



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Third Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday 29th July, 2020

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**Sitting of the House of Representatives
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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, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology, Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport and Implementation
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister wrf Forestry and Fisheries
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Agriculture and Lands
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Trade, Industry, Co-operatives and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister wrf Special Projects, Needy Assistance and ICT
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development and Religious Affairs
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business

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Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of the Opposition

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**Prayers
Minutes**

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

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

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

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

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 the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Wednesday 20th, Thursday 21st, and Friday 22nd November, 2019 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

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Minutes

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 the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Wednesday 20th, Thursday 21st, and Friday 22nd November, 2019 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Friday 13th April, 2020 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, if I may, it says here, Friday the 17th of April 2020, not the 13th. I don't know if I have a different minutes.

Mr. Speaker: What is the...

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: ...he said he has it.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, according to my calendar here, Friday the 17th of April is indeed the 17th. Monday the 13th of April, 2020. And, it was not Monday, so it must be the 17th.

(Inaudible comments by Members)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Hon. Tobias Clement: He said the 13th.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: I have 17. Brother Bowen said the 13th.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Oh, no no...

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: He made a mistake.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of Government's Business, could you just say it again?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Yes. On Friday the 17th April, 2020.

Hon. Tobias Clement: That's right.

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Minutes

Announcements

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Yes.

Question proposed for the Minutes to 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 Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Friday 17th April, 2020 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

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

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, let me welcome you to this very important Sitting of the House of Representatives.

I must implore God's blessing and all of us that we are safe today. There are many countries that is not safe, that is not so. Just to say on the seating arrangements, this was done so as to keep in accordance with the protocol, COVID protocol to social distance, and as much as possible, whenever one is speaking and the next person closest to him we want to make sure that they are masked. So, if one is addressing, the person closest to him or the next person

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***Announcements
Papers/Reports***

should make sure that you have on your mask, because not only are we six feet away, but we want to make sure that the person next door is well covered. So, that is where we want you to ensure that you wear your mask.

Let me just say that the decision Honourable Members to limit the access to the public, and to the media is not to keep the public or the media out. It is to protect them, it is to protect them and to protect the Parliament.

The decision is taken by the Clerk of Parliament, in consultation with the Speaker of the House of Representatives. And, I'm sure maybe Parliamentarian may have been surprised to hear the announcement, that, that is so, but the Clerk of Parliament has to make sure that every Member of the House and the media and the nation be safe. We have however, tried to provide limited access maybe to two or three media houses if they come by. I needed to make that mention.

Finally, I want to urge us to pay particular attention to our Standing Orders as we go about the business of today. Thank you.

Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Presentation of Petitions.

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

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of Government's Business has just stepped out.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: So, in the absence of the Leader of Government's Business, Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to present the following Papers to this Honourable House. First one, is the Financial

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Papers/Reports

Statements of the OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness (ORTC) Project for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

The second one is the Report of the Director of Audit, on the Resources Managed for the period from 1st January 2018 to 31st December, 2018 by the Project Co-ordinating Unit in the Ministry of Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development, for the Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (RDVRP). The third one, Mr. Speaker, is the Report of the Director of Audit, on the Performance of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

The fourth is the Annual Report of the Grenada Bureau of Standards for the year ended 31st December, 2018. The fifth, the Annual Report of Grenada Authority for the Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) for the year ended 31st December, 2018. The sixth, the Annual Report and Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

The seventh, the Report of the Director of Audit, on the Financial Statements of the Office of the Ombudsman for the year ended 31st December, 2018. The eighth, Annual Report, Financial Statements and Audit Report thereon of Grenada Ports Authority for the year ended 31st December, 2018. The ninth, Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority, Annual Report 2018.

The tenth, Financial Intelligence Unit Annual Report, 2016 - 2018. The eleventh, the Grenada Airports Authority Annual Report 2016. And, the twelfth and last, the Fiscal Responsibility Oversight Committee 2019 Annual Report. Sorry, thirteen, the Report of the Director of Audit Grenada on the Resources managed for the period 21st July, 2017 to 31st December, 2018 by the Project Accounting Unit in the Ministry of Finance for the OECS Regional Agricultural Competitiveness Project better know as AGRICOM, and the Income and

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***Papers/Reports
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Expenditure for the accounting period ending 31st December, 2018. The fourteenth, the Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada on the Financial Statements of the T. A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) for the year ended 31st December, 2018. And, the fifteenth and last, the Addendum to the Report of the Director of Audit on the Public Accounts of Grenada for the year ended 31st December, 2015.

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

Clerk Asistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 - Questions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

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

(The Speaker and Ag. Clerk converse in private)

Mr. Speaker: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition. Could you hold a while please, as we have the questions being written, the answers are written to you, written so we have to distribute it to all the members.

(Answers to questions distributed to Members)

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

Mr. Speaker: You can relax your legs still, take your seat. As soon as this is done, as soon as the distribution is done, then we can go back.

Hon. Tobias Clement: But, the question can be read I believe.

Mr. Speaker: Ok. Alright go ahead.

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

Question No. 1

Can the Minister for Finance provide to the House a detailed breakdown of the COVID-19 stimulus package as follows:

- (a)** The list of companies and the amount they received.
- (b)** The list of the people receiving, and the amount received.

Question No. 2

(a) What was the amount in spending for each Constituency Office for the last two years?

(b) Can you provide the details of the contract that was signed between the Government of Grenada and the contractor who is responsible for the Constituency Offices?

(c) Can a detailed breakdown be given of payment to staff, rental utilities and office supply for each office?

Yes, that was the question to the Minister. Well, I do have other questions.

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Mr. Speaker: Yes. So the Honourable Minister for Finance

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out, there were several questions that was sent just recently to the Minister for Finance on us. The Member has just indicated and clearly it requires a lot of time to put those data together. But, I do want to caution, Mr. Speaker, the Member should be observing the Standing Orders, to give details of person account and monies received, the individual personally, cannot be the work of Parliament. So, what he will get from here is the information about expenditure, not the names of company and who corrupt practices and so on. People can be sued Mr. Speaker, to say that because information wasn't given, it was corrupt, and I would not be a one to be sued. The Member can wish to make his statement publicly and face the consequences, but it will not be this Minister of Finance providing the information.

So, the answers that we will give to one of the questions will be broad. And, this is what is available to this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Cement: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that the questions according to the Standing Orders is not for the debate, but then I do believe the Stimulus Package, the monies that were expended, it is taxpayer's money.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business. Sorry, Leader of the Opposition. Thank you. The answer is circulated. And, an explanation is give in furtherance to the answer. And, if you have further questions that you may want to ask, then it's your prerogative to so do, but not to open debate on the response

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that is given. And, we have a number of questions here as we are in this. And, the question that is we're obligated to answer urgently was the question number one.

The other questions, that's the urgent question, question number one. Did you require oral answers or written answers for the others?

(Inaudible comments by the Leader of the Opposition)

Mr. Speaker: Well, we have to be specific.

(Inaudible comments)

Mr. Speaker: Please.

Hon. Tobias Clement: The question that was answered in terms of urgent questions, it is number 11 on the Order Paper, that is under "Urgent Questions under the provision of Standing Order No. 20 (1)."

Mr. Speaker, I must hasten to say too that, in terms of the short time that was given, the questions that I submitted, they were submitted to the Clerk of Parliament. And, it says that you should submit the questions at least seven days before the Sitting of Parliament. And, I do believe the questions was submitted more than seven days before.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. And, the Standing Orders also states that you have a certain period of time in which to respond to questions. But, the asker of the question must indicate whether they need an oral or written response. Where that indication is lacking, the Speaker

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of the House may determine that these questions be answered orally or written. In each case, there is a time period for responding. The seven days mentioned is that it be included on the Order Paper. That is the timeframe for including it on the Order Paper. Okay.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I do understand that according to the Standing Orders, it says that the questions could be deferred until the Minister or the Member get the opportunity to answer such questions. It doesn't mean that you have to answer the question at the next Sitting. You have the privilege of giving the time to for the questions to be answered.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I thought we were indicating... I already said many of the questions reached us very late. And, in any event, some of them would abrogate the rights of individual citizens and that I would not be held responsible for, so. But, I also pointed out, the answer to the first question, the one which I saw first, which has a lot of pertinent information, if the Member wants the answer to be read, it's available. So, I'm not postponing this to another session, but I'm giving the qualification of what is going to be provided. So, if the Member wishes to have an oral reply or the written reply, which he can circulate to the Press, as he has been doing, then he can wish to do so. So that's his prerogative, my brother.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, any...

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe again, like, it is not for debate, but I think well probably question one and question 11 on the Order Paper, I think there was some mix up there, in that, he says that he answered question one. But, like I said, on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker in terms of urgent questions provided, you would see the question 11 or urgent questions under provision of Standing Orders number 20 (1): Notice of questions, and that was not the first question that was read.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: We're really having a debate...

Mr. Speaker: We are not.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: ...which we said we are not supposed to be having. I think I've made my position very clear. The first question that came to me. I didn't say the first question on the Order Paper. And, you know, we're working in COVID time, with electronic means, that all of the days, so, numbering system might be a problem for us. The point I've really made, Mr. Speaker is that the urgent question has been answered. And, it also include, some of the information from other questions. I saw a duplication of questions. And, I was wondering what is the purpose for having same things, data to be received from different questions? So, if the Member wants the question that we're answering, which is a broad question, he can have it, it's available now. If he wishes for me to go through it, I'm quite willing to do so. If he wishes for me, just to say that it was given, and he can do what he wants with it, then you can feel free to do so. I can do it for the public perception information or he can do it himself. So I don't

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know if we need to carry this on. If he wants me to do that question. I think that should be what we should be talking about.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I will read for you the urgent question that probably we were talking about. In terms of the urgent question, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker: Just before, just before we move please. Right now we are on Item 10, Questions. From my understanding, an urgent..., please sit, please sit.

My understanding is that an urgent question was sent. And, we treated that urgent question with the urgency that we believe is needed. The other questions came, but there was no indication, there was no indication as to whether you require an oral answer or a written answer. The questions were circulated and each Minister to whom those questions were directed at would be given an opportunity to respond. If you require an oral answer to a particular question, then as the Prime Minister indicated he is prepared to respond orally, although it has been sent, written. So, we are dealing with questions one and two. Is that so?

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with question one and two, but what I am saying this was not the urgent question, the urgent question it has not been read as yet. So, this is what I'm saying...

Mr. Speaker: Okay, okay, fine

Hon. Tobias Clement: The urgent question has not been read as yet.

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(Ag. Clerk and the Speaker converse in private)

Mr. Speaker: We would get to Item 11.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Where these questions that you're debating now would be done.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, right, right.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, questions here for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Member for the Town of St. George.

Can the Minister for Foreign Affairs provide to this House a list of all diplomatic status given by the Government of Grenada, their names and place of birth?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable...

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I did receive notice that the question was asked. I must admit that I was not aware that it was an urgent question. In any event the Member may be aware that the question he is asking requires me to go the Registry and do a whole lot of digging and researching and getting all the necessary information. I will have that done expeditiously but 3 or 4 days is not sufficient time to have that done or even 7 days. It requires more because it will

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require intense research by the... there is no available documents sitting on my desk with that information. I will have to go the Registry, and I think the Member is aware that is how the Ministry's work. But I was not aware that it was an urgent question until now, that he asked it that way.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs. This question I assume would be one of the questions requiring a written answer... written response. According to the Standing Orders, I think you have about 30 days or for the next Sitting in order to respond.

Hon. Peter David: Thanks, Mr Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I must say again, Mr. Speaker, that was not an urgent question.

Hon. Peter David: Can I... I didn't hear what the speaker...

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, you would help us if we... in asking the question, you would say urgent or not urgent.

Hon. Tobias Clement: I only have one urgent question on the paper.

Hon. Peter David: Ok, thanks.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Question No. 1, Can the Minister for Infrastructure Development and Member for St. George South under whose Ministry the Parliament was constructed provide a copy of the flow plan to show the designation of the office space provided and the purpose? Question No. 2, could a list of Government assets, buildings and lands that were leased or sold from February 2013 to present be provided to this House?

Question No. 3, in the area of the land slippage in Molinere a large building was constructed before the slippage:

- a) Did the physical planning grant permission for construction to the owners of that building?
- b) If yes can you provide to this House a copy of the document granting permission to the owners?

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please take your indicator off. **(Speaking to the Leader of the Opposition)** Thank you.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these questions were not able to be answered within the short space of time. Many of them require cross-references and cross Ministries, like we have to go to the Ministry of Finance for the PPU, the planning permission, the Ministry of Agriculture for Lands and we are working on it, Mr. Speaker, so that we can respond to within the timeframe in the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister for Infrastructure. Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Question No. 1, could the Minister of Education provided to this House a plan for the reopening of school in September if it is prudent to do? Question No. 2, have any money's been budgeting for safety measures to be put in place for the reopening of schools, and if so what is the amount?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, shall I inquire as to whether this is an urgent. It has not indicated that it is, I think that is the first question. There is no indication that it is an urgent question.

Hon. Tobias Clement: No, it's not.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's not an urgent question.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Ok. So, I would want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that at the next Sitting of the House that I would seek to provide that plan. I cannot do so today because this plan has not even been tabled in Cabinet as yet and I would not think it's responsible to provide it to the House before going to Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Education. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Question No. 1, could the Minister of Health and Member for South St. George provide statistics on COVID-19 in Grenada as it relates to the following:

- a) the amount of test that was done.
- b) the number of positive cases that was found.

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c) the amount of test that is available.

Question No. 2, is there any plans in place to test the entire population?

Question No. 3, how long has the Perseverance dumpsite been burning? Was any action taken to extinguish the flames? Was an analysis done of the ambient air quality in the area?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, thank you again. The Leader of the Opposition has not indicated whether it is an urgent question or not but some of the information is public knowledge and under the Ministry's Website so I can refer to him or quote it for him. There are only 23 cases positive in Grenada to date and we continue to announce that consistently so the Member can also check on the Ministry's website for that. And the total number of tests, I intended to give that information anyway in my Ministerial Report. But if the Member would so choose because he has not indicated whether it is an urgent or not. My question to the Member for clarity though on Question 3, why is he asking the Minister for Health about the Perseverance dump? The Member of Opposition should know that, that falls under the Ministry of Environment nor would I have as the Minister for Health, information from the fire station etcetera but I can provide information if necessary with respect to the air quality, asking my health team to look at that and refer or if they have and answer the question assuming that, because he hasn't indicated otherwise that it is not a urgent question.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Health. If a question is asked, to ask why you asked the question we should try to avoid that. A question is asked to provide an answer but we don't have an answer. Thank you. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, my apologies in terms of I do have one other question for the Minister for Health. Did the National Insurance Scheme pay to workers unemployment benefit in the total sum of 10 million dollars due to COVID-19? Is the payment of unemployment benefit part of NIS charter? Where did NIS get the money to make such payment? And would these monies be deducted from the benefits of recipients upon retirement?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker questions have been received, they will be directed to the NIS. As you are aware, the NIS is at arms length from the Ministry. And once those answers are received and passed through we will bring it to this House.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Health. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the next question is for Minister for Legal Affairs and Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Question No. 1, the Port facilities in Carriacou have been moved from Hillsborough to Harvey Vale; are there any plans in place to return a Port facility to Hillsborough? Are there any plans to move Government Administration from Hillsborough to Harvey Vale?

Mr. Speaker: Minister with responsibility for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the answers to these questions will be provided in writing and will be submitted during the period prescribed by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

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**Questions
Urgent Questions**

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you. The next question that I have are questions are for the Minister for Agriculture and Member for St. Andrew's South-West. Can the Minister for Agriculture Member for St. Andrew's South-West provide to this House detail of the assets and liabilities held by the GCNA and the GCA organisation? What are the names of the company or companies and people owing monies to these organisation both foreign and domestic.

Question 2, based on previous years earnings, what is the amount of revenue lost by the sour sop farmers and the tuna fisherman? How many of them have received from the COVID-19 Stimulus package and what is the amount?

And question 3, what innovations and plans does the Ministry have for the revitalisation of the Agriculture Industry in Grenada?

Mr. Speaker: Minister for Agriculture.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr. Speaker question 1 and question 3, we have forwarded the information to the Clerk of Parliament, well sort of late this morning because we have received it late, because we had to speak with entities and so that they can provide the information. We had to write to them so we have forwarded question 1 and 3 and question 2 will take a longer time to collate all the information from a different entities. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister for Agriculture. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, here now it says...

Assistant Clerk: Item No. 11 - Urgent Questions Under the Standing Order 20
(1) (Notice of Questions).

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is what I was saying, Mr. Speaker. This now is the urgent questions. Can the Minister of Finance provide this House with details of the discrepancies that was discovered by the Ministry of Finance in regards to the disbursement of funds to companies and companies' disbursement of COVID stimulus funds to employees? If any corrupt practices were discovered what step have the Ministry taken to correct it? Three (3), in case where monies have been misappropriated, what measures are taken to recoup those funds? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as it is known the Government of Grenada in March 2020 introduced the income and payroll support as part of COVID-19 stimulus package to assist mainly the Tourism and Public Transportation Sectors and combating the negative effects of the pandemic. The payroll grant support, Mr. Speaker, is specifically targeted towards hotels including guest houses, restaurants, bars and small travel agencies. A monthly application by businesses wishing to access the grant support is required. The grant which constitute 40% of the eligible payroll is paid directly to the businesses on behalf of the employees because otherwise it would be extremely difficult for the staff at the Ministry of Finance to do so personally to every employee. Employee validation forms are required to be submitted following the disbursement of a subsequent month's payment.

The criteria for the payroll support are the following: businesses must be registered with the Inland Revenue Division and the National Insurance Scheme. Secondly funding should not be used for salary payments to owners, directors management and employees earning more than \$5,000 per month, for obvious reasons. Thirdly, entity must be in operation on or before March 1st 2020. Applicable to the employees on payroll up to 29th February 2020, new hirees post 29th February 2020 will

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not form part of this grant support. Fifthly, you must be registered with the Tourism Authority where applicable, that's particularly in the case of the hotels. The Ministry of Finance took steps during the design phase of the program to ensure that if there is a need, that the illegal path could be pursued to recoup any monies that were inappropriately used.

The following statement of declaration was included on the application and signed by the applicants to the payroll grant support and I quote **"I, being duly authorised to act on behalf of the applicant, hereby declares, that the information submitted is true and covenants on behalf of the applicant and that the applicant will observe and perform in accordance with the purposes stated in item 1 in this application form, which proposes, restricts the use of the money to the applicant once approved and imposes obligations on the on the applicants to act solely in accordance with the purposes stated in the item. The applicant covenants that if it fails to utilise the grant for the purposes stated in the item that is that he/she is to be deemed to be in breach of the stated purposes in the item and item and is therefore liable to repay the value received and not used for the stated purposes in item 1. And on the banned purposes..."** sorry **"and promise to pay to the Government of Grenada any or all the sums not used for the purposes stated in item 1 and associated incurred by the Government of Grenada to recover sums. "The approval of the applicant shall not be deemed to constitute a partnership or agency of the judiciary relationship and the applicant has no right to meet commitments for and on behalf of the Government of Grenada and/or otherwise hold the Government of Grenada liable for the sums granted."**

Mr. Speaker, the following are some of the anomalies identified during the process of these applications: One, some businesses indicated the inclusion included allowances, service charges holiday pay as part of the base salary when making a claim for the payroll support. The criteria for payroll support specifies base pay... it specifies base pay. Therefore it should not have been any problems with the conditions. Secondly, salary data submitted by employers... and I'm just going to clarify, Mr.

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Speaker, (some employers, right), ...for their employees, did not match the information contained in the National Insurance Scheme database regarding the salary amounts. In other words if their salary was this, it should be the same thing at the NIS.

Thirdly, misrepresentation of the salaries of Senior Management and Management level staff to make them eligible for stimulus payments despite being expressly excluded from the benefit. Fourthly, remitting smaller amounts to employees than was received. In other words, when they increased the salary based on all the other things they included, when the money was received they only paid them based on the base pay. Fifthly, employees have reported to the Secretariat that some employers have paid them less than 40% of the salary provided for in the stimulus package for disbursement to approved applicants. Sixthly, some entities have not paid NIS for their employees, although employee records show deductions being made from their salaries.

The process, Mr. Speaker, for verifying the information submitted by the applicants were as follows: Checks were made against the database at the Inland Revenue Division to determine the post title of applicants to ascertain their status within the businesses. Those identified as management were excluded from the grant amount given to the businesses.

Secondly individuals who did not appear on the payroll database from the NIS as being associated with that company were not considered for the grant amount. Additionally, those persons who had no contributions associated with their names were not included in the payroll calculations.

Thirdly in instances where the amounts were overclaimed by companies after reconciliation of the figures, the differences were reclaimed from those that paid to the companies for the following months, in other words, it was deducted. The last item were key stakeholders were also engaged to assist in the process, in other words, involve the companies in the processes.

The second question says, if any corrupt practices were discovered, what steps have been taken by the Ministry to correct it? The Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker,

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took several steps to rectify and identify anomalies and irregularities as highlighted above as follows: All the businesses where anomalies were discovered were contacted and the findings explained to the management. This was followed up, Mr. Speaker, with written correspondence to the management, reiterating the discussions and the recommendations. Businesses were advised to make good on any short payments identified as owing to the employees. The Ministry required supporting evidence that these monies were paid and no further payment would be made to businesses until full amounts had been paid. I need also to point out, a few businesses had the audacity when employers approached them, was blaming the Government and to me that was so unfair. Because here are the workers doing all they can, you did not do what you have to do and then you're putting the blame on the Government, politicians always end up with the blame.

In cases where monies, that's the last question, may have been misappropriated, what measures are taken to recoup this funds? To date, Mr. Speaker, all matters observed and reported have been investigated by the secretariat and the relevant businesses have been advised and to date, the necessary adjustments have been made. Namely, the staff have been given the short payments and instances where payments were made inappropriately, the funds were repaid into the Consolidated Fund. As a result, there has not been a need to pursue legal action, but I do want to finally make this point as I close answering to the question.

The problems that were created... the Member asked the question and I'm glad he is asking for the reason, we explained everything already but the Member asked so I have to answer those questions. But to make the point, these workers at the Secretariat were given a gigantic task, Mr. Speaker, and therefore in a time of problems, they were sacrificing their time. These are Public Servants who have families and they were trying to do everything for their country. They did not need us to create additional problems where they have to go and cross and recheck and crosscheck. I therefore appeal to the businesses concerned, that's the few of them that did it, be considerate, this is not a time for us to use each other.

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Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Finance. Let me just advise that if you are addressing, you may want to remove the mask for comfort sake. That is why I said the people left and right will make sure that they are covered when... And also remember we're going live, everybody watching us, so we want to see we whole face. **(Laughter)** Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the urgent question that the Minister answered again is related to the first question and this is why I said that if there are companies in Grenada that stiffed the taxpayers of monies that need to be recuperated I do believe that in the future there might be need to call them out. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Just before we proceed. The Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North East has just left for a short while to attend the graduation ceremony of the CPA Course that she participated in and has done very well and she is now being **(applause)** part of the graduation that is taking place now and she has to address the graduation. This is the second person, this is a second person... it's a virtual graduation so she's not leaving to go to Canada, it's happening right in the Conference Room and this is the second Parliamentarian who participated in that program from Grenada and have done very, very well. **(Applause)**

The first was Senator Cox and the second the Honourable Kate 'Skeeter Lewis. I want to urge that if the programme continues that other Parliamentarians may want to take advantage of it. I think all the exposures are just for building better capacity. So we want to commend Kate. A little later the Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North-West will have to leave us for a while to participate in a Round Table Conference, I think it is with the United... the OAS? UN Women. The UN Women Round Table Conference so she would be leaving us for about an hour and a half. So I just want to

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make mention that if she's gone, it's not that she has navigated her responsibility or that she has take on additional responsibilities.

Assistant Clerk: Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South... oh sorry, my apologies. Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North-West and Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Development.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Mr. Speaker, it seems like you no longer want me for your Parliamentary Representative. So you put me to a next Constituency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we meet in this Chamber, once again, amidst a changing and challenging local and worldwide environment. It is clear that COVID-19 has come not just with health challenges, but social and economic challenges as well. We have loosely spoken about adapting to a new normal. But, the truth be told, Mr. Speaker, no one has yet completely described what this new normal is. The situation continues to evolve. And, we as policymakers and leaders must be adept and attentive.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Environment, we had to deal with a number of challenges on the social side. Our Ministry has direct contact with a vulnerable population, recognising the many gaps that prevented persons from accessing immediate social support. Some of the issues were pronounced, others were underlying, and emerged. What was extremely encouraging, Mr. Speaker, was the continued demonstration of our people's resilience and their ability to reach out to each other as brothers and sisters in time of need.

