities that perhaps would bring even more opportunities for persons in this Industry, as well as persons outside of the Industry. And we look forward to a

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rebounding of a very robust industry. Let us not mourn too much and let us not be pessimistic.

Let us see this pandemic for what it is, it is an unfortunate disastrous event in our history. But also, let us look for the opportunities that are there. And so, the Grenada Tourism Authority, we're working with our partners, Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association and many of the others. And we're asking ourselves, what can we do now, so that post COVID-19, we can come back stronger and better. We know the competition will be fierce, it is not like a hurricane or other natural disasters, because usually one part of the world is affected and there are many others that continue. This time, everybody is impacted and therefore, the competition to get back into industry is going to be tight. But as said before me, we have weathered Ivan, we have weathered many other situations in our country, negative situations and we have come out successful. I believe in our people. I believe in this country. I believe in the leadership and I want to end by taking a little line from one of our leading Calypsonians, "*this is a thing of resilience*". Grenada has proved itself to be resilient and let us not... there will be naysayers, although we know it is a time when everybody should be realising, we in this thing together and coming along and offer. And I want to thank all those who have offered, especially in the Industry, because we have had our needs as well. But let us not focus on the negative and I want to beg, do not send to me, the negative things and the untruthful things. There are many positive things, many lessons to be learnt, a lot of information that can be shared with others. Let us be a positive country and we will make it on the other side of Covid-19. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for St. Mark. Honourable Representative for St. John.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that these times are very difficult and what is most difficult about it is that we are fighting an enemy that we cannot see, but I am very happy that we have good leadership. I want to thank our leadership,

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the COVID team and also, some of the persons that have stepped up to the plate, like our medical team, the police, the essential workers, sanitation workers and the people in the media that are putting out positive messages. Sometimes it is good to have both sides, but some are doing a good job. So, we are very grateful to them. I also want to say thank you and welcome to the Opposition Leader, although I am standing at the back of him. I see he moved. I am standing at the back of you and I wish that whatever decision you make, it would be to the benefit of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support this measure by the Member of St. George North-West and the Prime Minister. I am very happy of the funds that are being put out there, in terms of low interest loans, because that is what we need most. The opportunity to get capital, not just to spend to buy little things that we need, but so that we could that enhance our businesses, because that is what the country would need. We need to need to build back the economy, so that is very good leadership. I am very happy about that. I know that some other, the Farmers and so, are getting a little bit of relief. The fisherman, we had very great difficulty in getting to see what kind of relief that they need, because, Mr. Speaker, you have some Fishermen that make a lot of money and then, you have some, the ones that pull the net, they do not own the boat but they work every day hoping that when they see fish that they could pull the net and they make very small amount. And they're dependent on that, because that is their only job. So, you have a, from the top end of the scale, people that make a lot of money and at the bottom, people that make a little bit. But what is also important is that this time has made us see the importance of being part of the system. That means, to register, pay your licence, join the NIS (National Insurance Scheme). **(Applause)** And at least, the ones that making a lot of money, file your Tax Return, because this is how the Government would know how well that your business is doing and what you are doing. So, although it is difficult times, I am happy for the positive lessons that are being learned from what is happening. So, Mr. Speaker, I know I would not take long but I am

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happy for the opportunity and I want to tell my fellow citizens out there, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. John. Minister for Finance and Prime Minister. Oh. Who was it? **(Inaudible comments)** Oh, my apologies, my apologies.

Honourable Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. George North-East and Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, well, you know I would not rest until I make my little contribution here too. Let me thank my fellow MPs for your congratulatory messages and your blessings upon me. And as I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is new territory for me. But, indeed, I can go back to history. The Prime Minister, now where he sits, maybe the first time that I really got to know him was as Opposition Leader after the 1990 Election. And I'm sure that probably his experience may have been not too far from where I am today, having at the time, I remember, two (2) seats in Parliament and then one (1), but he was here. And I remember, Mr. Speaker, too, that in 1994, it galvanized me as towards being really coming into politics, when I listened to the debate in 1994, York House, about the sale of GRENLEC at the time. But, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to history even further and speak to Covid-19 and let history be our guide. Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago, 1917, 1918, 1919, the world was faced with a pandemic, the Spanish Flu, Swine Flu. At the time, Mr. Speaker, travel was slow, '18 and '19, but the Swine Flu wreaked havoc on our world community. It is estimated, Mr. Speaker that between 1918 and 1919, between 50 to 100 million people died and I must say, Mr. Speaker, let us hasten slowly. I know, all countries are talking about opening up back and letting the economy start again, but I

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will recall from the history that the Swine Flu of 1990, came in three waves. They lift and there were a few pockets there and it comes back again; they lift, one remains and it came back again. Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 started one place, maybe one person. I say to us today that as long as there is a case of COVID-19 anywhere, COVID-19 is everywhere. So, even if today Grenada can say that we will be COVID free, if there is a case somewhere in Africa, there is a case in India, there is a case in the United States, we still have to be concerned, because we saw how this started.

Mr. Speaker, the seriousness of COVID-19 cannot be overstated, lives are at stake. Mr. Speaker, as the gentle lady from St. Mark said, several messages came through on the phone and they came from time to time and you wonder sometimes, where some of our people will get these messages. But Mr. Speaker, one particular comment that touched me in such a way, that history repeats itself, Mr. Speaker, and I read. And this here was published in 1869, and it was again published in 1990. It is a poem that is written, **"This is timeless and the people stayed at home and read books and listened and they rested and did exercise and they made art and play and learned new ways of being and stopped and listened more deeply. Someone meditated, someone prayed, someone met their shadow and people began to think differently and people healed and in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways, dangerous, meaningless and heartless, the world began to heal. And when the danger ended and people found themselves, they grieved for the dead, they made new choices and dream of new vision and create new ways of living and completely healed the heart and they were healed."** 1869, 1919, and today again, 2020; Mr. Speaker, it is true that things will never be the same again. It is a time of healing. It is said that in some parts of the world, people who have not seen the sky in decades, have seen it. It was unexpected, but Mr. Speaker, I sat and I listened to some of the concerns and some of all the trappings that surrounds COVID-19 and I have had cause for concern in some areas. We call it a plague. This is not the first time plague has met the human race. Maybe in our reading and in our spiritual prowess we have come upon the children of Israel in Egypt. They went through a tough time too.

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The Egyptian did and then the children of Israel in the wilderness for so many years and they went through a very difficult time and they began to complain and things were not right. And the leader Moses at the time, a man that's after God's heart too, he got angry and struck the rock and because of that he was not made to enter into the Promised Land. I see we have to sometimes, soften up our tone with our people. After all, our people are God's people. I do not think that we should call them stupid or if they go to the shop to buy a little morsel, sometimes that's the only money that they have. So, we have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, people lives and humanity how this is.

