House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021.

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GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday 2nd March, 2021

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Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP, MBE, JP	- 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, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Labour, Agriculture, Forestry and Land
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	- Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Information and Religious Affairs

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021.

Attendance

Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
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 in the Ministry of Health and Social Security wrf Hospital Services and Community Health Services, and 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 Her Majesty's Opposition

ABSENT

Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs

Prayers
Minutes

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

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

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, good morning. Let us pray.

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of the Gravel)

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 3 - Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a New Member.
Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday, 2nd, Friday, 4th and Monday, 7th December, 2020 be taken as read.

Question proposed.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I do believe it should be Wednesday, the second and Friday; in terms of February, it should also state the year, it didn't say 2021. So, if you're not paying attention, and you see 2020 at the end, maybe you would think it is all 2020. But, Wednesday the second of February should have said 2021.

Mr. Speaker: Wednesday the 2nd, Friday the 4th, and Monday the 7th of December.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Oh, that's December.

Mr. Speaker: That's December.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Okay, yes.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday, 2nd, Friday 4th and Monday 7th December, 2020, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes confirmed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Minutes

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 15th January, 2021 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 15th January, 2021, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes confirmed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, 16th February, 2021 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Joint Sitting of both Houses of Parliament, held at the

Minutes
Announcements

Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, 16th February, 2021 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 5 - Messages from the Governor-General.
Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, just a few announcements. The Commonwealth Day Theme for 2021 is: ***"Delivering a Common Future."*** Also, the International Day for Women, 2021 would be held on the 8th of March, and the Theme is: ***"Choose to Challenge",*** and the United Nation's Theme for that day being, ***"Women in Leadership."***

The first Youth Parliament Sitting for 2021 is also carded for Monday, 8th March, being International Youth Day, and this would be done in the Parliament Chamber, with all health protocols being observed.

Members are also informed that hard copies of Reports and Papers would be phased out. The hard copies would be phased out, as we are moving closer to having a paperless Parliament.

However, we would make the necessary arrangements for Members who would still require the hard copies. Hard copies of Statutory Bodies and other organisations are expected to be phased out and electronic copies will be laid at the Parliament. But, there will be hard copies for the Archives and for the Library and so on. But, we are trying to move as close as possible to having a paperless Parliament. So, the Minister or Parliamentary Representatives, who still require the hard copies, we would ensure that they are made available to you. Thank you.

Papers / Reports

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Presentation of Petitions.
Item 8 - Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

1. Grenada Authority for the Regulations of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) - Annual Report Accounts, 2019.
2. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Financial Statements of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) – Grenada, for the period 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2019.
3. The Grenada Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training/National Training Agency (GCTVET/NTA) 2019 Annual Report.
4. Tenth Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman, for the period 1st January to 31st December, 2019.
5. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada on the Climate Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP) for the period ended 31st December, 2019.
6. Report of the Director of Audit Grenada on the Resources Managed for the period from 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2019 by the Project Accounting Unit in the Ministry of Finance for the OECS Regional Agriculture Competitiveness Project (AGRICOM) and the Income and Expenditure for the accounting period ended 31st December, 2019.
7. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada on the Resources Managed for the period from 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2019 by the Project Accounting Unit within the Ministry of Finance, Energy, Planning, Economic Development for the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Programme (CARCIP) and the Income and Expenditure for the accounting

period, ended 31st December, 2019.

8. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Resources Managed for the period 1st January to 31st December, 2019 by the Project Accounting Unit within the Ministry of Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development, OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness (ORTC) Project and the Income and Expenditure for the accounting period ended 31st December, 2019.
9. Report of the Director of Audit on the Resources Managed for the period 1st January, 2019 to 31st December, 2019 by the Project Accounting Unit within the Ministry of Finance, Energy, Economic Development and Physical Development, Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (RDVRP); and
10. The Annual Report, Financial Statement and Audit Report thereon, of the Grenada Investment Development Corporation (GIDC) for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 - Questions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the following questions here, although questions sometimes should be timely, but we understand that there was a delay here.

Question 1 - Can the Minister for Health tell the House what quarantine facilities that are provided by the Government to the frontline workers (doctors, nurses and police

officers), that may come into contact with COVID-19 patients, or suspected COVID-19 patients in carrying out their duties?

Mr. Speaker, there are three (3) questions. Should I take them all together or one at a time? I'll be so guided by you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health, would you want all the questions? Can we pass all three (3) questions on and then you answer them?

(The Minister responded in the affirmative)

Mr. Speaker: Sure. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question 2 - Can the Minister for Health give the House an update on COVID-19 in Grenada, which is:

a. The amount of positive cases recorded thus far?
b. The amount of test that was done?
c. The amount of PCR tests that are available on island for future use?

And Question No. 3 here, can the Minister tell the House action taken by the Government of Grenada in procuring a vaccine for the people of Grenada?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health and Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, as is allowed, the Questions will be responded to in writing. But, quite a lot of the answers will also come in a Ministerial Statement and the daily updates that come from the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed. Leader of the Opposition.

Questions

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question 4 - Can the Minister for Sports tell this House the amount of funds that was distributed by the National Lotteries Authority (NLA) for the St. George North-East Constituency, for the period November to December 2020?

How much did each constituency receive and through whom were these funds directed for the Constituency of St. George North East?

Mr. Speaker: Minister for Sports and Honourable Representative for St. Andrew, South-West.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the next Sitting of Parliament, I would provide the answers to the questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Questions 5, 6 and 7, I do believe it is directed to the Minister for Finance, and again, I can ask all three (3), or should I take it in parts?

Mr. Speaker: Please ask all three (3). That's okay? Is it okay that you will take all three (3), or one at a time?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, all three (3), but in general, it doesn't matter.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question 5 - How were the funds for the purchase of the WRB and GPG shares secured within the scope of the Appropriation Bill, 2020 and the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2019 to 2020?

Question 6 - Can the Minister for Finance, please provide an accounting for the apportionment of the funds used to pay for WRB and GPG shares in GRENLEC according to the following: (1) Capital Expenditure; (2) Recurrent Expenditure and (3) other sources (please specify).

Question 7 - Can the Minister for Finance provide the legal authority under which any derogation or exceptions to the normal legal provisions and convention regarding the approval and expenditure of finances entrusted to the Ministry of Finance may have been relied upon, or invoked, in settling the amounts due and owing to WRB and GPG in respect of the afore purchase of the GRENLEC shares?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Questions will be answered and circulated way in time before the next Sitting. They're all here, Mr. Speaker, but we would like the chance to review them. So, they will be circulated before the next Sitting of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 11 - Urgent Questions under the Provisions of Standing Order No. 20 (i) Notice of Questions.

Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health. Oh, I thought… Sorry. Oh! Honourable Minister for Social Development and Housing and Hospital Services.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I put on my Ministerial hat, as the Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment, and also Minister in the Ministry of Health with responsibility for Hospital and Community Health Services.

Please permit me, Mr. Speaker, to say a few words on one of our flagship Programmes in the Social Safety Network, known as SEED. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of families every month, benefit from this programme. In fact, just at the end of February, seventy-two (72) new families were added to the SEED Programme, and every month and weeks, people are being removed from the programme, through elderly deaths and graduation, people find new jobs and all that. So, we have hundreds of persons being removed and new families in need of the assistance.

It has been indeed, a singular success and genuine model of the SEED Programme. The administering and management of the programme is carried out by able-bodied Public Servants. From the gathering of data, which is done by the SEED Officers in the field, their role is merely to collect data, not to ensure that people get on. They cannot put on people, the processing of various applications, the ultimate approval, education and enrolment and then pay-out.

Mr. Speaker, after the SEED Officers collect the data in the field, the Social Workers within the Ministry are responsible for ensuring that the information presented before it goes through the Proxy Means Test, is accurate. There is a rigid set of rules in place, which guide how people are considered and approved for the programme, as well, as for on-going review of each case. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the structures are so well-built, that it's near fool proof against political influences, and let me break that down. No Representative in this House can dictate to the Ministry or even to me as Minister, that they have a list of names of persons that they want to be added. Maybe, they can advise the SEED Officer that there is a family in a particular area that need to collect the data for, but they cannot ensure, Mr. Speaker, that these families get on the

programme. There is no one, just no one that can influence the decision. And, Mr. Speaker, I would be naive to say that you cannot put on somebody, who doesn't meet the requirement. However, it will have to be a collaboration of Public Servants, because politicians are not involved, Cabinet is not involved. We have the policy and the policy is adhered to by the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible at the policy level, I have been consistently clear and always adamant about the rules and policies being followed to the Public Officers and to the PSs. I've been in the Ministry for more than eight (8) years, Mr. Speaker, my entire political life, and so, a number of PSs passed through this Ministry, and every one of them, no one can stand in my face or at my back to say that I have requested any illegal activities from them, or even asked them to add on somebody from my constituency, or even give them a list from the Cabinet, because the Cabinet does not make that decision. We follow the rules every time, Mr. Speaker. And so, any such talk is a work of friction carried out, bringing fake news. So, we hear about fake news and we're quick to share. Hundreds of opposition persons, Mr. Speaker, they are sharing the fake news because you know, they want something against your reputation and your character to say that something is wrong with your management of the process, the checks and balances, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know sometimes we talk about, we're now in Government and yes, we agree, we've been there eight (8) years, so we can't blame anybody for anything happening now. But, I ask the question, when I look at all the Audit Reports in the past. Are they talking about themselves, or are they judging us by their standard?

Mr. Speaker, in my hands, I have the Audit Report of the Director of Audit Grenada, Support for Education, Empowerment and Development, SEED Programme, April 2012. Mr. Speaker, when we first came into office in 2013, we met a broken down system, which we aggressively moved to fix in weeks. And I guess that is why we are being judged by what they knew happened in the past. In fact, there are former Representatives, who are asking Public Officers, so if your Minister gives you a list, you're telling me you will not put it on? Well, no Minister can give a list, and no, if your

Minister gives you a list, you cannot put them on. It must go through all the checks and balances and go through the Proxy Means Testing.

And, Mr. Speaker, this official Audit Report from April to September 2012, pointed out many irregularities and abnormalities. The Audit Report says, **"Benefits were added without due process;"** that's 2012, Mr. Speaker, it was not in our time. **"The Operation Manual was not following the Application and Enrolment Process in some cases."** The Report also said, **"There was evidence of inconsistencies in the payment process, as the established procedures were not applied and the Eligibility Criteria applied was not consistent with the stipulation in the Operations Manual."** Additionally, Mr. Speaker, **"There was no evidence of a clear flow of beneficiary entrance and exit from the programme."** I urge them to look now to see if that is the same, at this time. There are Audit Reports, and they need to find out what is happening now.

Mr. Speaker, in that Report, in hand, we moved to solve with promptness to correct these deficiencies, and we have, by-and-large, succeeded on every account. Mr. Speaker, I recalled, when we just came in there was one family, one lady in St. John, and I called the Parish, who was collecting for ten (10) families, and more than four (4) persons weren't aware that somebody was collecting on their behalf. This was an issue and several other issues went through the Court, Mr. Speaker, and some of these people agreed to pay back with their Lawyers, Mr. Speaker. So, we are being judged, Mr. Speaker, and I believe it's important that I protect, not only myself, as the Minister and my reputation, but the staff at the Ministry, who felt, in a kind of way, our Social Workers and our now PS, who cried that day, when there were all the circulation in public domain about what was happening as it related to the SEED Programme, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister, I will never ever be involved in anything that will go against the policies of the Ministry or any illegal things that will create any problem for the Government, and even myself and my family, because if I spent all my life teaching my children what is right from wrong. And as a child, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I'll say here that I've said it for the last couple of weeks, that if I have not done

anything illegal, like stealing and dishonest practices between the ages of eight (8) and sixteen (16), then it means that I will never do it again. That was the period, when I had nothing. At this point in my life, where I have reached at this level, I would not be part of anything that will involve illegal practices.

Mr. Speaker, I want to continue with the Audit Report, **"The team was unable to verify the existence of a number of persons, whether they were actual recipients of the Grants, since they were not home."** Mr. Speaker, eight (8) years ago, we moved and we corrected all those shortcomings. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition elements, who have shared this fake news, far and wide, they believed that, because that's what they were accustomed to, Mr. Speaker. And so, I am here to be clear, Mr. Speaker, and concise, to ensure that the people who qualify for the programmes are people who really need, and that is really the aim of SEED, Mr. Speaker.

The aim of SEED is assisting families and helping them to move from one state. And therefore if, in 2014, a family receiving SEED and when they were assessed, they had no bathroom, they had no stove, you cannot tell me, Mr. Speaker, as a Government, you cannot tell me that four (4) years later, when you go back to the field, you expect these people to still be in pit latrine and you expect these people to still do not have a stove.

This Government, my Government, Mr. Speaker, since we came back into Government in 2013, we have worked in the different villages to ensure that the pit latrines were removed from the elderly citizens, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So, when you go to assess, you compare and you say, in 2014, there was a pit latrine there, but in 2019, Mr. Speaker, five (5) years after, you expect these poor families to remain the same, do not have stove, and pipe borne water? But, it is us, as a Government. So if as a Government, we decided to put programmes in place, Mr. Speaker, and policies to help to improve the standard of living of our people; and so, we provide them with in-house toilet and bathroom facilities; we provide them with assistance with NAWASA with water; we help with the connection, and we even help some people with stoves, Mr. Speaker. Can we turn around as Members of Parliament and as a Government and

remove them from the SEED Programme? This is backward thinking, Mr. Speaker. So, you cannot use five (5) years, if you look and then come back and say there are problems.