I experienced, Mr. Speaker, persons working collectively as a team, not with political nor socio-economic differences, but with the true spirit of what it means to be Grenadian. I recognised the numerous contribution from the Private Sector, the NGO

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and the Diaspora communities, and truly thank them for their contribution and volunteerism.

Mr. Speaker, but what would stand out to me Mr. Speaker, during that period, when a young person, Mr. Speaker, ordinary working person who have just graduated from St. George's University, Mr. Speaker, just go on their job less than two years ago in the Social Sector, Mr. Speaker, she was able to give back \$2,500 of her hard earned cash, Mr. Speaker, to the Ministry of Social Development for families who were undergoing difficulties during the COVID-19 period, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this speaks volume **(applause)** because we're not talking about a business person here. We are not talking about persons who are making a extra money somewhere else, but, somebody who just came from university and just found a job, can say to the Ministry that I realise what is happening, I realise that there are many persons with a lot of issues outside there and need of our assistance. Mr. Speaker, she did not want her name to be mentioned in the media. She was giving from her heart. She did not want pictures with the vulnerable families receiving those donation and so the donation was not handed over to me as the politician. It was handed over to the Permanent Secretary and the Psychosocial Unit of the Ministry, who ensured that the many families we were dealing with, with social issues, got the assistance needed. And, I commend her, Mr. Speaker.

I also commend, Dr. Bridgeman, who is not in Grenada, but who have called to the Ministry and said to us that I want to assist virtually because everything we were doing as it relates to psychosocial interventions were done virtually. And so, he has assisted a number of families during that period. He must be commended.

We have other local persons from the St. George's University, who have also volunteered their services and is still volunteering their services to assist the Ministry with the many challenges that have been confronting our people.

I also want to thank Dr. Neil Chitan, who have been engaged in the level of the community assisting and dealing with the many challenges that we have had to deal with as the Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment.

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Mr. Speaker, we can say that during this period, there have been difficulties and triumphs along the way. With new models of work introduced, such as work from home and rotation, this became necessary to develop policy regulations as to guide and protect workers, families, senior citizens, children and the entire population. The social protection of our citizenry is of paramount importance to my Ministry.

Some of the social issues experience during the COVID-19 were as follows, Mr. Speaker, mental health issues, access to counselling and support system were made available to the general public via the 24-hours helpline. The Counselling Unit provided support to persons in quarantine, churches, workers in the Public and Private Sectors, persons with poor coping skills and other mental health challenges. They have worked diligently, Mr. Speaker, together to ensure that psychosocial needs of our population were met. To date, we have made over 1000 psychosocial interventions. As we go forward in this era, Mr. Speaker, it is of importance for the mental health in Grenada and person's coping mechanism came under scrutiny. It is important for us to exercise good mental health practices and reduce stigma and discrimination against persons with mental illnesses.

Employees are encouraged to develop strong employee assistance program that focuses on reducing stress and building healthy relationships among their staff where persons will feel comfortable talking about mental health. Above all else, the need to strengthen our family system by exercising proper communication, developing flexible but strong boundaries with members

Mr. Speaker, I want to place on record my commendation to the Head of Counselling and Psychosocial Unit in the Ministry, Mr. Speaker, Miss Kizzy Matthew Clarence and the entire team. Mr. Speaker, during the period, when many people, many workers were at home, they were out working, Mr. Speaker, dealing with those issues. Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on record my commendation to Nicole Pitt, even though she had bereavement in our family, Mr. Speaker, when I called to sympathise with her, she was walking through the community of St. David assisting in

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delivering hampers (**applause**) to very vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker. If that is not commitment, I do not know what is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my Permanent Secretary and the entire team, Mr. Speaker, because we were essential workers during that period. So, I want to commend them for the hard work, for their dedication and for their commitment during this period. It speaks about their commitment, Mr. Speaker. You know, in good times, you can say, well, this is a hard worker, but in a time of challenges as this period, which is showing us, we know who are committed. And, I want to commend the staff of the Ministry, the SEED Unit, the Housing Department, and every aspect within the Ministry, Mr. Speaker, the Gender-Based Violence Unit who had to be rushing through different communities to assist vulnerable women with problems, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend them for their hard work and dedication. And, as I speak of them, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that intimate partners who live together was stuck in the same home for hours than normal. Those spending time as family ordinarily had many positive outcomes. This had many drawbacks for persons with existing unhealthy relationships. We noted that victims might have experienced greater frequency or intensity of abuse, especially within the usual avenues for informal and formal support. It should be noted that all services continue to function by the Gender-Based Violence Unit and the Special Victims Unit during the entire COVID period, Mr. Speaker.

Older adults, the bearers of our history, our older adults. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, the bearers of the history of our country lies with our older adults. And so, we respect the contributions that they have made towards nation building, their sacrifices and their commitment to this country. I must hasten to add that as a people we have to continue to look out for our older adults. We have to continue to develop everything in our power to protect them against financial, emotional, physical and verbal abuse. Too many times, Mr. Speaker, report of this nature has to be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, during the distribution of the SEED Program, and, as you know, during the COVID-19 period, we went out in the different villages and at the different communities and we did house to house to deliver the assistance to vulnerable families at their homes. Mr. Speaker, and

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during that period, we discovered some things, Mr. Speaker, that families were doing to their own families, Mr. Speaker, and it makes you think twice. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when some elderly persons received \$300, it was the first time they were receiving \$300. In fact, their children, sometime grandchildren make them believe that they were still receiving \$200 when more than a year we have increased that, Mr. Speaker. We have discovered, Mr. Speaker, in the villages that there were parents where children wasn't even aware that they were on the SEED Program because parents was taking these monies and use it for themselves, and sometimes the very children were left at home, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I said COVID-19 has its challenges, but it also opened our eyes to see some of the issues that have been confronting our people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the SEED Unit, the Royal Grenada Police Force, members of the community for assisting us in delivering the SEED at the community level. And, we are still doing that, Mr. Speaker, while we try to ensure that we get bank accounts. So, there's over 1000 families receiving assistance in the Bank and Credit Union Accounts. However, we have challenges where many elderly citizens do not want to have an account, and therefore, we will still have to go into the communities until we find more creative ways in ensuring that the people who need those assistance get it, and get it on a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go into the issue of housing; housing has always been an issue, Mr. Speaker, and we have always spoken about the housing, and the need for housing and the more need for housing among the different Parishes and constituencies. During the COVID lockdown period, we have families needing our assistance and we had to... **(The Minister took a drink of water)** ...we had to intervene on the Government level, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we found rented places to assist families who had issues at home with violence, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a Ministry of Social Development and Housing, we are committed to assisting and dealing with the issues of housing. And, the programme at the Ministry is a House Repair Programme that I've said before. Sometimes many people are asking, can I get

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material to build a house, but really the program is aimed at providing repairs for families who need assistance. We also have the Housing Scheme Programme, Mr. Speaker, and in some of the areas what we are realising, that maybe we need more Housing Scheme, and Government will have to look at ways to provide budgetary allocation in different constituencies to deal with those issues. But, Mr. Speaker, we also have the Chinese Housing Project, and I'm pleased to report that although we had all these months during the COVID lockdown, that we're still on target to complete the Chinese Housing Projects. So, on the 18th of November of this year, we'll see the handing over of the Carriacou, Dumfries in Carriacou, the Villa in St. Patrick and Diamond in St. Mark. **(Applause)** These housing sites will be completed by the 18th of November. Mr. Speaker, January 1, 2021 we will see Corinth in St. David completed, and we know we had some challenges there as it relates to the land, so we had some delays there. We also have some delay earlier before COVID in Beausejour, but I'm pleased to announce also Mr. Speaker, on February 28, 2021, Beausejour, will be completed. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to announce that application is out. So, we already have the application and it will be at the Housing Authority of Grenada, it will be in the Ministry, it will be also at the different Constituency Office, **(applause)** whereby, persons who are desirous of applying, can apply. Mr. Speaker, and there are criteria to getting those housing and those criteria is never who you vote for. So, sometimes you hear they say, well, only NNP that will be getting the houses. Yes, so, there are criteria to distribute those houses and these criteria will be made known to the public. It is not only for vulnerable families, we also have a percentage of those houses to give to Public Officers, understanding how committed they are, understanding that even during the COVID period, their commitment, Mr. Speaker, so that will be made known to the public.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is committed to continuing to do what it takes as it relates to dealing with all the social issues. We have also seen some issues as it relates to child maintenance during the COVID period. Some parents and guardians who relied or receive Child Maintenance Allowance experienced difficulties that affected

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their ability to provide for their children. It also impacted the contributing parent who had little to no savings, self employed or daily paid and were mandated by the Court. So, we hope, Mr. Speaker, that as a Government, we will come up with creative ways in terms of finding employment or creating employment. We have to be thinking out of the box as policy makers. We have to look at new ways and new policies in dealing with the social and other issues that confront our people.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that very soon, the Ministry will be rolling out a programme that deals with providing employment opportunities for vulnerable families. However, we are not in the final stage yet, but this will be a agriculture program for the rural communities that will be done in conjunction with funding from the UN Trust Fund. So, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister, I'm committed and my staff at the Ministry, we are committed in dealing with all those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I am even more happier to be serving at a time like this. A time when you can show your real commitment, a time when you can serve people despite of their political affiliation. A time when you can reach out to communities, though it's difficult, Mr. Speaker, you can still do what it takes to assist. And, Mr. Speaker, this period has shown me that there are so many issues that have emerged even within my community. And, we have heard of the issue of violence at the level of the community. And, I have not spoken out on the issue. Mr. Speaker, when an issue affects you close to home, when it is in your house, it's difficult sometimes to just rush out and speak. Sometimes you have to take some step back and think and look at the way forward how to deal with particular issues. And, I'm speaking about one of the issues that have happened with persons within my Constituency, where a young man from another area lost his life because of some conflicts. **(Time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker, just give me two minutes while I wrap up...

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

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Hon. Delma Thomas: ...where a young man lost his life because of some conflict with some other young men from my Constituency, Mr. Speaker, young men who I considered my own children. Young men, Mr. speaker who I dealt with on a day-to-day basis, young men who I interacted with, Mr. Speaker. And, the truth is, as a Ministry we really thought we had it under control before COVID-19 as it relates to violent activities. We have started a number of programmes, Mr. Speaker, and we have seen a number of persons taking action, Mr. Speaker. Young people who people call no good, Mr. Speaker, they came and went to NEWLO, and they graduated, Mr. Speaker, and found gainful employment, Mr. Speaker, and it means that once we continue to deal with those issues... I'm not saying that these are bad boys, but these are our children in our communities that need our love and attention. And, as a Ministry, we will work. As a Government, we are committed to working and dealing with all those issues, social issues, that affects family and we are committed. We are coming up with a plan, finalising the plans to lay out even with the police, the community, the churches and the Ministry, to continue to deal with those challenges that confront us as a people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment. Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to give a brief update on some matters within the Ministry of Education. But, I start by identifying with the opening comments of the Minister for Social Development and Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-West, when she said that these are very challenging times, Mr. Speaker, and that we are basically trying to adapt to the new normal.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Education, it is no different. And, of course, while we are officially on vacation at this time as it relates to students and teachers, still a lot is happening because we do have, as you aware, the CSEC Exam wrapping up. And,

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we do have the registration of students for the new school year amidst a number of other things happening at this time, and we cannot shut down operations, even if our students and teachers are generally on vacation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to bring our attention to the fact that we have 1743 students who are moving on to the secondary school level in September and that 1743 are students out of a total of 1872 who sat and concluded the process of assessment for moving to secondary school. As you know, we had to make some changes as it relates to the CPEA Exam assessment process completed. But, of course, that final exam, which normally carries about 300 of the marks in general, we could not do that this year, obvious reasons, COVID-19. And so, Mr. Speaker, we came up with a formula, the assessment marks for grade six plus the MCT results from grade five, we combine that together and the technicians came up with that final formula to determine the students who received a certain score and were eligible to move on.

Mr. Speaker as it is right now we have 128 students who will be retained at the primary level and I was referring to the 100, which is normally the range as far back as the times of Common Entrance. And, this year, Mr. Speaker, we have taken a very bold initiative to address that particular issue, after a child spends seven years in school, we believe that, that child should be at a certain level. And so, we have taken on some new initiatives to add to all that is being done at the classroom level, in the school, at home, everywhere, all of the initiatives by the Ministry of Education, we have gone a bit further. So, right now, at various locations throughout the Island, there's a diagnostic process that is taking place led by Mrs. Niles at the Ministry of Education, and that is following individual one-on-one consultation with those 128 parents and students trying to identify and trying to find a solution individually to move forward. And, we have committed to these parents that we are going to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use the opportunity at the same time to extend very best wishes to all of these students, but also to recognise the challenges that many of their parents would have been through, their teachers, their principals, and want to thank everybody for all of the contributions they have made in preparing those students, the

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anxiety, and all of the challenges faced, particularly, the lead up to that final point, when we decided after consultation, we did have over 400 persons involved on a Zoom Platform for that consultation. And, just for clarity, there is the capacity for Zoom to take as much as 500 people. It depends on the account that you purchase and so after consultation we took that decision. And, I really want to commend the Examination Unit, this would not have been an easy process. It did require a lot more effort than it would normally require in normal times. And so, Mr. Speaker, bear with me, if I go back to refer to those 128 students. Mr. Speaker, our view is that each of those students must go forward with a personal portfolio that will define the way forward for them and where they go as it relates to September. So, they are going to continue within the Primary School setting and we are going to be working with them at the point where we are convinced that they are ready to fit into the secondary system. So, we are not going to just put people at the secondary level if we're not convinced that they are ready to deal with this. We have seen the results of students dropping out, primarily, we can conclude they have not been adequately prepared. And so, the adequate preparation has to be the emphasis. And so, in addition to that, we are going to be boosting our support as it relates to the Special Needs Units of the Ministry of Education. Right now we have about 16 teachers, paid for by the Government of Grenada on special scholarship, getting support as it relates to working with students with special needs. Now, in addition to that, we do have all of the itinerant teachers, special needs teachers who go to the primary schools, go to the secondary schools, they've been doing an excellent job. But, of course, Mr. Speaker we want to expand and the Special Education Unit is now looking at a proposal for expansion of that work. We may have to look a little bit at centralisation, for example. So, the time on officer take to move from this school to that school to that school, we can consolidate, and we can look at different approaches to further support some of those students who we want to continue to engage in mainstream schools.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also use this opportunity to say that while some of these students have gone on to secondary school level, we do realise and historically so, that

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there are those students who would need additional support at the secondary school level. And so, that intervention that I spoke about, would be expanded to provide additional support for students at the secondary school level, especially those in the lower forms at this point. Mr. Speaker, that has to expand even further looking at those children with special critical circumstances and some of those behavioural.

About a month ago, I presented to the Cabinet a special programme, which will be piloted at the Grenville Secondary School. And, Mr. Speaker, the intention is that, that programme would become a model programme that could be used across Grenada. And, I know the Cabinet was particularly anxious to roll that programme out, not just in a school where it would be piloted, but across the Island and so there are various programmes that would feed into that program.

We will be launching very soon a new project as it relates to Values Based Education, Compulsory Values Based Education. How do we expand our HFLE Programme, giving it the value that it deserves within our schools, understanding that those values and educating our children with those values, so important, just as much as Math and Language and Social Studies and History and all the other things that we do, the research is there to show the importance of that in the development of any human being. So, we have to critically look at who is teaching HFLE and the impact of HFLE in its current form and, how is it that we move forward to give greater attention to our HFLE Programme in schools?

So, Mr. Speaker, very soon after we've done the inspection, after we did the inspection at Grenville Secondary School, and the pilot project that was developed and the consultation held with parents, the engagement with teachers, and all others, we continue that process. Only yesterday or the day before, I visited the school myself where officials from the Ministry were actually engaged in, some parents for students we have identified, for special support, the details of those projects. And as I said, I mentioning that school because we took a decision at the Cabinet level that we would pilot at that school, but the intention is to expand.

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Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time, I want to give a quick update as it relates to the reopening of school in its first phase, and then what is going to happen in September. In a nutshell, as I said, the Official Plan is going to be going before Cabinet within a week or two, and then presented to the Parliament.

I want to specially recognise all stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. All of those persons who made this possible. It may have seemed to be a bit easy, but it was not. It was a major challenge for all stakeholders involved. And, I want to specially commend our principals, our teachers education officials, our Counselling Unit at the Ministry of Education, Heads of Department, all our ancillary staff, our parents, other stakeholders including the Grenada Union of Teachers. The support we received from all concerned, I believe, is what made it possible. And so we were able to get our Form Five students to come back into the classroom setting under special conditions. It did cost the Government quite a bit on supplies alone, Mr Speaker. Just for Form 5s, we spent over \$200,000.00, just for that aspect of the return to school.

Now we intend, Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, to continue all of the work that we've done and it probably was a good way to test the waters and to prepare ourselves to build our capacity to face what is ahead of us. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that together, I believe we did all that we could have done with the resources that we had, to assist to prepare these students psychologically and otherwise for the reopening and ultimately then the sitting of their exams. So what are briefly some of the things we did? You must have been aware, Mr. Speaker, but I want to again just... sometimes we forget. So the Government of Grenada did agree not just to provide the services of preparation, sanitary wise, but we also went further, direct support, the agreement to launch that App to support students, over 20,000 questions online, an additional to the MStar platform and what they had available there in terms of preparation at home. The decision to zero rate the platforms that they were preparing on and not just for them but all the students.

Online training for over 1600 teachers that took place during that period and only about 3 weeks ago we had an additional 500 teachers engaged in training or E-

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Learning training online. The provision of pre-recorded videos for students in the area of Math particularly and Sign Language, so we wanted to make sure our Special Needs Students were not left behind. And we continue, we are continuing the process of developing those videos and I want to specify the psychosocial support provided. So whether it was our online programme where students, parents, everybody involved had an opportunity to call in, request support and in addition to that the counselling that was provided not just to students but teachers, principals, everybody had the opportunity to access counselling during that period. And, Mr. Speaker, again, our Hotline that was established, I want to commend everybody who was part of the process making all of those possible.

So we are anticipating, Mr Speaker, and we are preparing for September and the intention at this point is to have a blended approach going forward meaning face-to-face as well as online. And one of the basic primary reason for that is the fact that in any classroom in Grenada at this time Carriacou, Petite Martinique, if you're going to be social or physically distancing 6 feet apart, it would be impossible to accommodate the same number of students that you accommodated before we went on or during this period. And so, Mr. Speaker, we are putting all of the systems in place and we will announce to the Nation what will be the approach in the context of the availability of resources. So Government has already invested millions of dollars, we started off by saying as a Government we are going to start with our Secondary Schools and we are going to provide devices for our teachers and students to ensure that we can facilitate e-learning but also the commitment that we have made to this Nation. But then we came back and we said, look, we recognise that we need to go beyond this and we were successful in raising the resources to do the same for the Primary School and so we are in the process of rolling out the project so we have been able to bring in for the secondary school which was our first commitment over 65% of those devices. They have all been inspected, we are moving onto the configuration stage and we are anticipating by the first week of school all of our Secondary School students and teachers will be able to benefit from this phase of the initiative.

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We also went further and we said we want to ensure that these devices are not blank but they are coming with e-books so that our Secondary School students can access books online with or without internet services. And so those devices already would have 18 e-books on them and we are in the process now of going even further in a time like this when it is challenging, economically and otherwise, recognising our commitment to this process, we are attempting to go even further with e-books for the Primary School. I want to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that in this first year the decision has been, **(time bell rings)** that we do e-books and text book, printed books side by side. So we are not going to be as old people would say, braps, moving from x to y. We are going side by side for one entire school year, the use of textbooks, print books and electronic books and so the transition would be an extremely smooth one. Mr. Speaker, is it possible to have an additional two minutes to wrap up?

Mr. Speaker: Two minutes is ok.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Most appreciated. I want to just use the 2 minutes, Mr. Speaker, and I am not sure if you meant it literally.

Mr. Speaker: Literally.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Mr. Speaker, I just want to wrap up on those two minutes to say that amidst all that is happening, this Government's commitment for development of infrastructure in schools remain solid and steadfast. We have said that we understand that our students and teachers need better environment for teaching and learning and we have kept that commitment and we continue to keep that commitment. So in the midst of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, this Government has found it possible to invest over 50 million dollars in the development of infrastructure throughout our school system. **(Applause)** And that is why, Mr. Speaker, we were able to do the do the sodturning at Presentation Brother's College, over 4.5 million dollars. Grenada SDA,

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the contract was signed, sodturning next week, 7 million dollars. Mr. Speaker, Bishops College, we have heard it; everybody in Grenada, I believe by now know the situation of Bishop College, 10.45 million dollars **(applause)** contract signed and we are about to start the work there. But in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, if you go behind Progress Park, you would realise the Paradise Pre-School has started. Happy Hill, Brizan Preschool also started, well on the way. River Salle Preschool, significant work taking place there. Mr. Speaker, it's an obligation, it's a commitment and in difficult times we are keeping it.

Designs are on the way for St. Andrew's Anglican Primary and Grenada Christian Academy. St. David's Secondary, within a week final decision, I believe, would be made as it relates to the land. We have been doing some negotiations and our commitment to this remain. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this, that this Government, has highly committed to education in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Why? Because we are convinced that education is a right. It is not a priviledge we are very convinced about that but furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we are convinced that every child could succeed and with our support, the support of all of our stakeholders we believe that we could make a reality, every child succeeds. Thank you so much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Education. Honourable Members, I have an instrument here that I can mute your mike. So when you ask for time and the time exceeds what you ask for, I promise you, I may be tempted to mute your mike. Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my Ministerial Report and let me start by saying the obvious which is, that these continue to be trying times. COVID-19 continues to exist among us and in the world. Mr. Speaker, 16 million people have been infected by COVID-19 to date. Mr. Speaker, the numbers keep increasing. At present, over 6 million people are suffering from COVID-19, at present, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we thought of taking aggressive action in

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March, the situation was not as bad internationally. So now as the situation out there gets worst we still need to continue to be cautious. So, Mr. Speaker, we have put certain measures in place, working with the COVID Committee, the Ministry of Health in consultation with Pan American Health, CARPHA, our other neighbours etc. Certain protocols for entering and just in brief, Mr. Speaker, just to say, because they are on our Website but there have been questions and concerns from the public.

We have ranked all countries based on a system being used right now by the European Union as well. Basically it is the number of cases a country has had... new cases in the last 14 days per 100,000 population. And if a country has had 19 or less cases in the last 14 days per 100,000 population, then it is a green state, if it has had between 20 and 60 new cases in the last 14 days per 100,000, then it is a yellow state, and if it has had 60 or above, then it is a red state. And that allows a ranking that can be monitored daily and updated. Mr. Speaker, the issue with that, is some of our closest neighbours and what I refer to as our gateway ports are red and continue to get redder as time goes on. So the risks increase.

Mr. Speaker, we recently had a JetBlue flight come in... charter flight and I will speak to that as we proceed. But, Mr. Speaker, all of our neighbours who considered opening and having regular flights during this difficult time have had to step back on that. Either step back completely or put stricter levels of enforcement on or screening.