Mr. Speaker, some concerns that were raised and as I support this stimulus package, I still say that, we all agree that it is just the beginning, because the question that can be asked here, how long will COVID-19 last on Grenada or on the world, for the first three months, the second three months. We do not know as yet. I asked the question. Maybe, yes we make money available, how soon do let these monies be available, is it to restart business now or is it to keep people and their family alive, going? Suppose I release it now and the country is not ready to start back, then what if, Mr. Speaker. What if this goes on for three months, six months, nine months, until next year, Mr. Speaker? So, we have to tread carefully. Mr. Speaker, we talk about saving lives and throughout this process, in the past few weeks, I have been out and I know some of my colleagues, you have been out too, because we had to attend to some disadvantaged folks and I have had some good moments and I had some disappointing moments, Mr. Speaker. Because, yes, we put some food hampers together, I called upon people within the community and they came forward and helped and I did not have to put it, but the Shopkeeper, they put it together. So, I just had to collect and deliver and to give people to deliver, but Mr. Speaker, when going out on Saturday, yes, there was a little break and lo and behold while going through some of the villages, I guess men, women got so happy that I could not believe that I came across people that was intoxicated, under the influence of alcohol. And I asked myself, how can this be, then they said well, the ban on the sale of alcohol was lifted. And I am thinking, well, the curfew will go back into effect now, but if I am drunk by the side of the road, maybe

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they will lock me up. Mr. Speaker, when lives are at stake, I wonder if the most important thing to do is to sell alcohol under some conditions as long as they do not drink it in the shop, but it is okay. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at this, in terms of, I know we are amending as we going, and it is probably highly experimental, but when the first shopping day was listed on Saturday, I got a number of calls. Mr. Speaker, I will not be able to shop on Saturday according to religious beliefs, but I see that was changed. Then I got calls, too, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the shopping. Most of us here, knows how our Grenadians last names are. We see that the time A to M and M to Z and if we are inclined with the Voter's List, we will know that 80% of Grenadian names are A to M. So, the last four hours, where you have M to Z, I mean, who in Grenada name is ending in Y or X or Z or Q or V or Y. So, you have the majority of people from 8 to 12, 80% there. And so, at the end of the day, then those people with the last name maybe get an easy go. When you're dividing, should you divide the alphabet or divide the population. Maybe these are some of the things that we should ask about.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I cannot speak about this and not talk about the farming community, our Farmers. And we always talk about the backbone of our economy and our country and today, we see again how important farming would be. I, myself practice some, Mr. Speaker, and I have had the opportunity to do a lot of distribution to disadvantaged people, because people wants to feed their family. Moreover, I got calls from Farmers in St. Andrew, St. Mark and other parts of the country that said that, they have their produce, some of it is spoiling, because the main market is in St. George's, all their neighbours are Farmers too, I cannot sell to another Farmer. Mr. Speaker, I got a call too from the Soursop growers and exporters and over the past few weeks, at the peak of the season, they were not able to harvest or ship out their Soursop, so that at least, it is estimated that about 40,000 pounds of Soursop per week, which they were shipping out before the close-down, ripe and fall and they cannot ship that out and they are concerned, because the time this is lifted, the season would have gone. I hope we do remember these people, the Shippers and the Farmers in that process and expressed to me, almost with tears in their eyes that, I have a few acres a Soursop and

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I just had to watch it ripe and fall. We do understand the lock-down, but if Amerijet takes it out and they can, we must look to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a time when I know revenue of this country will be down and to ask the Government to provide for everyone would be a tall, tall order that will not be able to be met. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, as we seek to help the disadvantaged in our community, we must be careful. Well, yes, we will go to NIS (National Insurance Scheme), we will check the last payroll, because as it is said, there are some of us who will go the extra mile just to do things differently. Mr. Speaker, as we talk about saving lives and I got a few calls, I wonder that we must be careful in how we're handling our Grenadian people. For the lock-down, Mr. Speaker, goods and services cannot move around as normal and business is not the same, but while I am giving out food hampers, a couple of people said to me, Mr. Clement, I do believe I have a barrel on the Port, it have mask and it has food. Mr. Speaker, I believe today, in this country, there are several containers of barrels sitting on the Port that is not cleared. Maybe, as part of the stimulus package, let us clear the barrels and deliver it to the people, because most of the time, what the barrels have in it, is food. But what we have done, we left them there and at this point in time, we are not clearing barrels, but we are clearing lumber and so forth. Well, yes, we do understand, it bring in the needed revenue, but Mr. Speaker, at the same time, at the same time, if we leave barrels on the Port and most of them is food stuff they have in it, that will help alleviate some of the problems that we are having in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on here, I believe that there might be long rainy days ahead, concerning the history and I know we almost want to jump start this economy and move ahead quickly, but I said that we should hasten slowly. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, things would be very different in this country and I know the Member for St. George North-West mentioned about the Electricity Company and as I said, probably that was when I really came into politics with him, because of the Electricity Company. But it should be mentioned that even today in our country, a lot of questions are being asked and, Mr. Speaker, you can recall that in this very House, over the last seven

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years, only one question was asked by your humble servant, but Mr. Speaker, in the coming days, I believe and in the coming times ahead, many questions will be asked.

Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with the stimulus package, as it is. What will concern me though, is how we spend our taxpayers' money and what I will ask for is that accounting, proper accounting, so that we can see how much and who gets what and the criteria that are used. When that is satisfied, Mr. Speaker, then we must be open and no clandestine measures to give certain people, we know how sometimes that goes when we have open ends, but Mr. Speaker, I would clamour and I would ask for accountability and transparency on this measure, as I support it today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Minister for Finance. Oh, there is somebody... just before. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-West.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make some brief remarks on the stimulus package and also to take this opportunity to thank the MP for St. George... not thank, but congratulate the MP for St. George North-East on his ascension to this position, His Majesty Opposition, Opposition in His Majesty... Opposition, sorry. I want to wish him well in his performance of his duties to the people of the State of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, every segment of the Agriculture Sector was touched in this dreadful situation we have here today. Every segment was affected, Mr. Speaker, our large scale Farmers, our small Farmers, our Vendors, our Agro-processors, our Nutmeg, Cocoa, Soursop Industry, our Livestock Industry. Every segment of the Agriculture Sector was affected. And Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, we have been working with the COVID team and the Royal Grenada Police Force to find ways and means of how we can support the Farmers and the other stakeholders of that Sector. Mr. Speaker, we have been speaking with every Sector, every part. We have

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been speaking with the Soursop persons, we have been speaking with the livestock persons as well and we know that it is trying times for everybody; we know it's difficult for everybody. The Soursop people, we know that they are losing Soursops around this time, because it is a peak season, but Mr. Speaker, if we're not alive, how could we have the Soursop to send to the United States of America. We must look after ourselves first **(applause)** and I want to applaud this COVID team who have been working. I know, because they have been back and forth with me all the time, because remember, we have over 9,000 Farmers in this country. It must be almost, the last figures that we had from the census that we did in 2012, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) and the Ministry conducted the census, we had 9,300 Farmers. Now, we maybe have about 10,000 Farmers, because we have a lot of young persons who are involved in agriculture now. And so, we have 7,000 Farmers registered at the Ministry of Agriculture, to date. So, Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about a handful of people, we are talking about a large number of registered Farmers and once a Farmer is registered, it tells you something, they're taking their farming seriously. They have registered; they're looking forward to the support from the Ministry, etcetera.

So, we have been speaking with the COVID team. It was very tough going back and forth, but they have to make decisions, Mr. Speaker, that can help us to live. Once we are alive, we will be able to do things to help move this Nation forward. So, we must applaud the efforts of the COVID team and the Royal Grenada Police Force. **(Applause)** And people on the outside do not understand, but it's going back and forth. Could it work? Would it not work? The social distancing, how are we going to work with the Soursop Farmers to observe, to adhere to the social distancing? We have to work it out. If you have your farm in that area, how much people, how much acres of Soursop we have, how much people we can allow on the farm to pick the Soursop? You know our people, how we operate. This is something new to all of us and as much as you will talk about social distancing, this morning, I am coming down and the amount of people gathered together, although they had their mask and covering, but they were close. They were still close. It is something new and you know, people are not used to that

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sort of thing. So we had to put this plan in place and submit it to the COVID team. So, it is in front of the COVID team, the COVID team will look at it and see how we can get the Soursop out of this country. We have to be serious, we have to be responsible, we're responsible for our people and we have to make sure that they do the right thing.