Mr. Speaker, they identified one (1) person, in the Parish of St. David, and I would not want to call the name, because I am one who believes that you protect... **(Time Bell Rings)** Mr. Speaker, can you give me three (3) more minutes, as I want to wrap up still and I still would need to go into Hospital Services.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up on SEED, I want to say that within the Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment, we are working and as a Government, we are working to develop and to improve the lives of our people. We are working to ensure that families come from a state of dependency to become independent, and so we have many success stories of students getting nine (9), ten (10) and eleven (11) subjects. These are the things that we need to see in the public domain. We need to highlight the achievement of the programme. And yes, if you find legitimate wrongdoing, then you need to highlight it also, and you need to bring it to our attention, so it can be dealt with, but no fake news, Mr. Speaker. These are distractors, Mr. Speaker, who will try to distract at all level, so we do not meet our mandate.

Mr. Speaker, just give me three (3) minutes, as I just highlight, as it relates to Hospital Services, some of the things that are happening.

Mr. Speaker: Is this another three (3) minutes?

(Laughter)

Hon. Delma Thomas: Well the three (3) minutes didn't go yet. Mr. Speaker, I have two (2) separate Ministries with responsibilities, so I think you should…

Mr. Speaker: Alright. Proceed, proceed. You have three (3) minutes.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I think also, you know, when there are misconceptions on what is happening, as Representatives, we have a responsibility to bring the facts to the public. And so, as it relates to the services provided, we have improved many services, and I would be the first one to say that there are many issues in health that still need to be dealt with. We are working, and we will continue to work, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must recall, and I want to speak specifically, to the Princess Alice Hospital, because that's where I live, within that constituency. And we know that in the past… Mr. Speaker, you're from St. Andrew and you know from the past, there was one doctor working twenty-four (24) hours. He had to go to sleep in a Doctors' Quarters, and then you had to wake him up and all that. And so, we have moved to correct that, Mr. Speaker, and as we speak, there is a full quota of doctors at the Princess Alice Hospital, six (6) doctors, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide specialist services at that hospital. So, we have surgery, we have a doctor there who goes once a week for surgery. We have paediatrics services, obstetrics and gynaecology services, oncology and just in the month of February, we added ophthalmology to the services provided at the level of, not only Princess Alice Hospital, but we also provided its launch in Princess Royal, that's Carriacou, and we will be moving to St. Patrick this month, as it relates to providing. And we continue to decentralise the services, because all the services that we are providing at the General Hospital, we are phasing it in, in the different Parishes. And so, very soon, we will also be launching in the month of March, in the Parish of St. John, the Paediatrics Clinic, and so, the other services will be added Mr. Speaker. We continue to work as a team. We continue to meet, Mr. Speaker. We have two (2) Ministers and two (2) Permanent Secretaries. And so, as we look at the issues that confront the Health System, we continue to work to ensure that we provide and deal with the issues.

In the area of Princess Alice at this time, we have an issue with the X-ray machine, and the whole issue of COVID-19 with the border being closed, we have an issue in getting the technician to resolve the issue. We are hoping that very soon, we

can resolve that issue. Last October, I believe, the technician for Princess Alice resigned, and so, in the next couple of days, maybe sometime this week, we are bringing in a new technician from overseas, because there's no technician that is engaged in Grenada, at this time, so we continue to work, Mr. Speaker.

And as time goes on for this year, we'll see surgeries and other things being done in Mirabeau Hospital, as well as Princess Royal, in Carriacou, and at the level of the other communities, St. Patrick and St. David, on a phased approach, Mr. Speaker. But as time goes on, we will update this Honourable House of what we are providing.

So, Mr. Speaker, when 'wanna be politician,' people who want to be there, you don't get votes, Mr. Speaker, by going on a Social Media and writing stupidness or doing a 'Live.' You get votes by winning the hearts of the people. And to win the heart, you have to show them that you love them, you care for them and you have to be there for them, Mr. Speaker. So, you can go and do all the 'Lives' in the world you want, but in order for you to be victorious at the Polls, you have to get to the heart of the people. And this Government will continue to get to the heart of the people, because we will continue to work to improve the services that we are providing to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Just before you stand, Honourable Minister for Health, let me remind this Honourable House that according to the Standing Orders, Statement by Ministers, and I read what it is said in the Standing Orders: ***"Under this Provision, a Minister may make statements of announcements for not more than ten (10) minutes."*** That is why I have advised Ministers to write your Ministerial Statements, which must be focused on the functioning and work of your Ministry, and send it to the Clerk of Parliament. This would help us, since we are moving towards getting our website up.

We have other opportunities for explanations of the issues that we may want to bring to the House. Personal Explanations is one of them, Unopposed Private Business is another of them. So, let us use the Statements by Ministers to talk about your

Ministry and use the other avenues made available to you, to speak on other issues. Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give account of activities in my Ministry, the Ministry of Health and Social Services. And if per chance, I do go over the allotted time it is because of the amount of work that the Ministry has been doing, and so much to report, and no disrespect to you or this House or the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, by the grace of God, the decisions of this Government and the actions of Grenadians and in particular, our Health Team, we can say today, that a total of one hundred and forty-eight (148) persons were confirmed to be COVID-19 positive, since the outbreak of this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry gives daily, updates of this, pictorially, as well. Mr. Speaker, regrettably, there was one (1) death in those one hundred and forty-eight (148), but one hundred and forty-seven (147) people have recovered.

Mr. Speaker, at present, we have one hundred and ninety-nine (199) individuals in quarantine, travel quarantine, individuals who have travelled in over the last one to seven days, because that is the length of the quarantine requirement here.

Mr. Speaker, to date, as of yesterday, we have conducted twenty-two thousand, two hundred and sixty-eight (22,268) PCR Tests, on individuals for various reasons. The majority being travel in or travel out, but others where there is a suspicion of exposure or symptoms that may point to.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry takes pride in the fact that this information is shared with the public, on a daily basis, and maybe not on Saturdays and Sundays, but every single day. It moved from there being a verbal report from GIS to there being a pictorial sheet sent out at the end of every working day.

Mr. Speaker, vaccinations are also included in this, but for the benefit of this House, I will also give an update. As of yesterday afternoon, when we cut off giving vaccinations yesterday, which would have been 4:30, three thousand, nine hundred and seventy-eight (3,978) individuals have received their first dose of vaccines, and these

were conducted at multiple sites, which would have included the Ministry of Health, or the Ministerial Complex itself; the General Hospital, in St. George; the Radisson, East Wing, in South St. George; Carriacou; St. Patrick, and today we have started in St. Andrew, at the Cinema in Grenville and will also be moving forward to St. David. The site was finally signed off on, yesterday, in terms of final inspection, which is the St. David Health Centre, and we are looking at two (2) separate sites and seeing whether it will be beneficial for two or one for St. John and St. Mark, as well. And this will continue, Mr. Speaker, based on the rate of uptake of vaccination and the number of people left to be vaccinated, as we proceed.

Mr. Speaker, as of today, as I speak, we have received in total, six thousand (6,000) doses, and as I just said, have used of that three thousand, nine hundred and seventy-eight (3,978). But, Mr. Speaker, later on today, and I may beg your indulgence to be excused from this House, we will be receiving an additional seventeen thousand (17,000) doses. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, also, we expect, by the end of March, which has been made public, not just by us, but by Pan American Health Organization, an additional forty thousand, six hundred (40,600) doses. But, as I have consistently said to my colleagues, and I will say here, in this House, with many of the urgent needs of a country with respect to COVID-19, there has been significant demand and logistical demand challenges, and as such, only when I have it in my hand or know that it is in Grenada, do we count it. So, I know that that aircraft has left, with the seventeen thousand (17,000) doses to be received today. But as soon as we have the forty thousand, six hundred (40,600) on the way or in our hand, then we will count it as an addition. The Government also has other initiatives.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think I should take the time to explain the process and what is happening, in terms of the procurement of these vaccines. It started months ago, when there were numerous vaccines that were put on the market, or discussions of vaccines to be imminently, approved, to which we then contacted and I have had, as Minister for Health, conversations with each and every one of the Vaccination Manufacturers to the highest levels, their CEO, or their Head of Procurement or Sales,

and that is Moderna, Pfizer BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Sputnik and Sinopharm. Those are the discussions we have had with each of them, because we knew that each and every one of them would have the possibility of being approved, and we couldn't wait until approval to have discussions, but we were not going to procure a single dose of any until they were approved, but had to engage in those discussions, not just us alone, but the OECS and our CARICOM brothers and sisters. So, when AstraZeneca was approved, we decided, as OECS, that there would be a joint approach for numbers, because it is actually easier to get a million doses than it is to get one hundred thousand, because in the volumes is when the Manufactures listen to you.

So we made a group approach, but also there were individual approaches made to India by OECS countries, and some of those individual approaches were responded to before the group approach was responded to. And as such, in respecting and recognising that we are all brothers and sisters and we are all in this together, those who had received their commitment and had either received their vaccinations or knew that it was there in India ready to be shipped, made a decision that I will also share with my OECS brothers and sisters. And in particular, in this shipment to be received today, our allocation was not ready for the aircraft on Friday leaving India, but others were. And a collective decision was made that while we have six thousand (6,000) doses on Island right now and we are rolling out, we have begun our vaccination process here in Grenada, some of other OECS Islands, one, have not started theirs or two, more importantly, have the spread of COVID-19 going on, whether community spread, or cluster, and, therefore, have a greater urgency. And therefore, while we are all in this together, we should respect that, allow them to receive theirs, and then we will deal with ours next week, rather than have everybody wait for when everybody is ready. So they received and they said, yes, we received, we are all paying for this and we will share with you on the understanding that when you get your allocation, you will share back, and that is very much an OECS spirit of who we are and who we want to be, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the procurement process in a nutshell. Direct communication and right now these Pharmaceutical Companies will not sell to anyone

else, but Governments. So it's not a case of going through an Agent or Representative. It is direct Government to Pharmaceutical Company, or Government to Government.

But, Mr. Speaker, there have been many questions, recently, legitimately, valid, after vaccinated, how is that going to affect me, with respect to travel, quarantine, contagious and the various other protocols and measures. Mr. Speaker, the facts are as follows, when COVID-19 first came out, the WHO, Pan American Health and this Government, we took the stringent, safest route, which was fourteen (14) days quarantine, if there was risk or exposure, or travelling; no questions asked, fourteen (14) days. And then a test at the end of that period, once we were comfortable with that test.

Real world experience, as we progressed, allowed us, WHO and Pan American Health Organization to say that, that quarantine could be only as long as four (4) days or five (5). And then further, real world experience, with variants coming out, it allowed us and the CDC and WHO and others to say, it should be ten (10). It doesn't have to be the fourteen (14), it should be ten (10), and if you test at that point and the test is negative, you can release.

Similarly with the vaccine, Mr. Speaker, what is different with this vaccine is that it deals with COVID-19, but the principle and concept and method is the same as other vaccines. This vaccine is very similar to the measles vaccine, in that it is a vector to teach the body how to fight a specific virus. In this case, the specific virus is COVID-19, in other cases the virus is measles. But once it teaches the body, the antibodies don't just stay at the vaccination site or in the spleen or in a certain part of the body, they're all over. So, while we know the possibility that once you have this vaccine, you are immune, 80%, 90%, 60%, but you are better, we wait for real world information to be able to say how quickly the body fights, because we already have experimental information from within a laboratory environment, and observing a couple million people. But we want to observe a couple hundred million now that the vaccination is being rolled out. So it is expected, at some point to say that it will reduce the need for quarantine, or hopefully even remove the need for quarantine, but we need that data to support it.

But what is important for individuals asking those questions, who now say, then well, if it's not going to change anything now, why take it now? That information is quite

likely imminent, next week or next month, but it will be announced. But in order for you to be treated like that, it's going to take twelve (12) to fourteen (14) weeks, because you are going to need to have your first dose and your second dose before you are at that. So that is why it's your choice, but we encourage you, because we don't know what the future will hold. Your need to travel, emergency wise, and other countries saying that you cannot come to my country unless you have a vaccine and most of those countries are waiting to make sure that they vaccinate enough of their population, so that they can adopt this policy. But one thing COVID-19 has shown us is that the future is unpredictable.

In January of 2020, in this House, none of us would have contemplated the closing of borders and all of the confusion and stress, the hardships that we have all had to go through, not just here in Grenada, but other places. But the key is, the one route out of this and the only known route out of this, is in vaccination.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will like to share a light moment of a Cartoon that I saw, most recently, which has a little girl looking at her mother, and points to her mother's arm and says, **"Mommy, what is that bump here?"** And her mother said: **"That's my smallpox vaccination."** Most of us who received the smallpox vaccination have a little bump there. And the little girl asked her mother, **"Why don't I have one?"** And the mother's response was, **"Because, mine worked."** Because the mother's generation all took the smallpox vaccination, we no longer have the smallpox virus, and we have eradicated it. So we need to get to that level and we will get to that level.