Quarantine is a necessary evil, I say evil yes because it does hurt for individuals to be finally home on Grenadian soil but then have to be in quarantine. And, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing, I use the example of British Virgin Islands where they relied on significantly on an honour system for their nationals returning to remain in quarantine and within 2-weeks of implementing that system recently their number of cases doubled. So that is why we are putting these stringent measures in place. And it really does hurt as Members of Government to be putting these because we are very much aware that our citizens who have been caught out there have been suffering. So too have our citizens here who went through the process to bring us to where we are now

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where we can say as best as possible, we do not have community spread for sure. And that any new case, is being caught at the border.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the incident a couple of weeks ago from Trinidad where it was implied that three Trinidadians returning to Trinidad from Grenada tested positive. Mr. Speaker, within 3 days, Trinidad Government cleared those individuals. In that period, we also did our testing of over 154 people that would have been in touch and can categorically say that those individuals did not get COVID-19 here in Grenada while they were here. Because we traced everybody and nobody that they were in contact with showed any sign of COVID-19. So Trinidad Government clearing them is Trinidad Government saying that these individuals had PCR test showed what is referred to as shedding which is that they had it some long time ago, and that long time ago is not here because we found nobody here. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, that speaks to the efficiency and effectiveness of the team of the Ministry of Health **(applause)** to have done that level of contact tracing, that level of testing to be able to say categorically that these three individuals who stayed in different parts of the Island, were for different reasons, the contact tracing was done, the testing was done and the confirmation can be laid here, Mr. Speaker, team work. Team work, Mr. Speaker, and that allows us to say categorically and proudly that while we have built and put a State of the Art Isolation Unit at the General Hospital and we used it during those difficult periods. In the last couple of months we have had no need to use that isolation facility, there is no one there because of any infectious disease, COVID in particular or any other and that is because of the screening and the work being done by the Ministry of Health in conjunction with Airport Authority, Ministry of Tourism, Royal Grenada Police Force, Customs and Immigration in particular as well, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me digress a bit and speak to... regardless of these trying times under these difficult conditions, the accomplishments outside of this of the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health has ordered and began the installation of X-ray or imaging upgrading throughout the island, Mr. Speaker. There will be two new X-ray machines at the General Hospital, there will be and

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continues to be one up at Princess Alice and, Mr. Speaker, the X-ray for Carriacou is on island **(applause)** it is here. Carriacou Hospital will begin their preparation for their brand new X-ray Unit and, Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm aware **(applause)** this would be the first time that all of our Hospitals have X-ray Units. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, dialysis units for our Government run Dialysis Centre have been ordered, are on the way. The delays, Mr. Speaker, is also that the individuals who need to come to install are in the United States and it poses a problem. These individuals would like to come just for a week and do the installation, but we have some strict quarantine measures. So we are working through that but we can say based on the Report I received yesterday from the Hospital Director, dialysis services will be up and running by middle of September at our General Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, CT Scanner has been ordered as well, it will be the first time Grenada has a CT Scanner and it will be the most advanced CT Scanner in the OECS. That has been ordered and will be installed by November, again these delays are also, Mr. Speaker, because individuals have to come and install them. Mr. Speaker, the move into A&E has begun in the phase two Hospital. In fact, the second floor and third floor are being used at present. They're being used, Mr. Speaker, to train our Nurses; the training session has started for our nurses and the Conference Rooms and Office areas of the upper level of Phase 2 building is being used as we speak. The lab, Mr. Speaker, on the second floor, I am pleased to announce that during this COVID, we were one of the first or OECS countries to be able to do PCR testing on Island, compliments of our partnership with St. George's University. As of today, we are also the first OECS country to have two labs now doing PCR testing; the General Hospital and **(applause)** our St. George's University. As of yesterday the General Hospital commissioned and started testing for PCR, COVID specifically **(applause)** in Grenada certified by CARPHA. Mr. Speaker, we continue to also work on the upgrade of our health facilities and in advancing or improving, there will be inconveniences to the individuals in those districts. The first such is Tivoli; Tivoli Health Centre has to be closed, relocated while the work is being done there, that process is on the way. So I

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ask the Representatives and the people in the area to bear with us as we move swiftly to do the repairs, the upgrading of that Centre and then have everybody back there working from there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with this upgraded testing facility, a total of 1252 PCR test has been done to date and, Mr. Speaker, over 5,000 IGG/IGM test have been done to date and that number continues. Only 23 people have been found positive for COVID-19 in Grenada to date but, Mr. Speaker, there are results pending that we expect and the Ministry should be making an announcement by midday. We do expect at least one more positive case coming from that JetBlue flight last week. And, Mr. Speaker, we should not be surprised, while we regret it, the probabilities and the percentages show not just in Grenada, but in all the other Caribbean countries that there are direct flights from red zone countries, particularly high red zone countries. That at least 2 or 3% at minimum of the passengers on the flights will test positive, we cannot be expected to be any exception. So, Mr. Speaker, regrettably there will be more positive cases but those will be positive cases that are in quarantine, those are Grenadians who have found a way and means to come back home and therefore as a Ministry of Health and as a Government and as a people, we need to make sure that we welcome them but we need to make sure that we safeguard ourselves and we put the necessary systems in place which are in place. Individuals are kept in quarantine and it has been difficult, Mr. Speaker, because there are individuals who were trying to get around it but we will continue. Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up so that you will not have to press your device.

Mr. speaker, we have increased our contact tracing as well to seventy-five (75) individuals where we had five (5) Public Health Officers to complement them. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this time to touch on a personal matter, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about a week ago about an article in one of our allowed Newspapers which said a spygate... it's allowed to be published too. It said Spygate Scandal as a headlines drawing attention with my picture on it, and the picture of someone wanted by the German Government and a fake letter. Now the article when you read it and the article it refers to in a reputable international Newspaper Der Spiegel in Germany says

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the document is fake, says that their independent research has shown that the document is fake, not just asking us but asking the recipient and asking others, says that. Says that the individual is a fraudster, says that the individual is wanted by the German Government; says that they contacted us and we have confirmed that document and that request has never happened. Yet the responsibility of freedom of press is abused by putting the wrong headline, we respect our freedom of speech here and the freedom of the press in Grenada but with every responsibility... sorry, with every freedom comes a responsibility **(applause)** and accountability, Mr. Speaker. So I speak to that, lay it before this House to say that there are rules and regulations that we make sure allow the freedom of press, but we need to consider the responsible use of that freedom like any of the freedoms that we have and therefore as a citizen I intend to exercise my rights as well that the Constitution affords me. So, Mr. Speaker, having said that, I've cut short my Report, there is much more to be said about it but COVID remains among us. I am glad that we follow through your instructions, the enforcements of the various protocols that will keep us safe as best as possible. And regrettably I have received confirmation as well, a text while speaking, that yes we do have one more positive case in quarantine. And regrettably there are other results that are pending that may also be positive but most definitely one more so we another 24, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Health. Honourable Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform this Honourable House on activities that have been taking place in the Ministry for which I have responsibility at this time, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. Mr. Speaker, I want to start with some very good news, Tourism has not had many in this Covid period. So this morning I got some news that Grenada had been mentioned today on the Jimmy Vine show, it is a BBC Radio 2 programme with they say

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is the most listened to station in the UK and Grenada was mentioned and I quote “as leading the way in dealing with COVID-19 with 0 deaths.” **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this was sent to me by one of our very reliable hoteliers and he usually monitors what happens in UK and Europe and I believe that this was said and of course Grenada is well deserving of that. We have really done well in this very trying times and the Minister for Health has said his bit and there has been a lot of cooperation and collaboration to ensure that we follow the lead of the Minister and his Ministry for Health and we have managed to contain the spread when we had a spread and we have managed to keep the disease out of our country when it was possible to do so. And that is why we have been extremely cautious. In terms of opening our borders, we have not gone to commercial flights especially from the red zone from our neighbouring country and our biggest source market, the US. And, Mr. Speaker, this of course, will impact very negatively on our economy and very negatively on the individuals who work and operate within the industry; all of those in the Hospitality Sector, those in the transportation, the Taxi Associations, those in the Dive Sector etc., etc. And very importantly the Farmers, Mr. Speaker, we do not hear a lot of farmers benefiting from Tourism but in these past few weeks and months without the hotels, without the restaurants and so operating, we have heard the cries of farmers in terms of reduction of the sale of their produce and I know that they have felt it just as much as some of those were directly involved in the industry.

Mr. Speaker, Government as we know has given payroll support to many in the industry. As a matter of fact, because Tourism has been the first to be negatively impacted we had a slow-down from the very beginning of the COVID situation. Flights had a lot of cancellations, hotels had a lot of cancellations and what we seeing now, a number of businesses are on the road to recovery but Tourism is still almost dormant some would have made some efforts but we are really... our actions are guided by what is happening within the region and internationally and as I mentioned earlier because our biggest source market is so seriously impacted by the disease, it is really a deterrent in many respects to do business as usual. And so, we continue to be guided

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by the science, we continue to prepare, however, for the eventuality because at some point in time, we must open up. We have thousands of persons who are displaced and, yes, some, those in the Hospitality Sector especially have received three months support, 40%, which is close to half of their usual salary and they are in the process of receiving another three months. But, what happens after this three months, and we are well aware that Government's revenues have depleted. So, what do we do? So, tourism really is caught between a rock and a hard place because we want to keep our country safe, we want to do everything possible, and we have done extremely well, we do not want to turn this around. And what do we do in the Sector? So we're in a difficult situation. But, health comes first and foremost, because if there is no health, there will be no tourism, there will be no wealth. And so, we wait and while we wait, we continue to do a number of things to prepare ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, in the interim, we have been able to repatriate over 300 of our seafarers, those who worked on the cruise ships. They have been very effectively and efficiently dealt with. They were all quarantined, and I'm happy to say that all now have been released to their homes, all in safe health. **(Applause)** And, it has been excellent teamwork, working with the cruise ships, we had a lot of hiccups before, but I think eventually they began to understand that our protocols were in the best interests of this country. There was a lot of arguments, what this organisation said and what we could allow and what we shouldn't allow, and they were quarantined on the ship for so long, so they just should be allowed to go home. And, as the Ministry of Health directed, as a responsible Ministry of Tourism, and of course, guided by our Government, we stuck to our guns. We had a lot of meetings on Zoom. I had to write a lot of letters, insisting that this was the pathway and eventually, they got to accept it. And, we start to have some better relationship, better communications, and we were able to repatriate in a more orderly manner, so that we were able to take care of our seafarers as they came home. The largest batch of returnees, they amounted to one hundred and thirteen, that posed a challenge for us, but we worked with the accommodation sector. And, I must compliment them. They came up to speed in short time ensuring that they have the

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basic requirements to prevent the disease. There was vigilance offered to us by the Commissioner of Police and his team. They worked endless hours. I don't know how they managed it. But, I think we did, as a team an excellent job in ensuring that the virus stayed out and that whatever came in contained. And, the Member for St. George South spoke about and Minister for Health spoke about the possibility of 2%, two to 3% of persons coming in positive. This is something that we would expect. We do not want to rush into it. But, once we reopen our borders, we will expect a few people to be positive. That is why we are insisting on pretesting, especially if you're coming from what we call a red zone or hot zone, like the US and some people are trying always to get away from it. We're still sticking to that, we are sticking to quarantine. And, I believe that is the best way forward. So, in this regard, we have been preparing facilities, and so far, we have 22 accommodation that have been inspected and approved and they are on the Ministry, on the GTA's Website, that persons desiring to come into our country can have access to.

We have at this time inspected over 40 transportation means, with the Taxi Associations working in tandem with Ministry of Health to ensure that one, they had the training, and two, that they had the means, whatever implements, whatever tools they had to have, whatever supplies they had to have, to ensure that they had it on board. When we started to speak to them, they were saying, no, no, no, we only want to deal with visitors who's coming from the green zones. But, now that the training has been done and we have encouraged them to purchase the supplies that they need, there is a better understanding and there is greater willingness to deal with persons from the medium zone, which we call the amber or the yellow and also from the red zone. But, the red zone is always a tricky or a difficult area for us to deal with. So, we continue to be guided by the Ministry of Health Team.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, we know that the Ministry of Finance and the Minister cannot continue the payroll. We're talking about thousands of people here directly and indirectly. How do we chart that, how do we maneuver in those waters? And, there are constant discussions. We are saying that those who come from the

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medium range zone in terms of risk, like Canada and UK and other European countries, they can have limited movement. And, everybody is asking, the Airlines, visitors, every day we say, what is limited movement? And while, we have come up with something, we are still tweaking, to be on the safe side we're trying to walk the straight and narrow to ensure that limited movement does not compromise the health or does not favour the transmission of the virus. And so, we have not sent it out as yet. We have had a lot of discussions, we have shared our direction, but, we have not finalised on what limited movement is. And so, we're treading in cautiously, because we know it is, it is a serious issue and we cannot take it lightly and we cannot just give a response. And, individuals are asking, everybody is asking, but we beg their patience as we seek to maintain the gains that we have made, and to ensure that we keep this country safe and by implication, keep visitors who come to our shores safe.

So, I just want to say that the pretesting continues for the medium zone and the red zones. Persons who are in the Caribbean area are by and large, allowed to come in without pretesting, but they will be tested here in Grenada and they will be monitored. I learned yesterday that our geo-fencing watch is in the Island. And so, it is one of the tools we are going to use so that maybe we can give consideration at some point in time to home quarantine now that we are better equipped. There is an App that I think is up and running. And, there is... (I haven't checked it myself, I'm told it's up and running) ...and, there is the geo-fencing watch. What the geo-fencing watch does, it tells someone who is monitoring, exactly, geographically where the individual is and if they have moved out of the restrictions that has been given to them. And, if they take that watch out, it sends a signal. So, these are some of the kind of security measures that we are seeking to implement, so that we can open at sometime. We noticed some countries, some of our neighbors, they opened quickly, they had to pull back. And, we're learning the lessons that they learn. We don't feel that we have to experience everything that they have experienced. So, we're going slowly. I know, family and friends are asking, and visitors are asking too, people love Grenada, and especially when they hear that on BBC, and they hear other kudos that Grenada has been given

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worldwide, they want to come to a safe heaven, but we want to keep it safe too. So, we are in a difficult situation, but we are maneuvering. So far, the numbers, as the Minister said, are down and we intend to keep it that way.

Our priority now is what we call Staycation, encouraging Grenadians to use the facilities, the hotels, and so on, use the attraction site and get introduced to Grenada in a different way, see it with a different light, and a few of the hotels have agreed to that. They have entertained persons in the, locals in various, using various innovative means. Some of them have been successful, some of them have to be revisited, because as new guests come they have to request, they have to request permission, and up till now the COVID Team... but, I know the COVID Team is fast winding down. And so, whatever other responsible Body is placed in that position, that would have to be weighed and balanced before we can approve, but some hotels have found some very innovative ways to have some activities for the Staycation. This is our first priority.

The second priority is regional, so that we're encouraging the countries who like us have done well in terms of keeping their numbers down to come on. And, I'm so happy that last week, we had the first flight last Wednesday, one week ago, Caribbean Airline came in with the first commercial flight. InterCaribbean has put out their schedule and, we're working with One Caribbean; they're doing their schedule as well. And so, we'll have three airlines working with. So, we're better off than we were before. We, of course, we miss LIAT; LIAT has served us well. I must say that Grenada to Barbados route. Yes, PM. **(The Prime Minister made inaudible comments)** I know. But, I would say, I know, but, I would say that some of the most important flights that we had, especially the Grenada/Barbados route, LIAT came around and assisted us and they've worked with us better than they had worked with others, our route to Trinidad and so on. But, the thing is, everything was not, everything was not in order and they could not provide what we really needed. But, they've been there many, many years. And so, I still think that thanks are in order for what they have done. We have other airlines that we dealing with. **(Time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker, I would just ask for two more minutes.

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Mr. Speaker: Two more minutes granted.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: You will not have to mute. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we have been in touch with European flights, European Airlines like Virgin and British Airways. They're looking further down the line like about October when the winter season is, you know, coming on, and it is the time when tourists fly more than ever. And so, we're in conversation, and we're looking somewhere about October. And, they have put some tentative dates, but we have not firmed up anything yet. We're also talking to Condor from Germany. And, we believe that, that is the best route when we're looking internationally at this time to take because many of the EU countries are indeed in the medium range. And, we believe that putting proper measures in place, we can start some business coming our ways. Otherwise, it becomes very difficult. If we lose this whole winter season, and the airlines get set in terms of the scheduling of their flights to other countries, it will be extremely difficult for us to recover that.

So, I'm not saying, let us open recklessly, but I'm just saying that as a Nation, we have to be aware that if we do not make arrangements, and if some flights do not start now, we will lose the whole season and we will have a task to restart with the airlines again because a lot of arrangements have to be made in terms of the gates, the pilots, their staffing, and so these are some of the challenges.

JetBlue has come in with a few charters and anything with JetBlue or from the US will remain charters until we are guided differently and we will make other decisions. Charters are more manageable, you can pace your time, you can give people time to get their test done, and all of that, whereas if we have daily flights, it's harder to be able to monitor and manage. We will not be able... we do not want to overwhelm our accommodation facilities and, I call it accommodation facilities because some of our hoteliers they're a bit afraid to hear about quarantine. But the reality is, quarantine doesn't mean that you have the disease, it just means that you're under observation because once you have the disease then the monitoring comes fully under the Ministry

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of Health and they are not allowed into the approved accommodation. So, it is accommodation, it is quarantine, whatever it is, but it is a facility where only healthy persons, persons who test negative are sent.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have done well, I want to thank the team at Grenada Tourism Authority, the Ministry of Tourism, thank Health for its guidance and its support. Many of the hoteliers have done extremely well, they have bought their hand sanitisers, their touchless thermometers, I mean, some have gone, I mean, they have ordered things in terms of being able to spray the whole body and to sanitise people as they come in and so on. So, I want to commend them, they're preparing they're getting ready, and I believe that when the time is right, and with the right scientific guidance, our industry will rebound again. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Tourism. Honourable Minister for Agriculture.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the pleasure is mine to update this Honourable House on some of the programmes and projects, activities of the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, during the COVID-19 crisis, our farmers went through very, very difficult and troubling times, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I have seen them bouncing back and that's a good sign. They're adjusting to the situation. This is something new to all of us. Everyone of us, this is something that we never thought would have, you know, come our way. And, we are grappling with it. We notice the world is grappling with it and we seem to be easing out very well out of the problems, Mr. Speaker. So, I want to recognise the farmers. I want to commend them on the hard work in resuscitating the sector to ensure that we have food on our plates.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start off, Mr. Speaker, by speaking of the opening of the Plant Propagating Distribution, plant distribution for 2020, Mr. Speaker. This was held on the 14th of July at the Mirabeau Propagating Station. Mr. Speaker, this year, we had

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set a target for over 60,000 plants, 40,800 plants were ready for the opening of the season. And, for the rest of the period to December, we would have 20,000 plants ready. Mr. Speaker, these plants are highly subsidised to give the farmers ease so they can purchase a lot of plants and plant them on their farms. The costs of producing one plant, Mr. speaker, is very, very high. We have dropped the prices to \$1, \$2 and \$5 just to give farmers the opportunity to plant out these plants to make sure that we have enough food, to make sure that we develop the sector, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so I really want to tell the farmers to cherish, to really plant these plants out. I went to a field and I was shocked. There were about 15 or 20 plants still in the backyard of a farmer. I tried to lift one it was already growing, assembled together, growing in the backyard, this is not a joke. It takes a lot of preparation. And, when I see the quality of work and the kind of work that the Propagation Unit, the young people at the Unit are doing in Mirabeau, Ashenden and Boulogne, it takes a lot of preparation. If you go to put a cost to these plants, it's over \$32, I will say, when I listened to how they calculate. So, we have to take this seriously, we have to understand that the Government is really trying to help to develop the sector. And so, we have given the prices, those prices of the plants so that farmers can purchase them and plant them on their farms.

In 2018, Mr. Speaker, and 2019, over 149,750 plants were sold at the Propagation Station. **(Applause)** It's a good sign, but if you check back how much of these plants are in the ground. So, we are doing all this analysis now, we are looking at all of that, Mr. Speaker to ensure that we make sure that these plants are planted out. Hence, the Farm Labour Programme is tying up with the whole project and I will speak about that just now, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity right now to commend the staff. During all these trying times, I saw the work that they did, they were out everyday wetting these plants because you have to keep the plants moist. And so, they were out through thick and thin, out at the stations wetting all the plants. I want to thank the Royal Grenada Police Force as well for giving us the opportunity to have ease going back and forth to these Propagating Stations.

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Mr. Speaker, yesterday we launched the Farm Labour Programme. This programme was launched on the Dunfermline Estate yesterday. We chose the Dunfermline Estate to launch this programme because they are trying to resuscitate that estate, aspects of the estate. It's a huge estate and we were asked to support. And, we thought it was important to launch this programme there to see the kind of work that they are doing there. The amount of cocoa they have on this Estate, it is not taken care of.

So, Mr. Speaker, we launched the programme there, just to let persons see what is taking place there and to encourage the owner of the estate to develop the estate again, get the estate back in action. It's amazing, Mr. Speaker, to see the quality and the type of lands that is on this estate, that is just sitting there without nothing much happened.

Mr. Speaker, this year, the Ministry will spent \$1.3 million on the programme, Mr. Speaker, this is about three or four times more than we have spent on a programme, that Farm Labour Programme. And, the reason for that too, Mr. Speaker, we realise the situation, they realise the kind of support that we have to give to this programme during this period, so we have doubled up a lot on it to support the farmers out there and to support persons who are not working on some of the farms out there so they can get some funds and they can they can benefit out of it.

We expect to rehabilitate, Mr. Speaker, 200 acres of tree crops, and we plan to establish 200 acres of staple food crops. This programme, Mr. Speaker, will also help cushion the economic impact of COVID-19 through the provision of over 400 temporary jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we have recognised that the program... we realised that the programme was not doing very well over the years, so we have revamped the programme, we have reshaped the programme. We now have a coordinator in place to coordinate the program along with the Extension Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture. And, so far, Mr. Speaker, the preparatory work that was done last month to get the

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program to where it is now has been, you know, it's really something that we can talk about.

Mr. Speaker, over 750 persons applied for the programme. There is a criteria so some person may have not fit in the criteria, but we have a very considerable amount of persons into the programme, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the backyard gardening or home garden initiative, Mr. Speaker. As it's called, two will support over 600 vulnerable households and other farmers across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, a lot of persons are looking forward to this programme. And so, we have opened up our arms, we have discussed it over and over and we have put things in perspective to support 600 vulnerable households and other farmers who have a deep interest.

Mr. Speaker, the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council, which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture worked very closely. Miss Lydia Brown and her team worked very, very closely with us, Mr. Speaker, and we have decided and identified all of the plants that should be grown in every backyard garden. We thought it was important because we have to develop and keep the nutritional value of what we want to see on the plates of our people in Grenada. The project starts this month, Mr. Speaker, in a few days, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 10,000 tissue culture banana plants were distributed to 14 farmers. This is a pilot project and the objective is to increase the level and quantity of banana production in order to adequately supply the domestic market, improve food security and take advantage of opportunities in regional markets, thereby increasing growers income and increasing foreign exchange earning capacity of the sector.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of farmers have been calling because they probably did not understand the dynamics of this 10,000 banana plants. 10,000 tissue culture banana plants is not a lot of plants. We are starting with that to start. We are doing a pilot. Our aim is to resuscitate, so that locals can have enough to eat and we can export to the region. As we are now, sometimes we import from St. Vincent. So, Mr. Speaker, this is

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a pilot project. We are piloting this project so we can look to see what comes out of it, so we can use that experience to develop the sector.

Mr. Speaker, the procurement and care of the plants has cost us \$65,000, to procure them to, to bring them up to a level so that we can distribute it to the farmers out there. And, the farmers I believe, are very happy about that. It's an experience for them. They have to make sure they care and protect the plants because you know, we don't want the Moko Disease to spread and then we lose the whole pilot of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, we will see very soon the tagging of animals. The Animal Programme will start in the month of August, mid August, where they will be tagging animals, you would hear more of that from our public relations team.

Mr. Speaker, praedial larceny has been a vexing situation for a long, long time. And, Mr. Speaker, over the period, COVID period when things were really, really crazy a lot of stealing took place, a lot, a lot of stealing took place, Mr. Speaker. When we opened up a bit to accommodate the trade of the soursop to Miami and other places, we saw a lot of stealing taking place, Mr. Speaker. There are some middlemen who are working with a group of persons all over and they are stealing and these persons comes around and picks up the soursop and probably store it and get it out the next day. So, we are looking at that very closely. We have ideas on who and what is going on in the field. The police has been very supportive, Mr. Speaker, so far.