So, Mr. Speaker, during the time the Ministry came up with a short term or immediate plan and a midterm to long term plan and, Mr. Speaker, apart from Cabinet meetings, we have been having a lot of virtual meetings, with the CARICOM Secretariat, with FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), with IICA, to look at ways and means how we can get support for the Farmers in Grenada. Mr. Speaker, I think it was Winston Churchill that made this remark and I quote, **"Never let a crisis go to waste"**, unquote. Mr. Speaker, we must make use, best use of the lessons learned from this crisis. We have learned so many lessons from this crisis and in, especially in the Ministry of Agriculture. You will be surprised to hear the amount of things and the amount of support and the amount of advice that people are bringing forward to the fore, now, because of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, it is not an easy thing and I know the Farmers, they have all their families to look after. Some of them have large families, some have small families, some have been (you know,) sending their children to school, paying all of this. Now, children are home, but they still have to support their children at home and to support what they are doing. And it is difficult times for all of us, but I am asking them to be patient and tolerant. I am asking the Farmers out there to follow the distancing strategy that the team, the COVID team has put forward and let us work together as a team to move this country forward. We have done well. 14 cases and you listened to the report this morning. Six of the 14 cases are on their way out now. So, we are doing very well, Mr. Speaker, and I am hoping that we would all support the team, support what we are putting forward, they would unfold as the week goes by. Maybe next week, the Nutmeg Farmers might be able to go out. Maybe the following week, the Soursop person might be able to bring in... export Soursop and these are the things that are unfolding weekly. They are taxing their brains to see how we can balance everything. So, we're just

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asking for your patience out there. You know, the Farmers, be patient and let us follow the plans and the strategies that the COVID team have put together.

I also want to take this opportunity to speak to my Constituents and wish them well, because they have had a lot of problems as well in their Constituency. As I moved around the Constituency, I could see the plight, I can see the faces of the Constituents, although I wave to them, I stay in my vehicle and wave and (you know,) make some utterances, how are you all doing, etcetera. We have been doing a lot of phone calls, calling back and forth to see how they are doing and those that are in need, we are able to support them (you know,) with their immediate needs, etcetera. I want to tell them that we love them, we will continue to work together as a team and you know, do the right things, do not come out of your homes unnecessarily, wear your masks, follow the protocols and let us work together to get this thing out of our country, out of this world and (you know,) let us try and keep things safe. So, with these few words I want to say again to the Farmers out there and especially our Opposition Leader, who is a Farmer, that we are all in this race together and let us put our hearts and our minds together to make sure that we get rid of this deadly virus that is plaguing our shores. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Andrew South-West. Honourable Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, in concluding the debate on this Motion, I just wish to point out a few things. As relates to, to thank my colleagues on the Government side for support and of course, some of the points that have been raised in supporting this Motion and specifically to the Minister for Health, who of course, announced that six of the persons who were tested are now, COVID free in the test. That does not mean it ends there, because we have known cases where people have been tested negative and prove positive later. So, this is an on-going issue that has to be, we have to be vigilant and continue to be vigilant on. So, I just want to make the

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point here, of course, to reinforce the point made by the Member for St. David also, on the micro-business. I know that we have to be looking at ways of encouraging the Sector, as we look towards the whole question of post COVID-19 and preparing for serious economic activity. That does not imply that we will be making rash decisions. The Member for St. George North-East, was clearly warning about not making any hasty decisions towards bringing back the things to normality. This would never happen. Of course, this Government and this country have been given enormous credit internationally for one of the first country that recognized the seriousness of this issue, in the region. It was just to point out. Five weeks ago, when we went to... a team of us, six of our leaders went to Guyana, from the region, to look at helping to solve the problems in the Elections there. I remember going down the plane and some of my colleagues were shaking hands and hugging people and I said, guys, we have to be careful, we cannot be doing this and I advised, by the time we were leaving Guyana everybody was saying, remember what Keith said to us and everybody was bouncing each other with their shoulders and not shaking any more hands. We recognized the seriousness, five weeks ago, saw the problem and we moved faster than most countries. In fact, some people were laughing at us when they saw St. George's University (SGU) students going out of the country, those who were obviously envious of our success, they were laughing. That was not something to laugh at and to promote, (you know,) but some people were doing it, unfortunately. But we recognized the seriousness of this and we were not putting politics before the health of the people of this land and so, we consistently have been doing what is best, the establishment of the COVID team, with the work done by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Health and the Minister for Youth, Minister for Sports, Minister Cox and the team in general and several other persons who were helping from the Private Sector. They're helping with the whole question of how we deal with the problem, because we knew we were in uncharted territory, Mr. Speaker, and we recognized that we need all hands on board.

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I do want to just say to the Member for St. George North-East and the Leader of, present Leader of the Opposition, that is, you know, when we talk about expenditure, well part of the monies that we're supposed to be spending on COVID-19, we have to now allocate One Hundred and something Thousand Dollars out of that for Office of the Leader of the Opposition. **(Chuckles)** So, maybe he should have announced, maybe he should have announced that he would not accept any more, any funding at this point in time, until COVID-19. **(Honourable Clement rose...)** Member, I notice, I see... Yes. No, is it a Point of Order? Is it a Point of Order?

Hon. Tobias Clement: Point of Order. Let me say that based on... no negotiating have been done with me, you're negotiating with me... in that I have known, in several countries, here even in Grenada that while we speak about saving lives, there are people who have lived and died for democracy. Mr. Speaker, if by this move, I keep democracy alive and put some life and adrenaline into democracy, then I would have done my duty towards our Nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I hope the Member would know what a Point of Order is. **(Chuckles)** This is not a Point of Order, this is an explanation; this is an explanation.

Mr. Speaker: I will remember...

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I know it's uncharted territory for the Member, Mr. Speaker, but I think he needs to read the Standing Orders carefully, because it won't be an easy job being Leader of the Opposition. **(Chuckles)**

Mr. Speaker: I will remember to guide him in the future.

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Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell: You will have to guide him and I will certainly be advising him accordingly. In fact, if I was to advise him properly, I would say to him that it would be more appropriate to wait for the end of COVID-19, which hopefully, will not be long, instead of ascending to an office, a new office at this time, but that's his choice and as I said before, I recognize it and of course, I would support him in every aspect. And so, let it be that way, Mr. Speaker.

But, I just, the Member made a point about, he would be very observant of any attempt at clandestine operation, with respect to the spending of Government money. I just want us to be very careful, using words that has negative connotation for people who are working hard. We have Public Servants, who have given up their family time, when they should be out there protecting their family, coming into work, who are working at home. Public Servants, who, some of them were on holiday, come back in, when most Public Servants are home, not doing much. They are working to put this thing together, to get the list of Vendors, the list of Bus Drivers, the list of businesses, creating forms. Something that never happened before; night and day, they are working and to talk about possible clandestine, who to give monies to. I do not see any names. None of us here have seen names. None of us know. The Public Servants are the ones doing the work, Mr. Speaker, and I just want the Member to be careful. I know he has to behave in a manner of opposition, but the wording, the language, one can do his job effectively as Opposition on policy issues, but imputing ulterior motives on people, honest Public Servants, is not fair and I certainly want the Member to understand this.

Another point I want to make, colleagues, this is serious business. How the Member was talking about advising Members to go out there and distribute hampers, I would not advise that. Mr. Speaker, this is serious times. We can help and there are constructive ways to do so. We can help people protect themselves. We have constituents, individuals who are prepared to help in their communities. That is being done. I would advise that, but a Member of Parliament, going out there, visiting communities in this time. We do not even know how this virus operates. Some cases, some people are even thinking you can get it through the air. That is why we are being

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asked to wear mask. So, I would not advise, but the Member of the St. George North-East and Leader of the Opposition is advising and talking and seem to be proud that he is going out there. I would not advise him to do it. I would like to see him healthy. I would like to see all of us continue with health. I am just giving a warning, Mr. Speaker, because I could only say, what I see as the best for all of us here in this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, there are several Grenadians who are asking about having problems. A number of people call, about, they have, they used to be working and paying rent and wondering what could happen to them. That is a serious issue. I just hope, just like how all businesses are being given some space right now by the banks that, I hope that there would not be many rental property owners who would evict people in this three months' time, because they are not able to pay rent, especially if the person accustomed paying. Now, I do not mean that because it is COVID-19 and you can afford to pay, that you have refused to pay, taking advantage of the atmosphere. That would not be my call and I am sure that is not going to be the call of any one of us in this Honourable House, but certainly, if you have a good client, a good person paying their rent regularly and meeting their responsibility and they have lost their jobs, I think it would be unconscionable and unchristian-like to evict persons and to put pressure on persons in this time.