Another beautiful moment witnessed yesterday, and I have the permission of the individuals, was to see our Catholic Bishop receiving his vaccine and at the same time, side-by-side with him, receiving their vaccines, were members of the Muslim Community. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Speaker, they say a picture says a thousand words; that spoke volumes to who we are and what we need to do to get past this COVID, as well. So, Mr. Speaker, I implore as Minister of Health, as many Grenadians as possible to come forward, and I respect each and every one choice.

I congratulated previous Members of this House, who are now seen... **(Time Bell Rings)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be wrapping up within the three (3) minutes; who

also received their vaccine yesterday, former Members of Parliament, now Members of the Opposition Party, and I implore on them, because this is not just a Government thing.

Each and every stakeholder, each and every responsible Entity has an obligation to speak for themselves, to their peers. We can provide information, but one thing we know is that we are in an information age, so the issue is not a shortage of information. The issue is one of trust and anxiety maybe, and it does help when someone else says, **"I have taken it, you should take it too."** It does help when someone else says, **"I have taken it and I encourage you to take it. It's okay, let us go take it. I'll come with you."** We need more of that to get to that point.

I have seen the public's opinion change significantly, from individuals saying, **"I am not going to take it...,"** to individuals saying, **"I'll take it in a couple weeks, or I'll take it next week."** So, we need to be responsible. If we still have anxiety on it, it is our, I believe right to have that, but it is not our right to interfere with another person's decision-making process on it, and to try and hold them back into our same level of anxiety, or to have gone past our level of anxiety, taken it and remained silent.

If you are a responsible leader or you want to be a responsible leader, as my sister has said, you need to win the hearts and minds of the people and it is a responsible thing to do to say, **"I have taken it,"** and make a public statement that I didn't have a problem with, which is what our Prime Minister did, which is what I did, which is what other Members of this House have done and other members of society. And with that, we will accelerate the process of vaccination, and therefore, as I said this morning to the Director-General of WHO, we are beginning to see a light, and I truly do hope that that light we see is the light at the end of the tunnel. But in order to confirm this like entering it, we need to exit it all together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-East and Minister for Education.

Statements by Ministers

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise just to share some announcements on three (3) items that I think is important that I bring to the knowledge of the House, as well as the general public, through you.

Mr. Speaker, the first one is just to reiterate as we have already said this publicly, that due to the current health situation and the advice that the Ministry has received from the Ministry of Health, we have not moved at this stage, to regular sitting in classrooms. We are still at the three feet (3 ft) physical distancing, and as a result of that, some schools are able to accommodate all their students every day, but we still do have some schools, where all students are not able to attend every day. Of course, this is still a great concern for us, and we continue to dialogue with the technical experts on this matter. The Ministry will not and cannot make a decision like this on its own, and we would be guided accordingly.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, with the recent activities of vaccination, we are advised to give this another two (2) weeks for assessment and then a decision would be taken. I know there is great anxiety in some quarters, and we want to do this right, as we have been attempting to do over the past months, moving from six (6) feet to three (3) feet, back to regular, back to six (6) to three (3) and we are currently there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also announce that a decision has been taken only yesterday morning, as it relates to the CXC suite of examinations for 2021, and I wish to give… although CXC would be making an official statement sometime today/tomorrow, I want to just give an idea to the House, as to where that decision is, at this time.

The decision is that the examinations will be done this year. However, students would have an opportunity, if they wish to defer. So, a student or a parent decide that they are not ready for 2021, there is the option to every student, every parent, on behalf of their child, to defer to 2022, meaning that you can do the same examination in 2022 and CXC is saying there would be no cost to do it in 2022. So, this is an option that is available to everyone concerned.

However, Mr. Speaker, those students, who are attempting CAPE and CSEC this year, if those students believe that they are ready to do and ready to take the exam,

those examinations would be administered in June/July of 2021, so during that period. It is important to note, unlike last year, that those examinations would be administered in their original format, meaning, for example, CSEC, last year we only had Paper 1. This year, we will be having Paper 1 and Paper 2, as part of the original format of the examination. The expected timeline for the release of the results would be the last week in September of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, one condition, added provision, this year, is that the broad topics for Paper 2 will be released to Ministries of Education five (5) weeks prior to the examination. But, I want to make this very critical point, Mr. Speaker, because we can get carried away on this concession. Mr. Speaker, Paper 1 of the exam covers all aspects of the syllabus and so a student must not be misled into thinking that they should only prepare surrounding the topics of Paper 2, because they may be in for a surprise when they attempt Paper 1. So my advice to every student would be to continue to prepare as normal.

Mr. Speaker, on this note, I want to commend all of our teachers, all of our parents. Mr. Speaker, a lot of sacrifices are being made in preparation for those examinations. Many parents have been attempting additional classes for their students, paying for additional classes for their children, and many teachers have been doing additional, in terms of helping these students to prepare. And so I want to use this opportunity to commend and to recognise our principals, as well, and Education Officials across the system. It is a very challenging time, but of course, persons have been rising to the occasion in support.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on that point, and every time you say this, you often get the follow up questions, so what about the 4%? Mr. Speaker, I just want to, again, reiterate that the 4% has absolutely nothing to do with Government not recognising the performance and the support from many of our teachers in the system. It is a simple matter that Government has repeatedly said, we do not have the resources at this time. And it is a guarantee that you're going to get that 4% increase but just right now, because of all of the challenges, we cannot do it right now. So, Mr. Speaker, I continue

to remind our teachers, Government honours its obligation; it is just that in this case it is not able to do so at the time that it committed to.

The third area, Mr. Speaker, I want to quickly make mention of is that of donations to schools. Mr. Speaker, last year I addressed this issue and there was a public statement on that particular matter. As a matter of fact, I want to make the point that I addressed this matter, not only publicly, but I also addressed this matter among my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, we would recall that last year, two (2) Political Organisations including the one that I belong to, made presentations to schools. In attempting to be very fair, I addressed both matters, publicly. Mr. Speaker, I have always given credit to my colleague, who said to me, in hindsight, I should have done it differently and apologised. Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. None of us to is too big to observe rules and regulations, to observe protocols, and that is why I said I publicly recognise and commended my sister for her response.

Mr. Speaker, another Political Organisation was involved. I have heard many things publicly, but I always believe our response to a situation tells a lot. And, Mr. Speaker, rather than seeking to understand why the Ministry took a certain position, which is an established position, rather than seeking to understand, persons publicly, made statements, which indicated that they would just do as they please. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that we do have a situation where expired food was provided to schools, on Island, by a Political Organisation. Mr. Speaker, I am mentioning this, because this should have never happened, after that public statement of the process and the procedures to deal with the distribution of items to schools.

Mr. Speaker, there are some things we take for granted until something happens that we are unable to deal with. At the end of the day, this Government, no Political Party, this Government will be held accountable for any student who becomes sick, is hospitalised, or endure some medical condition, as a result of our irresponsibility. I am surprised, Mr. Speaker, that after this matter was dealt with, last year, that we have to be having this conversation today. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to name schools here, but we have to be mindful that when we're speaking ***(time bell rings)*** about things to

eat, feeding children. A parent at home, sends a child to school, expects that this child would be protected. And so under no circumstances, under no condition can it be right. I don't know where you prepared the food. I don't know where you got the ice-cream. I don't know where you got the ice-lollies. To give those to a child without sufficient background information, Mr. Speaker, I can only consider it to be reckless and irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, those items that were collected back from the school, I assume and I pray and I hope that they were discarded, and that no one had them. I just want to remind the Nation and beg for their cooperation, all organisations, whether political, whether religious, whatever they may be, Mr. Speaker, I appeal, this morning, let us not wait for something to happen before we respond appropriately. Thank you so much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Sports and Fisheries.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, permit me to provide a few updates from the Fisheries and Co-operatives Division of the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives.

Co-operatives Department

Mr. Speaker, the Department, in its on-going effort to educate the public on the value and the functionality of Co-operatives, as a construct for facilitating small business development, has launched a Radio and Online promotion during the month of March. The public would be provided with a daily dose of educational tit bits about Co-operatives. This is meant to pique the interest of and encourage the relevant listeners, Mr. Speaker, to visit the Division for further conversation. The Division of Co-operatives is now situated in the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts.

Fisheries Division

Mr. Speaker, the Ice Machines and Cold Storage Unit in Gouyave, are now up and fully functional, after three (3) years of being non-operational. This is a welcomed

development for fisher folk in the immediate and surrounding areas. The lack of sufficient quantities of ice was posing a challenge and this has finally been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the MPA Catamaran has also been repaired, and is now available for use in the Marine Resource Management within the MPA Unit of the Division.

Mr. Speaker, Cold Rooms or Freezers Rooms are now operating around the island, to ensure fishermen can store their fish after returning from the sea. This is another critical area of service, Mr. Speaker, that ensures the freshness of fish to our consumers.

Mr. Speaker, a complete assessment of the Fisheries Division and its operations and processes is currently being carried out, with a view to enhancing the Fisheries Division. This assessment has become essential, given the change in dynamics that has and is emerging in the global landscape. Efficiencies in the harvesting, preparation and distribution of fish must be realised, going forward.

Mr. Speaker, a National Consultation was held with fishermen on the 18th of February, 2021. This Consultation had a very good turnout, which indicates the willingness by the fishermen to engage the Ministry. Several areas were discussed in Plenary Sessions, and the outturn would be analysed and a strategy document would be produced to drive the operational improvements, as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday an engagement was held with the Soubise fishermen on projects earmarked for the immediate area. The Ministry would work with the Nature Conservancy to facilitate a major project in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the Division is exploring management arrangement with the Private Sector for the Marine Protected Areas that have been established to date, and future MPAs with a view to ensuring that the objectives of the MPAs are realised without placing heavy financial burden on the State. MPAs play a critical role in the safeguarding of our marine environment and are also a major factor in the development of the blue economy.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, a Maritime Economy Plan funded by the UK Government is being finalised as we speak, and will be presented to the Cabinet for the appropriate

action. This plan encompasses the sustainability and equity concepts of the blue economy.

Mr. Speaker, there are several more initiatives that are in play for the Fisheries Sector, which will be brought from time-to-time to this Honourable House. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Sports and Fisheries. Honourable Minister with responsibility for Youth.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning, I rise to provide an update from the Division of Youth Development, as it relates to our Flagship Programme, the New IMANI Programme and the transition strategy and its process. By way of background information, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that from 2013 to 2018, five thousand, one hundred (5,100) trainees were engaged in Batches 1 to 6 of the New IMANI Programme. And based on data from February 2021 of the five thousand, one hundred (5,100) trainees, from Batches 1 to 6, three thousand, two hundred and eighty-nine (3,289), that is 64% of these trainees have already transitioned to permanent placement or engagement outside of the New IMANI Programme**.** **(Applause)**

The remaining 36%, one thousand, eight hundred and eleven (1,811) trainees are those who are currently working to transition to sustainable employment and the following is a breakdown of the organisations where the trainees are currently engaged: NGOs, Private Schools, Private Sector Businesses, Public Schools, Public Sector Departments, and that would make up the total of the one thousand, eight hundred and eleven (1,811) trainees.

The implementation of the Transition Strategy entails a phased approach, including the on-going process of engagement of trainees by Ministries and Departments through individuals Contract for Service, where possible; procurement of Healthcare and Caregiver services, which would be done through a Service Provider; procurement of Educational Services, which are currently provided to the Public Sector;

procurement of services in other areas of the Public Sector, which will be done through individual Service Contracts where possible and through one or more Service Providers. We also will look at the operationalization of the Garment Production Co-operative and provide certified training in digital technologies and other areas by local institutions. Finally, we would strengthen our YUTBIZ Division to provide entrepreneurial support for our young entrepreneurs.

So far, Mr. Speaker, the Transition Committee has been formed to lead the process. Letters were issued to Private Sector businesses, NGOs and Private Schools to ascertain their interest in the trainees. Preliminary analysis of that data has begun and we have already received the information of the number of trainees they intend to keep permanently, those they will keep part-time, those who they are unable to employ and mainly due to the impact of COVID, the amount they are requesting for extension for two (2) to three (3) months and also we have conducted an assessment of 95% of the trainees in this programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have already identified Service Providers for some of the trainees under the Healthcare and Caregivers support, and initial meetings were held to discuss the mode of engagement. As we move on, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to follow up with Ministries to receive the listing of trainees they recommend for transitioning, and those who they indicate would need further training.

We will review the draft request for proposals, shortlist, evaluate and award the contracts. We will engage the Service Providers to finalise the details of the transitioning and finally engage the trainees to brief them on the process and the expectations, as they move from the IMANI Programme into sustainable jobs.

By way of an announcement, Mr. Speaker, as you have already indicated, on March 8, 2021, Grenada will join the rest of the Commonwealth to celebrate Commonwealth Day, under the Theme: ***"Delivering a Common Future, Connecting, Innovating and Transforming."***

The Division of Youth will be engaged in a series of activities to celebrate Commonwealth Day and this would include the National Youth Parliament, the first one for 2021, to be held in this Parliament, and the Resolution for the debate will focus on

the Impact of COVID-19 on the Implementation on the National Sustainable Development Plan 2020 – 2035.