So, Mr. Speaker, today you will see the first reading of the Praedial Larceny (Amendment) Act, 2020. And, we have made provision in that Act for the classification of soursop as a specially protected produce because we must protect our soursop. Grenada, we are the only ones. Grenada is the only country that can export **(applause)** fresh soursop to the United States of America. So, this is our green-gold, and we must protect it with legislation. We cannot go less than that, Mr. Speaker, we have to move in that direction. And so, Mr. Speaker, in the very near future, you will see that we will pass this Bill here to protect the soursop growers and so. I know they are very happy with that move that we are making.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to touch down a bit on GCNA and GCA, Mr. Speaker, because that is something that's all over, in our communities, all over the place, our media, etc. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is something that... the merger, Mr. Speaker, is something that we have been talking for a long, long time. Since 1992, up to this point, Mr. Speaker, the merger has been discussed or continues to be discussed. Every meeting that I go to, every cocoa or nutmeg meeting that I go to and I haven't missed much of the meetings, merger comes up, either directly or indirectly, after the meetings or isometimes in the meetings. And so, Mr. Speaker, that is not a new issue. That is not a new issue for the GCNA and the GCA, maybe its new issue for some of the farmers who don't have the information, Mr. Speaker. And we have not taken time off and enough time and I am blaming both GCNA and GCA and I am even blaming the Ministry as well to really factor out... get the information to the farmers out there. And I will explain a little more on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened and what has triggered off all this action in the media, a Merger Oversight Committee was set up by the Cabinet. A Committee was set up before that was not very active, not much has happened. And so we reviewed the whole thing and we had brought to Cabinet a list of names to be part of the Committee, Cabinet endorsed the list of names. So this Merger Oversight Committee was set up and it included... it's a five man committee with a Consulatat that can give support. Five man Committee including the Chairpersons of the both Commodity Boards and so the meetings have started but this Committee is supposed to look at how we're going to merge the organisation. Look at the whole merger and liberalisation of the organisation, this word liberalisation came into play as well. Mr. Speaker, and so the Committee had to use something to kick off their work. The legal Department worked very closely with the Committee. The Legal Department looked at all the studies that were done, Mr. Speaker, over the period coming down from the 90's up to this period including the Complete Caribbean Study that was so very comprehensive, that spoke in detail about the both organisations, what they found and what has to be done with those organisations. That document was looked at plus all the other

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documents, Mr. Speaker. The ordinances that are very archaic, they're way back and is not suited if you read them for today's world and moving an industry forward, that was looked at.

The GCNA was the one most appropriate to use as the base. And so, Mr. Speaker, those documents were looked at, the GCNA document was looked at and a document was prepared to start to kick off the work, that is what happened you know. Because we must start from somewhere but what happened, Mr. Speaker, the document was out in the media and that created all the annoyance amongst the farmers. The poor little farmers now have no idea of what is going on because they are not briefed. When they go to these area meetings, these are the things that have to be told to the farmers. Educate the farmers so that they can be in touch, so that they will know what is happening, so that they can relate to anything that is before them. So these farmers got angry and I would be angry if I was a farmer, I will be very angry to be hearing that the Minister take over. To hear the Minister is 51 times in the document, the Minister responsible for Agriculture. And that is what has been floating out there and aggravated the farmers, and aggravated sensible person, business people who had no knowledge. So that is, Mr. Speaker, that created all the problem. I don't want to take over no GCNA. The Government does not want to deal with these matters. What we want to see is that the GCNA and GCA come together, strengthen themselves **(time bell rings)** and move from strength to strength. My goodness, Mr. Speaker, that's looking like I might have to beg for another 10 minutes or something. **(Laughter)** This is a big Ministry you know, Mr. Speaker, and if I were to unfold all the projects and programmes to tell you what has been happening over the few weeks or months, it would be. So, Mr. Speaker, I will just try and wrap up.

Mr. Speaker: We will give you 3 minutes.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: So, Mr. Speaker, what has been happening. So the document as it's being used, is going back and forth. The Head of the GCNA and

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GCA supposed to take this information to the farmers and let the farmers know what is going on, discuss it with them, they make recommendations and bring it back to the team. That is what had to happen. Since all of that has been taking place, we believe that we had to clarify some of the issues and hence the reason we were having meetings in the communities to clarify some of the issues, to give the information, explain to the farmers what was taking place. And that is what happened over the past few. So it's a working document, Mr. Speaker, the document is still going back and forth with recommendations coming from... but when I spoke with some of the farmers, they said they knew nothing about it and when I spoke to one of the Heads of the Commodity Boards, they said to me that they did not bring the information to the farmers yet because they thought they had to do some work upfront because they thought the document was heavy, so that was the reason. So the farmers, they started to unfold information very late, Mr. Speaker, and that is what created all these problems.

So the farmers are better aware of things now and we still have a lot of work to do with them and I don't know if the GCNA and GCA want to continue to run an organisation that is not working. We have not seen so much growth, we have not seen so much coming out. Thank God the GCA started with the Chocolate Factory and other things but nothing much has happened with these two entities over the years. So why is it we don't want to come together, everything is pointing to coming together, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, one of the Head of one of the Boards was heading a team initiated by the GCA to look at all the documents, to look at the Caribbean... a complete Caribbean document and come up with recommendations. And it is glaring us in the eyes. Out of the document, coming out from the meetings that they have had, they recommended, they discussed, there are so much similarities between the two entities. They identified and pinpointed all the similarities, it's the same farmers, you know a number of things came out of that and two of the recommendations coming out of that; that the Government should take a leading role in moving the organisation forward. They agreed on the merger because of the similarities and the number of things that are happening already in the organisations, both organisations. So it is not difficult to pull

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the two together. And they said in one of the recommendations that the farmers must be at the center of everything. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what is slowing down the process of moving forward.

I think the problem is that our farmers need to be educated, they need to have all the information at their fingertips, they must be aware of what is taking place in the both entities, Mr. Speaker. If that was happening over the years, we would not be in a situation like that today. So, Mr. Speaker, I know I don't have much time but the Committee is working and very soon you will hear a Public Relations Plan that they are developing now so they can go out there and inform the public on the moves and where they are with the whole merger, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to mention that quickly because I think it's a very important project that is going to unfold and it is going to impact the nutmeg and cocoa. These two areas, it would impact them heavily and I want you to just give me an opportunity to share this information, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the month of August, Mr. Speaker, this Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Project, I want to speak about here today is a project that will be unfolding here in Grenada. The focus will be on rehabilitation of abandoned crop lands and agro forestry totalling 6,000 hectares of nutmeg and cocoa and forest lands left uncultivated after Ivan. It will improve soil fertility through use of organic manures and local grasses of economic value of 1,000 hectares. Implement soil conservation measures to restore degraded soil and farm lands in Carriacou, 1,000 hectares. This project, Mr. Speaker, will cost 20-30 million dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Presently, Mr. Speaker, a consultant is required to start the preparatory work this month, Mr. Speaker, so that they can submit it to the global mechanism. Mr. Speaker, this is a serious project that will impact the Nutmeg and Cocoa... these two Bodies, Mr. Speaker. And so we really have to get things in order. We cannot have these serious projects coming up and we're still in a situation where we cannot balance ourselves and move these industries forward. You're talking about within 20-30 million dollars and a very highly considerable portion of it because we spoke about recussitating that sector

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when the whole discussion was in line with that project. And so, Mr. Speaker, if we don't do these things, if we don't get these things going in time, we will lose a lot of the benefits of these project, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with these few words, you know there is much more, but I would like to thank you for the opportunity and I hope that especially the GCNA and GCA, I hope they would really will take this move that we are making to strengthen and organise these organisations so that our farmers would benefit. Our farmers must benefit. A farmer said to me yesterday, "Minister, I have so much nutmegs home, I wish the pool could open every day," he said that to me. And all these talk, I mean these little farmers, when they talk to you, they talk deep in their soul, this is what they live by, that is what they live by, yes. And too, the GCNA received money for price support, you know the cocoa as well. We have been helping these entities for too long, they overdraft; it's overdraft alone, it's overdraft alone. There is no contingency, there is no development plan and so we cannot see the organisation. Doing manures and doing these things are little things... are small things, Mr. Speaker. I mean to build on, its value added they're doing at the moment, but these cannot resuscitate. This whole organisation needs to be revamped and structured properly using the skills, proper skill sets to make sure that we move this forward. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to close off and thank you for the opportunity. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Agriculture. Just before, I think I saw before the Minister for Foreign Affairs was the Minister for... just before we start with you. We can do the Ministerial Statement you know and get a lot done if we can prepare, write out our statements. If you write out the statement and you can come and present, you can highlight certain aspect of the statement but that would come to the Parliament and we would have it on the website, because that is where we are going. So that you prepare your statement, you send it and you come and you could take 15 minutes to highlight what you are saying so that you could present much more than you really would do. Prepare your statement because that is really what it is about.

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Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, because there is so much to talk about and if you don't... I really appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker: Yes please.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: This Ministry is a big Ministry and half of the things I haven't spoken about. So I will do that in future. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Minister for the Prime Minister's Ministry.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Yes, Mr. Speaker, good morning. Good morning all. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my Ministerial Report and permit me, Mr. Speaker, to focus very quickly on how we have adapted and how we will continue to adapt in this COVID-19 times. The Ministry of ICT was very instrumental, Mr. Speaker, in the implementation of the new Government web portal. A web portal that facilitated the online payments throughout the Tri-Island State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique as well as the entire diaspora during the period of lockdown.

Mr. Speaker, the DG4R, (Digital Government for Resilient Project) as it's called, was in the making long before COVID-19 came on the scene and it really aims, Mr. Speaker, to support Grenada's effort at digital governance. The project, Mr. Speaker, provides accessible and resilient online services to its citizens and also to all the businesses. It establishes online systems that are really more efficient and more transparent in public service delivery to the citizens of this Tri-Island State. Mr. Speaker, a significant component of our Government's digital transformation agenda is the submission of forms electronically. Through this initiative, our citizens can do business with our Government, online at any time and from anywhere, saving long hours of standing in lines, saving on time spent trying to figure out paper work and all of those things.

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Mr. Speaker, DH4R was launched by our Prime Minister and the ICT team just about 4 months before lockdown. Mr. Speaker, it's like this Government knew that the world was about to shut down and so put all systems in place, that was very strategic and very proactive, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, because of this program, our citizens, whether it is here in Grenada, Carriacou or Petite Martinique or abroad, were able to fill out forms and submit them electronically. From wherever they were, Mr. Speaker, they were able to access the Government services, they were able to go online, they were able to pay electronically as well. They didn't just fill forms and pay, everything was done electronically. So, Mr. Speaker during lockdown our little Island was still able to provide services.

I must say that the reviews from the diaspora was quite positive, it clearly indicated the the people in the US, London, Canada and also people in my constituency, you know from Villages like Rose Hill and Levera and Hermitage, River Sallee, they were very pleased that they were able to pay their taxes, pay their license, get a birth paper, get their passports and all of these things paid online even though they were in lockdown. Now, what I must say, Mr. Speaker, is those who were able to do so had a credit card. But, Mr. Speaker, what if you don't have a credit or a debit card? What if you don't even have a bank account? How are you going to access those programs. It means, Mr. Speaker, that you would still have to travel all the way down; like for example if you live in St. Patrick East, it means therefore that all of my constituents will have to pay two buses to come to St. George's, would still have to travel that long distance to pay... actually pay Government because they don't have those bank cards.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our Ministry, Ministry of ICT has made all these tremendous strides, but I want to say here today, Mr. Speaker, that we will not rest until we cater to all of our citizens. Because not everyone will qualify for a credit card and as such, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to finding a way to making a way, some way possible for everyone including private businesses where they can pay online anywhere from inside a village or whether you are in the back of Mt. St. Catherine or Morne Longue, wherever

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you are in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique or in the diaspora and you don't have a credit card, that you will be able to pay Government in some way. Maybe it may be from your cell phone you know, might be able to pay our Government or you might be able to go into your village shop and pay your taxes from there, pay for your passport, pay for your birth paper any such thing, Mr. Speaker, we will get back to this Honourable House on that matter.

Mr. Speaker, we now have e-Parliament and e-Cabinet, we have so much laptops in front us you know, it is a wonderful sign. In this year, the Ministry of ICT contributed significantly in ensuring that all of Government went paperless. Mr. Speaker, we were prepared in March for Zoom meetings. In the month of March this Parliament was prepared to work remotely and so when lockdown came, we never stopped working. We didn't have a rest as some did, we continued to work because our Ministry of ICT had prepared for this and so, we were able to upload forms and still communicate as a Ministry and as a Government and so to get work done. Did that contribute to our great success in managing COVID-19? Obviously, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, also the Office 365 which is used throughout the Public Service was expanded during the period of lockdown to include more of our departments so that more persons can continue to work from home, work remotely and so to serve this country during those times. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Grenada is now Microsoft compliant with the implementation and expansion of Office 365. Mr. Speaker, we held our first cross sector meeting for all ICT Departments. Mr. Speaker, there is an ICT Division in all Ministries. Mr. Speaker, our ICT Department is one of the most Decentralised Sector in this country and as such we have found it necessary despite the fact that decentralisation is great and it is what is fully recommended, but we are finding need to come closer together and so function as a closer unit. And so this sector when we met last month, we decided that we will do so monthly and to share our ideas and also our best practices. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of ICT implemented training support which facilitated training of Public Officers online during the lockdown. The Ministry facilitated the implementation of the MStar Learning Platform with the Ministry of

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Education and also upgraded ICT network systems and security function across all of the Ministries of Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Mesh Project has brought high speed internet to our Government buildings, Schools and Community Centers across the country. This is almost completed and it has served adults and children well during this COVID-19 times. Just recently the River Saltee Skills Development Center which is still under renovation was just outfitted with internet through the Ministry of ICT Mesh Project.

In the area of Needy Assistance, Mr. Speaker, we have commenced the School Uniform Assistance programme and that is going on right now at our constituencies throughout the Parishes in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The Ministry of ICT again collaborated with the Needy Assistance Department to develop a sSchool Uniform Voucher Programme App that is fully online. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the School Uniform Voucher Programme is almost paperless, and I say almost because we have not yet gotten to the point where we can figure out a way for... well not figure out, but we haven't yet gotten to the point where we can pay for the school uniforms online. Mr. Speaker, all forms from the constituencies are now being uploaded to the Prime Minister's Ministry using an App that is designed by our ICT team. This App, Mr. Speaker, has really removed the need for workers at the Ministry or at the Prime Minister's Ministry to stay late into the night transferring the information from the forms submitted into the computer system. There is no need for that. Mr. Speaker, because ICT has created this App for the Needy Assistance Programme, the information that is filled out in the constituency goes straight into an Excel program ready to print, Mr. Speaker, once it is approved. Mr. Speaker, when you print, you know that it's paper that is coming out out. And our aim under the guidance of our Prime Minister is really to go paperless. Mr. Speaker, ICT now commits again to making this process paperless for 2021. We will explore the school uniform voucher fully, ensuring that it is online and so we would not have to print, not even a single piece of paper for such program. We will find a way, Mr. Speaker, whether it is a card to swipe at the Indian Store when the mother goes to buy a bag or a shoes for her child, whether it is Government sending

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some code maybe to the cell phone of all the parents so all they need to do is just go in at the store you know and have the code scanned. Mr. Speaker, all of these technologies are at our fingertips. And as a department we are committed to ensuring that this Government make it so much easier for everyone, whether it is here or abroad. We want to let persons know that it is compulsory to have a birth paper for each child to fill out the form online for the school uniform voucher program.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, as I close to thank our ICT team in Government, to thank our Prime Minister, our Leader of Government's Business, our Permanent Secretaries and all the other Senior and also the Junior ICT Officers for all that they have done in the past. As you know, Mr. Speaker, all those things I spoke about here I mean I wasn't part of it... I just joined the team and so I want to be on record as acknowledging their hard work and their great works. And I want to thank them and encourage them to continue with what they have done in the past and well continue to do it now all that they have done in the past and for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister responsible for ICT. Honourable Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make some comments, (I'll be as brief as I possibly can), on the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to engage the international community as much as we can in the context and in the environment that has been created by COVID-19. It is clear that the world has changed and I suspect it has changed forever in many respects. Meetings are now held virtually, and while there are advantages to this, some of this we will see, there are disadvantages in the sense that you don't develop personal relationships and it's slightly different but given the nature of the pandemic there is no choice. Meetings as important as the United Nations General Assembly, this year has to be done through virtual means and all of the other

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international fora for are being conducted. So it has created a different environment. I know the Minister for Finance will be happy in that we are not travelling. There are no costs related to travel and that is a substantial cost in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so there is an advantage and it forces us now to find ways to meet without those additional cost.

So I just want to start by saying that the world has changed. And not only are we changing the way we do things, there has been some change in our focus. The Ministry has had to focus over the last several months on COVID-19 and how do we as a Ministry assist in the fight against this pandemic. Our Outpost, our Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates, Honorary Consuls, they have all been engaged with the Ministry of Health, with the Ministry of Tourism, with all of the Ministries collectively doing our part in fighting COVID-19. For example, Mr. Speaker, our Embassy in Cuba, they have been working very hard, not only to assist in us getting the supplies that we did from Cuba, getting the personnel assistance from Cuba, but also in working with our students because sometimes, you know, we have students in places that we sometimes forget, we have students in Cuba, we have students in Serbia, we have students in Moscow, at our Outposts, our Embassies have had to work hard in this regard. So, all of our Embassies and the Embassy in Cuba, I pointed out has done a lot with our students with getting Cuban assistance here.

Our High Commissioner in London, working hard in London, not only with respect again to getting assistance into Grenada, but also working with repatriation. They have worked very closely with the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Health to ensure that Grenadians who are stuck worst off in the United Kingdom, were able to return home.

Our Consulate in Dubai, our Consul General there was able to mobilise assistance from persons in Dubai, who are interested in Grenada, who have been working with us many years, but are now willing to assist us with supplies with respect to COVID.

Our Embassies in China, New York, Washington, Venezuela, Miami, Brussels, Canada, all of them, Moscow; all of them have been working hard and I don't want to go

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into details. I've done some of that in the media already, but, I want to commend all of them, and, to say that we in Grenada are extremely grateful for what they have done to assist us in fighting COVID-19. As the Minister for Health indicated, we have some of the best equipment, some of the best supplies in the region. And, a lot of that has to be attributed to the work of our Outposts, our Embassies, Consulates, and so on who have worked to help us.

I want to also thank our many Consul Generals, and Honorary Consuls, throughout the world. Honorary Consuls are appointed and not paid. In fact, I recently attended a Seminar organised by UNITAR, a United Nations Organization, a virtual forum on capacity development for Honorary Consuls and on the role of Honorary Consuls in a time of crisis. I want to particularly stand here today to thank many of our Honorary Consuls, I would name none of the them, who have worked hard. I want to point out one of them in Jamaica, I will I will point it out who worked extremely hard, and I think the Minister for Tourism, worked with him to repatriate Grenadian students stuck in Jamaica. So, we have these Honorary Consuls that we appoint, we don't pay them, but they are recognised in the international community. They work with us and assist us. You see small countries, Mr. Speaker, cannot afford the kind of diplomacy that the United States and Canada and Great Britain can afford. We do not have the money to finance Embassies in every country. There are over 190 countries throughout the world. We have Embassies in about eight of them. We cannot afford to have Embassies throughout Africa, throughout Europe throughout Southeast Asia. So, countries like Grenada, what we do, is appointed Honorary Consuls, who develop Consulates in these countries and work with us. They work with us in terms of getting assistance, they bring investors into the country. They find ways to establish contact between Grenada and countries that Grenada would not otherwise be able to have relationships with and not otherwise be able to develop organic means of development between both countries. So, we have these Honorary Consuls out there, we have these Consul Generals and what they do is work with us. For example, I just mentioned Jamaica. There are Honorary Consuls in Southeast Asia, there are Honorary Councul

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in cities throughout the world and what they do is ensure that where we cannot afford to establish Outposts, where the Ministry of Finance will not be able to give us money to operate, they have been assisting us. And, I must report here today that during the period of COVID, the Honorary Consuls have been extremely important, not only for supplies, but in taking care of students. For example, in Serbia, we have five students doing engineering in Serbia. Without Honorary Consuls in those areas, they would not have been able to survive the way they did. So, I want to stand here today to pay special tribute to Consuls, Honorary Consuls, Consuls Generals and our Embassies and Consulates throughout the world who have worked with us throughout this period.

(Applause)

I also want to thank Grenadians in the Diaspora. You know I think the Minister for Works, recently we were able to contribute through our Consulate in Toronto, we were able to donate sanitiser liquids, 20 huge bottles of liquids, 20 gallons, (sorry), to the Ministry of Transportation to be used for the buses and to ensure that our buses are safe and the persons on our buses are safe. **(Applause)** I want to thank the Grenadians in the Diaspora, in Toronto in particular. I want to thank the Consulate in Toronto for that donation, and they said it was to be given specifically to the Ministry of Transport. I want to thank them for doing that. So, again, Mr. Speaker, therein lies the role of our Consulates in Dubai, indicated our Consulates in Canada, our Embassy story, therein lies the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the role of our Ambassadors and Diplomats throughout the world.

I also want to thank the Governments. I want to reiterate, I did it before, I want to reiterate, the Chinese Government only yesterday gave us 10,000 masks. We've received assistance from the Central Government of the People's Republic of China, from the Provincial Governments in the People's Republic of China, from the Embassy itself from People's Republic of China and from the Private Sector, Alibaba, in particular, from the People's Republic of China. I want to publicly thank them for all that you've done for us throughout this period. **(Applause)**

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I also want to thank the Government of Cuba for the personnel that they've sent, the Government of Venezuela, but also the Governments of Canada, the United States and Europe, **(applause)** all of the countries throughout the world that have assisted us in fighting COVID-19. I want to commend them and thank them for the support they've given to us.

Mr. Speaker, the Diaspora, I want to start on commenting and expressing condolences to the members of the family of Andre Stewart. We all know him, as 'Big Andre,' I saw it in the news last night. Big Andre was a very well known boxer. He died, he did contract COVID-19 earlier, and he died a couple of weeks ago and his funeral is today. In fact, I have to attend the funeral. I wanted on behalf of the people of the Town of St. George, on behalf of the Government, on behalf of the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs because he was in contact with us constantly throughout the period, **(applause)** I want to express our deepest condolences to Andre's family on his passing.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we've also engaged the Diaspora on developing the Diaspora Policy, that policy we hope to lay out in December. We've had meetings with Grenadians throughout the world on it. Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the advantages, the disadvantages of the Zoom. One of the advantages is now that when we have meetings, I said earlier, the Ministry of Finance will be happy that we don't fly anymore so the travel budget is down, but another benefit is the fact that we can meet with agents in these meetings anywhere in the world. So, we don't have to go to New York to meet with New York Diaspora and to Toronto and fly from New York to Toronto to Washington. We call a Zoom meeting and we have 500 people on it from every part of the world. And, we held one of those meetings to help develop the Diaspora Policy and these meetings are ongoing. And, hopefully, by the end of the year, we will have developed a full Diaspora Policy so that we can work the Diaspora into organically being involved in the development of this country. It is something we've said, and it's something we continue to say, but more importantly, this Government continues to work hard to ensure that the Diaspora is not only there when we need them for something, but they're also there to contribute to development, through their ideas, through their

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participation, and through other means, other than simply when we need them to get stuff. So, I want to say that the Government is working actively towards that and, we at the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs have done a lot to get us there. So, that in a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, is a quick report on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I want to turn to the Ministry of Labour for a few minutes. COVID has presented many challenges. One of the huge challenges, is the impact it has had on workers and businesses and workers and businesses are interrelated, Mr. Speaker. We have met with Unions, we've met with businesses. In fact, our Labour Commissioner has been extremely busy meeting with workplaces where there have been layoffs or where decisions have been taken to work with the Unions and to work with the workers to avoid layoffs where that is possible. He has met with over 20 workplaces in that regard, he's met with hundreds of workers to avoid the layoffs, to find ways to change the shifts to implement shift systems. It has been very difficult. Mr. Speaker, there are workplaces that have had to shut down. Look at the hotels, I mean, the Minister for Tourism has spoken about that, the impact of workers at Royalton and Radisson and Sandals. The impact has been hard on workers. The Government has done a tremendous job with respect to trying to buffer the difficulties that these workers face. But, we at the Ministry of Labour have also been working with the employers to see if we can work out means through which people do not have to be laid off. And, we have had successes in many, many respects; in other areas, not so successful. But, there are other issues that arise, the issue of, for example, vacation, should employers be able to give vacation for the COVID period.