In fact, in New York, a Governor has in fact, invoked a special part of their Laws to prevent Landlords from evicting anybody in this three months period. I do not, we do not want to go that road. I think it is people's conscience and of course, behaviour should be the one, but we use moral suasion to ask people not to go that route. We have a number who have people who have built student apartments, who were, some of them are ordinary folks and I know some of them are hurting. So, all these are issues we have to look at, because many of the students have left and it is not known yet how soon that the University would return and of course, all these have to be based on what we have indicated ourselves and what we put in place for the return of persons coming back to our country.

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So, these are a number of issues. A number of persons are calling about medications, especially in a time of, where serious issues of health are being decided. Clearly more and more persons would be willing, will be needing support for medication and other things. So, clearly we have to do a lot more out there and the Ministry of Social Services is certainly working to deal with the problem. (The Ministry of Social Services might find that there are more increasing incidents of physical abuse, because now some people that hardly used to be home might be home more often than they have been before and you never know, what that could mean. And I am not talking about man doing it, from both sides; both sexes can have problems at this time. Sometimes, it is not just physical abuse. Sometimes the mental abuse is worse. If people have poor relationships and they have to stay in a house 24 hours, now, as opposed to two and five hours, then, you could see the problem. These are serious issues. They might seem like some sort of joke, but it is not a joke, it is a serious issue. So, the Ministry of Social Services and Ministry of Health and us in Government would have to be doing a lot more and finding resources to provide a lot more psychological support for persons outside there.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a final point before I close. My constituents, St. George North-West, have been going through quite a lot. In just, as it's well known, the Molinere Road is posing enormous problems, a lot of the shops in that area, because people are not passing through this area anymore, have found themselves marginalized, the physical problem that this has faced with the Constituency has quite been have been enormous, indeed. Some of the Busmen were complaining that the extra travel was costing them more and the problems of passing through this narrow roads is really a problematic thing for them. In addition, the Perseverance Dump has been, with the smoke, we do not know, a lot of health problems could emanate, I feel very sorry for the people at Brizan, Beausejour, Happy Hill and the areas, Mt. Moritz and Concord, Cotton Bailey area, and so on. They have to bear this problem and with all the attempt by the Ministry of Health and of course, the Solid Waste Division to attempt to deal with that problem, but because of the technical issues involved and the scientific

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issues of where this fire is emanating and what is causing it, the gas and so on, there could be a lot of health issues. I am worried; I am extremely worried for those persons living in that community. And, then, now, you have COVID-19. So, they are dealing with all of that and COVID-19. So, my heart goes out to the people of North-West, St. George, particular and the people of Concord and surrounding areas and other areas that are being affected by all that is taking place.

But finally, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I raised this issue at the Heads of Government Meeting and I think it is important that, and I noticed my colleagues did in fact, put it in the communiqué at the Heads of Government Meeting we had two days ago, that I think if we ask people, Christian people and people with conscience, I cannot see why any country in this world that we are living in and COVID-19 has affected all of us, the entire world. Why one would impose sanctions against another country at this time, when people are dying. I think it is unconscionable and I believe all Nations, all persons, whatever your political philosophies, whatever the issues are, this is not a time to allow babies to die, women and children to die, innocent men to die, because of the sanctions. And I think we are in this world, we must speak out no matter who is doing it, whether it is our best friend, it has nothing to do with ideology, it has nothing to do with any other issues, economic and otherwise, political doctrines. We are living in this world, it is one order. The sanction against Venezuela and Cuba is wrong, morally and otherwise. We must speak out about it. **(Applause)** We cannot be silent in this. If it wants to be imposed after that, well, I do not support it, but that is the choice, but not now.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend this motion to this Honourable House for passage. **(Applause)**

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable...

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I just want to, sorry I have to, I was going to close on a further note. We have lost a lot of our brothers and sisters abroad. We have no deaths here and thank God for it, but we are losing so many of our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora, in UK, Canada, particularly in New York, they are frightened. I keep getting calls, left, right and center, they want to come home, because every day you get messages. I know some people, very close, they were very healthy and some of them are lying almost in a coma now. They're dying like flies in New York and we must remember them and pray for them at this particular time. And I really thank you for giving me this opportunity to make this point.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 6 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: We have two (2) more Motions. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move Motion 5 (c), standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 69 (1), of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, provides for the election of a Committee to be known as the Public Accounts Committee;

AND WHEREAS this Committee was elected on Friday 22nd November, 2019, be it resolved that the appointment of the members of the said Committee, be revoked and be it further resolved that a new Committee, be appointed.

Question proposed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reason should be obvious. We never had for the last, many years, as the Member for St. David, articulated. Now, we have Member for St. George North-East being appointed in

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the post of Leader of the Opposition and so, the construct of the Public Accounts Committee must be looked at. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I will like to recommend that the Public Accounts Committee doth now comprise the Leader of the Opposition, as Chairman, the Honourable Anthony Boatswain and from the 'Other Place', Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand to move that Resolution in my name:

Resolution for the purposes of section 17 (2) of the Constitution, which deals with the Statutory Rules and Orders and it read as follows:

WHEREAS there has been a worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus disease, COVID-19 and on the 11th day of March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak;

AND WHEREAS on the 22nd day of March, 2020, the Ministry of Health and the Government of Grenada confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS on the 30th day of March, 2020, the Governor-General at the time, when Parliament was not sitting, by Proclamation pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution and section 3 of the Emergency Powers Act, Chapter 88, declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS section 17 (2) (b) of the Constitution provides that where a declaration is made when Parliament is not sitting, a declaration of an emergency shall lapse at the expiration of a period of 21 days, beginning with the date of the publication of the declaration unless it has in the meantime, been approved by the resolution of both Houses of Parliament;

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AND WHEREAS section 17 (5) of the Constitution provides that the resolution of a House of Parliament, passed for the purposes of Section 17 of the Constitution, shall remain for six months or such shorter period, as may be specified therein;

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient and necessary in the public interest of the State of Grenada that the declaration of emergency by the Governor-General dated the 30th day of March, 2020, be approved by the Houses of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS the Leader of Government's Business proposes that the House of Representatives makes such a resolution;

NOW THEREFORE be it resolved by the Houses of Representatives that the declaration of emergency by the Governor-General dated the 30th day of March, 2020, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution is approved.

Mr. Speaker: You could proceed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, working with the Ministry of Legal Affairs, since this resolution as was stated by the Constitution, requires that eight Members, that is, more than half of the number of Members in the House, must support. Therefore, we propose a very slight amendment to this, Mr. Speaker, because if we had nine of us here, we had a quorum and, if five voted 'for', the Constitution says, it must be a majority of the Members of the House must support. So, in that context, Mr. Speaker, I will be reading out very shortly, a just slight amendment to the resolution, which says, "that a majority of the Members of the House must support". Thank you, I just thought I should bring that up right now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. So, you may determine, Mr. Speaker, whether it will be a de facto to count the number of people, just for the record. You will determine how you say eight people voted for it. I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Motion speaks for itself. I have a complete explanation, a pretty long one, which explains every aspects of this from the Ministry of Legal Affairs. So, I would, in fact, make it available so Members can have it in their record and it could be circulated publicly. But I don't, knowing that we have a Parliament Session this afternoon and knowing other Members would certainly want to comment on, concerning their own Constituencies and things that... I don't believe I should spend too much time on this.