We will also have a Sensitisation Drive on Climate Change, as flyers will be distributed to the public on March 8, with the slogan: ***"Make a Change for Climate Change."*** Our National Youth Ambassadors will be engaged in producing a one minute video on climate change.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we will have a Climate Focused Roundtable Panel Discussion to be held on March 10, and it will focus on, 'Our Planet, Our Future, Fighting Climate Change Together.'

Also on March 10, the Commonwealth will have their Youth Award Ceremony and they will announce regional winners for the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Person of the Year. Grenada's nominee is Miss Bevon Charles, founder of Akata Farms, and her project focuses on SDG Goal No. 2, Zero Hunger. Our Division wish Miss Charles tremendous success in this endeavour.

Mr. Speaker, all our programmes are continuing relatively smooth, and that is the M-Power, Project FLY, YUTBIZ and our participants are engaged in direct training, CVQs and apprenticeship training, as we continue to engage and empower our young people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Minister for Legal Affairs and Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning, to raise a particular issue, Mr. Speaker. An issue, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the administration of Justice in Grenada, that deals with our Legal System and the efforts and strides that we have made and are continuing to make, to ensure that same is improved.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, that Court implemented a new E-Filing System via the E-Litigation portal of the Court. And, Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the State of Grenada was and still remains one of the few outstanding

Member States that is yet to implement this new E-Filing System. But, Mr. Speaker, at present, we are very, very close to this implementation, and so we should see the implementation of this new filing E-Portal System by the middle of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the E-Filing System is intended to eliminate, or to significantly reduce physical copies of documents, which are prepared by Lawyers/Attorneys and are stored at the Supreme Court Registry. Mr. Speaker, documents and papers, as a result of the new Filing System would be stored electronically. As a matter of fact it would be able to be submitted electronically in the first place, and that will be done and can be done at anywhere, in the world, at any time, including Saturdays and Sundays. And so, Mr. Speaker, the fees payable as well, with the introduction of this new portal, would also be able to be paid electronically, from anywhere and at any time.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this system, we believe as a Government would be very beneficial, not just to Litigants, but to Lawyers, and for the whole administration of justice, on a whole. We believe that it will no doubt, Mr. Speaker, save costs and of course, expenses resulting from the existing paper-based structure that is presently borne by the Litigants, rather than the Attorneys. Further, Mr. Speaker, the experiences that we've had, and we continue to have as a result of COVID, it makes the introduction of this new Portal System in Grenada, a priority of this Government at this time.

However, Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that in order for that new Portal to be introduced in Grenada, it was necessary for us as a Government, to pass, right here in Parliament, the Supreme Court Fees Act, 2020, which, to some extent, Mr. Speaker, increased the Court fees for Court proceedings to some extent. But this was also done, Mr. Speaker, to bring the fees in conformity with other Member States. Mr. Speaker, it must be noted, and I want the record to reflect that Grenada was very, very reluctant to do so. Our Prime Minister strenuously objected, Mr. Speaker, to this increase, at the time when it was proposed, I think it was at the 69th Meeting of the OECS Authority, which was held on the 6th of November, 2019. And this, Mr. Speaker was even before the onset of COVID-19.

However, Mr. Speaker, in June of 2020, the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean States wrote to the Government, on this same issue and basically indicated, Mr. Speaker, that Grenada, at the time, was the only Member State, which did not bring into effect the revised fees for filing in Court proceedings, and which she reminded was also necessary before the E-Litigation System could be implemented in Grenada. And, Mr. Speaker, permit me to read from the letter of the Chief Justice, in this regard, and she states: **"Grenada is the only Member State, which has not yet brought into effect, the revised fees for filing in Court proceedings, which is also necessary before the E-Litigation System can be implemented."** She further went on to state: **"I trust that your Government will move quickly to bring this new Act into effect, so that your members of the Bar and citizens can also receive the benefits of this new Electronic System, now being enjoyed by the States and territories where implementation has occurred. I can personally attest that the new System has been of significant benefit during these times, when the operation of the Court offices have been affected by the pandemic and as we enter into the 2020 Hurricane Season, the System may prove to be extremely important, in the event that any of the Member States are affected by a Natural Disaster."**

So, Mr. Speaker, while the timing of the increase may not have been right, it was extremely difficult for us to maintain our original position and to holdout on the passing, Mr. Speaker, of the enactment of the Supreme Court Fees, as this, as was indicated was necessary to bring the E-Litigation Portal and the Filing System to Grenada. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that this was fundamental and is very important to our administration and the administration of justice here in Grenada.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, after much consultation with the Bar, and with other stakeholders, the Bill was debated, and it was passed by this House, and it came into effect on the 1st of March, which was yesterday. Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that the introduction of this new Portal, this new E-Litigation System will bring tremendous benefits, not only to Litigants, as I said before and Attorneys, but all Court users. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the benefits will far outweigh and will compensate for the new Court fees.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this regard, I just want to thank the Registrar and her staff, the Bar Association, who has worked with us on this matter, the Bench Bar Committee, and all the persons who have been involved in this regard.

We are now, Mr. Speaker, putting all structures in place to ensure that we move towards full implementation of the E-Litigation Portal and E-Filing System in Grenada, which Mr. Speaker, no doubt, would improve, or would assist in the improvement of our Justice System here, in Grenada. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Legal Affairs and Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give a brief update of the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs, during the last two (2) months. It has been an extremely busy period for the Ministry, Mr. Speaker. We were in touch with our friendly countries, regionally, internationally and international organisations in order to seek support for Grenada, during this very difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, I must report that Grenada is viewed as a country with this deep respect. Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out the contribution and highlight the contribution of the Government and People of Venezuela, because we know what Venezuela is going through. We know the blockade against Venezuela, we know all the protests that's taking place. And, Mr. Speaker, Venezuela has donated US$200,000.00 to Grenada for the purchase of vaccines, in these difficult times. **(Applause)** That's a genuine friend, Mr. Speaker. A friend in need, they say, is a friend indeed. And it was only yesterday, the members of ALBA/TCP met to discuss the situation, the economic impact on the countries of ALBA, and all their members agreed to work, collectively, to help one another in the current situation.

Mr. Speaker, the Government and People of Cuba, when, over the years, we have had Cuba sending medical personnel to Grenada and other areas, engineers and

so on. But, during this COVID time, a special request was made to the Government of Cuba to send medical personnel to help deal with the COVID-19 situation. And around the world, if you listen to the News, you would realise the demand that was placed on Cuba for medical personnel, all over the world. Well, they have responded to a call and sent medical personnel to assist us here in Grenada, and on behalf of the Government, I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Government and People of Cuba for their assistance. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of China, who we have very friendly relations with, provided us with PPEs to help, again, in the fight of COVID-19, and we want to use this occasion to express our appreciation to them.

Several friendly countries have come to our assistance. Our Ambassadors based in various capitals around the world, Ambassadors-at-Large, Consul General, all came together to provide assistance to Grenada. And today, as you know, Mr. Speaker, for the last twenty-one (21) days, we had zero active cases and Grenada is complimented for the way it dealt with the COVID situation. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in several virtual meetings, sometimes two (2), per day, with various organisations, all discussing the way forward after COVID-19. And what has started as a health crisis is now the largest financial crisis. Every country in the world, seriously impacted by COVID-19, in terms of the financial situation, and we in Grenada, no doubt, seriously impacted as a result of COVID-19. However, this Government has pledged to continue to provide assistance and work with all sectors to alleviate this problem.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use the next few minutes to deal with a matter that I have been assigned to by the Cabinet to deal with it, and that is, I was appointed, as the Lead Government Negotiator to meet with the Unions to negotiate salary increases. So, in 2019, we signed a three-year contract with the Public Sector Union for a 4% increase in 2020, '21 and '22. Mr. Speaker, in 2020, January 2020, we paid the first 4%, in keeping with the Agreement, and what happened? In March, we discovered the first COVID case and had to close down the country. But we had already added the 4% onto the salary, which increased the Recurrent Expenditure for 2020.

However, the Government took the decision that despite the reduction in revenue collection, we will continue to pay Public Sector Workers Union their increase and with their new salaries every month, on time. **(Applause)** In other words, the commitment was made not to lay off any worker, because the Private Sector laid off thousands of workers. As you know, all the hotels closed, St. George's University closed, other businesses reduced their staff, and unemployment went up. So, the Government decided to keep all Public Sector jobs. While most Governments were contemplating cutting salary, or at least, not increasing salary, I have heard about no increase, in none of the CARICOM Member States, for this year, for Public Officers.

So, 2021 came and the first mandate that I was given by the Cabinet, was to ask the Public Sector workers to forego the 4%, to give it up, because look at the struggle we had in 2020, caused by COVID-19, where we were collecting 50% less revenue. But, Mr. Speaker, you know, like everybody else, if you're in a business and you're collecting less revenue and you're struggling to meet your expenditure, you would have to cut your expenditure, you will have to cut, that's how businesses operate. So, the Government decided they would not cut the salaries of Public Workers. So, they asked me to go to the Unions and say to them, consider to forgo the 4%, to give the Government some more room, some more fiscal space, because all the other sectors are looking to Government for help, the Grenada Taxi Association, the Hotel Association, small businesses, all of them turning to Government. So, with reduced revenue, you have increased expenditure, increased request to spend more. So I went to the Unions and said that we would like you to consider forgoing the 4%. They came back with a response saying, they are not prepared to forego the 4%. They have negotiated it, they're entitled to it, we are contractually bound to give them and therefore they are not prepared to do that. So I said, well in the interest of Grenada we're asking you to do that. They said, no.

So I went back to Cabinet and reported that the Union did not agree to forego. So, the Cabinet gave me a new mandate. They say well, go back to the Unions and ask them to consider deferring the 4%. In other words, because of the negative impact on the recurrent revenue, we will not be able to pay you from January. So, we will

consider deferring it to a time when we have the recurrent revenue to meet the Recurrent Expenditure, because let me explain this, Mr. Speaker. We meet the Recurrent Expenditure, that is the monthly expenditure that we have to pay every time, recurring, by collecting revenues. And I showed to the Union the various tax types and explained the performance. I said, Personal Income Tax down, Corporate Tax down, Value Added Tax down, all the taxes down, and you live in Grenada and you know why it's down. Because if two thousand (2,000) workers gone home who are paying income tax, they have no disposable income, they cannot spend in the economy, if they cannot spend, then you collect less, and so that's no magic of why the revenues fell.

So we said, listen, you cannot get it in January, because of the fiscal situation, because if you increase it, you have to find it every month, you know. So you might say, let us look at finances and say, well, in February you collected a lot of money, so you could pay us. So, where are we finding the money in March, April and the rest of months? You have to find it every month. That is why you call it recurrent, it's recurring every month. So, you can't just look at one month and say you did good so pay us. Every month we have to find it, you know. Once you increase it, the Recurrent Expenditure, you must find it every month to pay. So, we said to the Union, we must consider deferring it, but whenever we pay it, you will get it retroactively. So, you won't lose anything. You will get the retroactive payment.

Now, retroactive payment is something that we got rid of when we entered the Structural Adjustment Programme. We said we are going to negotiate before the next cycle starts, so that there is no retroactive payment. So, we don't want to be in a position as a Government where we have to pay this money retroactively, because if we pay the money at the end of December, it's costing $13.2m retroactively, you have to find, you know, and then you have to put the 4% on top the 4% for 2022. So, this Government doesn't want to be in that position. I have explained that to the Union. I said, if we only had the money, it will be in our interest to pay you now. Why would we hold it back? **(Applause)**

So, the GUT wrote to the Labour Commissioner and asked for conciliation in the matter, and we met on Friday, 19th, and they came to the table asking for a date. They

said, **"Minister, all we want from this meeting is for you to tell us the date when you will pay us."** And they even suggested that the Government should pay them before May Day. They say well, if you pay us before May Day, so everything going to be quiet, so pay us. I said, **"If we had the money, we are paying you now. We are not even waiting until May Day. We are paying you now."**

So I suggested that we meet at the end of March to review the first quarter performance, fiscal situation, revenue and expenditure situation at the end of March. The Union agreed and around the Table, Mr. Speaker, I must say they are very cordial and understanding around the Table. So when they leave round the Table, I might be surprised what take place after, because around the Table, they are so cooperative. And they're saying, yes, well we understand the situation, but we cannot go back to our membership and tell them that. I said, **"Why you can't go back to your membership and explain the situation to them?"** They said they want a date. So I said, **"Okay. The money will be paid on or before December 31st, this year."** It's due this year; we say we will pay it this year. They said, **"No, we want a more specific date. You must give us a month. Let us go back."** I said, **"Well, I have no mandate from Cabinet with a month, and based on the fiscal situation, I cannot give you a month. But, let us review the situation, at the end of March and then we'll be in a position to determine that."**

So I suggested, since they agreed, that is the Grenada Union of Teachers now, because that's the only Union that approached the Labour Commissioner, since we agreed to meet at the end of March, I asked the Union to call off their industrial action, because we're in front of the Labour Commissioner, we agreed to the end of March, so, there is no dispute there going forward. They said, **"No, they're not calling off their action until I give them a date,"** well, until the Government gives them a date. So, go back and tell Cabinet, that we're not calling off our option until they give us a date, because the Prime Minister could give us a date, because he is a long standing Politician and they feel that he is trying outsmart them. **(Laughter)**

As I say, around the table, it's usually real friendly and understanding. So, we left on the 19th of February, Mr. Speaker, and the action continues. The protests

continue. But the protest is not helpful, because we are trying to raise the revenue. We want to make sure that we have a stable environment, because investors look for a stable environment, and the good thing is that the public is drawing their conclusion, because they're saying, well, if the Government said to you that you will not lose the money, that you will get it retroactively, then why are you taking action?