In fact, that issue arose acutely with GRENLEC and TAWU. And, the Ministry of Labour intervened, it was asked to intervene. We intervened, we were not able to resolve it. But I must say that the discussions that took place between GRENLEC and TAWU was respectful. They both understood each other's position and now it has been sent to arbitration. Hopefully, at arbitration, we'll be able to find a resolution, but we want to urge both Unions and employers, workers and employers, to work together to resolve these issues. It is a difficult time for employers and employees. There's going to be no

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winning in this. We have to find win-win solutions to these problems. If businesses go out of business, there will be no workers. And, if workers are not able to work properly, there will be no businesses. So, we have to find a way. And, I have been working with the Unions, working with the businesses to see if we can find a way to ensure that we mitigate all of the problems that arise as a result of COVID-19. So we hope that the GRENLEC/TAWU matter will be resolved amicably in the arbitration. When I say amicably, meaning that whatever solution is found, that it is acceptable to both and that they both leave feeling that nobody has won, but both of them have found a way to solve the problems that they confront. I will continue to work with the Unions to resolve these issues and the Labour Commissioner and his staff and the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour will continue to work with the Unions and the employers to solve these problems. So, I call on businesses to work with the Unions to resolve the many issues that arise and on both sides to find fair and realistic resolutions to all of the problems and the Ministry of Labour is ready, willing and able to receive them to engage in discussions as we've done over these many years, and the pandemic, the pandemic must not cause there to be a breakdown in Union business relations.

I want to thank the workers in the Ministry of Labour for their hard work in that regard. And, as I indicated, we've had visits to many workplaces. And, in addition, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has had meetings with the Unions **(time bell rings)**... Mr. Speaker, can I have just about two minutes, please, if I may, I won't need more than that.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. Peter David: We've met with Unions in the Public Sector and they have gone out inspecting places to ensure that safety is kept. One of the major issues over the next, in this upcoming period is to ensure safety at the workplace. If we do not ensure safety of the workers then we are going to have more serious problems. We see what's happening in the US. Premature opening has caused a shutdown of many

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of the workplace, **(applause)** we cannot allow that to happen in Grenada. **(Applause)** We have to be extremely cautious about how we proceed. That is why we are asking for the Unions and the employers and the Government has been working with them to do that to ensure when we open, we open safely. And, I must say that the Ministry of Labour has been working with the Public Workers Union, Technical and Allied Workers Union to ensure that the Government employees are safe and the Government has been extremely cautious, (some people have said, over cautious), in ensuring that its employees in the Public Sector are not faced with risks when they come back to work. So, you see them masked, you see the sanitisers, and you know, we are ensuring that that is the way forward for us.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak, I just have a minute on the Farm Labour Programme with Canada. This programme continues, last year we had 162 workers go to Canada, this year so far we've had 50 go, just under 50 go this summer and another 30 or so due to go out soon. There have been challenges with the Farm Labour Programme. There have been challenges with respect to the existence of COVID in Canada, workers from the Caribbean have come down, including some Grenadian workers have come down with COVID. But, we have been working with the Eastern Caribbean Office in Toronto and the Grenada Consulate in Toronto to ensure the safety of Grenadian workers who go to Canada. It is an important avenue for employment. I get calls every day from workers throughout the country asking to go to Toronto. The Canadian Government has facilitated it and have facilitated ease of travel into Canada now, except that the quarantining is in place, and we believe we have restrictions, Canada has extremely tough restrictions on COVID-19, and therefore, the workers who go to Canada, they have to quarantine, they have to do social spacing, the masking all of that. And, I'm happy to say that we've been successful this year in getting the programme to continue. In fact, it is such an important program to Canada that charter flights, two charter flights have come into the region already, come to St. Vincent, come to Dominica, come to St. Lucia, they have come into the region to take

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the workers out. In fact, in August another flight will come to our shores to take workers to Toronto.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the extension and I, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour, I wish you well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour. Honourable Minister for Youth.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Welcome back. I hope you did enjoy your graduation.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and also thank you for giving me the time to participate in this virtual Graduation Ceremony. This was an opportunity afforded to me by this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very grateful for this opportunity. Thank you, again.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I am very pleased to report on the activities of the Ministry of Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts over the past few months. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada continues to invest heavily in the young people of our country, as we believe it is important to prepare them for the future development of Grenada. Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has indeed affected many of our programmes and projects that we have planned for the young people. However, we continue through the alterations of the programmes, and I am happy to report that many of our programmes are ongoing despite the challenges of COVID-19.

The IMANI Programme, Mr. Speaker, one of the flagship programs of the Ministry of Youth, we have faced many challenges over the period and that is because of the closing down of some businesses or restructuring or delay in the reopening. However, Mr. Speaker, our supervisors and monitors of the programme continue to

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engage our trainees through virtual means in different sessions, aimed at capacity building.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to commend our Supervisors, Mentors for this commitment and the continued efforts they place in the trainees to ensure that all the protocols have been met, and that they are increasing the capacity in what they're able to do, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the IMANI Programme continues to propel many of our young people. And, we can think about those who come into our program from a CXC, just only having CXC and moving on to Master's degrees. We have had trainees who came into the programme with no level of training in any, any specialised area and today we have many of our trainees moved on and leading businesses, Mr. Speaker. So, the programme has been providing serious empowerment to our young people and we are pleased to continue with this programme.

I am also happy in the face of COVID-19 that the Cabinet has agreed that we are able to launch a new batch of IMANI trainees come September this year, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, during this difficult period for all of us, we have had many of our trainees in the front line also and I do want to recognise them. We have had many of our trainees at the various hospitals, at the police stations, the nursing homes and so on and they continue to play a valuable role, making valuable contributions to these institutions. Mr. Speaker. The trainees who have been in the front line, some of them do not get the recognition that they deserve, but, I want to recognise them today, Mr. Speaker.

The Social Care Unit of the IMANI Secretariat, during the period raised resources to provide food hampers to some of the trainees who were in urgent need, Mr. Speaker. They were able to ensure that all of the sessions provided to our trainees were done and done via Zoom, Mr. Speaker. So, I commend the Social Care Unit for the work that they have done with the Imani Programme.

As I continue, Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight the work that we have been doing at the Yutbiz Support Center located in St. Mark. The Yutbiz Department continues to

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encourage youth entrepreneurship. And, that is where we provide training, business support, and final financial support to many of our young people. They go out into the communities, encourage youth entrepreneurship, encourage the young people who have business ideas, and they help them to materialise it. And, Mr. Speaker, I am happy that this year, new loans were approved to young entrepreneurs in the amount of \$126,000. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as a Ministry, we believe in giving our young people the opportunities to express themselves on different views, on different issues that concerns us on the national level. And, through our various parish debates, where all the training and preparations were done via virtual means, we have thus far had a series of Parish debates, completed five (5) Sittings with only Carriacou and Petite Martinique left to have their debate on July, well should be carded for today, July 29, Mr. Speaker. It is important, and I want the young people to know that these are opportunities where we give them to lend their voices on issues that affect them. And, some of the topics debated during that period, Mr. Speaker, focused on COVID-19, the impact, the economic impact of COVID-19 and the way forward for our country; mental health issues that affect our people, especially this time, normal people did suffer from mental health challenges. Our young people are able to analyse it and to bring about more awareness of mental health to our country. They also looked at issues such as the Gaming Act, and how can gaming be a part of the economic recovery of our country. Mr. Speaker, to conclude the round of debates, on Tuesday, August 4, we will see a champion of champions debate with all the top debaters, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges of COVID-19 we continue to engage our young people in Youth Rehabilitation Programs at the community level. And, I'm very happy that in June of this year, we were able to launch another cohort of Project FLY in the communities of Willis, St. George, and Dover, Carriacou. Mr. Speaker, I was so looking forward to see the MP in the launch of that program, but I did not see him. Forty-six (46) young men and women from that Constituency, Mr. Speaker, are currently engaged in soft skills, like building skills, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to engage

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them, Mr. Speaker, for the next year. And, they, upon completion, they will be graduating with various CVQs in different vocational and technical areas; areas demanded by the job market, Mr. Speaker. We continue to create opportunities for young people so that they too can make their contribution towards the development of our country.

Mr. Speaker, the M-Power Project. Shortly before the COVID-19 lockdown, we were able to launch M-Power 2.0. However, due to the lockdown the programme was halted, but I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, in July the beginning of this month, Mr. Speaker, we resumed the programme. And, currently all Constituencies are involved in the life skills activities. Thus far, they have completed man-to-man sessions. It was men speaking to men about the issues affecting men. Remember, this programme targets at-risk young men, young men who are looking for the opportunity to take off, to be given the opportunity to serve, and to serve their country well. So, we are working with these at-risk young men, Mr. Speaker, so that they too can make their contribution. Throughout the year, they will be involved in a series of different sessions, and, upon graduation, they will be completing the CVQs in various technical and vocational levels, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts, we have pledged our support to the establishment of a Grenada Youth Workers Association because we believe that all the people who are engaged in training our young people should have a particular level of standard. And, that will be the aim of the Youth Workers Association. As a result, Mr. Speaker, we have partnered with the Commonwealth Youth Workers Association, as well as the National Youth Workers Association in the United Kingdom and, together, we have launched a leadership and management training for youth workers. And, when I speak about youth workers, Mr. Speaker, I'm not only talking about those from the Ministry of Youth Development who are involved in training our young people, but I'm speaking about teachers, I'm speaking about Social Workers. Every individual who are in contact with young people are involved in these training session and they will be exposed to areas which includes

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management and leadership skills for youth development work, health, safety, and well being in youth development work, supporting young people in grief and trauma, and also peace, conflict resolution and mediation.

Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we launched a National Youth Ambassadors Programme and after thorough application, short listing, and the interview process, we have chosen 30 young people to be a part of this programme, because we believe that they have the qualities that are worthy of emulation, and have the potential to becoming a role model for other young people of these countries, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here you can see, we continue to provide enormous opportunities for our young people to propel, opportunities for our young people to take over this country, Mr. Speaker. And, I'm happy to see, Mr. Speaker, that many of the people who are leading different activities today, they have benefited, they have been empowered from programmes of the Ministry of Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts. And, we are seeing the benefits and that is why we will continue to empower our young people because we know they are our future leaders, our future entrepreneurs, our future workforce. And, we will continue to give them the necessary skills that they need in order to serve us and serve us right when we are no longer here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now move on to the Division of Sports, which continue to play a critical role in the lives of our young people, and also in communities. COVID-19 has seriously impacted all of the activities that the Ministry of Sports had planned for the sporting season, Mr. Speaker, and, as a result of that, many of the activities have been cancelled or deferred until further notice. But, the Division continue to work and has embarked on the following: upgrades of the following playing fields to create and maintain the appropriate facilities and enable further development of sports and opportunities at all supporting levels, the Limes playing field. **(Applause)** This is something that the MP was awaiting for a long time, and I realise he is very happy. We are happy that we are able to deliver on this, Mr. Speaker. The La Sagesse facility, Progress Park, the Willis playing field, River Sallee playing field, and the Fond playing field in St. Patrick, Mr. Speaker.

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The Division provided assistance to many of our student athletes who are in the United States and have also been affected and displaced as a result of the closure of Educational Institution due to COVID-19. The award and renewal of many contracts for the maintenance of various playing fields. The Division of Sports conducted specialised training for medical practitioners, physiotherapist in Sports Medicine and sports related injuries and treatment. The Division saw the re-constitution of the Board of Directors for the Grenada Lotteries Authority and the National Stadium Authority and also the Division engaged various stakeholders for the finalisation of the National Sports Policy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on to the Division of Culture, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask this Honourable House to just pause for a few moments as we recognise Mr. David 'Peck' Edwards one of our fallen soldiers, Mr. Speaker.

(Moment of silence observed)

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we all know that Mr. David 'Peck' Edwards was a true cultural icon, a true pan hero and he has contributed immensely to the development of culture in this country. And we salute the work that he has done and today we extend our deepest condolences to his family. **(Applause)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Division of Culture, however, continues to maintain, protect and enhance our nation's tangible and intangible cultural heritage and its related Industries. And in 2020, Mr. Speaker, the Division focused on the following: the commissioning of a music lab at the McDonald's College, and the near completion of another music lab at the St Andrews Anglican Secondary School; the provision of support to many of our local artistes who participated in the International Soca Monarch in March and that was before the lockdown. There was the reconstitution of the Board of Directors of the Grenada Cultural Foundation. And very importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Division continue to work as we design the concept design for the Simon Cultural Centre, Mr. Speaker.

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And this is a project we all know that is very close to my heart and I always say to people it's very close because this was one of... Simon Cultural Centre assisted me in going to school, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** That is where my father used to raise his little money when they had events there by setting up a simple bar, Mr. Speaker. So we will continue and we have committed to the people that we will see the Simon Cultural Centre. COVID-19 has indeed delayed, Mr. Speaker... (and just one minute as I wrap up please, Mr. Speaker), ...delayed on what we are going to do but it has not stopped the project, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful that we have a Government that continue to invest heavily in the young people of this country. And despite the reduction in Government revenues over the past few months because of the lockdown, slow down in economic activities, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see the implementation of all of the projects and programmes aimed at ensuring we can empower our young people of this country, Mr. Speaker, and I am very proud. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture. Honourable Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Minister for Legal Affairs.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, briefly, I just want to take this opportunity to first and foremost commend the various officers attached to the Ministry of Legal Affairs especially those in the Attorney General's Chambers, the Attorney General himself and those in the Drafting Unit of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, they have provided and continues to provide yeoman service to the Government of Grenada especially during this challenging covideous time. They have worked closely, Mr. Speaker, with the COVID Committee, the Ministry of Health, the various stakeholders to ensure that the legal framework or platform was laid to ensure that the COVID pandemic was managed, successfully so that is, in our country.

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And so, Mr. Speaker, this Division or Department will continue to ensure that the legal framework and the platform is there to guarantee and to continue to protect our people. Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this Honourable House, that the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Attorney General Chambers have been working on several other Bills, other than COVID related Bill, most notable of which, Mr. Speaker, is the National Sex Offenders Registry Bill. This is a Bill, Mr. Speaker, that we have been talking about for quite some time, a Bill I know that the Honourable Prime Minister is excited about and also the Minister for Social Development who have been assisting us in this process. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is presently in the consultative stage, having presented same to the Granada Bar Association and to the other stakeholders for comment and for feedback. Mr. Speaker, we also continue to work on various amendments to the Criminal Code, the Evidence Act and other pieces of legislation to deal effectively with the burning issue of sexual abuse especially amongst children.

We continue in this regard, Mr. Speaker, to receive meaningful feedback from all the stakeholders before same is finalised and brought to Parliament for passage. Mr. Speaker, also we continue to work on the Nutmeg and Cocoa Bill 2020 which is also in the consultative stage. Mr. Speaker, it is very clear and evident that the Ministry of Legal Affairs has to do a lot more in terms of public engagement and consultation with respect to substantive legislations that the Government intends to enact and to legislate. Mr. Speaker, we have heard the cry for greater and deeper participation, and in this regard, Mr. Speaker, we will strengthen the existing mechanisms at the Ministry of Legal Affairs to ensure that this happens as we forge ahead.

Mr. Speaker, over in the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, we continue to work and to ensure that we keep COVID-19 at bay. Interisland travel has resumed, albeit in a very limited way. Recently, SVG Air recommenced its operations at the Lauriston Airport providing airlift between Grenada and Carriacou, three days per week. The Ferry service has also resumed, providing service 3 days a week, also ensuring that the relevant protocols and regulations are abided by. Mr. Speaker, various programmes within the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs are

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also ongoing, such as the Food Security Programme, wherein farmers are being assisted with Agricultural implements to assist in their farming. And, Mr. Speaker, for the very first time, we are participating in the Farm Labour Programme wherein farmers are assisted with the provision of labour on their farm. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for Agriculture for ensuring that we are in fact included in this programme. Over twenty-six (26) farmers, Mr. Speaker, are expected to benefit from this programme, along with two of our Government Estates, being the Limlair Farm and the Dumfries area. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to our participation in the backyard gardening programme where we expect over one hundred and fifty (150) persons, vulnerable persons, especially our women, to be benefitted from this programme. Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has taught us so many lessons, so many things and one of which is that we must continue to place greater emphasis in Agriculture. And so the Division of Agriculture within the Ministry has been tasked with the responsibility and the mandate to ensure that this Sector is strengthened on the Islands. Mr. Speaker, we continue to work collaboratively with all the relevant stakeholders, line Ministries, to ensure the implementation of many Government Programmes and Projects.

And today, Mr. Speaker, I was very heartened to hear of the existence of the X-ray machine on Island that is destined for Princess Royal Hospital which is now presently under construction. It is now being as Minister Steel, Minister for Health indicated, is now being smarting, both our Princess Royal Hospital and our Hillsborough Clinic is under construction. I was also heartened to hear, Mr. Speaker, of the award of the contract for Bishop's College, Carriacou, a school that has been in a deplorable condition for a long time and I'm happy to hear that within a couple days or weeks, that we should actually see boots on the ground, **(applause)** there should actually be a soil turning ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, also presently under construction is our OEC building, our NaDMA building in Belair, Carriacou. This is something again, Mr. Speaker, we are extremely excited about and cannot wait to see the finished project. All in all, Mr. Speaker, we

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continue to work with all the stakeholders, all Sectors to ensure that we remain vigilant, we remain clear of COVID-19. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time and the opportunity. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you kindly Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, you're not switching on?

Hon. Oliver Joseph: ...indicate that when you want to speak you must rise to be recognised by the Speaker. We have not changed it to say put on the lights. So when you recognise me, I then move to put on the light. So thank you.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: So, Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a statement as the Minister responsible for Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and CARICOM Affairs. Let me state that COVID-19 has been a real challenge for the Business Sector. But it created a number of opportunities which I will highlight briefly, given the limited time I have. Mr. Chair, as of the end of... Mr. Speaker, at the end of 2019 we had 4428 registered business in Grenada that comprises of micro, small and medium-sized Enterprises which represent 90% of all businesses in Grenada. So the COVID-19 had a terrible effect on these businesses but I must commend this Government for the response to small businesses. In the Budget of 2020, five million dollars (\$5 m) was allocated and when COVID came along, the first decision Government took under the Stimulus Package was to allocate an additional five million EC (EC \$5 m). **(Applause)** Given the role created by small business, the number of jobs that are created, the economic activities in all the various sectors... these 4428 businesses, Mr. Speaker, comes from 15 different sectors. And the Small Business Development Fund has become

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necessary over the years because these small businesses cannot access finances from the traditional financial institutions like the Banks and the Credit Unions who are risk averse. They do not want to give a loan of 10,000, 25,000 and these things to small businesses so therefore the Government had to step in and say we will make these finances available to you so that you can carry out business. And that has created a lot of jobs and led to improvements and led to a lot of people getting involved in businesses now that would not have happened because of the lack of access. And you might find that very contradictory because the Banks are very liquid, so how you could be so liquid and yet you are not lending to small businesses and the Government must turn and make these funds available to small businesses.

The conditions for the small businesses were also reviewed. Unsecured loans under the Small Business Development Fund have moved from 7000 to 10,000 unsecured. The maximum amount increased from 25,000 to 40,000 and the interest, most importantly, moved from 6% to 3%. That is the new condition as a result of COVID-19 and in order to stimulate the economic activities and to put these small businesses back on track with the finances, the interest rate has dropped from 6% to 3%. A moratorium has also been granted for 6 months to existing loans from the Small Business Development Fund. That is a Fund, Mr. Speaker, that had tremendous impact and will continue to have impact. The number of application we've seen has increased exponentially from since the start of this Fund, in 2014 to now. You're seeing a lot of interest and a lot of small businesses all over the place.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to look at some Trade Figures and draw the population attention to some very critical things that we can do. I mentioned in the last Sitting of Parliament that our trade deficit is 1.05 billion EC dollars, means that we imported 1.05 billion more than we exported. And when you look at the Food Import Bill, it stands at 350 million dollars, Food Import Bill. Now as a result of COVID, there is a programme for food security under the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with the farmers and the Marketing Board, it provides a very good opportunity now to reduce this Food Import Bill. Every year, the Ministry of Trade embarks on a programme to promote local

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production, it say “eat local and grow what you eat” and every year we are seeing an increase in the Food Import Bill despite the fact that we are trying to encourage people to eat local. What has happened in COVID now, Port closed down, we are forced now to look internally to support our farmers, to eat what we grow, all the healthy fruits and vegetables that we produce. Imagine the white potatoes, Mr. Speaker, that you refer to as irish potato, we’re not getting it from Ireland now, we’re getting it from Holland but the category is not whether it is irish or dutch but it’s the white potatoes; millions of dollars’ worth you know. And the food and Nutrition have said... put out a report saying that sweet potato is far more healthier. You could make sweet potato pie, you could make all kind of thing with sweet potato. Yet, millions of dollars worth of white potato is imported in this country.

Poultry imports, thirty-five million dollars (\$35 m), Mr. Speaker. Well I am happy to report that we have two (2) businesses that will start shortly to operate Processing Plants so that we can have our local production of poultry in Grenada. And that will make a tremendous impact on our import of poultry. Of course, local poultry will be done from the local farmers, so the meat will be much healthier to eat and I’m looking forward for the operation in these two Plants that will start shortly to help cut back on our Poultry Import Bill, because most CARICOM Member States are self-sufficient you know, Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica. They are all self-sufficient in poultry and there is no reason why Grenada cannot in the medium to long term become self-sufficient.

Even if, in the first year, we cut back... we’re able to supply 10% of the market, that is 3.5 million dollars and then we keep going on. And we could keep reducing it and save this foreign exchange that keeps going out for the importation of poultry into this country. And there are a lot of other Sectors because we import a lot of meat. Ten million dollars (\$10 m) worth in other meats like lamb and pork and all these other things that we bring in as meat products. These are opportunities now that we have as a result of COVID to start looking internally and as we start to talk, food security is very important. Over the years we keep talking about food security, food security and we

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must be self-sufficient and very little is achieved. I believe that this opportunity provided now, that COVID has provided us with the opportunity to really take on board all these measures that are necessary in order to make us self-sufficient and really address the issue of food security in our Island.

The Minister for Agriculture spoke about the number of plants that have been distributed at subsidised prices, the backyard gardening and farmers... and all these things would yield to increased production and that is the way that we need to go. Increased production in our food production, we are a farming community. Before we had the large estates producing the main crops, now we have a lot of farmers going into short crops and are doing well. Farming has to be operated as a business and we have to look at really addressing this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on the CARICOM front, Grenada is now the Chair of the Council for Trade and Economic Development and that's by rotation, every 6 months. We have had a very successful COTED meeting held virtually, every Member State was represented and at good numbers. Every Member State had at least five (5) other members with the Minister at the meeting. It was the largest COTED meeting we have had and the most successful one too because a lot of discussions took place at this meeting. The meeting actually ran from 10 a.m to 4 p.m because we wanted to cover the entire agenda. And then we had a CARIFORUM Ministers meeting, which is Caricom plus the Dominican Republic which again virtual means full participation. Every Member State, fifteen (15) Member States in CARIFORUM all represented and participated in this meeting. So we have been able to achieve that, going to these successful meetings, by not having to move physically because it is so time consuming to travel sometimes. To get to Guyana to the COTED Meeting, I have to go in Barbados and spend 5 hours to wait for the connection to go down to Guyana or if I go to Trinidad, I have to spend 4 hours to wait for the connection, so the amount of time you spending in travelling, it takes up a lot of your time, travelling. And then when you get there you have to come back... so with this virtual meeting, I think you will see that trend moving forward. Face to face meeting is something that I think will seldom

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happen because even though because of COVID there is no urgency to travel you know, people are scared. One of my friends say there was a meeting, and he said the meeting will be in November you know. Would you be attending because we want you to make a presentation. I say listen, Grenada is the safest place in the world, why should I leave Grenada and go to a next country, I said I will do it by virtual means. I am not leaving Grenada and go anywhere, **(applause)** we're free of COVID and you want me to travel to a meeting to make a presentation when I could stay right here in Grenada and make the presentation to any part of the world. So that is the reality we have to deal with, the travel Budget as the Minister for Foreign Affairs say, his travel Budget now will go right down because he does not have to travel. So that is some savings that we have which we need with the decline in Government revenue.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that is something that the Minister for Finance will speak about. Government revenue continue to decline and it's obvious, you don't have to... the Port is closed you know. Mr. Speaker, 48% of Government recurrent revenue comes from the Port, 48%; the total recurrent revenue comes from the Port. So if you are on lockdown and VAT is a main source of revenue and you do not have business activities to generate VAT, it's obvious that your revenue will cut... will fall and despite of a drop of 50% in Government revenue, the Government continue to pay salaries on time of twenty-three (23) million dollars every month you know, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Some people start wondering if was not for this Government that was in power whether or not they will get pay because in the absence of a pandemic you couldn't pay. And now that you have a pandemic, what you expect **(applause)** so we have been able to manage. Imagine if Government paying hotel workers, when we presented a budget nobody thought you would have had to take monies to pay hotel workers because we was not prepared for COVID-19 coming. The Government have to pay hotel workers and pay taxi drivers and pay out all this money in a Stimulus Package in the face of declining revenues. Because we raise revenue by taxes, that's where we get the revenue from, Inland Revenue, the taxes at the Inland Revenue and the Taxes of the Port. So if all start dropping and the Government have to continue like that, then

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obviously the Ministry of Finance and the Minister will have to examine how long we could continue with this thing. It is a worrying situation you know, you present a budget at a certain... 1.2 billion and 3 months in the year you know January, February, March you get hit you know. Then the next 9 months you have all those provisions to make with all those additional demands to make with revenues down. So it requires serious planning and serious leadership but I am confident that we have the right team in place at the right time to take this country forward **(applause)** and that **(time bell rings)** is why we will be able to manage. Mr. Speaker, just 2 minutes and I'll wrap up.