But just to make the point and to say, as the resolution says, the Proclamation by the Governor-General has legal standing and it is a seven-day period, first and then, 21 days. With the 21 days, it means that the Parliament must meet, if we have to go further than that, to give approval for it and to go for an extended period. So, the Parliament now meeting, when it is passed as was pointed out by Leader of Government Business, it could go for this, when it is passed here and passed in the other House, then it could be for six months, Mr. Speaker. So, it means that we do not have to come back here, if we want to extend the state of emergency pass the three months or two months or whatever it is. But what is significant about this, Mr. Speaker, is that now it have the Act of Parliament behind it. And I want to be careful, because already I have received some comments. Sometimes, you have to have a sense of humour in all the problems we're facing, psychological and otherwise. I got a few comments, one yesterday in particular, a gentleman, I don't know the person, they put their name in the WhatsApp message and then, I got one on Facebook, stating **"Prime Minister, please, don't let us go on this thing for six months again, we cannot take six months."** (Chuckles) I had to right him to say, look, the Act of Parliament gives us a six months period for an emergency to be enforced, but it does not say we have to go for six months. In fact, this Act, the Resolution does in fact says, the Law states that the Governor-General with the advice of the Cabinet, can in fact, annul the emergency at any given time, on the advice of the Cabinet. It could be next month, three weeks from now, four weeks from now, five weeks from now. So, we do not necessarily... we just cover ourselves for six months, but it does not mean that we have to go for six months.

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So, I just want that to be clear for those who are concerned that we are asking them for six more months of Emergency Legislation. That is not, I honestly hope, with what we're seeing right now and the Ministry of Health, the Minister made the statement this morning and of course, the team, the work of the COVID team, who have done enormous amount of work and I have to give more and more complement to that team, that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have been working closely with other members of the team, in ensuring some of the decisions that we have made... They have not been perfect, sometimes, people complain, why is this one get pass and that one did not get pass? I just want to make this point. We cannot be perfect in this time. They will not be perfect, they never indicated that every decision they made was necessarily optimal, but in this trying times we just have to give each other support and if there are areas that are pointed out as weakness, it is brought to their attention with the Commissioner... I want to also make the point. The Commissioner of Police, he has been working as member of the COVID team and working closely. I do not know where he gets time to rest, because he has been at it, literally 24 hours. So, I want to give special consideration and congrats and thanks to the Commissioner of Police for his work. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I therefore want to just commend this Motion and as I said, there is quite an elaborate explanation of all aspects, the legal aspects of this. I just want to say this. Seven days, she has first time Proclamation, then twenty-one days and now, we're giving effect to this officially and then, this can now go on for another six months, if we wish to, but we hopefully and I am pretty sure, I am quite confident that we would not have to be going to that extended period. I want to therefore, commend this motion to the Honourable House. **(Applause)**

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government Business.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to put the wordings.

(Inaudible comments)

Hon. Gregory Bowen: ...to put the wordings for the Resolution, which should read, **“NOW THEREFORE be it resolved by a majority of the Members,”** of all the Members. It is understood here, it is just a majority, but, **“be it resolved by a majority of all the Members of the House.”** And, in which context, Mr. Speaker, it is up to you. You may wish to call for a division or you may wish to make us put up our hands as in school, but it has to be recorded that it is a majority of the... of all the Members. So, we must get at least 8.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion as presented by our Prime Minister. First, let me welcome the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tobias Clement to this House and I look forward to spirited debate and discussion of course, all in the interest of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the state of emergency, I just want to, I will try to be as brief as I can, but to state that in some of the discussions this morning, it was said and I want to reiterate it, that in our discussions in the... COVID Committee and I want to pay tribute to the Committee because the Committee and many Members have said it and the Member for St. Andrew South-West did say, that we are always in touch with everybody. It's an attempt, Mr. Speaker, to balance the science and the economy. It's always a question of 'do we free up the society to make contact with each other and to have the economy running or do we try to follow the science?' And you see the same debate every day in the News; you see it in the United States and Britain, so it's not an easy task. For example, with the Ministry of Agriculture, we have to be back and forth, how do we get the farmers and I must say there was a whole lot of cooperation between

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all the Ministers of Government and all the Sectors of our economy, to try to get that balance.

So whereas... and what is strange sometimes, somebody would say, 'we should shut it down, shut it down now, but we should open it up for one, two, three, four; shut it down, but...' So there is always this balancing of science versus 'do we open up the economy?' And I know as we go forward, I want to add my voice of caution, that there are some countries that opened up and opened up too fast and they had to lock back down. So, in making a decision how we go forward, how much do we open up, how much of the economy do we allow to restart, we have to always remain cognizant of the fact that our primary objective is to ensure that we save lives. Because if we open too fast and then something happens, everybody will run and say, 'you see, you see, you don't see what Keith Mitchell do, he opened up fast and people die.' But if we keep it down too long, then they're going to criticize him for keeping it down too. But we as leaders have to take that burden on our shoulders and the burden is on the Prime Minister and all of us to try to make sure we do the right thing to ensure that lives are saved, because this coronavirus, Mr. Speaker, is not a known phenomenon. It is unknown. We don't know where it is, we don't know how it is, as somebody said, it's an unseen enemy. So in the state of emergency, in supporting the state of emergency, what we are trying to do, the primary objective, is to ensure that our people maintain social distancing, that if it exists in the community, we can find it.

And I want to pay a tribute to the Scientists, to the Doctors, to Dr Charles and Dr Martin and Dr Mitchell and all of the others and even our own Dr Clarice Modeste-Curwen, who is part of the team, who is always reminding us... they are always reminding us that we must do what is necessary to ensure that we do not spread the disease. And I must say that we have been following the Scientists as we go forward in the next couple of weeks and months, we will listen to the Scientists at least at the Committee level, we will advise our Prime Minister and our leadership on what the science is saying and then we make a policy decision based on the best interests of our people. And there will always be complaints. And I urge us not to only listen to when

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people complain that 'I can't move, I can't do this'; listen to what the science is saying. You know I always tell my colleagues, it's like when we were young and sometimes your mother said, 'boy you must take this medication,' and you resist it, because you don't like the taste, but at the end of the day she was doing it because it was in your best interest.

So I want to pay tribute to the COVID-19 Committee, the members of the Committee who have been working diligently day and night, arguing back and forth. Believe you me, Mr Speaker, all of the views on our society are expressed to the Committee because we argue day and night about it. So I want to state my full support to the state of emergency, but I want to urge Grenadians, please, follow the social distancing. Some people say it's not social distancing, but the physical distancing guidelines, stay home if you do not need to be outside. Because, you know, we noticed on some days when people are given permission to go out to shop, it's as if we're saying, just go out and do anything. No, it is to go shop, get your essentials and go back home. Not because you yourself might get ill alone, but remember, remember, and this is one of the reasons why schools remain closed. People say, 'well young people can't die from it, but young people can bring it home and give it to their parents and grandparents and kill their grandparents and parents while they themselves may not show severe symptoms. So I just want to urge us to support the state of emergency and to ensure that we keep the social physical distancing.

I just want to pay tribute to, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Affairs, the communities of Britain and the United States. We must really keep them in our prayers. Over forty (40) Grenadians, Mr. Speaker, died in New York alone and in the United Kingdom... in the United Kingdom many more are dying. We must pay tribute to them and you know what is fascinating to me, while they are undergoing that... I have received messages from Diaspora communities asking what they can do for us in Grenada. That is amazing (**applause**); amazing how our Diaspora community, despite their own challenges still, still thinking of how they can help us here. So I want

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us to keep them in our prayers, see how we can give their family support here because many of them have families here who need that support.