Mr. Speaker, this month will mark one (1) year, since thousands of workers have not received a single cent, one year, you know, Hotel workers have been sent home. People, who for the very first time since I am in politics, eight (8) years now, for the very first time came to me for help. **(Applause)** These people had good jobs, you know, good, paying jobs, never approached me. And ask any Member of Parliament here, people never came to us assistance; cannot pay rent; cannot pay mortgage; cannot pay their bills, because they are not working, one year. One year, not a cent and they are approaching Government and Government does not have the resources to help. That is the situation we find ourselves in, in Grenada. So we have the Public Sector workers who are paid every month, received their salary, their allowances and everything and you have a next group of people, who one year now, have not received anything at all, and turning to Government.

So, it's a difficult situation where we live in Grenada, and under the New National Party Government, democracy reigns supreme, that's what you're seeing the most march, and the most talk and everybody is on Talk Radio. The most licence any Government ever gave for Radio Stations is the NNP Government. Everybody is lambasting, so they have their right to do what they are doing and the public will be the judge.

So, I've heard statements from the public saying, it seems that this is about Union election, because you have two (2) elections coming up this month, Public Workers' Union and GUT. I don't know. I am just reporting what the public is saying, that it seems that these actions are geared to influence the outcome of the elections that are coming up.

But at the same time, you have students in the school that are suffering, because of their action. So, I hope that good sense will prevail, and that we can see an amicable

settlement to the matter, which, quite frankly, is one that is so simple. We owe you, we accept that. So, when I heard the Union Leader saying, that legally, the Government has to pay them, we never disputed that, Mr. Speaker. Every time around the table, we never disputed that. We said, we are contractually bound to pay you and we will pay you. So, where is the dispute? And when we are paying you, you will get it retroactively. They say we understand that, but still tell us a month when you are going to pay. So, I don't know what else to say. So, I just wanted to update the Nation on the facts, outline the facts and let rationale people draw their own conclusion. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister. Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just some brief comments on a couple issues of national importance. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Legal Affairs and Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique did allude to the Court fees, the increases that were announced recently for E-Filing. And of course, she mentioned the fact that it was a decision at the OECS level, because, as you know, it's the Supreme Court of the OECS. I think that's the most important thing to know, because the impression people will have is when an issue of this comes up, that Government is attempting to get revenue. Let us make it very clear; there is no revenue from these increases to the Government. In other words, the Minister for Finance and his team and the Government will not get a cent from this. This is an OECS decision.

And I think what is so sad, Mr. Speaker, is people who are aspiring to want to be in this Honourable House, and they claim to have certain professional qualification, I would assume there's some fundamental behaviour pattern or approaches that will be taken when you're dealing with basic information that you will not expose yourself publicly, to literally ridicule, intellectually, because it doesn't serve your purpose, so you should be very careful.

So when I listened to some statements about the unfairness of the increase to the country, and how the Government is wicked and so on, I thought it was extremely

unfortunate. So I think it's important for me to inform the Nation, as to exactly what transpired. Some persons might even say that we should have done this before. But, the reason is fundamentally this. At the 69th Meeting of the OECS Authority, the Supreme Court Chief Justice had a Paper presented to the OECS Authority, because any decision of that nature must be taken at the OECS Heads of Government Meeting, and did in fact, indicate in the Paper of the E-Filing System that will enhance justice in the Region as a whole, and indicated that they were already implementing in the late part of 2019, these Court fees for the E-Filing System, and that she was seeking authority to continue to implement it.

There appeared to have been general acceptance at the OECS leadership. But I made the point to my colleagues at that time, that when this was done initially, there was no pandemic in the Region and the Governments of the Region were operating, generally speaking, on Budget Revenue Estimates that were normal, in normal times. But the impact of the Pandemic had affected tremendously, all Governments' finances of the Region, and that it would be difficult for me, as Minister for Finance then, and of course, as Prime Minister, to support any increase of this nature at that time.

The Supreme Court Chief Justice pointed out that it would be difficult to stop the payment now, because of the expectation. Well, I countered then, that we also were implementing increases that we agreed with the Public Servants of Grenada, 4% increases, and that we were asking them to forego those increases in the time of pandemic. And the increases for distinguished Judges and Chief Justice were far in excess in percentage wise, and of course monetary wise, the increases that we were giving to individual teachers and Public Servants in Grenada. And therefore, I would have great difficulty going to the Public Workers in Grenada and the Teachers, if I sat here and agreed to the continuation of these increases, in this time.

In fact, I was able to get the support of most of the leaders; I would say all the leaders, because there was agreement. And the Chief Justice did in fact say, she understood, and that she certainly will take this into consideration, and the impression we had, there will be no further increases. A few months later, I received this correspondence that the Minister for Legal Affairs read out a while ago, indicating that

Grenada was the only country not implementing the increases and did not go to Parliament, because we must go to Parliament to implement the new Court filing fees.

So I said, well, I am a bit surprised, because we had an understanding. The Minutes of the recording of the meeting of the OECS leadership indicated there was agreement. So I called the Director General of the OECS and said, **"What is happening? I understand we're being looked at, as the "Fall Guy", so to speak, with the Supreme Court System."** And he himself was a bit embarrassed, because he said, "Yes, we did agree that they will put it on hold." But he said everybody else has implemented the increase. So, in effect, what he was saying, he couldn't tell Grenada what to do, because he is a creature of the OECS leadership. But I got the message. In effect he was saying, your Judges in Grenada would be marginalised and it would affect justice. So, I had to inform my colleague based on what has happened, at the leadership of the OECS in the regional level, that we probably had no choice, otherwise Grenada would look bad. And therefore, we came to Parliament, reluctantly. We were a reluctant bride in that respect. So, that is what really transpired. We strongly objected.

Now, if some of the comments I've heard from Opposition elements would have just asked a simple question about this, they would understand, and they would have been given the facts. But the typical thing, some people want to be in a position of leadership so badly, that they don't even do things that would make them look good to have an opportunity. And I wouldn't call names, clearly so, but I think the cap will fit where it's supposed to. But it's unfortunate, because this is not our doing, and I think I wanted to clarify this, to point out the role of Grenada in this entire exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make a point. This is a very difficult time, as we pointed out, with this pandemic. The world is going through a torrid time, every country. But you know, I just don't understand some of the things that I see happening, that some persons in our country, making themselves look worse every day.

Why would you have any kind of demonstration during a pandemic for issues that are not of, I would say, extreme national crisis, maybe if people are dying or something like that and there is a crisis? I wouldn't understand why anyone would, and I am talking specifically not of the street demonstration of the Unions, that's a separate issue.

You know, in all my years, Mr. Speaker, in this Parliament, every time this NNP Government starts any project to bring development to the country, hundreds of jobs, economic activity, a certain political organisation, who is opposed to the NNP, has always come out with demonstration against the project and using all sorts of fictitious reasons and environmental concerns. Every time there is a project some armchair environmentalists emerge and when the project is implemented, they disappear and the next time, another set of arm chair environmentalists emerge again. **(Applause)** It looks like we create environmentalists in this country, in different sections, for different times, which is sad, in a way.

So, just to go back; you recall the Lagoon Project. We were destroying the Lagoon, which was almost a dump. It was being cleaned up, but we were destroying it. There was environment demonstration against the construction.

The Cruise Ship Terminal; Grand Anse Beach was going to be destroyed in what we intended to do. Every single project, you can go forward and look at, Mr. Speaker, we have seen this. The Project in St. David that would bring two (2) hotels; hundreds of jobs, the people are doing everything possible to protect every aspect of the environmental concerns the country would have, everything.

Mr. Speaker, in this period, no serious investor would want to come and invest his money in any serious project in any country, in these times, with the sensitivity of environmental issues now, and do anything that would cause environmental concerns and affect the environment.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I am raising this today is, because the investor came forward to say to me, because of the noises being made by those persons in the St. David area on this major project, one of the hotel chains that was involved said, they don't want any part of that anymore. So they had to move to get another hotel chain involved. It doesn't stop the project, but it stopped the question of the entity that would be managing the activity.

In other words the purpose of these demonstrations is meant to stop the project to prevent Grenadians from eating bread, Mr. Speaker, that's the point I want to make.

It is selfish, backward and stupid, in my view, politically stupid, because you must not be seen as hurting people, particularly at this time.

The Tourism Industry is in trouble now. We are not going to see major tourism activity for maybe another several months, or maybe another year. We would start getting some as the Vaccination Programme increases. But the major area of opportunities for jobs and economic activity is construction, so the Public Sector Investment Programme is going to be key. All the Private Sector projects are going to be key, Mr. Speaker. So the area of most opportunity, you're doing everything to stop it, and they claim they are interested in the country.

So I have to bring this up, and I must speak to this, because of the concern that all of us should have, the impact of this and the fact that the investor came forward three (3) days ago to tell me, that look what has happened and how should he handle it. I said, "Well, you have to confront these guys for what they are doing," because it's malicious and intended to hurt people and create damage to the economy of the country and therefore, I wanted to raise this.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to add just a point on the vaccination that the Minister for Health pointed to, the Vaccination Programme. Given the fact that it is important for us to have as much of the vaccination activity in the country, to ensure that we can protect ourselves as a nation, as a population. And I think it is important to mention the fact that with this Vaccination Programme, we have to go out to the communities now. So a Plan of Action is that a Cabinet Subcommittee has been appointed to meet with the Ministry of Health to look at a Planned Programme for going out into the Community. With the additional vaccines coming into the country, they would be advising, going into Community Centres and asking people to come in.

No one will be forcing anybody, as the Minister pointed out. But we are impressing on our brothers and sisters to protect themselves. You don't want to wait to get sick before you look at dealing and protecting yourself against the virus, because the verdict is still out there. We don't even know how long the vaccination protects you. We don't know. There are some projections, but the verdict is still not final. So, the point is, let us do what we have to do and of course, the Cabinet Subcommittee and the

Ministry of Health and the COVID Secretariat, they will be working to enhance the Vaccination Programme, throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 13 - Personal Explanations.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me at this point here, place on record my sincere gratitude to Members of this House, to yourself, the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and to the hundreds, if not thousands of people, who reached out to me and my family in our time of bereavement. I do know that it was one of the most difficult periods, over the last few weeks that we endured.

Mr. Speaker, I just came back from Carriacou and Petite Martinique on Sunday after spending some time with family and friends, over the last few weeks or so and indeed, sometimes people just live a quiet life. But I do believe that quite a few people, they were shocked to learn that my mom was also a Public Servant for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. She was a Member of the Health Services, as a Nurse Aide, from 1956 to way into the 70s, and they recalled her working at the time in the Surgery, you know, the Clinic then, and she worked there for a number of years.

But, Mr. Speaker, we celebrated her life, although it would be difficult, I think, not only myself, but the people of Petite Martinique and Carriacou, where she was well-known, also celebrated her life. But, Mr. Speaker, in my position as I was home, I had a few conversation with people, who came by, just to say hello and came by to talk and concerns were raised. And for the last month, Mr. Speaker, in Petite Martinique and Carriacou, it has been windy, even here in Grenada, very windy, and when I asked and they talk to me about it, mothers, brothers, sisters, they were so worried.

Personal Explanations

Mr. Speaker, you see Petite Martinique is really and truly a Fishing Village. I think they boast a fleet of Tuna Vessels, about one hundred and thirty-five/forty thereabout. But, the position has changed really. Mr. Speaker, at one time they used to go into the Caribbean Sea, West of Grenada. But now, most of them don't venture there anymore, they go into the Atlantic Ocean now. So you talk about four/five hundred miles up into the Atlantic, East of Grenada.

One young man said to me, "Toby, I was two hundred and fifty-nine (259) miles, East of Georgetown, Guyana, and speaking to his mother, she said, **"Every time the wind blows she wakes up."** She said, **"Mr. Clement, we cannot sleep in the night, because the Atlantic is rough."** If they use their Satellite Phone to call and the mom, or the brother, or the father misses that call, it is real stress. But they do go up in company and sometimes they would come back in company, or sometimes they have to tour back their colleagues. They have lost a couple vessels, Mr. Speaker, in the process, no lives were lost.

But, Mr. Speaker, when they leave Grenada here and they take stores to go up, they told me they would spend probably up to almost $20,000.00 in fuel, ice and everything, because they have to remain three (3) or four (4) weeks sometimes, and they would accompany boats from Barbados and Trinidad too, in the Atlantic.

But while the boats from Grenada would have to stay two (2) or three (3) weeks, sometimes a month, because they have to clear that initial expense before they come back, those guys from Trinidad and Barbados might spend a week or so. Because the issue that they talk about, is the price that they receive for the Tuna, when they get to Grenada.

Now if their friends from Trinidad could boast and say that when they go back to Trinidad, they can ship out their Tuna at least US$8.00 a pound, in the last trip, it went up US$8.50 and when they come to Grenada they get $7.00 and then when they get here, they said the price dropped to EC$6.00 a pound.