In the area of Co-operatives, this is also an opportunity. We are embarking on the formation of Co-operatives, to bring people together so that they can take the opportunities to start providing... getting into light manufacturing, getting into different areas to help create business opportunities and we think that Co-operatives is one way so the Co-operatives Department is actively going around, even during this time, meeting with groups encouraging them to form Co-operative, letting them know the conditions under which the Co-operative can be formed and we are confident that during this period as a means of ensuring economic stability we will see some more Co-operatives being established and that is the non-financial Co-operatives. As you know we have the financial Co-operatives like the Credit Unions and the non-financial Co-operatives. So we are placing emphasis on the non financial Co-operatives. But it is a period that everybody will have to make sacrifice; businesses, Government and the population will recognise that this period calls for sacrifice so that together we will come through this period successfully. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Economic Affairs. Honourable Members it is now 1:00 and I was hoping that we may have lunch at 1 but... How many we have, we have two more Ministers to report. **(Inaudible comments)** Only one? Then we can take the Honourable Minister for Infrastructural Development. And, we'll proceed to lunch afterwards.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give some brief information and report on the Ministry of Implementation, Infrastructure, Energy, Transport. And, Mr. Speaker, like most of the colleagues before me, I wish to start by complimenting the staff as we work through difficult times. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Ministry now, seven o'clock and everyone is at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Community Development, sorry, Public Utilities, etc, Mr. Speaker.

To give a brief history, the Ministry of Implementation Mr. Speaker, has 64 projects to monitor and to implement. Not all the projects are in the Ministry. They are spread throughout the Government Ministries, but the Ministry of Implementation is responsible for this, Mr. Speaker. The 64 project budget with over \$200 million, Mr. Speaker, that's the responsibility of the Ministry as we work with the Whole-of-Government Approach, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start with the Department of Energy, Mr. Speaker, and the 5C's, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center, and the Energy for Sustainable Development. I want to compliment, Mr. Speaker, all of those who saved this project. 5C's gave us five days, Mr. Speaker, after COVID and we lost over three months. Yes, there other reasons, but then they gave us five days without any notice, or we lose the following subprojects, Mr. Speaker, and grant, and these sub-projects, Mr. Speaker, four components, solar electricity, a project geared towards training at True Blue, at the Blue Horizon Hotel, Mr. Speaker, it's a retrofit from where school students can come and learn on the installation and maintenance of solar photovoltaic equipment, Mr. Speaker, \$10,000; at the St. Rose Modern Secondary School, 90,000, those are US dollars, Mr. Speaker. Equipment and design for energy, solar panel again, Mr. Speaker, \$90,000 US dollars, and for the Bureau of Standards, equipment for measuring energy data in buildings, \$9,593.00. But, Mr. Speaker, the biggest component is 400,000 US dollars for the Grenada Development Bank to unlend to citizens, both corporate and natural citizens, so that, they can invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency, Mr. Speaker. And, I want to thank those, not only the Ministry, but you have other persons that are referred to as Grenadians, that those others who see it only to destroy or to

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bring down, but these people... And Mr. Speaker, what is rigged, we know that some of them do not have any political affiliation and may even be against the party in power, when I say against, they don't support, but they came out Mr. Speaker, because Grenada was losing 510,000 US dollars, and they decided that it is their duty as Grenadians to safe guard this, Mr. Speaker. So, I want to compliment these people, as well as, the people in the Ministry, who worked the day and night for five days to save this thing, Mr. Speaker. I want to go on record as complimenting them, Mr. Speaker.

Under Energy, we have the Geothermal Project and we are assisted by the Government of New Zealand and Japan. And, we are at the stage to drill slim hole, Mr. Speaker, in order to effect 15 megawatts of electrical power, renewable power. In Dominica, Mr. Speaker, their project was seven megawatts. And, because they were able to attract, primarily because they have a lot of State backing, in fact, they are a State owned enterprise, they were able to attract financing for this project. And, the price of one kilowatt hour of electricity there, when it's under production would be four US cents, Mr. Speaker. Now Grenada is at the stage where we should be able to follow their footsteps, Mr. Speaker. And imagine 15 megawatts of a peak load of 33 megawatts, and we sell now, between 30 and 40 US cents. But, if we could get 50 megawatts at four US cents, Mr. Speaker, you could imagine what that will do for the price of energy and for the economy in Grenada, Mr. Speaker.

On the Transport, Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment again, the Permanent Secretary, the Police, the Ports Authority, and health on the reopening of the Transportation Sector, Mr. Speaker. We knew we had some hiccup there with certain demands that were made, but I'm happy to say that all parties, the Bus Associations, the bus operators, the police and everyone have been working together now, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward. The Government is continuous in the search for assistance with the bus operators to get them discount at part place and tyre place, Mr. Speaker, and this is progressing quite well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the traffic lights and the traffic light refurbishment because since the GCF Smart City Project, and you note that they indicated that we

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should do a study in order to coordinate the location of your lights. At the roundabout, Mr. Speaker, it was built for small traffic and all over the world you have this. If you go down to Grand Anse, you see if you're coming out from a certain sector from the Airport, you can't enter the traffic. And, what do they do in the large worlds, they place lights at these sections to operate at different times of the day, so that we can have a smooth traffic flow. Besides, it is proposed that all the lights will be interconnected from the Airport to the Town of St. George, so that one will be watching what the other is doing and we'll be able to cycle on and off, not by fixed time but to ensure that we have smooth traffic flow, Mr. Speaker. And, this is where we're under, we have budgeted 2.5 million, next year we will see the studies being completed, and the lights being refurbished in a smart state, Mr. Speaker.

The drastic increase in the number of vehicles, and this is what the studies... we are doing a total study, Mr. Speaker, on the transport system and COVID has shown up the weaknesses in transport system and its structure, not only in Grenada, but throughout the world, developed and non developed countries, Mr. Speaker. And, what we have to look at is the role the businesses play in the traffic being at peak times, instead of having a peak at that time, you want to smooth it out, Mr. Speaker, and obviously, if we move the time of businesses in some areas, then this could happen. So, that study will tell us exactly what to do and the structure of the transport system, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I move to the infrastructure itself and I want to start with the reopening of the Construction Sector and to thank all the Private Sector who participated with us on that subcommittee. And, to date we have started to note and take data on the Private Sector. We never did that before, Mr. Speaker, but they opened first and going towards July, by the end of July, if you predict what we have there 561 job sites, we have to inspect and clear the sites, the Ministry had to do this. And, 4,200 persons have returned to work since the reopening of the Construction Sector. And, this is the Private Sector, Mr. Speake, we're not talking about the Public Sector Investment Programme yet, Mr. Speaker.

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So what are the projects that we have in play, Mr. Speaker? We have the Agriculture Feeder Roads, \$46.8 million, we have signed the contract. And, right now we're speaking with the contractor to ensure that people in the area of work, are engaged. And, we expect to see, Mr. Speaker, in less than 30 days that the construction should start because everything is in place now, Mr. Speaker.

The Grenville Commercial Complex, we're at the tendering stage. That's the building, the Ministry of Finance building where all the Inland Revenue Department will be, and where we will have a big anchor tenant, the Grenada Cooperative Bank. And so, we have six contractors and we're short listing, Mr. Speaker, so that they can send in their tender documents. And we expect an 18-months project after which stage we will not have any of the District Revenue Offices in dilapidated building, and we will have, not only the structure, but equipment, Mr. Speaker, to make sure as we've heard from ICT, the way we're going, Mr. Speaker, you can move in there and stay anywhere and pay your taxes, Inland Revenue, Mr. Speaker.

The St. George Market Square, we have been following and we know the concerns that were raised there. Right now, I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that all the vendors are working together with the contractor of that project, so that we can clean the market and pass the inspection, so that we can revive operations there, Mr. Speaker.

If we look, Mr. Speaker, the cleanliness of that place is returning and the vendors have a significant part to play, and I want to compliment them as well as the contractor doing the work on the vendors market, Mr. Speaker. We intend to move immediately after and to cover the market with one stage covering and we're working with the Parliamentary Representative and the other stakeholders. There was a design where you have a lower floor and an upper floor and that did not go down well. So, we will just simply cover the market and what the police and the security forces want to, when they pass in the night to do their business they should see, day or night you should see clear through without any big stalls or booths blocking the view, so that we can get rid of all the unsavoury activities that's going on at the market at this point in time, Mr. Speaker.

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The CARCIP Project, we have an additional \$3 million that we got from the World Bank and so, we will be completing with the Data Center. All that we're talking about ICT, Mr. Speaker, if we don't have a Data Center, then we're nowhere. All Government data will be stored there and there'll be a backup, a next place that we will not say. That's for the security forces to only to know about. And so, we'll be able to pass all information there, withdraw all our information, the public, the population can come in there, I mean, electronically, and get all the information that they wish. Mr. Speaker, this is part of the CARCIP Project, and it will be going close to the Emergency Center, Mr. Speaker, at Morne Jaloux.

There are many small parts that the Ministry is also working on, but, I want to speak, Mr. Speaker, about the St. Patrick's roads. The St. Patrick's road, part one, is near in completion, that's a 10 million US dollars project. And, it's more to the east of St. Patrick. We're now negotiating with the OPEC Fund for International Development to do the next portion, Mr. Speaker. We have already applied for the funds. And, you'll see a lot of work starting there, Mr. Speaker, very soon, because I've spoken to the Funder and they say, they're ready and willing to move forward with the next motion because they were all tendered already, Mr. Speaker. It's only because the funds allocated were insufficient. So, there is no tendering process anymore, they either decide to give us the funds to continue the project, which they indicated they will. So, by the end of the year into the beginning of next year, we'll see that second phase, Mr. Speaker, continuing. **(Applause)** And, I want to thank the Representative for his patience. Yes. We know that you're quite blunt and frank with us, obviously you're representing your people. And so, I want to commend you there, and as you pushed, so I pushed, so the results will be beneficial for both of us. Thank you again, Mr. Representative.

The Western Main Road Project Corridor, Mr. Speaker, \$16 million. And, that's to do with the Molinere slip, \$28 million given by Britain, 12 million to NAWASA to do the sewer in the St. George's area, we had to do to refurbish it and to bring it up the standard with plant processing plant but, 16 million for the Western Main Road. At that

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point, we were talking, Mr. Speaker from Sauteurs to St. George, \$16 million will end in Molinere, and the State will have to put another \$12 million, Mr. Speaker, to do this. The consultants... we're waiting on no objection, just from CDB for them to get onto the job, but from what we see, Mr. Speaker, it will be a significant expenditure, Mr. Speaker.

The RDVRP, the Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project under the Ministry of Finance, it's a infrastructural project, \$30 million to be spent on buildings. And so, we have divided it into lots and there again, we want to use a lot of the local contractors in the local area, Mr. Speaker, to do works on these school, \$13 million thereabout for it.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the Asphalt Plant, now the Asphalt Plant was put up months ago. COVID overtook it so the people to commission the Plant could not come into Grenada. So, we proposed to them, Mr. Speaker, and we accepted because of the same CARCIP and other projects, going way back, Mr. Speaker, to 2000, to the liberalisation of the telecommunication company, now, we are commissioning the plant by virtual means because we have the bandwidth now, so that, we can stay here with a camera and show the technicians, the manufacturers exactly what we're doing, and they can give guidance. And so, we have been doing this for over one week now, we have a further week. And, after two weeks we will be commissioning, Mr. Speaker, the Plant, but by virtual means. **(Applause)** We have to commission the Plant, the Data Center again, but we're asking the people to do it by virtual means, otherwise, Mr. Speaker, when we open the market... and where are they coming from? Did he call it the redder zone? They're coming from Florida, Mr. Speaker. So, they will not take a flight to come into Grenada. They may charter a plane, but they would not go into 14 days quarantine. They made it abundantly clear. That means they will never get here until we open that border completely. When is that, Mr. Speaker? But then that project is finishing and the World Bank says they will not allow us to go pass December 31 because they have already given us the extension for COVID. So, I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that I can persuade them as well to do this. Otherwise, we could be in serious trouble, Mr. Speaker, all the other expenses would fall on the State, Mr. Speaker.

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So, here, Mr. Speaker, just to go to the Public Utilities, to the GCF \$125 million water project, it's progressing quite well. We're there with the German GIZ, as the implementing agency, and a lot of storage will be put in place and many areas that suffered during this dry season, and many dry seasons before will find relief, Mr. Speaker, when this project is commissioned, maybe in two to three years thereafter.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is what I have to report. I hope, and you and I have spoken on many occasions on the Ministerial Statement, and I heard you giving a signal today. So, I hope that I have achieved it within the ten minutes and put out the information that is necessary.

And, I want to close again by thanking everyone in the Ministry, all the public servants who participated, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are at this stage. And, we know that the area for the revival of the economy must come from construction, must come from construction. That is why we are pushing institutions, Mr. Speaker, and today, we are not too happy with one of our own institution because of the timeframe that they take to do things. These rule based organisation that says between the time that the consultant gets the request for proposal, there must be a minimum time. So, if it's 30 days, even though he finishes in 10 days, Mr. Speaker, it's 30 days. And, as you're well aware, Mr. Speaker, you have great knowledge from that Ministry. And, that is what, if we were able to do things ourselves, Mr. Speaker, a lot of projects would be on stream already. But, everyday we're calling, at times it has to reach to the Prime Minister to call the Presidents of institutions to tell them that we are unhappy with the delay, but we're doing all that we can, Mr. Speaker, so that construction... but when we hit the ground, Mr. Speaker, we will have a lot of projects on stream, and I know that the economy would benefit. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Finance.

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker. I know it's a difficult time for all of us and it's redder than that I'm getting the opportunity to speak on Ministerial Statement, after one o'clock, and I turned to a couple of your staff, our legal staff, and they all say they're hungry like me. And, I'm not usually a breakfast man, just a couple of bit of fruits, so he could imagine it's difficult for me, but in these times COVID time, we have to adjust accordingly, like everybody else, so. So, I just want to thank you for and the staff in general and my colleagues for being able to withstand this particular lengthy period we have gone through.

I want to compliment obviously the presentation of all the Members because we, having not been able to meet very often, it is clear that there are lots of information and sometimes people may not even understand, Mr. Speaker, the extent of work being done in this difficult period, by the Government as a whole, and by public servants and by all those. And, what you hear sometimes, is only when something doesn't appear to go right as people perceive and everybody want to come down and they forget the amount of work that is being done and the sacrifices that are being made by so many people. And, some people are just on the sidelines, literally doing nothing and sometimes, not even making their own contribution in this very difficult time, but their voices are very loud and quite rightly, they have the responsibility to do so. But, we all must in this period, come to terms that this is not normal times.

None of us are without fault in this process and that tolerance and patience are extremely important in this whole process. Even meeting today and the fact that there was this perception of problems at the Parliament and how the Speaker ruled that nobody can come into Parliament and he and the Clerk took some dictatorial decision and Keith Mitchell is behind it, you know everything is Keith Mitchell. I wasn't even aware, so I had to find out what is it they're saying. So the Speaker, has already explained. I know the Clerk has never been a dictatorial man and the Speaker accordingly so.

Mr. Speaker, I must speak on the whole issue of this COVID-19 period, and to address specifically, some key issues. I wanted to also be clear, Mr. Speaker, that you

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will notice that we have already announced the withdrawal of the COVID-19 Act, that we were proposing to take here to the Parliament and therefore I would be addressing some issues and would refer to some aspects of the COVID-19 period. So, that's the main area that I'll be touching on this morning. I may not have enough time to deal with any aspects of the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's office where so much is taking place with enormous sacrifice of so many public servants, you know. While some may not have been that occupied, others have been doing tremendous amount of work.

Mr. Speaker, it must be known, in March when COVID-19 struck, we in Grenada understood the seriousness of this COVID-19. And, I remember, Mr. Speaker, going to Guyana in late March and then I got to Guyana with my colleagues, five Prime Ministers, and I will never forget this, my colleagues were out there shaking hands and hugging. I told Prime Minister, Motley and all of those guys, are you aware of what is happening? I'm not shaking nobody hand and I don't want any hug. People started to laugh and I remember the President of Guyana came up to hug me, I say President, not today, another time. By the time we were leaving Guyana, because we were attempting to deal with the problems of, five of us, Prime Minister Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent, Barbados, myself and Prime Minister of Dominica, by the time we were leaving, everybody was just bouncing each other and saying, Keith say, Keith say, we mustn't hug. Afterward, I think we all became, it became clear to us that this thing is not a joke, that it is extremely serious, and that we moved to lockdown our country, Mr. Speaker, as you remember. And, of course, lots of initiatives were taken by this Government and the region as a whole, recognising the problem as we saw. And, in fact, we then moved to appoint a Cabinet subcommittee led by the Minister for Health, we call it Cabinet COVID subcommittee, which met literally every day without exception, even on Saturdays and Sundays, and reported to me, so that Members of the Government team and then on Monday when we meet with Cabinet Members would be alerted of some of the decisions that were made. There were other Cabinet Members on the team also with some other public servants and other members that that were in fact, taken in to

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help with the... so for example, the CMO and other persons at the Ministry of Health. So that work continues, Mr. Speaker, and I must say that's what provided the basis for what is perceived as the Minister for Tourism pointed out today, the success that we've had so far in protecting our people.

And, I think this is important, but I want to also be clear, Mr. Speaker. I get the impression that sometimes we're behaving as if this have ended and we don't have to worry again. We're free now. That's the mindset I'm noticing. When New York was in serious trouble and people had to bring in all kind refrigerated trucks for bodies, people were dying in New York, and the family did not know they were buried because that was the seriousness of the situation. Miami thought and the elements in Miami were saying we are not New York. Today, Miami is the one under problems. In other words, when they thought they were free, they see now the seriousness. We're not free, Mr. Speaker. I want it to be understood, and even persons who have issues with the COVID Bill, I would hope that while we talk about this, and quite rightly so, we should talk also about the fear and the problems that may emerge if we do not stay the course. I'm worried because I got the impression that once... and you know there are some persons who may believe that we are being too harsh and dictatorial, I'm hearing these comments about dictatorship. Dictatorship in trying to protect people's lives? Is that what we're talking about?

Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful. We deal with issues. Yes, if there is an error, let's deal with it and express ourselves. But, don't forget the main thing, protection of the lives of the people of our country. As I tell my colleagues, if you worry too much, and you should be concerned about any problems outside there, the talk and the attempt to score something, in some cases, to put you on the defensive, if we have to correct certain things we do, but do not forget that our duty first and foremost is to protect the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, if we don't and we fall prey to some little political licks here and there and we drop our guard and with the border opening and people start being infected and they die on our watch for the five or six ICU beds we have there that

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cannot cope with more than that, you will not hear the last of it. The same persons who might be down on us today for attempting to protect this country would be the ones, would be the loudest one, you kill my brother, you kill my sister, you kill my cousin. And, that one will be lasting, that wouldn't be a temporary licks you know, that will be permanent, because people will not forgive us; they will not forgive us. Our number one priority is to protect the lives of the people of this country. **(Applause)** And, we must never forget this. And, I make a call to my brothers and sisters out there who feel aggrieved by what they perceive as the wrongs of the Bill, most Regulations are already in place. That is your right and we have no problem with that and I am not going to be upset with any such persons because freedom of expression and the will to criticise and to express views correctly or incorrectly is the right of strong democracy and this country is a very strong democracy. **(Applause)** And we must not be afraid to accept a demonstration here and there... while we are not encouraging it but if it happens that is part of the democratic process. We won't be seeing people been holding the streets and put away into jails and some of the things we see coming from abroad; we won't see that here, people are right to express themselves, it's their right. While in some cases some might have ulterior motives but that's another issue but their right, Mr. Speaker. So I am talking about the COVID sub-committee and the work they have done that's brought us here, the work that they did. I want to give a lot of credit to the team, the men and women who stood the test of times. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, we appointed immediately a COVID subcommittee of public servants, Mr. Speaker, they were all public servants. And we asked them to consult with Private Sector persons in the process of going forward to look at the stimulus package when initially we thought was the Tourism Sector and restaurants and bars, soon afterwards we found out joke we making. There were more problems outside there than we envisaged. With 50% revenue loss, the pressure on Government was becoming enormous and agreeing to pay all public servants in most cases who were home. In some cases, public servants who had travelling allowance, all sets of special allowance, they were not travelling but they were paid their travelling allowances during

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those times. So these public servants, about 15 of them, went to the Ministry of Finance everyday. While some of us were home with our families, they were out there night and day working going through these lists to provide support (**applause**) for the people of this country. And I don't hear enough people talking about them; I don't hear them getting the credit. You don't have to give the Government Ministers the credit but you could give these workers and do not make it harder for them to go and have to recheck list and recheck NIS and recheck this. We should have a conscience but they were working and continuing to work while I'm talking right now, a pile of papers with names for the next payment have gone to them and they have to go to every one. We must not forget them; we must not forget them. I must keep repeating to thank them for their service.

And that's why I wanted to speak today, Mr. Speaker, on this important matter because sometimes we lose bearings. We lose bearings and we talk about one thing and we forget sometimes the most important thing. Because I make the point, you have Carnival Bills coming up and you see if we don't, if we're not careful and we concentrate on what is perceived to be the perceived ills of a Bill which is not accurate but misinformation makes it sound so. Next thing you have people who feel, we want to be free, we should have Carnival, we should be able to have jab jab all over the place, go on the beach and fete and lime and forget the whole thing. We are free man, why are you doing this to us, we don't have that here. I have friends of mine who tell me, doc what you worrying about, let us drink a strong rum, get rid of this thing man, we don't need this thing, you too hard on us. So I'm becoming a dictator because I'm trying and the Government is trying to see what it could do to protect people.

But misinformation can send the wrong message, we're seeing misinformation in the great United States what it is causing. We want that here? So all of us in leadership, whether we are in Parliament, whether we are in business, whether in sports, whether it's the Union Leader, whether we are lawyers, we have a responsibility to protect and I want to hear the lawyers also talk about protection of the people of this country. Our legal brothers and sisters, some of them with their well intention, they

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must not just talk about it, talk about the protection of the people also. What can I do, as John F Kennedy said, **“not just ask what my country can do for you, what can I do for my country?”** That’s the message we need from every single Grenadian because we are getting a lot of credit for what we have done to protect this country. People will want to come here because of that perceived safety as the Member for St. David said, me ain’t going nowhere. I want the meeting here or I’m going virtual. I say the same thing you know, Mr. Speaker, I am not even interested in leaving Grenada to tell you the honest truth. I’m not an excited traveller in this period, in the latter part of my service but I become worst now. I know the Minister for Foreign Affairs may have a problem because he is an easy traveller. I’m not very good at that so COVID has kept him here, he must become far more popular as a representative now because he is not travelling much, he is able to be in all parts of the country because of his presence. COVID-19 has presented opportunities for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I want it also to be undertood, the Regional Meetings everyday, whether it is Regional Meeting of Heads, CARICOM, whether it’s further, the OECS, whether it’s the European Union, whether it’s the International Organisation, World Bank, IMF, EU, everyday, Mr. Speaker, I am being asked to attend, to be part of a virtual meeting for hours. Sometimes I duck out and disappear, sometimes when they look for me they can’t see me, because I have other things to do. I can’t spend 5-6 hours... and you’re trying to do all this while you’re trying to manage a country, make sure you have enough money in the Ministry of Finance and you hear nobody giving credit about this, then you hear you are a dictator. Mr. Speaker, so we have all those things and I listened to all the Members of the team and they have spoken about so many things that are being done in this difficult period. I want to continue to give credit to all of them and to also say, Mr. Speaker, this is difficult time for finances. I have listened to my colleagues in the regional level and the OECS and CARICOM, we should feel very fortunate here. **(Applause)**

Some countries can’t pay salaries, our public servants getting salaries every month; some countries can’t pay. Some countries are giving cash, half cash, half bonds

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to public servants. It is happening in the region right now, whatever stimulus activity they are giving is nothing compared to what we are giving here. Vendors getting, who used to earn a livelihood and they need it, we have had to give them something, although they were not part of the original plan but when the information came we had to do something. The busmen, hundreds of busmen getting stimulus, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds getting, all levels of persons, next thing we get request from Union about the LIAT workers. Now we are now working on packages for them, the ASG workers, the airline at the Airport that service airlines, they have not received anything for months. We have now given them, I believe they should have received it by now or very soon and more and more and more. We thought three (3) months would be enough for hotel workers, we have to extend it for another three (3) months. The Minister for Tourism has just mentioned the fact that she doesn't know what's going to happen after the next three (3) months, because there is no way the hotel facilities will be up and running to reemploy these staff again. It's just no way they will, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, therefore the Government with all its intension, we had an emergency of this country installed when we closed down the country because we had to do something drastic and therefore we presented Regulations in accordance with our Constitutional provisions.