I spoke to one Undertaker in New York who is a Grenadian asking him to... and this is one of the tragedies, that one family, Mr Speaker, not only did the gentleman die, but his family was not able to recover his body because there were no spaces in the Funeral Homes. So we had to be asking around New York to try to get space in a Funeral Home. One Funeral Home said to me, 'listen I'll try to... I'm trying to get these containers now to take more bodies'. He alone had fifteen (15) Grenadians in his Funeral Home. So I really want us to keep them in our prayers and to ensure that we can do whatever we can to give them the support, because the Grenadian community in the Diaspora, in New York, in London, in Canada they have been very, very supportive of Us in Grenada.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, and I promise to be brief because I know we have a time hindrance on us, is to express how pleased I was that the Prime Minister raised the issue of sanctions in the Heads of Government meeting. This is a time when we should be seeking to support each other; to lift sanctions, as a matter fact, in the middle of this crisis, that we can save lives. In Venezuela, it does not matter if you are a supporter or not a supporter of the Bolivarian Revolution, you will suffer from COVID; similarly in China, similarly in Cuba, in these countries. And you know what is amazing, I want to also use this opportunity to thank the Governments of Cuba, the Cuban Government sent Nurses to Grenada and are about to send Doctors (**applause**) to this country. In the face of their own crisis, the government of Cuba is sending assistance, not only to us, you look on the television, you will realise they're sending assistance to all countries all over the world.

Secondly, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We got over three thousand (3000) tests last week, some of which we are currently using, from Venezuela at a time when they are suffering (**applause**) and they are facing sanctions. And the Government and people of China, they gave us supplies and more supplies are coming from China next week. Three (3) Governments months who are subjects to

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sanctions; I want to express on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Government, on behalf of the Prime Minister, on behalf of the people Grenada, thanks to all of these Governments who are assisting us. Thanks to the WHO; thanks to PAHO, thanks to all of the International Agencies who are helping us. But also, thanks to many of our Embassies and Ambassadors out there in the Diaspora, out there in Brussels, in London, in Canada, who are helping us. They have all come together, Mr. Speaker, to help us.

So as we fight the disease, as we fight the virus and there are other people facing the virus, we must always bear in mind, that we are not in this alone. We are supported by people out there who want to see as well and who will continue to support us as we try to rid Grenada and the world of the virus.

So in conclusion, I also want to say to my constituents that I know they are going through difficulties. I've done what I can with the resources we have to ensure that they survive this. You know, the Prime Minister said something earlier that I want to reiterate in closing; that while we have difficulties now, there are many more problems facing us in the future. The Minister for Agriculture said it and another Caribbean Leader said it, that a crisis... he said it in a much... maybe a humourous way; that "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste. As we go through these difficulties and as our businesses face challenges, we have to look to new ways, we have to look to new ways of doing business so that when we emerge, as we did emerge from Hurricane Ivan, we'll not only emerge stronger, but we will emerge better organised. For example the use of technology, people have been meeting all over the world. I know our own Prime Minister talks about the need for us to have more meetings using Zoom and Skype and these methods. In fact, he has said it all the time, as a means of cutting down the expenses we have of travel. But look, we are meeting now; in fact, we have had several meetings of Committees of this Parliament, the Committee meets by Zoom every day. These are ways we can cut down expenses, but also, these are ways where we can make it convenient and easier to do business.

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But, Mr. Speaker, we have much time in order to discuss that. I want to express my support to the state of emergency Motion and to say that our people should support it by doing what the state of emergency asks them to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for the Town of St. George. Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Resolution as it relates to the approval of the declaration of the 30th of March by the Governor-General declaring a state of emergency for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are in a very critical stage in our fight against COVID-19. And I believe, so far, Mr. Speaker, that we have been doing a wonderful job. We have been keeping the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique fairly safe.

As for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, I can say that we too have been doing our part. We have been working collaboratively with the Ministry of Health, the COVID-19 team. We also, Mr. Speaker, have a local on-the-ground COVID-19 team, both in Carriacou and in Petite Martinique and we have been working together to ensure that COVID-19 does not reach the shores of Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I would want to say that Carriacou and Petite Martinique, was one of the few places where COVID-19 never made an appearance. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Speaker, we have been doing just that. The measures that we have implemented thus far, Mr. Speaker have worked and are working. Mr Speaker, though some of those measures I know brought a lot of inconvenience and hardships to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I've heard, Mr. Speaker, a lot of noises with respect to the said hardships. I have been accused, Mr. Speaker, of being uncaring and being unkind. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, it's only because we care, it's only because we care for all the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, these measures, these restrictions, these Regulations were implemented.

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(Applause) Mr. Speaker, it's because we care for the vulnerable and the elderly in our society, because we care about the hardworking Police Officers, the Nurses, the Doctors, the persons on the front line, that is why these and other measures were implemented, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address a particular issue as it relates to the widely discussed issue regarding food shortages in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And, Mr. Speaker, I must say, categorically, that Carriacou and Petite Martinique is not experienced and is not experiencing any food shortages at this time. There are a lot of people who would want to make the outside world believe that we, the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are hungry. **(Applause)** That could never be further from the truth. All the arrangements, all the mechanisms that we have put in place, ensured that there was food and water for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday over four (4) boats, cargo boats from Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in this instance, left Grenada, filled with cargo **(applause)**, filled with food for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, I can only say that the persons who are spreading these lies and this propaganda are doing it for one thing. They are trying at this time to score cheap political points, but I know my people and I know that they go to the supermarket, almost on every shopping day and I know that they can attest, that we are not hungry and there is enough food on Island to feed all of us. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the members of the Royal Grenada Police Force attached to the Police Station in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. They have been doing an excellent job. I also want to thank the members of the Coast Guard, who was responsible for getting me down to Grenada here this morning, very safe, and hopefully, will get me back up. But, Mr. Speaker, we have been doing... they have been doing a wonderful job. Also, the people themselves, Mr. Speaker, have really listened to the call. They have adhered to the Regulations, the warnings and the restrictions and so far, we are doing, really, really well.

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Mr. Speaker, also on the frontline, I want to commend the truck drivers and the truck owners who are responsible for bringing and carrying water to the homes of the people of Carriacou. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we are in the dry period and so we depend on water from our Desalination Plant, which of course has its issues. But, Mr. Speaker, we have, through the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, have a Water programme, whereby we deliver water to the persons who cannot otherwise afford to purchase same from the Desalination Plant. That has been working well, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do so. These persons, Mr. Speaker, must be recommended, because they too are on the frontline. We're telling persons every day to wash their hands for twenty seconds. We cannot do so in Petite Martinique if we do not have portable water. And so, these persons have been going out there day after day, on holidays, on weekends, to ensure that portable water is delivered to the homes of these persons.

In this vein, Mr. Speaker, I really make a clarion call for us to look, as a Government, to look at the water situation in Carriacou, as we go forward. This COVID-19 has basically... is an opportunity for us to assess where we are as a Government, to assess some of the things that we need to do in order to better provide for our people and I call, Mr. Speaker, on the relevant authorities with respect to the NAWASA Plant in Carriacou, to ensure that the intended project to upgrade the existing Water Plant, to ensure that the pipes that are now on the ground at the NAWASA's premises are installed so that we can have running water, running portable water, throughout the length and breadth of Carriacou.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity to thank also the Attorney General from the Attorney General Chambers and the Legal Drafters attached to the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Mr Speaker these persons basically have given the legal guidance in terms of ensuring that the state of emergency is within the legal parameters and that the drafting of the Regulations and other amendments and legal changes are done appropriately and in accordance with the Constitution and the other various Legislations. They too, Mr. Speaker, they must be commended for that. **(Applause)**