Now, the time that they would have to spend to clear those expenses, and now they cannot go so much in the Caribbean Sea again, because the resources are getting scarce. So, the danger that they are facing, is like more for less. What shall they do?

And they speak openly to me that they will look for other alternatives, because it is like, in Grenada, in Agriculture, we set the prices of certain commodities, but in fishing it's the middleman who sets the price. The Ministry or the Government doesn't determine the price, but those who buy it from the fishermen, and they find that that is very unfair, because you can go out one day, the price is $8.00, when you come back it's $5.00 and when they go online and they look, they see nothing happened to the price that they are selling for in the United States. I think it is something that must be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, in my position, I also get calls and I got a few calls from St. Patrick and that is concerning the Breakwater Project that was constructed there. The people are concerned about the erosion. You try to fix one and at another end, then damage is done and they are asking, is Government going to do something to help out our position, because they are losing where they live in St. Patrick, and I hope that can be addressed.

Another point that was raised to me is concerning the Schools. I am not going to talk about the 4%, but we implemented in Government, a strategy, in terms of tablets and computers for the teachers and a few of the teachers complained to me that it is almost useless, because it seems like we gave them the hardware, but the software to run those machines are not there. Most of the times, people are accustomed with Microsoft Suite. So, if the tablets and the computers do not have the Office Operating Suite, then we are in problems, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what it takes for you to have the Operating System on your computer, whether you would have to buy it from Microsoft, but sometimes, we try to develop or get another. You could have the best computers, but if you do not have the Operating System, then your computer would be useless. So I do believe for what it is worth, maybe we can implement a strategy, so that the computers that are given and the tablets that are given, would be of more use to the students and they would be used for what they are intended for.

Mr. Speaker, and the last one that I would talk about here is that of the nurses, the frontline workers. A few of them are complaining that they are operating without no appointment for years, and I do believe we must look to see about the appointments of those, especially frontline workers.

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And, Mr. Speaker, I would make one correction here. The Minister for Health mentioned that small pox is totally eradicated, maybe from the population of the world, as a whole. But when I was studying Biology at the University level, it was told to me that they do have reserves both in the United States and Russia, the Military reserved it, just in case it can be used again or activated, when the time comes, for biological warfare. So, they still have it in their labs, and it is stored there. Although it is not out in the population, the super powers that be kept a certain portion, so it can be used in the future, if they so choose. So, I think that it is there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-West.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on a sad development in the Fisheries family, and by extension the nation.

Mr. Speaker, the entire family of the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts…

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment, is that Ministerial Statement?

Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford: No.

Mr. Speaker: Personal Explanation. Okay. Good. Go ahead.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: So, the Ministry and staff extend their deepest condolences to the bereaved family of Mr. St. Louis. Mr. Speaker, Mr. St. Louis made a significant impact in the Fishing Industry in Grenada. I myself was surprised to hear the amount of things that had happened under his watch as a Fisheries Officer. He worked tirelessly in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, to ensure that Grenada became HACCP Certified, and so became able to export fishery products to the US and the European Countries.

Personal Explanations

Mr. Speaker, Mr. St. Louis did not stop at this juncture. He continued to work diligently, to ensure that Grenada was listed, as No. 1 on the HACCP Certification list and that's a great achievement for Grenada. Mr. Speaker, Johnson also contributed tremendously towards the resuscitation of the trade route for fishing vessels in Carriacou and the French Martinique fish traders. Due to his unwavering effort, fish traders from Carriacou and Petite Martinique initiated the resumption of selling fish to French Martinique, after the trade was suspended.

Mr. Johnson also contributed towards the infrastructural development of some of the major Fish Markets on the Island, as well as the upgrade of the smaller markets. He also established all the concepts of Quality Assurance of all the Fish Markets on the Island. I was amazed when I looked at the records, and I think it was important that I stand here today to recognise his efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. St. Louis was also the Vice Principal of the Grenada Fisheries School during the People's Revolutionary Government. After the closure of the Fisheries School, he was transferred to the Artisanal Fisheries Development Project, as the Marketing Manager. Mr. Speaker, subsequently, the Artisanal Development Project expired and he was transferred to the Fisheries Division, as a Fisheries Officer, where he worked assiduously, as a Certified Health Inspector until he retired.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. St. Louis was also a former Executive member of the Grenada Boxing Association, and he was bilingual. He spoke fluent Spanish and French. He also spoke Japanese and Korean.

Mr. Johnson fell ill in Iceland, while he was representing the Government at a Fisheries Programme. From then, he experienced tremendous health challenges. He resumed work for a short time, even after the incident, but nature eventually took its course.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson, as I understood, was a dedicated and generous person, who assisted everyone in whatever way possible. He served the People and Government of Grenada for thirty-six (36) years, before his retirement. He will be very well missed. May his soul Rest in Peace. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Amen. Thank you for that, Madam Minister. I heard about it last night. I was surprised, but you are never surprised of death. Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments and observations with regards to an issue that has become highly controversial, quite topical. And the Member for St. George North-East made passing mention, when he spoke about the concerns being expressed by folks in St. Patrick about the effects of the Breakwater and the erosion taking place along the Mt. Rodney Beach and the loss of the coastal area.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the beginning and to identify the core reasons why that Breakwater was established in the first place. Mr. Speaker, we should not forget that where the Breakwater is now constructed was a natural reef that provided protection to Lower Sauteurs. And, if you look at the map of Grenada of 1894, you would see that reef like a small Island. And it served as a protection, Mr. Speaker, because right there was a Port for inter-Island travel. Instead of using inland transportation they used to use sea transportation to transport produce from Sauteurs to St. George's, so it was a Port, there was a Port there.

But overtime, that reef was eroded and that protection was no longer there. And therefore, the Lower Sauteurs area became exposed to high waves, significant erosions, and as a matter of fact, during Hurricane Janet, the Port was destroyed and was never restored. And therefore the buildings along Lower Sauteurs, even the coast there, was subjected to significant erosion, there is no doubt about that. As a matter of fact, there were times when the waves were breaking on the buildings, exposing septic tanks, destroying the foundation of certain buildings, and I recall the cries of the people in the area.

And I will never forget the day when our Prime Minister visited the area and he saw first-hand what was taking place, the impending destruction of the entire area of Lower Sauteurs. And the Prime Minister said at the time that something ought to be done and should be done immediately.

Personal Explanations

Mr. Speaker, there are times when you cannot wait on a luxury of studies that would take two (2) to three (3) years. It's like saying, let us look at Rome burn, while we enjoy ourselves. The fact is that, that area was under serious threat from the constant erosion, and something had to be done. And there were two (2) approaches that could have been taken, to provide some kind of buffer to the constant pounding of the waves.

As was done previously, I recall in the early days, because I used to pass in the back area there, when the then GULP Government used sand bags. They filled bags with sand and cement and put along the coastline. But, over time, those disappeared.

Government could have taken one of two approaches, continue the same trend of putting sand bags or boulders along the coast to provide some kind of protection or utilise a longer term vision for that area, a vision that pioneers like the late Stan Friday and Knox Jerome, embarked upon a project to create what you call a Port in Sauteurs, a Yacht Marina, that was their vision. And therefore, instead of putting the boulders along the coastline, which would have prevented the possibility of creating a Port in the long run, it was felt that it would have been better to put the boulders where that natural reef previously existed. With two (2) primary effects in mind, one, to protect the buildings and the seashore, and to provide that kind of calming environment, or the basin for the ultimate construction of a Yacht Marina, that was the intent.

The fact is that, Mr. Speaker, when you look at Lower Sauteurs today, you will see that massive expanse of sand, maybe over one hundred (100) meters, between the sea itself and the buildings, providing effective protection, not only the buildings, but the entire area, that is a fact.

What it has also done, Mr. Speaker, was to create a beautiful beach, and I am a bit concerned, because this was not the intent. And if people become too accustomed to the beach, eventually it would be difficult to tell them they can't use that beach. They would say this is our beach, you can't tell us not to use the beach. But, the original intention was not to create a beach in that area, but it is being used and nothing is wrong with that, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that, that area is now protected and when that Breakwater started, Mr. Speaker, every single person that was interviewed was in full praise, not one single

dissenting voice, not one person asked about an Environmental Impact Assessment then. They saw the effect of protecting the area, and they were all happy. Check all the interviews that were done. Every single person welcomed that project. But now we have erosion taking place in the Mt. Rodney area, unfortunately, and without the technical evidence, the same Breakwater that they praised, they are saying that the Breakwater is now responsible for creating what is happening on the Lower Mt. Rodney Beach. I do not have the technical knowledge, I cannot say that. It may or may not be. But unless we do an assessment of the Breakwater and get technical expertise, we cannot conclude, beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is the Breakwater. All I am saying, I am not excluding that, but we should not be making that kind of conclusion, without the kind of information.

And there are so many armchair Marine Biologists Engineers coming forward now, giving their views. Everybody now is an environmentalist. They are all on board now. They have no expertise in the area, but they're telling you it's the Breakwater that is creating what is taking place on Mt. Rodney Beach.

The fact is that, Mr. Speaker, there is significant erosion taking place there. We cannot deny that. Homes have been threatened. Some have been destroyed, and like any responsible Government, the first line of action is to protect lives. And those homes that were more vulnerable to the disruptive waves, those families were provided with building assistance, housing materials, and as a result, three (3) families were able to relocate from the area.

Mr. Speaker, about two (2) months ago, the Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick East and myself were invited to, I don't know if to call it a consultation or; I don't know what you would call it, but we were invited to meet with an Environmental Group from the area. There were over seventy-five (75) of them there. Everyone came with their own agenda, their own mission, and it turned out to be more of a political fiasco than anything else. And that is always the thing, the political element, the Opposition, and we know who was there. But if you have an Environmental Group, it should not be focused only on the politics. The only thing there was the politics, the politics, the politics.

Personal Explanations

The fact is that, Mr. Speaker, after lengthy discussions, they came to two (2) conclusions, as to how we can move forward with regards to protecting that area. First, there was what we called the short-term approach, and then you had the longer term approach that was discussed. The first short-term approach, which some of the persons present agreed to, was that as an immediate response, again, it was immediate, because the Lower Sauteurs area was an immediate response. They said, let us take immediate action, and let us put boulders along the coastline, as is done in Victoria and other places. Some supported that approach.

But the fact is that, Mr. Speaker, if we had gone along with that approach, it would mean that the possibility of reclaiming those lands that have been lost would be nil. And secondly, because the idea of Lower Sauteurs was not to have a beach there, but to have the beach lower down in the same Mt. Rodney area, if we are taking that approach to put the boulders along the coastline, we will not have the beach there. So in essence, there would have been no beach, because if we decided that the Breakwater as it stands right now, is not supposed to be a beach, because let us face it, when that project in Levera starts, that area will be transformed. That is one of the possibilities that we are looking at, in terms of transporting all of the materials into that area and then moving them to Levera, so, we won't have a beach there. So, the idea of let us create the beach down in the Mt. Rodney area, but to put the boulders along the coastline would negate any effort to have a beach.

Therefore, preliminary drawings were done to show how a revetment could be constructed, a defence mechanism where you can have the lands being restored, as well as creating a beautiful beach. But that was not a preliminary idea. In order to put that into effect, it would require technical expertise from abroad, because we did not have the technical expertise to do that kind of assessment here.

But then came COVID, Mr. Speaker, and everything as you know was turned upside down. Travelling became problematic. It was difficult to get consultants into the country to do that kind of studies and hence nothing could have happened in terms of getting those studies done to look at the second alternative, as to how we can create

the beach in that area, as well as providing effective protection and restoration of the land.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is where we are right now. But the fact is that the Government has taken an even stronger approach, in terms of providing assistance to the residents in the area to relocate. And from day one, we were telling the residents, listen, we are building these Chinese apartments in the Villa, you would receive first preference to relocate, once that is ready.

But another approach was again, taken by Government. And again, I want to applaud the Prime Minister and the Minister for Housing, who came up with the idea that, listen, it will take some time to have them relocated to the Villa, or maybe the Villa may not be appropriate, so let us give families, who have alternative lands on which to build the financial resources to relocate. And of the eleven (11) families that were located along that coastal area, five (5) families have agreed to relocate on lands that they own, not located within that same vulnerable zone. And Government upped the allocation of assistance to $25,000.00 per family; **(applause)** $25,000.00 per family, Mr. Speaker. Five (5) have agreed, and of the five (5), to date, their application for the $25,000.00 worth of material is now being processed by the Ministry of Housing, and very soon construction will start on their relocation, in a safer area.

Two (2) have not yet started, in terms of having their application processed, and we are waiting on them. We told them time is of the essence. Two (2) other families, Mr. Speaker, have indicated that because of the size of their household, and because they do not have any alternative lands on which to relocate, they would not be able to move. And they also said that the Housing Apartments in the Villa cannot accommodate the family size, so they have no choice, but to remain where they are.