The Attorney General and the staff of the Ministry of Legal Affairs working night and day, they worked with us. Every week or every two weeks they have to do new Regulations, nobody talks about that but next thing you hear they're getting criticised now for having done something wrong. So the tendencies, were, look every week you have to do it, every week, every week, so do it in one Act, that was the plan. The same regulation... we had an emergency declared in this country under Ivan and all the powers, you hear people talking about the police now could go in and walk in and just do what they want with people. In this country? Grenadians have some Carib blood in them, you know, we all know this. They're best behaved but when you hear they turn bad, they could be something else. Everyone, every Leader knows this and every person in Grenada knows this... the police could just go into people's place and do what

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they want? That's all the Bills under the Emergency Powers that give restrictions for a particular period of time. And if people said that what was existing years ago shouldn't be there, there was several Attorney Generals in this country who could have said, listen let's change it. I don't know if that makes sense but, let's change it, but it was there. Nothing is new, so alright there were lots of comments. The Government accepts the responsibility that it did not do enough homework, that was an acceptance and I always say, it's only little boys and little girls who makes mistakes and try to be right when you are wrong. Big men admit weaknesses when it appears to be so.

The Government has accepted that, we withdraw the Bill and keep the same Regulations that we have in place, which give the same powers to the Police, that has not changed. So we don't even have to come back if we don't want to, but after consultation that will be determined. But we have demonstration still, so I said no problem with demonstrations, that's peoples' rights. But you know something, what becomes clear is this, if the opposition to this Bill was purely about the Bill and the Bill is withdrawn then why are you demonstrating? I mean seriously, Mr. Speaker, why are some of my friends, my friends, these are my friends. Some wouldn't vote for me but they're still my friends and that's one thing we must understand in this country. You don't have to vote for somebody to be a friend of the person. Everybody has a right, everybody can't support one political organisation. But if the Bill has been withdrawn for consultation, then why are you demonstrating? So you could only... I'm only drawing my own conclusion and I suppose everybody else can draw their own. It would mean that there must be ulterior motives, it could be onr, maybe political; it could be some of us maybe want to satisfy our ego and like to be in the limelight for one reason or the other and all that is ok. There is nothing wrong with that but at least the people will know what people are doing. So the Government has cleared the deck, consultation is to be the order of the day.

The Attorney General is out explaining the Bill, some people are saying he should not go out and explain the Bill, but why he mustn't do it? That is his fundamental responsibility. Now if it is perceived that people find he come off arrogantly then, ok,

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one could talk about this and everybody has a personality. But you cannot fault the person for going out and explain, that's a responsibility. They fail to do that, then it means something is wrong with the objection in the first place, and the explanation has to continue. Because the fundamental problem, Mr. Speaker, the initiative is about protecting the people of this land and I think that to me, Mr. Speaker, is where we should concentrate heavily. So the public awareness and the public responses, people will get a chance to know more, they will even know... In fact, the present problems and the opposition sounding, in some ways has helped, Mr. Speaker. You might think it's negative. In some ways, it has helped because it has opened people's eyes into some of the fundamental things that are in past Bills and laws that we were aware. So in effect, it may not have been all that negative. So out of something, some good comes out of it.

And I just want to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that for those who... and I'm speaking to a particular group of people now because I have already said everybody has a right to their own views and... but I noticed something happening, there is a narrative that is being planned, but it was tried before. This Prime Minister over the years has been accused of being a dictator by certain sections of our society but that is their right, but the people have rejected that description over and over and over. That group of persons cannot go to tell the people that the NNP Government is not a working Government, they cannot tell the people that the NNP Government does not care about people because they are seeing it... the people feeling it on the ground, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** They cannot tell the people that we hate people because they don't see hatred from us. In the worst of times under criticism, they see smiling faces from the Members of this House. The more they criticise me is the more smiles I give them and the more pray I pray for them, Mr. Speaker. I pray for them because I see some of them looking older everyday, their face getting harder and I'm worried about their physical safety, I'm worried for them. Because why are you carrying hate against somebody, if you don't like their policies, that's your right, but why you hating to the point that you can't sleep. I had another sleepless night, well who caused you not to

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sleep, who tell you to hate till you can't sleep. I'm snoring... before I put my head on the bed I'm snoring. Because I ain't hate nobody, I ain't have no problem with nobody. I may not like somebody policies, I may not like certain aspects but I do not and I cannot bring myself to hate people. We will have our battles in different ways on issues but hate... my mother always said that and I watched her operate. I watched my grandmother operate, they have never been, and I always tell people when I got involved in politics, the first time I run, people will tell me, but I don't know you well, but I know your mother, so half of the votes I get, was my mother. So while you live by those basic fundamental principles of lack of hate, then you don't have a problem. The NNP Government, Mr. Speaker, got 15 seats twice, **(time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to tell you, Mr. Speaker, because of the seriousness of this because that I needed some extra time... because of the importance. But this is serious business. In fact, one of the main reasons we are here today, that's the main reason with this COVID period that we are dealing with, it's a serious matter and I, Mr. Speaker, no one could say that this Government has acted as it has so much power that it could do as it wants. If that was so the people would never give us another 15 seats mandate or give us the kind of majority support they have given us. And this Government would never be accused seriously so and people believe it, that we have become dictatorial, that's the narrative. If you could build a narrative and you start of with a piece of propaganda by the Minister for Health in 2013 you know, signed something asking for some equipment to... what it says again... **(inaudible comments)** to spy on people, **(chuckles)** spying on people. Mr. Speaker, you know one thing I know about life, whatever you use against somebody when you're not there, they will use it on you. So if you bring something here now unless you intend to stay away forever... and I always remember... I always tell people this over and over, every day I spend in this job is one more day preparing when I leave. I remember telling the Police Force and the Members of the Police Force remember this when we were looking at the possibility of choosing... recommending a new Acting Commissioner, I told the whole Force, I would never want to recommend after the process is done, someone that would just be an NNP

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sympathiser, a friend of Keith Mitchell as the Police Force Head because when I'm out there as an ordinary member of the society which I have to be sooner than later, that same person will be used by the next person against me or members of this Government. So the person I want is the person whose character and standard show some independence and principle of judgement as the leader of our Police Force in an independent democratic society. That is the person, and I am proud to say that we have such a person as Acting Commissioner of Police, and I am proud to know that when I am out, I hope and pray that he will still be there because I know everybody in this country will be treated fairly. And the Force is building itself, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we never... I see some persons in opposition demonstrating but the same persons were there when their party closed down the Parliament for six (6) months. All the dictator this Government... this person has been and this Government has been... some people want them to believe, we have never closed down Parliament to avoid the people speaking, we have never done it and will never do it under my watch.

Mr. Speaker, the most demonstration we have had in this country against a Government has been under the NNP Government during its period of service, the most demonstration. Sometimes all Trade Unions were out, no trade Union Member was ever arrested and put in jail for demonstration, who did it? It was the same party that members are now demonstrating claiming liberty and freedom and somebody else being dictators in this country. Mr. Speaker, you know it best, when the Teachers Union in the late 1990's, in which you were part of, were demonstrating, they barbed wired you and other members of the leadership of the Teachers Union, the same Government was in power. They must go and check their history, if you just joined that party, check the history of that party before you speak, because you may find somebody may throw it in your face. But this party has never arrested a Union Leader and put them in jail. This party in power today or in Office... I like to use the word Office, has never barbed wired the leadership of a Trade Union Organisation. Despite the fact that we have had stronger opposition in the streets against it in Government, never done it and it will never happen.

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Mr. Speaker, therefore I urge our friends, let's work together, they're right, the Government erred in it's not sufficient consultation, we admit this and we plan... the Minister for Legal Affairs said, we will improve on that aspect, totally right. Our error, we accept it, no bad intention, we will not want to interfere with anybody's fundamental rights. But let's build our country, let us protect each other. All of our families must be protected in this difficult period with a virus even the scientist still don't know what is happening. For three (3) people to leave and go to Trinidad, come from Grenada and test positive and three days later two negative tests, it tells you, that we still don't understand how this virus operate. So most likely it's some dead cells that were still there and they may have got it long before they came to Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, let's work together, all our people, Members of Opposition, Members of Government, Members of Trade Union, Members and everybody, let's work together because if that virus come here, it ain't picking out NNP you know and NDC or Adventist and Catholic and so on; everybody, toot moon. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your patience and hearing me this morning. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, we will now adjourn for lunch. I am told that the lunch is packaged so that you will not have to go too close by... where we have it upstairs? So we go to the lunch room and there we will have lunch. We adjourn for lunch and be back here at 2:45. Sorry I cannot give you more time.

House adjourns for lunch at 2:00 p.m.

House resumes at 2:45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes.

Clerk Assistant: Item No. 13 - Personal Explanations.

Item No. 14 - Motions.

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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 debate on the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor-General on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament on Friday, 4th October, 2019, was further deferred to a date to be fixed;

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech as it was delivered 4th October, 2019, went straight into the Budget, then, Mr. Speaker, it was overtaken by COVID. We had limited time in this House, Mr. Speaker, and this is only the second of the sessions that we've had for the year. So, in that context, Mr. Speaker, we're asking for the debate on the Gracious Address to be deferred to a further date. It's not something that should be taken lightly, the debate on the Throne Speech. So, it will give us time, Mr. Speaker, so that we treat it with respect that it deserves. I beg that it so be deferred, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate on the Gracious Address further deferred.

Clerk Assistant: Item No. 15 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence to reorder the Bills, Mr. Speaker, and so as to bring forward the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, Mr. Speaker, as number one, and we will reverse back to the order.

Mr. Speaker: Consumer Protection...

Hon. Gregory Bowen: ...(Amendment), Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, so we have reorganised the order of the Bills. We will take Consumer Protection.

Ag. Clerk: An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act (No. 2) of 2018, shortly entitled, Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading the Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business, sorry, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I stand to oppose the second reading or to the Standing Order be suspended so that the Bill be taken through all its stages. Mr. Speaker, I simply did that, because I do believe that as we plot the course forward for

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democracy, over the last few years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen occasions when seldom that the Bills were only taken, like read through different stages at different times. Now, I could understand in terms of the Carnival Suspension Bill that is here, that is an emergency, in terms of the time limit. But, when I studied democracies in our Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker, it is very seldom that a Bill would be taken through all its stages at one Sitting. And, what I would urge today, Mr. Speaker, is that we revert back to good democratic practices in Parliament, where we have time to study and debate the Bills, and not just do so in one Sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, this is an amendment to the substantive Bill, it's not a... the Consumer Protection Bill is already passed. And, this Act is seeking to correct some typographical errors, because the Units has been established from the 1st of July to enforce the Bill. But, there are some typographical errors in it, and some administrative matters, that's this amendment to the substantive Bill. If it was a substantive Bill for the first time...

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David you had made a motion

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: And, I was about to put the Motion to the House.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Okay.

Mr. Speaker: So, let me put the Motion to the House and the House will determine.

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Question proposed.

Question put and agreed.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the first time I'm presenting a Bill with a Leader of the Opposition and so I will stand guided by you, Mr. Speaker. So, thank you for the guidance. I noticed when you said anybody to the contrary, the Opposition Leader did not vote. So that means he agreed that it's only amendments, so, we could go through with the amendments.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, the consumer, that is something that was lacking in our legislation in terms of our governance, that we did not have a Consumer Protection Bill and members of the public made continuous call for the Government to introduce this Bill because what happened in the past under the Supplies Control Act and Sale of Goods Act, you have to use persuasion when you go to the business, it's moral suasion you have to use to get them to comply. Now you have an Act enforced, Act No. 2 of 2018, and the Unit that was under the Ministry of Finance, the Consumer Affairs Unit is now, under the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Co-operatives, that's where it's located from the first of July. And, it is this office now under the Ministry of Trade, Consumer Affairs Office that will deal with all these matters as it relates to implementing the measures in this Bill.

So, Clause 2 seeks to amend section 8 (1). Section 8 (1) provides that the Minister shall appoint a Director of Consumer Affairs, however, this amendment is saying that the Director should be Public Officer. Therefore, it takes away the power of the Minister to appoint a Director of Consumer Affairs, and it here says that a Public Officer should be appointed as the Director of Consumer Affairs. That's the first amendment to this Bill.

Clause 3 seeks to amend section 10 to remove the paragraph that the Consumer Advisory Body shall review work-plan. We think that it is the Consumer Affairs Division that should do that and not the Advisory Body and, this Clause seeks to address that

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issue. Clause 4, seeks to amend section 13 to provide clarity on the procedural connection between investigation and the referral of matters to the Tribunal. So, there will be, the Office you could make complaints to, and then there will be a Tribunal. If you are not satisfied, you can appeal to a Tribunal.

Clause 5 seeks to correct typographical error in the numbering. If you look at the Bill, you'll see section 31, 30/31 and when you come to 32, you will see 11 there. So, you have to remove the 11, numbering of section 31 if you look at the Bill, you will see 11 there, so this 11 is really supposed to be 31 because you have 30, then you have 11 and you have 32, that's the correction there. Yes.

Clause 6 seeks to amend 33 (1) to remove the requirement of payment fee for lodging of a complaint. If you look at the original Act, you would see there is a fee for the complaint, now we're saying there'll be no fee. You want to make a complaint against a business for the provision of services or goods, you'll only pay the fee if you want to go to the Tribunal, but not for a complaint. So, that is being removed by this section of paying fees for complaint.

Clause 7 seeks to amend section 34 (5) (c) to correct the typographical error. Section 34 (5) (c) reads as follows: **"Upon receipt of a complaint, the Office shall proceed to investigate the complaint unless the Office is satisfied that the complaint was filed in accordance with section 38 (4)..."** However, section 34 does not exist. If you read the principal Act, it will say under section 38 (4), but there's no section 38 (4). So, the correction there it should be section 36 (4) instead of section 38 (4). That's the correction.

Clause 8 seeks to amend section 35 (2) of the principal Act to correct a typographical error. Section 35 (2) reads as follows: **"If the opposite party fails to make a written response in accordance with section 34 (9), the Office shall complete the investigation based on the complaint and the evidence."** However, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Act there is no 34 (9). Clause 34 only have 8 sections, not 9. But, the Bill is referring to 34 (9). There is no 34 (9) in section 34. So, section 34 (9) does not exist. Really there is an error there and it should be 34 (8), that's the

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correction we're making there; instead of saying 34 (9), which does not exist, because there is no 34 (9) in the Bill, it should be 34 (8), that's the appropriate correction there. That's why this Clause seeks to correct this.

Clause 9 seeks to amend section 54 to correct reference to respondent in subsection 3 (a) with reference to the defendant. So that is the correction that Clause 9 is seeking to make to section 54. Clause 10 seeks to amend Schedule I to correct reference to the "Tribunal" in section (3) with reference to the "Advisory Body". So, Clause 10, the reference in Schedule 1 would be to the Advisory Body.

Clause 11 seeks to amend Schedule II to correct reference to "subsection (14)" in paragraph 5 (d) with reference to "paragraph 15" since paragraph 15 addresses the requirement to disclose a conflict of interest and would justify operation of paragraph 5.

So, as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, there is really some typographical errors in these amendments, it's no substantive change. But, we had to make these changes in order to bring everything in conformity with the Act that was passed, Act 2 of 2018 and as indicated, the Consumer Affairs Office is now under the Ministry of Trade from the 1st of July. Officers, they are appointed, the public now have a place that they can lodge complaint too against suppliers of goods and services. And, it's not only goods; sometimes when you hear consumer complaints it is dominated by defective items. So, you bought a TV and it is not working and you return it and then the wholesaler or the retailer, the business person say, well, we have no agreement, there is no guarantee, or there was no warranty, so we can't take it back and, you cannot do anything. Now, the law provides the Unit, the officers there, the legal basis for taking action. And, you're hearing that complaint all over, that certain things happen and you return the item and it's not taken back on the basis that there is no warranty.

This Bill is something that was long overdue in Grenada. We know in the more developed countries we hear about all sorts of insurance against goods and where you could complain. Now formally, you have this in place and it is designed as the name is, to protect the consumers, and not only goods, it's services too. So, if you are not satisfied with the services provided by the Telecommunications Company, the Electricity

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Company and other companies, this Act deals with goods and services, and that is something people been asking for a long time. We had a lot of complaints from telecommunication providers and other providers, as providing their service. Under this Bill, it gives the consumer officers legal authority. It clearly outlined what can be done. And, when they lodged their complaint to the Consumer Affairs Office, if they are not satisfied, they can go to a tribunal that is set up under the Act to listen to their complaints. So, consumers have this opportunity now as you operate to take forward their complaints that they have against any business operator providing goods or services. And therefore, these amendments as I said were mainly some typographical errors that came up and one that gave the Minister the power to appoint the Director of Consumer Affairs and it is felt that the public officer should hold that position. These are the main changes to the Act, but we had a lot of debate on it.

I remember when it was passed, the substantive Act, No. 2 of 2018 and got some very positive feedback from consumers. And, in fact, you know during the COVID time, there was accusation of price gouging and people were calling and say, where we could complain, where we could complain? Because they remember we passed this Bill, you know, but the thing is they can't remember us putting anything in place, so that people could complain. And, that was good, genuine concerns that they were raising. Therefore, we moved swiftly to have it published, and to set up the Unit and everything is now in place and I want the public to know that they can make full use of the Consumer Affairs Office under the Ministry of Trade to lodge their complaint. So, these are the amendments, Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. John.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the amendments to this very important Bill. And, it's one of the other landmark pieces of legislation that this Government has introduced for the wellbeing of the public, and especially for people that have no voices or no connections in high places.

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So, the amendment to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is very important because in our society, for it to function properly, because we have business transactions going on, you have to have the rules of engagement and those rules have to be fairly administered because in the commercial world, we use money as the source of our transactions. And, if you have money, you could get more nice things, more goods and services. So, it's a commodity that everybody wants. And, in trying to acquire more of that commodity, you have some people that are honest and then you have some that are very unscrupulous. So, that's what this Bill tends to do, to make regulations so that the people, you would have recourse.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see, you know, sometimes you could be operating within the legality or the legal framework, but what you're doing is not fair and the people could be aggrieved by it. You know, it caused them pain or loss in revenue. For example, we see that before, post Ivan, Banks used to close at four, right now it's down at two. So, you have a small business, you have to give somebody a whole half day off to just go and cash a cheque. And, sometimes when you go with the cheque to the Bank, they have the means of knowing the balance, in all other branches because right now we have just maybe two banks here, or three, it's reduced to that amount, but they want to keep your cheque for a few days, they say for it to clear, clear where? But, they hang on to it.

We look, Mr. Speaker, at... okay another area is, it's like funerals, small businesses are suffering because people have to get a whole day off to go to a funeral. It used to be four, right now it's down to 11, and then they don't come back to work. So, although they're operating, maybe within the framework, they're causing financial pain to small businesses. You have, my colleague talked about ICT and the credit card. We use the credit card, they charge you a fee to use it, an annual fee, they're still taking 3% from the business, that they will be paying the money to. So, they're taking on both sides, from the consumer that use it and from the business place. And, for instance, I'll give you an example, even operating here, you have Republic, would give you a credit card at the branch in Grenada, then they would send the statement from Trinidad by the

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Post Office. It would get here, three, four days after the due date. Right. Now, when you go and pay, they're charging you late fees through no fault of your own and the consumer have no, you know, no place, no recourse to deal with these unfair things. Sometimes even something as simple as busses, sometimes you know, our public transportation close down early. Some people working as a security guard or a maid, so to get home, the busses charging you extra than what the fee is and you want to go, so you have no recourse. And, also the manufacturer, Mr. Speaker, make the bus to accommodate fifteen people. You see they're putting a little box in the middle where you're supposed to walk, just to make it up to 18, no emergency escape. So, if you have an accident or fire, whatever, you're trapped in there. So, and you know these are things that I'm hoping that even though it might be legal, the Tribunal created by this Legislation could say, well, this is not fair and that's not supposed to happen.

Sometimes, you go in the market, you buy a pineapple, but before you reach home, you cut it, and it's rotten on the inside and they don't want to take it back. And, I'm sure people have this experience. So, it's not only at the big corporation, even at the local vendor level you still have these things happening, which is unfair to our consumer.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes, and it has happened to me before, I've gone to a lawyer, he take a retainer from me, and the person that I bring, you know that I went to, he also take a retainer from the other person, you're representing both of us and then you can't get a lawyer to represent you in both. You know, and it's happening and sometimes they have no criteria for the retainer, they look at you and they make a price.

But if... you know, Mr. Speaker, these things is just, it's just not fair. I mean, we need to have some regulation or the Tribunal should look at these things. And, even sometimes you go to some businesses, and you have poor people come down, you take bus and you're in a line to get your service and they would not put on another consumer, CSR, which is a Customer Service Representative. They just, they don't want to pay additional persons, but you have poor people coming in there in the long

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line and that happens especially in the areas where you have a monopoly or few people competing against them.

Just last, I'll mention the last one, Mr. Speaker. And, that one is in the courts. You have a case, they want everybody to leave whichever part of the country to be there for nine and you get there for nine and you see the Judge or the Magistrate coming after 10, no regards for people. And, then when you get there, they know that the case will be adjourned, you know, but they're still letting you come and waste time, lose your day work to come in there. So, people don't want to take anybody to Court because most of the times you lose, you're not gaining. So, Mr. Chair, those are few of the things that I wanted to mention. And, just referring back to the Act, the Member from St. David East, sorry St. David...

One Member said: I think they're trying to divide you.

(Laughter)

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: ...St. David spoke about most of them. But Clause 2 talk about the changing of the Director being appointed by the Minister to one being a public officer. And, to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if that is good or bad because they might argue that if the person is a public officer, they do not have to worry about their employment or what the Minister say because their job is secure. But, if it was, if they're appointed by the Minister, they might know that, hey, the job is not that secure, so I would have to perform. So, the argument could go both ways. But, I guess the people that, the drafters would have additional information that I did not have.

It also, Clause 6 calls for the removal of the lodging fee, which I support a 100% because most people that come in to make the complaint would not have any additional money to pay to lodge the complaint because that would be a double whammy for them. So, I support this.

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And, Clause 4 talked about now having a fee if the matter has to go to the Tribunal and we know that there is a cost so that I do support. Finally, Mr. Speaker, Clause 8 seeks to implement timelines and that's very important because here they're talking about maximum three (3) months. The existing Court system that we have here, the only time I see things happen quickly is if some young person in Gouyave curse a badword and then you see the Magistrate deal with them the next week. If you have any other matters, land matters or anything like that or something against a big corporation, you're there for years before your case is called. So at least in this case here, they're talking about three (3) months to have your dispute resolved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you kindly, Representative for St. John. Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to this Bill and the amendment to the Bill before us, Mr. Speaker. And I wish to start with a point that I made when we were discussing the substansive Bill. And this has to do with goods, returning goods. I have made the point, Mr. Speaker, that the wholesalers and the importers must be part of the solution. One, when they purchase from abroad, they must ensure that the supplier provides insurance. Because when the small consumer brings it back to them, they don't want it because they are at lost. But they must be able to send it back. So if they do their business right and procure correctly, it might be an added cost you know, but it will be their insurance for damaged goods etc. shipment cost etc. Sometimes you don't take the shipment cost and sometimes the little man, if he gets three quarter of it, he will be happy. But at least, Mr. Speaker, when the wholesalers purchase and when they purchase from abroad, they must have this, Mr. Speaker.