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Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the people and the business community of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, who have worked and continue to work with us to ensure that the less fortunate among us are not forgotten during this period. Mr. Speaker, I have received many calls and many type of assistance for persons who during this time were not able, maybe to provide and themselves and their family with a meal. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to purchase and to allocate much needed items, care packages for some of these persons. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do so because I believe that we must touch these persons who are so affected by COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we want to be able to boast at the end of the day that COVID-19 did not make an appearance in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to adhere to all the Regulations, the restrictions, the warnings and I know the people of Carriacou will likewise want to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, in this regard, I know that we have made some gains where we are concerned with respective COVID-19 in Grenada, but we must continue, we must continue. And I believe that if the state of emergency is not continued at this time, the gains that we have made for the last few weeks, can renoun to nought. We can go back to where we started. And so, Mr. Speaker, in this regard, I lend my fullest support to the Resolution to approve this particular Resolution. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.
(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I was wondering if you would be down here today. But when I did ask, I was told, you're coming and then I started to wonder, how is she going to get here? Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, in closing this Motion that supports the Emergency Act and passage of the Resolution for that, I just want to thank my colleagues for their contribution; the Member for the Town of St. George and of

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course, Minister for Foreign Affairs, for again elaborating on the problems concerning our Diaspora friends out there. In fact, I've heard, to the Member, that it's over fifty (50) odd persons, as of yesterday, that passed and the numbers are... in fact, several of them, now are, some are home sick, very sick and some are in hospital. So we have to pray for their recovery. It's a very serious situation.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to compliment the Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique on her presentation because I think it's important... to allay any perception that there is some issues about the lack of attention of the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, so that others from outside have to come and rescue the people of Petite Martinique and Carriacou. We are taking care of ourselves and we just wish that others are doing the same thing for their own country. We wish them the best; that's all we wish. We would never attempt to give any impression that we are rescuing anybody whatsoever, Mr Speaker. So I just want that, to compliment her and to say that the efforts that they expended in Carriacou to help themselves and to ensure the people of Petite Martinique also is well taken care of, this is something I want to commend all the citizens of Carriacou and Petite Martinique on their efforts, for working together. There's one thing you know, Carriacouans and Petite Martiniqueans, historically, the people of the entire State is a very proud people, but I think Carriacou and Petite Martinique have a special element of proudness (if there is a word like that). **(Chuckles)** I don't think they want any perception. If you give somebody from Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and you give them piece of food, the worse thing to do is go and talk about it. They would be mad with you forever and forever, amen. Grenadians are the same thing too, but I think there is a fierceness in that State.

So I want to commend the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique for their understanding. Everyone is going through. There is no part of the State right now, where it could be said that people are so happy and that things are so nice and dandy. Every part of the country; there's some sacrifices being made by citizens in St. Andrew, in St. Patrick, in St. David, in St. George; all parts, St. Mark, St. John. Every part... the

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Member for St. John talked about the fishermen in the Western side and the country as a whole. They're making a lot of sacrifices. The fact that many of them could not go out; some of them in the Agricultural Sector has suffered losses as the Member for St. George North-East mentioned earlier on. So, sacrifice is the order of the day; no one is immune from sacrifices at this particular time. And a final point I want to make... you know, when this whole emergency thing started and we said we were going to close our borders and you know, the minute someone comes in here, someone on a private plane lands here and he has the features of a Chinese, then you have all these noises as if the Government and the Prime Minister in particular, importing COVID-19 people into the country to destroy the people of this country. And you have people in this country, elements in the Opposition who have nothing else to do. I was surprised, even the leader of that Political Party, who you expect at this time, coming in new, would be saying something different; and how they're giving a speech and talking about the Prime Minister allowed people, Chinese to come in here in the dead of the night, 3 o'clock in the morning. I had nothing to do with this; absolutely nothing. It's just so sad when you see people using a situation they should all be united and working together, sending the right message, attacking innocent people for doing things to destroy their country. Someone who has given his entire life, promoting the development of this country, made sacrifices to give up lucrative appointments abroad and to come home and make sacrifices to help in the building of his country, and he decided to bring people here because it's benefitting him personally and otherwise. That's the implication. It's sad, but that was what was happening.

The good thing is, and what is good about it, no one can say that a Chinese person came in here and had COVID-19. Every incident of COVID-19; the fourteen (14) cases here, came from where? **(Inaudible comments)** UK and USA; but you have heard nothing said **(chuckles)**. In fact, I couldn't be accused of the one bringing them here, but I just want to make the point. We are in this together, Mr. Speaker. We're doing what we have to do. We're getting the political benefits or losses about the decisions that we make. We are concentrating, as the Minister for Health said and the

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Member for the South of St. George, we're concerned about life; life, life, life, life. If you don't have life and I think the Member for St. Andrew South-West also articulated the same point. What is the point about food if you have no life? What is the point about soursop if you have no life? What is the point about making more money, if your hotel is filled, if you have no life? That's the issue. So, Mr. Speaker, I commend this motion for the enactment of the state of emergency to this Honourable House for passage.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Members, because of the importance and nature of this Motion, a division will be taken in which case the Clerk would call each Representative by name and you will indicate, yes or no.

Question put.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, **'by a majority of all the members'**.

Mr. Speaker: Of all the Members present. Clerk.

(Acting Clerk converse with the Speaker in private)

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, a majority of all the Members, which would be recorded. So we will have that on record. So let me say it again. By a majority of all the Members of the House of Representatives, that the declaration of emergency by the Governor-General dated 30th day of March, 2020, as set out in the Schedule be approved.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Keith Mitchell.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Gregory Bowen.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Dr Clarice Modeste-Curwen.

Hon. Dr Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Anthony Boatswain.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Nickolas Steele.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Delma Thomas.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Alvin Da Breo.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Pamela Moses.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Peter David.

Hon. Peter David: Aye.

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Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Oliver Joseph.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Kate Lewis.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Emmalin Pierre.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Aye.

Clerk (Ag.): Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Tobias Clement.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Aye.

(The Clerk gave the results to the Speaker)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, we have everybody voting 'aye'. So the Motion is passed by a unanimous vote. And let me just remind us that we are getting

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tight on time because at 3 o'clock, there will be a sitting of the Members from the 'Other Place. Bills.

Clerk Assistant (Ag.): Item 6 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I just stand to move the first reading of the Bill and entitled, Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2020.

Clerk (Ag.): A Bill to make provisions for the appropriation of an additional sum to service the State of Grenada for the period 20th April to 31st December, 2020, shortly entitled Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the house be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all the stages at this Sitting.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move the second reading of this Bill and to inform this Honourable House that I have the consent of the Governor-General to proceed.

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Mr. Speaker, in moving the second reading, it's just important for me to point out, we already had discussed in detail, at the Motion for the Supplementary Appropriation, which has detailed every aspect of the purpose of this Bill and the details of it, and therefore there would not be much need for me to say a lot more, except to point out, that as I made the point, in terms of the wage support; it'll be 40% of wages for workers at certain levels of all of the areas that we mentioned in the Bill. It would be supported with the application forms available and we did. We're calling on Members, those who have not done so; so far two hundred and sixty eight (268) businesses have already sent in business application.

In addition, the buses are going to be given eight hundred dollars (\$800.00) each; the owners of the buses to support the drivers, that's monthly; in other words, that's monthly; monthly, eight hundred (800) each month. We would love to have given more, Mr. Speaker, but the Bill itself is quite large and we don't know the time period. We may have to be doing this, not for three (3) months; maybe for more months. **(Inaudible comments)** So it's both the drivers and the conductors, must be paid first. The bus owners cannot keep the money for themselves, just for themselves, because the buses, those who own the buses and have the banks to pay, the banks are giving three to six months of grace, so it cannot be said that 'I have to find the money no, so whatever is given, it's primarily to support the workforce. And of course, we expect, in some cases, the owners will have some expenses that he wants to deal with. So I think it's important to mention this specifically.