Another family said, regardless of the circumstances, they will remain where they are. So, this is the situation, Mr. Speaker, that we are faced with. The fact is that Government is trying its best to assist, first and foremost, with the protection of lives by having them relocated, because even if in the long run, Mr. Speaker, they decide to remain in that area, it is a highly vulnerable area. Not ten (10) miles away or so, is the Kick 'em Jenny underwater volcano, which could trigger a Tsunami, and that area could

become destroyed in seconds. With the rising sea levels, it is also not a safe area and experts have said that even if they do all that, there cannot be a guarantee that in the next twenty (20) years, the same thing will not happen, where they will have to move again, with all the protection that we put in there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again, I am concerned. I am concerned about the kind of criticisms that do not have any merit, because those who are saying where is the Environmental Impact Assessment, Mr. Speaker, the question is, if there was no erosion taking place, no one was going to ask about the EIA. The fact is that studies were done, with regards to any activity to be undertaken in the Breakwater area, including the Breakwater. There were various studies, studies going way back, Mr. Speaker, to the days of, as I said, Stan Friday and Knox Jerome, looking at the movement of currents, looking at depths and you know, all kinds of studies were done. So, it is not correct to say that no study was done in the area. What may be correct to say is that no study was done, in terms of the impact that the Breakwater would have, because, as I said, it was an emergency situation, action had to be taken, and that is where we are, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, I must be concerned as well, because erosion is taking place. There is the main road leading to Darvey/Prospect, that could become under threat, if nothing is done and ultimately, if that road is cut off, then people in that area will be cut off as well. So, there are reasons to be concerned, but what I've seen, Mr. Speaker, is not genuine concern. There are people who want to make this thing into a political issue, but it should not be a political issue. And therefore, we will be working with the Government. The now Minister for Finance, I know we have been in touch recently, and he has also expressed concern, as to how we could move forward.

The current Minister for Infrastructure, a few days ago, we spoke, and we all agreed as to how we will move forward, in terms of getting that study done, as soon as possible. But again, as I would say, Mr. Speaker, the choice is open. Do we want to have a short term solution, where you have these boulders just placed along the coast and negate the construction of a beautiful beach in the area and negate the reclamation of the land? Or do you want to wait a little longer and have something that is good,

have your beach and have the lands reclaimed? And this is the junction at which we are, with regards to what is taking place at the Mt. Rodney area. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 14 - Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

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

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 existed in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting, and on the 17th day of April 2020 that Proclamation was approved by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS section 10 (1) of the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015 ("the Act") provides that the Minister of 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* natural disaster or 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 Order made pursuant section 10 (1) shall be subject to negative resolution of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS on the 10th day of April 2020 the Minister of Finance made an Order suspending the application of sections 7 and 8 of the Act for the Fiscal Year ended 31st December 2020 and on the 17th day of April 2020, the Order was laid before the House of Representatives;

AND WHEREAS after the expiration of six months, the declaration of a state of emergency dated the 30th day of March 2020 lapsed pursuant to section 17 (5) of the Constitution;

AND WHEREAS on the 21st day of December 2020 the Governor-General, by a Proclamation pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution, declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting;

AND WHEREAS on the 22nd day of December 2020 the Appropriation (2021) Act No. 12 of 2020 was published in the *Gazette,* setting out and approving the budgetary estimates for the fiscal year commencing 1st January 2021 and ending 31st December 2021;

AND WHEREAS on the 11th day of January 2021 the Governor-General, by Proclamation pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution, revoked the previous proclamation and declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting and that Proclamation was approved by a resolution of the House of Representatives on the 15th day of January 2021 and by a resolution of the Senate on the 27th day of January 2021;

AND WHEREAS section 10 (7) of the Act provides that, where the Minister of Finance determines that resumption of the application of fiscal rules, targets or corrective measures, at the expiration of the period stipulated in an Order made pursuant to section 10 (1) of the Act would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic or financial stability, the Minister may make a second Order to extend

the period for which such fiscal rules and targets are suspended, by a period not exceeding one fiscal year;

AND WHEREAS the Minister for Finance, having regard to the Appropriation (2021) Act No. 12 of 2020, public finances, the macroeconomic and financial stability of the State of Grenada and there being a declaration of a state of emergency, has determined that the application of fiscal rules, targets or corrective measures would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic and financial stability and has deemed it necessary to make a second Order to extend the period for which sections 7 and 8 of the Act are suspended, to the fiscal year ending 31st December 2021;

AND WHEREAS section 10 (8) of the Act provides that any Order made pursuant to section 10 (7) of the Act shall be subject to approval by Cabinet and affirmative resolution of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS on the 15th day of February 2021 Cabinet approved the Order;

AND WHEREAS the Minister proposes to make a Resolution to approve the Order;

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient that the Order be approved by the House of Representatives;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives that the Order with retroactive effect from the 31st day of December 2020 as set out in Schedule to this Resolution be now approved.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Home-Grown Structural Adjustment Programme, referred to, commenced in 2014, we all recall the sacrifices that we had to make. And I wish to place on record, again, this Government's thanks and in particular, the gratitude of the Ministry of Finance to the stakeholders, the citizens of Grenada, the social partners and the external assisting

groups that we had, at the point in time, Mr. Speaker, for the part played in ensuring that we move forward with that programme.

Mr. Speaker, during that programme, we had four (4) hallmark bits of Legislation: the Public Finance Management Act, 2015; the Fiscal Responsibility Act, normally called the FRL; the Fiscal Responsibility Law, 2015; the Public Debt Management Act, 2015; the PP and DPPA, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act in 2014, Mr. Speaker, formed the basis for the restoration of the economy after 2013.

Mr. Speaker, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, when we were discussing in 2015 with the International Community and we were discussing the so called 'Escape Clause', Clause 10, and this is the Clause, which we are using today to get approval for the Resolution. And the Resolution clearly states, Mr. Speaker, that this will be done under certain occurrences, if the macroeconomic and financial stability of the country is at stake. At the point in time, Mr. Speaker, there were three (3) occurrences that will cause such, as was given in section 10 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act. In the Resolution, we only refer to the pertinent one, section 10 (1) (a): **"If a natural disaster, a public health pandemic, a war, which is as a result of a state of emergency, will be declared."**

At the point in time, Mr. Speaker, I remember leading the negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank and the other groups. And we on the local side said, well, these other two (2), you wouldn't see them at all, but we're going to see a natural disaster very soon which is the normal hurricanes, the earthquakes and the floods.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, we got it in and I daresay, the international community had no problems with us putting things like you know, the pandemic and war, but we thought we'll never see a war, just as we thought we would never see a pandemic. But look at what hit us today, Mr. Speaker, COVID-19. And it is because of these conditions, that we could have invoked the first suspension, which we did last year, Mr. Speaker, and that suspension required negative resolution.

If the situation persists, Mr. Speaker, then we can extend this, so we extended it until December 31st. It said: "A fiscal year", although we may have done it close to the Supplementary Budget at the middle of the year, it says you can do it for the fiscal year.

It is not a calendar year. So, lo and behold, it was extinguished on the 31st December, the end of the fiscal year, 2020, Mr. Speaker.

Let us look, again, Mr. Speaker, at 10 (b). We can also invoke this Clause, that is suspend the rules, if the **"GDP experiences a decline of two percent in any given fiscal year or cumulative decline equal to or greater than three percent over two consecutive years."** If that occurs, it means that you're sinking, Mr. Speaker, and as such, you could look at the constraints that the rules are putting on you and you can come forward and ask for the suspension of the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Again, another occurrence, if **"the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank has certified in writing that a financial sector crisis has occurred, or is imminent, and the Minister estimates that the fiscal cost of such crisis, including the cost of any related recapitalisation of banks by the Government, after all possible private sector solutions have been explored, is likely to equate or exceed percent of GDP."** Remember, Mr. Speaker, the world had a decline, fiscal banking declined some time ago. If that occurs again, at that point in time, it was 2007/2008; we did not have the rules. As a matter of fact, we were not taking corrective measures, so there was nothing to suspend.

And, Mr. Speaker, if we look again, at sections 7 and 8, that we are asking this House to suspend, we know two (2) of the major rules, Mr. Speaker. The first one is that there is a two percent increase on primary expenditure. So, if we spend $100.00 today or this year, on primary expenditure, we cannot expand more than $102.00 the following year on primary expenditure. That is why a lot of people are seeing the Government behaving with fiscal prudence and saying why can we not do this and why can we not do that? It is because these rules have helped us, Mr. Speaker.

The other one, Mr. Speaker, is that, you know, we have to get our Debt to GDP Ratio down, and we must hit by a certain time, 55%. Another very important one, Mr. Speaker, these are the Fiscal Rules in sections 7 and 8, and just a few of them, that we cannot pass 9% of GDP on personnel expenditure. If you go above that, there are repercussions, Mr. Speaker.

I had a visit, Mr. Speaker, and we were negotiating some of the private loans, the bonds out there, not from the multilateral, but these people, you know, they were watching. And they come to look at everything, not only the IMF and the World Bank, but the creditors, they come and they look forward, saying let us see how you are following the rules there. And if, Mr. Speaker, we fail to follow the rules, without having it suspended according to Law, according to what we agreed with and passed into Law, then the millstone could come back around our necks.

The creditors made it abundantly clear that it is in their rights and within the Agreements. The 50% hair cut that we got, they could ask back for their money forthwith, and these are private creditors whom Government owed and who chopped the amount that they had to get back. So if we fail in our rules here, this will come back as a millstone around our necks. All the other assistances that we were given during the period could roll back around our necks, Mr. Speaker. So, if we feel that we could do certain things and get away with it, we're joking, Mr. Speaker.

I remember the IMF, at the point in time, you know, we thought they're just the people who push austerity around the neck of the poor. But at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, they stood up with the Government of Grenada against the private bondholders, who did not want to give the haircut at all and, Mr. Speaker, like they worked magic. After coming out of the room with many of the bondholders, those who were saying no way, you're not getting any haircut, well, I don't know if it was a beard cut, but it came out, Mr. Speaker, with Grenada benefitting tremendously. And it was at that point in time, a lot of us changed our attitudes and minds with the IMF, because they were a real partner at that point in time. We don't know what's happening today, but definitely, Mr. Speaker, they helped us.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, we are here to ask for the extension of the suspension, and it has been suspended until December 31, 2020. We are extending it and we are asking for that extension to start again, from the first of January, at the end of the 31st December, 2020 for the fiscal year, 2021, so that, Mr. Speaker, we would not have to go back to spend the certain things. Because, Mr. Speaker, if we did not suspended it that Fiscal Stimulus Package that we gave, we could not have done it, you know, Mr.

Speaker, because we would have crossed the two percent primary expenditure. So, the people of Grenada would not have benefited. No sector would have benefited from this.

Now, we still have a lot to do. We are extending in the Construction Sector, so that primary expenditure must be large. And if we do not extend it again, we would simply have to chop our Budget, Mr. Speaker, and get nothing done, and our people would go back into the hole where we were, Mr. Speaker.

So, we are asking this Honourable House to approve the second extension, which cannot go for more than one (1) year. And I say we must therefore work prudently, because we'll have to do a lot of dancing and amendments to come back to ask for a further extension. It is not in the law, so we must work. We must work together. The State must ensure that we operate with financial prudence. And all of us, the country must accept that the COVID-19 has brought a debilitating effect, on not only us, but throughout the world. But we, with the Fiscal Responsibility Act with so much to lose, we must work together, so that by the end of 2021, there will be no need or we should come out of the doldrums way before. September/October, we should be saying, we could always remove the suspension and go back to wait, you know, Mr. Speaker, go back to the rules. But by the end of 2021, we should know that we'll have no difficulty in going back with the rules. I therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, that this Motion be approved by this Honourable House.

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

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give my full support to this Resolution. Mr. Speaker, when we undertook the Structural Adjustment Programme, we passed a number of Legislations, in order to bring fiscal discipline to our country, and the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015 was one such Act.

Grenada and Jamaica are the only two (2) CARICOM countries that went to Parliament and passed the Fiscal Responsibility Law. My colleagues in the Region have said to me, they will have Fiscal Responsibility Framework, but not in a Law, because if you put it in a Law, you cannot break the Law.

So, we have it in the Law, but section 10, which the Minister pointed out provides for the Minister for Finance to suspend it by Order, given certain conditions. So we know that COVID-19 and affected seriously, the performance. Prior to COVID, Mr. Speaker, this Fiscal Responsibility Law has seen this country achieve some macroeconomic targets, never seen before **(applause)** and I'll give you just three (3) examples. Debt to GDP Ratio fell from 108% to 57%; the $18m deficit on the recurrent side, turned around to a recurrent surplus and, Mr. Speaker, unemployment fell from 40% to 15%, **(applause)** because of the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the discipline that it brought to this country.

And so, it has served us well and we were on target, you know. Five years of consecutive growth, never seen in CARICOM, no other CARICOM country experienced that, five (5) years consecutive growth, because we stuck to the targets that were set in this Law, and then COVID came.

You know the first quarter of 2020 the revenue exceeded what was budgeted? The first quarter you know, 2020, everything going smooth and then COVID came and we had to close down. Well if 50% of your recurrent revenue comes from your border, from international trade, and you close your border, well what do you expect? You close down your border, you shut off where your main source of revenue is coming from. So everything went out, but the Government continued to be prudent in its fiscal management.