In the case of the Vendors and so on, they are working right now as to the amounts. There are different amounts we looked at, so very soon, there would be an announcement of how much. It would be a one-off, Mr. Speaker, not a monthly thing, because we do not expect that we'll have to... the Vendors should be able to ply their trade very soon, in the normal way that they have been doing. The Fish Vendors, we are working on, as mentioned by the Member for St. John; that we have to look at certain sections of the fishing community. Not all sections, so we don't expect that bill to be very high. We will work with the Minister responsible for Fisheries and the team in

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the Department of Fisheries and the fishermen in general to see what relief we can bring. And there must be other areas, as I mentioned before, that people would be coming forward and asking for a relief and bring in legitimate concerns to us and we have to be prepared to help in some of those areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, therefore, I commend the second reading of this Bill to this Honourable House.

Question proposed.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore... I assume that Members would have accepted.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have any Members? Any contributors to the Bill.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Please proceed, Mr. Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Well you moved the...

Mr. Speaker: Second reading...

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House...

Mr. Speaker: Just before.

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Sorry, yes.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take this Bill Clause by Clause.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

House resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that this... I have to report that the... Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move the third reading and passage of this Bill.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

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Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020.

Clerk (Ag.): An Act to suspend specific tax obligations imposed by other Acts of Parliament to alleviate adverse financial effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, shortly entitled, COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the House be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020, seeks to suspend specific tax obligations imposed by other Acts of Parliament to alleviate adverse financial effects of the coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic; namely, the Annual Stamp Tax Act and the Income Tax Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Annual Stamp Tax Act...

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Member...

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Just want to remind that you have to inform that the Governor-General acceded; it's a money Bill. The Governor-General's assent has been obtained.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much, Minister for Finance. So, Mr. Speaker, there are two specific tax this Bill refers to. The first one is the Annual Stamp Tax Act. Now the Annual Stamp Tax requires Businesses to pay Annual Stamp Tax in nine (9) equal monthly instalments from April to December, in the year for which the tax is payable. This Bill seeks to suspend the tax liability under the Annual Stamp Tax Act, for the period 1st April to 30th June and for the sum to be payable between the 1st July, 2020 and the 31st December, 2022. So, the suspension is from the 1st April to the 30th June, but that sum will be payable between 1st July, 2020 and December 31, 2020. That is the first amendment.

And I will go straight to the essential point because of time, the time constraints. So I will go to the second one; that's the Annual Stamp Tax. The second is to suspend the tax liability under the Income Tax Act for the period 1st April to 30th June, 2020 and for the sum to be payable between 1st July, 2020 and 31st March, 2021. So there will be a suspension for the tax liability for Income Tax for April to June, but that sum would become payable between 1st July, 2020 and 31st March; nine (9) months. Because usually at the end of the tax year, you have three (3) months, three (3) additional months for filing and that is why it is up to the 31st March, 2021. So that is the period in which the tax would become due and payable and the suspension would run from 1st

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April to 30th June. No, the tax would not be paid within that period of time, but it would become due and payable between the 1st of July, 2020 and the 31st of March, 2021.

These are the key... that's the key points in the Bill, Mr. Speaker. As I said, given the time, I would not elaborate on all the details. It's just to give relief to taxpayers for these two specific tax; the Annual Stamp Tax and the Income Tax for the period April to June and the period wherein it would become payable is stated in this amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, in supporting the second reading of this important Bill, just to add, to thank the Member for leading this discussion; this Bill, discussion on the second reading. And to say that, the fact that the Government has decided to do this, it means that it certainly is going to affect revenue of the Government for this rest of this year and maybe some part of next year, which means therefore, there's going to be less revenue collected by Government, with the commitment, with all the financial support it is expected to give and to state that we are not even seeing the whole picture yet, because we still expect others will be coming forward. As I mentioned before, that we may have no choice, but to do something about it. So, I just want us to be understanding and those who are seeking support and wanting everything from Government, to realise that this is a period of sacrifice, not just for the Government only, but for all concerned, so that persons should not be expecting to get more than that is possible under the present circumstances that we are facing at this time. So I just want to commend, to support the second reading of this very important Bill that we have before us.

But, Mr. Speaker, just to also say this. I have been involved over the last few weeks at several meetings, virtually, regionally. Regionally, well of course internally here, of course in many cases with stakeholders around the country and with constituents. But also internationally, because right now, Mr. Speaker, I'm still Chairman of the Monetary Council of Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and therefore I have to be

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involved in lots of virtual meetings and chairing those meetings which goes on for hours. And also, as a member of the OECS, we have been meeting regularly, so at several occasions, I have to be on virtual meetings for a length of time. And with the Caribbean Development Bank also, as a member of the bank, I have to be involved in several meetings and providing direction as far as policies are concerned. At World Bank meetings and they've been calling meetings; sometimes I had to ask for the Minister of Works and other Members to stand in for me because some meetings are taking place almost at the same time simultaneously. So there's been a lot of work, a lot of people don't know what is taking place. They think some of us are just home but we are probably working harder mentally now than we'd been working before, because of the strain of dealing with the problems that we are facing.

I just must add that we expect significant support based on the number of things that we see coming. We expect about 17 million US dollars from the World Bank initiative to support the civil aviation area because of the... that's Grenada's component of this. We expect serious support also from the IMF, for the SDR support for different countries. It could be about 20 million US. These are monies to be spent for different activities and to also make sure that we are prepared also, for, in the case of natural disaster coming. So it's not just to spend all the resources we're getting now. The UN Services have come forward also with some support; grant support in some areas. The European Union has signalled also that they would be providing some significant support. In a meeting of the IMF team recently, I have been recommending additional support for countries, particularly countries like Grenada that's been meeting their... managing their fiscal situation in a much more astute way than some of the countries have been doing.

So we are benefitting in a lot, to some extent because of the way we have managed and that's why we shouldn't loosen our belts at this particular time. We should continue to do what we have to do to protect the resources of this country and to protect the future generations, that we are here right now and we are preparing the ground for

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future leaders of this country. So on this note, Mr. Speaker, I would just want to support second reading of this important Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Finance. Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Let me thank the Minister for Finance for his support for the Bill and I wish to commend it for its second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider the Bill, Clause by Clause.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee

House resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the Whole House and passed without amendments. Honourable Representative.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: It has to be adopted first.

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Question proposed for the adoption of the Chairman's Report.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence now because you had afforded us the permission for every Member to have a five (5) minutes and you with foresight said, no way, it would more be like three (3). Now some people have spoken to their constituents and those remaining, they have not gotten the opportunity. We know time is of the essence. So, Mr. Speaker, I just beg of you to speak to the Nation and to tell the Members, their constituents, that they would have addressed them, but they can't now, because of time. I too wanted to speak of the workers in GRENLEC, LIME/FLOW and NAWASA, the Telecoms, because they're doing a lot now. But we don't have the time now, so I just want the Nation to know that those of us who did not speak to our constituency; it's because of time constraints now.

I'm not asking, I understand the Senate must meet in order to do the passage of this very important Bill. So all of us must understand but I say it so that those of us whose constituents were waiting and now will not hear anything, that they're well aware of why it was not done. And I think and I hope, Mr. Speaker, the next time we're here, you will give us the opportunity to do that. So, on behalf of my other colleagues and

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myself who did not get the opportunity, not because we did not want to, but certainly because of time. And I'm begging of you, Mr Speaker, to reiterate this to the listening public for me. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Leader of Government's Business. I know that some of the Parliamentary Representatives will be disappointed. But the issue is that the people from the 'Other Place' would be meeting in about an hour and a quarter time. The Senate would be meeting this afternoon and so we must get out of here and have the whole place sanitized and get ready for the meeting of the Senate. And it would not be possible to have Members, Parliamentary Representatives address their constituents today. I promise you this, if God gives us leave, we would ensure that you have an extended time at our next Sitting.

I must apologise to you for not giving you the opportunity now but it cannot be helped. We must get out of here to make way for the next people. So the Parliamentarians... the constituency members, who may have been listening to hear you say something nice to them, tell them dream of the beautiful things that you would have said.

Honourable Members this Special Sitting, now stands adjourned.

The Sitting of the House adjourned sine die at 1:37 p.m.

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