Now, why do we have to suspend the rules? There are a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker. First of all, because in the rules we set the targets there, so we say, the GDP, we'll bring it down, Debt to GDP ratio, 55%, primary expenditure should not increase by more than 2% in the previous year, you must have recurrent surplus of 3%. But because of the effect of COVID, we cannot achieve these targets and therefore, we must suspend the rules, because if you do not suspend the rules, and then you don't achieve the target, then you will be in violation. The IMF and the World Bank rate us on our performance of the economy, based on these macroeconomic targets. So all these concessionary loans that Grenada received from the World Bank, forty (40) years to

pay, ten (10) years grace period, .75%, that is because of our fiscal performance. That is the reason we able to achieve it, you know. **(Applause)**

Do you know that a number of CARICOM countries did not get any money from AIDA? They were not qualified. They look at your performance; Grenada was qualified and able to assess this funding, and that is what is helping us. So this Fiscal Responsibility Law is extremely critical to the macroeconomic development of this country, and it has worked well for us. And therefore, this Resolution to extend it to a further year is coming at the right time. We are doing the right thing. We are ensuring that we keep within our rules and that we'll see at the end of day, how the economy will start growing back.

Mr. Speaker, to get the growth in the economy, we need to create jobs. This Budget, the last Budget that was presented by the Minister for Finance, for 2021, had the largest Public Sector Investment Programme ever. When you have the largest Public Sector Investment Programme, combined with the Private Sector investment in the Construction Sector, and you create jobs and people get disposable income and they spend more, Government will collect more revenue. And that is the model that we are working on.

So when you hear the term about, "trying to achieve aggregate demand", all that simply means is that you want people spending more money on goods and services in the economy, that is all, in the aggregate, the total amount. So if unemployment is very high, you have people with less disposable income. So, you want to create jobs, that is what is going to take us out of the current situation, you know, the creation of jobs, Mr. Speaker. And that is why the Minister for Finance stressed so much on the Investment Programme and all the construction work that is taking place. And in the hotels, already, we have a number of hotels that are continuing in their development, creating the jobs. That is what will take us out. And so, it is important that we suspend the rules to give us the leeway, because if you cannot increase your recurrent expenditure by more than 2%, as you did in the previous year, then you are constrained. So these are all constraints.

For example, the Minister for Finance announced that there will be a 12% increase in the GDP. So, we brought it down to 57%, it went down to 57%, at the end of this year, we expect it to go to 69%, because we are going to do concessionary borrowing, in order to help us come out of this situation. But 69% is still a good position to be in, because the guideline by the ECCB is 60%, that we should try to achieve. So, while the target of 55% will not be met, but we are at 69%, and with proper management of the economy, we may even do better. So, these rules are there to aid in the development of the country and to ensure that we follow strict fiscal discipline.

All the countries in the Caribbean are looking towards creating jobs. In fact, just yesterday, I received an invitation to participate in a Virtual Meeting, and the topic is: ***"How can Investment in Infrastructure Revitalise Caribbean Economies?"*** That's the topic. ***"How can Investment in Infrastructure Revitalise Caribbean Economies?"*** And that is what the Minister presented, the Minister for Finance, you know. He said to revitalise the Grenada economy, we must invest heavily in the Public Sector Investment Programme, which is infrastructure development and that is what the Caribbean countries are looking for to get the jobs that will give them the growth in the Economy. And so, Mr. Speaker, I give my full support to this Resolution, and I am confident that Grenada will continue to benefit, because of our fiscal discipline and financial prudence. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. David. Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the Member for St. David and Minister for Foreign Affairs for eloquently supporting the Motion before us. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that to get here, the Motion must have had the total support of Cabinet. And as a matter of fact, in the Motion itself, the Law requires that we state that Cabinet, even if procedurally, things must pass through Cabinet and come here, but you would see in the Law, it says it has to be approved by Cabinet. So, we must come and say here, that it was approved.

So all my Cabinet colleagues have already supported this within the confines of the Cabinet, and now, Mr. Speaker, this suspension is of such critical importance. And I want to remind all of us that, yes, we are being supported totally, by the World Bank, in particular, with respect to the very soft concessional loans mentioned by the Member for St. David. Never forget still, Mr. Speaker, it is a loan. It is necessary, so it is building up. And at the CARICOM level, at the ECCB level, those of us, only one or two other countries got these soft loans, we lamented the fact that it's easy and nice to take, easy and nice to manage, but still, on the books, it is a loan. As soon as we get out of this, after December 31, 2021, we are not monitoring; well, we're monitoring, but we're not watching and reporting. We have to watch and report.

The Member for St. David already alluded, we got down to 57%. We are way back up now, Mr. Speaker, to nearly 67%, in loans that we have taken, soft loans that we could manage. But then we have to hit that trajectory back down again, to try to get to 55%, and because we have suspended and extended the suspension, we will be looked at even more closely.

But I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. As we continue to tell the IMF and the World Bank and the other International Institutions, it's not because they are looking, you know, it is because we know what we have to do, and we have the fortitude to do it, and we are doing what is right for the country of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, that is why. So, whether they are there or not, we will do it.

Sometimes we hear a lot of criticisms, well, why don't you do this? Why don't you relax? You have gone past the Structural Adjustment Programme now. No, Mr. Speaker, we have too much to lose and we have seen too many benefits to detract from what we are doing now, to veer off coast.

And again, I want to thank all the stakeholders, who were with us, in the beginning, 2014. We want to ask for their continued commitment and understanding, and it is our duty, and we will always be doing it, advising the General Public on why we are holding certain courses, why we are taking a particular path, because unless we go along that path, we will fall by the wayside, Mr. Speaker, and we will revert to where we

came from in 2013. So, Mr. Speaker, I recommend this Resolution for its passage through this Honourable House. **(Applause)**

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Ag. Assistant Clerk: Item 15 - Bills.
Item 16 - Request for Leave to Move the Adjournment of the House on Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question proposed.

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

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to make a brief remark on the Adjournment. Mr. Speaker, it has to do with the recently instituted increase in the Court fees, and I was very happy to hear the explanation given by the Prime Minister with regards to those fees. Because the information out there is that Government is imposing some onerous fees on the poor people, and therefore, that explanation, I think, should be well disseminated, so, at least people would be clear that it is not Government benefitting from those fees, but it is an OECS arrangement that we have to satisfy.

Notwithstanding that, Mr, Speaker, there is no doubt that the impact of those increases in Court fees will be felt, disproportionately, by the poor and vulnerable segments in our society, who have to access our Court System. And, Mr. Speaker, it could not come at a time more disadvantageous to that segment, given the fact that family incomes have been falling, unemployment rising due to this COVID, and therefore any increases, regardless to how small, will have that impact of further diminishing the real incomes of the poor and vulnerable. It would also have the impact, Mr. Speaker, of pushing them further away, or making justice less accessible and affordable to those who may wish to make use of it in their daily battles with systems that they are faced with.

Mr. Speaker, given this situation, I will like to propose a kind of compromised situation, one that will call for some sharing of the sacrifice. And in this regard, Mr. Speaker, I will like to call upon the Legal Fraternity to absorb those elements of costs on behalf of their clients. At least, let us say, for one year, or until such time as this crisis that we are faced with is over, because, Mr. Speaker, in the long run they will also benefit, it will not be a loss to them. And I do not believe that our Legal Fraternity will be disadvantaged to that extent, if they were to absorb that for a period of a year or so, so at least our poor and vulnerable will not be further pushed away from our Justice System, Mr. Speaker. And this is a recommendation, I will like to make, and I am hoping that it will be received in good faith by members of our Legal Fraternity and to continue whatever pro bono services that they have been providing to those disadvantaged segment in our society. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West. Honourable Members, I mentioned to you in my Announcements that on the 8th of March is International Women's Day, and the theme for that is: ***"Choose to Challenge"***, and the United Nations' Theme for that day is: ***"Women in Leadership***". I want to take this opportunity to salute…, Oh, my apologies. I did not look up. Honourable Representative for St. David.

Adjournment

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my voice to what is taking place in the Constituency of St. David, with respect to the Six Senses Hotel. Mr. Speaker, first of all we need to get the record straight. The land on which the Six Senses Hotel is being constructed is private land that was bought from a private resident living in La Sagesse. It is not Government lands. I've heard that Government is giving away the land to investors. A simple check would reveal that. Everybody knows this is private land, that this land there was never Government land, and that thirty-two (32) acres of land was purchased for the hotel and it's only ten (10) acres of land that the hotel would use. The Developer came to St. David where they had choices. They could have chosen to go to other CARICOM countries or even different parts in Grenada, that was not their first choice. We had to do some convincing to get them to come to St. David, so we were quite happy.

He came to St. David and all of a sudden environmentalists emerged saying that they were going to destroy the environment. And so the first protest was called, very few people attended and the National Democratic Congress decided that they must add their voice, and therefore, they invited people from all over Grenada to come on Sunday 28th, that was Sunday gone, to protest against the development. Well they said they are not against the hotel development, they are against the destruction to the environment. The Developer invited people to come for consultation to explain. A Town Hall meeting was held in St. David, and another one would be held soon again, to engage, so he could explain. They started out by saying that we are destroying the Salt Pond and now Sunday it moved to the Salt Lake, guessing, because there aren't any real environmentalists in this thing. What we have are political people who are opposed to the development in St. David.

So the poster that was sent out by the NDC said to the people: ***"Come out and protest the destruction of the Salt Lake in La Sagesse."*** People who were born and grew up in La Sagesse and lived all their lives there, never know there was a Salt Lake there. And if you have so many environmentalists, how come they never protected the Lake? What the environmentalists have to do is to take on that project and that would have been a very good project, protection of what they call the Salt Lake in La Sagesse,

over the years. So, I was surprised that all these environmentalists now come in. What they have to do is pick a project, work on it and develop it, so people could get to know who you are and they can see your work.

The Salt Pond that you claim to be there, you did absolutely nothing to protect it. Now, the Six Senses Hotel is coming, a five-star brand, a big brand hotel. When you march against such a project, whether you want to put it under the cover of the environment, it's sending the wrong message to investors that Grenada is a hostile place to come. Government is not building no hotel, you know, Mr. Speaker. All that they are saying is that all Government doing is building hotels. Government doesn't build hotels. We create the right environment for people to come to Grenada **(applause)** that is what we are doing, and we are able to attract these hotels.

Some of my colleagues told me they wish they could attract these hotels to come to their country, but Grenada is attracting them because of the stability of the country, because of the peaceful nature and the friendly people, we are attracting hotels to come. We are not in the business of building hotels. So when they come, we welcome them and it's in St. David's. No major hotels have ever been built in St. David. So, the people of St. David are so happy. They were looking forward for that.

Construction has just started in January, and today fifty-two (52) people have already been employed, fifty-two (52) people are employed. **(Applause)** And by September one hundred (100) more would be added to it, so you would have one hundred and fifty-two (152) people being engaged on the site and during operation, three hundred (300) people would be employed during operation; that is what we are talking about.

So every time, every major project undertaken by this Government, people have come up against it, people who claim to be environmentalists. Look at Port Louis, look at it today. It was a Dump, and look at it today. Look at the Cruise Ship Terminal. They said it would destroy Grand Anse Beach. Every project you're coming up. So, it is glaring now that all they're doing is opposing development work.

There is a balance between development and the environment, that happens all over the world, that is a topic that has been treated and discussed every day; the balance between protecting the environment and development, so that is nothing new.

There is an Authority in Grenada that you must submit your plans to. They request an Environmental Impact Assessment, and all these things were done, before the project could commence. So everything, legally, that the Developers were supposed to do, that was done and the work is there, and I am pleased to report that the Developers decide that they will continue by protecting the environment, doing everything according to Law, to ensure that we get the Six Senses Hotel, and very soon another hotel will come to St. David. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David. I want to make sure that I look around well before I end.

As I was saying, I want to salute the women of our country, and very importantly the women of this Parliament, because we would not be meeting here before the 8th. So I want to give an extended salutation to all of the wonderful stalwarts and tower and strength of our country. You are the glue that holds our country together, and so we must not ever take you for granted, and I want to beg you not to take yourselves for granted.

I don't know of a Pope, a King, or Prime Minister, or the Minister for Finance that could have been here without you. You brought us here. You nurtured us. You kept us here and when we are falling backwards, you hold us there. When we are slipping down the hill, you push us up. So I want to salute you and to honour you.

But, I want to beg of you also, do not let foreign culture destroy the name of your offspring. Very often, we hear that the young human being is called a young goat. Our children are being called 'kids' and I feel it's very demeaning and insulting and disrespectful to call the mother of a child a 'she goat'. And if you're calling your children or people are allowed to call your children 'kids', and kids are the young goats, we are forgetting that we are human beings. It's done in schools. It's done in churches. It's done on the streets. Our Grenadian children are being called 'kids'.

Adjournment

I used to mind goats, so I know how kids behave, and if we give a dog a good name, it lives by it. If you give a dog a bad name, he hangs himself with it. And if our young children are beginning to behave like little goats we can't blame them, because we call them goats. So let us fight against this scourge of changing our children to other animals. They are children, let us call them children and not 'kids', because anytime I hear somebody ask, who this 'kid' for, I get angry, because you are calling our women folk 'she goats' and the fathers 'he goats'. So let us remain human, and I salute the women of our Nation. I applaud you. I honour you and most importantly, I love you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourns, *sine* die at 12:50 p.m.

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