The vehicle companies, maybe they have some of this. You take out something new and they give you within the warranty period, they may be able to ship it back to the

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bigger supplier or to the manufacturer. That is a fundamental importance, so we must start to do business the new way otherwise we will always be complaining on this issue. Because the wholesaler will say, I cannot lose. The law tells him now that maybe he has to take it back, so what we must ensure, maybe the Ministry of Trade or whosoever, ensure that you bring them in and tell them whatever you purchase now, put the insurance on it so that you will have no problem and it will not be your loss or your total loss if it is brought back to you. And that's... we have to look after the small consumers as well, but we must ensure that the larger ones get it right in their procurement, Mr. Speaker.

And the second point I wish to make, Mr. Speaker, is that I welcome this Bill whether it is a process, stage one in moving towards recourse. We have the Telecommunications Act of 2000; in that Telecommunications Act, there is solid protection for consumers. Sometimes they don't know about it, sometimes they figure well, I wouldn't fight it. But if they go to this, Mr. Speaker, they will be advised and they will be told, you can come to me, but you better apply under this Act. And then they will go to the NTRC who has the power, both as a Tribunal and then you still have the appeals process and the law is very stringent there. When you're dealing with the tribunal processing, you can't apply to the first instance Court you know. You have to apply to the Court of Appeal in some instances because of the power that this Tribunal has and that's the Appeals Tribunal and they make it very difficult because the qualification is very high on some of those. Lawyers for long outstanding years, Appeal Judges those are the people who will sit on the Appeal Tribunal.

But the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission that deal with other utilities except telecommunication and the only person there now is the electricity utility but by Order of the Governor General, NAWASA could be brought under it and any utility could be brought under it. And if you have a problem there, this Act too has its Tribunal to deal with it, it is very specific. Whereas the Consumer Protection Act will direct you into it, they may say we don't have the technical capacity to do this but at least the small consumer will know I am going to somebody and they will send me the right place.

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Because you have frequency, fifty cycles in Grenada. You could have a brown out, you could be getting 48.5 and 49, who measures it? Some equipment, as you put your computers on, it may tell you now that you don't have the right frequency, because a lot of electronic gadget will not operate if it does not have the right frequency.

But if that happens, what do you do? Most people will not go and find the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Office, they will go to this institution and this institution will tell them that's the place. In fact, they may even assist them in filling out the complaint form, so I welcome it, Mr. Speaker, even if you might say it does not deal with utilities but access is of critical importance and once the small person can get access. Because right now, Mr. speaker, there is only one person I saw wrote a letter to the NTRC on a complaint, a valid complaint, but that person operated within the Ministry and know exactly the rules and rights. So that letter went out to the utility and I know that they are treating it with great importance. But the rank and file will not know that but go into that Consumer Protection Office that everybody knows about price. I bring back my potato, I bring back my this, I bring back my that, everybody will know that office. And when they get there, they will be channeled, Mr. Speaker, at least if the office feels that's the best way, the Advisory Committee will send them there, Mr. Speaker.

So in this context, I could see more of our people accessing the NTRC and accessing the book. If you get the wrong voltage, for example, the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act penalises the company if they give you too much outages you know, Mr. Speaker. In the Telecommunications Act, you must give 95% of what you say you are going to give for 95% of the time. So when you tell us your speed or your bandwidth right, is 1GB, you better give this for 95% of the time. But once you prove that is not so, then the consumer could be reimbursed, it is in the Act. How many of us know this, Mr. Speaker? So one of the task that this institution will be doing is to educate the persons when they come in. And they say it burn my radio, they go down into it and even though they don't deal with it, they tell you where to go and they tell you what recompense it would have, Mr. Speaker. So I welcome this amendment to the Act

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and I know that it will serve our people in the best way, Mr. Speaker. I thank you.
(Applause)

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

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to give my full support to the various amendments to this very important Bill. I have listened to the Member for St. John and he made some very practical revelations with regards to how consumers could be ripped off if we do not have the basic laws in place to protect them. Therefore I do not wish to reharsh because you know, we are really dealing with specific amendments but my point is this, Mr. Speaker, is that, it have to be a continuous process of accessing consumer complaints and making the relevant changes to the Act. So let us not look at this as a one off, because there is one aspect of consumer protection that I feel very strongly about because I was affected by it and I believe that any Act to protect consumers should include this particular reference I'm making. And it has to do with certain companies asking consumers to pay for warranties, even when the good might be defective when they sell the good. I think that it is unconscionable that you go to a certain business place, you buy certain appliances and they tell you, you have to pay two or three hundred for warranty. I have never heard of that before.

When you go to certain places in the United States and Canada, I could go in the States buy a suit today and go to a wedding and bring it back the next day and they will take it. I'm not saying we will do it here but the fact that you have to pay for warranty, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this is fair and I believe the poor people is being ripped off by these companies and it's something this Bill in it's further amendment should look into. Having to pay warranty when the defect could be due to the supplier or the provider and not the fault of the consumer, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative. Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As it is said, Mr. Speaker, there is only one point that I wish to raise here although the Member for St. John raised it. And that is the... where it says here, there shall be a Director of Consumer Affairs Office who shall be an officer in the Public Service. Mr. Speaker, to me this is very important because when this Bill first came, I asked myself the question, where it was stated that the Minister shall appoint the Director of Consumer Affairs and we have known from time and time again in this country, sometimes you get service, or you get out of service depending on who you know. And if for instance I have a problem and the Minister appoint the Director of the Consumer Affairs, if I am aggrieved, I may just challenge the aggrieved person and say I'm going to the Minister and the Minister will deal with that person in charge of Consumer Affairs. So that if it's a business place, the business place and the Minister can have a relationship so that the Director cannot do his/her job as he should be. But if it's an independent person, then we know this will take away any blame from a Minister in that case.

So I will always support that part where the person is an independent person so that without interference by the Minister or anyone because of his appointment. And I think that will speak good for the independence of that agency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Members ... Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all my colleagues for their contribution to the Bill... the amendments to this Bill. As I indicated it's timely for Consumer Protection and I thank the Member for St. John for the many examples that he used. I suppose from his experience living in Canada, and dealing with consumer protection, he's very much aware of what exists there and the Bill, the substantive Act seeks to address these issues. So, Mr. Speaker, I wish to then commend the Bill for its second reading.

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Question proposed

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

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

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

House resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to Report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

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

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

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Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I requested and you so graciously granted, I propose that we return to the order on the Order Paper and we see there the first item the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Control Bill, 2020. This House has been advised that the Bill has been withdrawn and officially for the records. It is still on the Order Paper, so I now propose, Mr. Speaker, officially that it be withdrawn and that we go back to the Item 2 on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the COVID-19 Bill has been withdrawn from the Order Paper, so it shall not be dealt with at this Sitting or until such time as the Bill is...

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I do believe that a Motion must be moved so to order the Bill to be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: The presenter of the Bill or Motion can withdraw, not necessarily by a Motion to withdraw but a statement to withdraw. Am I correct? Thank you Leader of the Opposition. According to page 49, section 65.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, before I move the Motion I just... it says the interpretation is illegal. A Motion would spark debate and we can't stop the debate. The withdrawal is to take it off the Order Paper, so, Mr. Speaker, you have to determine what sort of Motion this one will be. It will come as if you are debating the Bill, so not for its passage but again, Mr. Speaker, it's what you would allow in the Motion. So I will move the Motion for the withdrawal of the Bill.

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Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Control Bill, 2020 be withdrawn from the Order Paper.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I second the Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. So the Motion has been moved and seconded.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Again, I would ask, does the Motion require a seconder. Government Business, section... page 24... We're glad, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition seconded.

Mr. Speaker: You were saying on section... if it requires...

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Does it require...

Mr. Speaker: Any explanation?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: A seconder?

Mr. Speaker: Not necessarily but it is seconded.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: We're happy that he did. But it has to be clear that Government Business does not require a seconder.

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

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I stand to move the first Motion of a Bill, COVID-19 Cancellation Carnival August Celebration Bill, 2020.

Ag. Clerk: An Act to cancel the Carnival August Celebrations for the year 2020 and the recognition of those days as Bank Holidays shortly entitled, COVID-19 Cancellation of Carnival August Celebrations Bill, 2020.

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

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I therefore move that the relevant Standing Order of this House be suspended to allow this Bill to be taken through all its stages at this session.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I now move the second reading of this Bill.

Question proposed.

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

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Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, in standing to move the second reading of this Bill and to point out that already this morning I spoke to the concerns of the COVID-19 Bill which was to be brought before this House, which has been withdrawn and intentions of it. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that particular Monday in August and the whole day Monday in August and the half day on the second day has been designated Bank Holiday period for our national August Carnival celebrations.

This year it was supposed to be on August 10th, the Monday and the 11th, the Tuesday. In the context of the tremendous problems that we recognise with the pandemic that we all are facing... in fact, Mr. Speaker, it must be clear that in February this year... late February when the virus was already affecting the world and many did not realise the extent of it as something I pointed out when I went to Guyana, Trinidad Carnival took place. Subsequently, there was an obvious, from all reports, that there was in fact, a level of infestation in Trinidad due to that national celebrations where a mass of people would be interacting, sweating, talking to each other, hugging and all sorts of things and the carnival is what it is. It is a physical thing in a lot of sense of the word.

So in the face of what is evident of the problems that countries around the world... in fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to make this point, I was watching television one evening and I saw a young lady about twenty (20) years in Miami speaking to the world and young people and saying that her state was locked down. When they opened up for bars and restaurants, a lot of her friends and her went to a particular bar and because of the lockdown and the atmosphere of freedom, they really had a time, a ball. About a week later, twenty-one (21) of her friends including her, were infected. That is the extent of how fast this virus affect people and large numbers of persons with that sort of interaction, it was reported recently.

The Marlins Baseball Team, they tested them before they started their training session, everyone was tested positive. In the space of one week and a half after their training session, they tested them regularly, like they were doing with all the West Indies players recently, eleven (11) of them came down with positive test and a couple days

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later, up to this morning four (4) more. So fifteen (15) members of a 30-member team. So it is now under serious consideration whether the Miami Marlins could in fact take part in the season at all because of the amount of games they would miss because mostly all their stars, in fact, it is felt that they may not be competitive, even if they proceeded to use the other fifty (50) members. And, you don't know between now and the time they start the season, whether more of the fifteen (15) left. The point really we're making is, I know how much our people depend on carnival. I know how much they enjoy it. I know how much the young people in particular and even the businesses that have suffered a lot already depend on some sort of celebration activities really to make a dollar. So, we know we are asking people to make a lot of sacrifices. We know how we have become the country that is identified with "Jab Jab", it has become almost an international thing, after Tallprey's exposé. So, we know people look forward to coming to Grenada for Carnival, it's becoming bigger and bigger and bigger. Government revenues would be helped, exceedingly so; it is in our interest financially to have Carnival. I enjoy it myself. I don't play much, but I enjoy it. But what is first, Mr. Speaker? As I pointed out this morning, the first thing is the protection of our people, the health. What is the revenue in Government? What is the revenue to a shopkeeper or a business person when he or she does not have health? What does the revenue mean to Government when the people that the Government is supposed to be protecting, the Government picks up more revenue and a lot of people get infected, and some go through some serious illness and problems that can affect them for life? Because there's quite a strong evidence, Mr. Speaker, that this virus is not something that... some people recover and when after they do physical afterwards, they seem not to have any lingering problem. But, for others, some have had permanent damage to the liver and other organs of the body. You don't know, we don't know what inside of us right now, is not functioning at its optimal and you don't want to test it. I hear the President say he testing, but he can test, but I'm not testing no part of my body with nothing that I don't believe is right.

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So, we have to come to terms, with all our good intention, I want, that's why I'm appealing to our friends this morning and who had problems with the COVID-19 Act, and as I said before, understand it. At the same time, please do the same thing, call on people not to use that as the basis for trying to go against the protocols and the rules that we established to protect them. Because some people would say, the Government was dictatorial with the COVID-19 Act, and they're dictatorial trying to get rid of our Jab Jab and our celebration and Carnival. That could be the mindset and will decide who will defy us.

Just last week, as the Minister here pointed out, you had Jab Jab on the beach. Oh, what's going on? Because we are afraid to lose two votes, we're going to say go ahead and do it and we won't interrupt. My friend, Mr. Speaker, I've told my colleagues, leadership requires guts, leadership requires a responsibility to do what is right, not always what is popular. I have always told my colleagues, for my thirty-five (35) years experience in politics, the noises you hear today, is not permanent noise. It's what is right becomes permanent. That is what survives. That is my experience in thirty-five (35) years. I've seen situations where it looks bleak, as if you are dead politically and otherwise and you took a decision based on what is right, those who curse you today, praise you tomorrow. That is a fact.

As long as you are doing it for what you believe is right. Even when you're wrong, Mr. Speaker. Even when the result for what you start, took a decision on turns out wrong, when they believe you were genuinely feeling what you're doing is right, people forgive you. Good people forgive you, those who have ulterior motives, and full of hate and spite, they are the ones that keep the permanent opposition to things that you do, which is interesting. So, I'm convinced, Mr. Speaker, to have a holiday is to encourage people to have mass, to encourage people to Jab Jab in the thousands and the hundreds and the tens and we have got a major problem, because with border opening more people will be coming from different parts and you never know. As the Minister pointed out, one come came in with a positive test a few days ago, that one person can go into a celebration on the beach and infect twenty (20) or thirty (30)

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people. That twenty (20) or thirty (30) people goes out, go out in the villages and infects hundreds. Where are the beds in the hospital for one hundred (100) ICU patients? We in Government, if we allow that, we better run from town because people will deal with us accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the point I just made, is this, we have had three (3) months, literally, no productivity. Businesses are hurting, Government revenue, I looked at the Inland Revenue data last night, 50%, a few more days to go. You know that remind me of in the 80's and 90's in Government, when you budget for revenue for a hundred million dollars (\$100 m) in Customs and Inland Revenue, forty-seven million dollars (\$47 million) you were earning. So, you know, that's why we had to go at bank, borrowing money to pay salaries and so on, because you weren't getting revenue. Not that there wasn't revenue, the collection process was extremely bad and people were doing their own thing, and the Government assured they did not have the capacity in terms of the systems in place to collect the appropriate revenue. But, if we are collecting 50%, and we are helping hotel workers that we are not responsible for, directly so, but morally responsible for, if we are helping all the different sectors of the country that we're helping, if every day we're being asked to do more and more and people start believing Government have some sort of, some sort of empty chest, some chest or refill chest that they can just go and pick up money, we will be fooling ourselves and fooling people. Already, we've seen the drop, series drop in our fiscal situation that was extremely stable.

The only reason, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to continue to do what we're doing is because of the way we managed the country in the last, we say, 2013, and the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Public Management Act and other Acts that we put in place, have satisfied the international community. Therefore, we are getting support more than any other country in the region, because of the AIDA support that we are qualified for, most countries did not qualify for because of the sacrifices we've made. But, if we overplay our hand, Mr. Speaker, and the deficit becomes a problem, we will lose all that possibilities that we have. So, I'm using, I'm saying, the Government

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revenues also has to be a concern. And, the business persons and the persons around the country who have been having to bear the brunt of a lot of the problems we face would also. So, why would we go and give another holiday, well, the two days because if you tell somebody Tuesday is a holiday, forget it. A man wouldn't leave Sauteurs and come down in town just to go to work for three hours ago, sometimes they come in, they reach 10 o'clock and they want to go for lunch at 11:30. So, if they know they're coming just for half day, you're not going to see them. So, you know, it's two days you're talking about, and two days loss of productivity further. So, on these two basis, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe it would be unwise, maybe a little bit unpopular, you know, but, I believe it would be the wise decision and the right one. And, I honestly believe... Mr. Speaker, I go to church on Sundays, and I see how the religious community have been so, so positive in the approach in meeting what we have asked them to. In my church I see the distancing, I see the older people, they're not coming because the Priests and others they go to them sometimes on Sundays, but the young people and everybody distancing and they have marks where you can stand, you can't go past this. And, this thing about going around giving handshake, they say bow, everybody bowing. The discipline is so good. Even the Adventist Church, Mr. Speaker, up to now they're doing virtual services, although we've said they can, but just keep the protocols. But they are so disciplined in their approach and so protective of their constituents that they're really... my feeling is, if we allow this Carnival and we allow this mass gathering, we're going to hear from those churches and they will be quite right to condemn all of us.

And, you and I know, while the carnival is a positive in some sense, there are some displays that take place, it almost could be seen as anti Christian. The morality issue is becoming a problem. The embarrassment that some of us, when you look at some people on the street, it's better they just didn't put on nothing. And, sometimes we have to ask ourselves, is that really Carnival? Is that what we want to project? Right. And I'm not sure that it's going to be, but if we allow it, and that excesses continue, which it will, we're going to be in lot of trouble.

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Mr. Speaker, therefore, I take this special opportunity to move the second reading of this Bill and ask for passage of the second reading. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Bill, the Amendment Bill as presented, COVID-19 Cancellation of Carnival Celebrations Bill, 2020. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Carnival is good for Tourism, Carnival is very, very good for Tourism. Carnival has contributed in putting our country as a serious destination competitor, for experience, people like to go to countries where they can have experience, where they can have fun and for quality entertainment. Our artistes have excelled in-country, regionally and internationally; they have performed well.

I will just give two stats to show how important Carnival is to Tourism. In 2018, during the carnival period, which is about a month, couple of weeks before, and a few days after Carnival, we had 12,379 visitors to our shores and that was a dramatic increase over 2017. And, in 2019, we had about 1000 increase of 13,327. And, what we were hearing, people who came for Carnival in 2019, they were booking before they left Grenada for 2020, persons were calling in. We saw more visitors booking with bands to play Carnival in their bands. So, 2020, would have been bumper for us. It would have been extremely significant and coming after COVID, that is a big whammy for Tourism. But, Mr. Speaker, there are things like life and health that are more important. I like traditional mass. I like it even more because for the past few years traditional mass has been celebrated in St. Mark. But, personally, I like traditional mass because I like my shortknee, even when I'm driving Mr. Speaker, I buy my clothes and I wear my shortknee clothes. I like the carnival, I like the spirit, I like to see our people enjoying themselves. But, Mr. Speaker, as much as I like that, and I care about the people who would have earned a living by it, throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Carriacou for another time, however, Mr.

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Speaker, as I said before, health and life are certainly more important than making a dollar or enjoying Carnival and Jab for a while. Two days and it's over and what can we have in the aftermath of those two days.

We have seen some of our Sister Islands, like for example, St. Vincent, they have cancelled carnival. And, it means a lot to them as well, but they made a wise decision and we have taken this same pathway based on sound, medical advice, and also just empirically, what we see. So, for example, we have seen the negative impact of gatherings internationally, both small gatherings and large, it doesn't have to be large. But, a party of seventeen (17) in New Jersey, and I have relatives in New Jersey, seventeen (17) went to a party, seventeen (17) contracted the disease, and several of them died. I don't remember the exact amount, but more double figures died. So, a significant number died. A family had a dinner, family, they all love one another. And gradually, every day you saw the news, two persons, the parents went first and sisters and brothers and everybody lamenting that, you know, they have that dinner and somebody is grieving because he or she would have brought that virus into the family environments. And, we have seen it, persons going into their parents home or living with their parents, and the parents are home, but they bring it in. And, you know, the remorse and the grief they had to get counselling for it. Is that what we are looking for just for two days of fun?

Mr. Speaker, this thing is very serious and through you, I want to speak to all my Grenadian brothers and sisters, nephews, nennens, whatever. Let us take this thing seriously. Some people even go as far as saying, that it don't have virus. I heard they say it about AIDS, but the world statistics will show a lot of people died before we realised that AIDS does exist, and the virus does exist. The thing is, sometimes when a Government performs well and a Ministry of Health performs well and we have managed to keep this thing down, people instead of realising that it took effort, it took work and it took astuteness, and dedicated, not just work, but dedicated work, day after day, to monitor this thing, what's happening outside. And, a lot of the things, the examples we've had didn't happen here, but, it doesn't have to happen to you, for it to

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be true. And so, we learn from that. I'm sure the Minister and his team were pursuing what CDC was saying, WHO and all of this guidance and CARPHA and whoever else. And, just seeing what happened, when people complied, you see, the numbers go down, and when people break away, like they went in the beach in Miami and they went crazy. New Orleans had Carnival, and what happened to the numbers, they soared. So, there are too many examples for us to ignore just because we've been doing well. Let us praise God in the first instance, praise the scientific staff, the team and others who worked, but let us be wise.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I want to beg that we continue on the trajectory that we are on, the path that we have carved as a nation, because every one of us makes sacrifices and let us not throw those sacrifices down the drain. As much as we like Carnival, as much as it does for the economy, I would beg everyone, let us comply, let us leave the Jab for a while, next year is going to be bigger, **(applause)** it's going to be better for us, but we have to make the sacrifices now. I thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Mark and Minister for Tourism. I know how you feel. I imagine. Honourable Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, it is like with most of us, if not all of us, with a heavy heart. Mr. Speaker, I like my Carnival, I play pretty mas, I play Jab Jab. I support Panorama, not just as a spectator, but financially as well, Panorama. **(Laughter)** I haven't played in a while, but, yes. I said farewell to a dear friend of mine who, we played Jab Jab together for years. I know, like anybody else, like anybody else that you say, I work hard or I see trouble for the year, I'm going to play a mas. And, this year of all years, most of us, if not all of us have seen trouble and would be looking to play that mas. But, we would be reversing all of the sacrifices, Mr. Speaker.

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Mr. Speaker, this is not the desire of a cruel, authoritarian Government or so, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is not political policy, this is scientific fact. COVID-19 is a contagious disease, COVID-19 spreads through mass events. And, Mr. Speaker, we are not the only ones coming to this conclusion. St. Vincent, on April 2, announced the cancellation of their Carnival. St. Lucia on the 27th of March announced the cancellation of their Carnival. Antigua the 19th of April announced the cancellation of their Carnival. Barbados, that same day announced the cancellation of their Carnival, Kadooment and Crop Over, as they call it. Martinique announced the cancellation of their Saint-Pierre Celebration, which is similar around the same time. Dominica has cancelled their Jazz and Creole for this year as well, around the same time. That's not because this Government has asked them to do it and that we are just coming up with something in isolation. That is responsible Governments throughout the region following the scientific fact.

Mr. Speaker, F1 was cancelled. It's now back, but with no spectators, no mass gathering, just the drivers on the road. Football, FA Cup, UEFA, CREIA, they've all been accommodating just the team with no spectator, no mass gathering. We are no different than any of the responsible Governments that recognise that mass events will cause the spread of COVID-19. And, for those who say, well, we don't have no COVID in Grenada right now, I don't know that for a fact and I'm the Minister for Health. And, we as a responsible Government are not prepared to play Russian Roulette with the population. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, my final words too, is that there are some out there who are provoking this, but they themselves will stay home, **(applause)** they themselves are wearing the mask. They are provoking this, just to see civil disorder because it's not their watch. But, this is our watch and we have to do the responsible thing, Mr. Speaker. So, regrettably with a heavy heart, I stand in support of this Bill. My birthday is August 11, usually around Carnival as well, another reason to celebrate. **(Applause)** But this year, no Carnival, no large gatherings, moderation, so that all of the sacrifices will continue to be worthwhile. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for St. George South. We have to talk something about this Jab Jab. We will talk about it. Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments, comments, support. **(Laughter/Applause)** And, I do have some comments to make. I don't do Jab Jab, I never did pretty mas. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it's a very quiet time for me. But, I do enjoy and listen to a good calypso and a good piece of pan. I have family who would chase Carnival, whether it's in St. Vincent or Barbados or Fort-de-France, they go. I never, I never pursue. But, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that if I take it from a scientific point of view, that there is some science in being alone together. Stay home, if you have the COVID or just stay home, you don't have to go out, alone together. Someone asked me what it means. I say it means that you're protecting others when you stay at home.

But, Mr. Speaker, from this point of view, I raise concerns that were raised to me by a few employees in some businesses, that they worked as essential, almost essential workers in stores and so forth and all during the COVID time they were out at work and lo and behold, their two weeks holiday was taken from them, even in that line. And so, they were looking forward, maybe for that two days spare for Carnival in terms to do their own private business. They don't take part in Carnival, but that too they feel is taken away from them. And, the question is asked, what can we do about it? Some people feel that they have given yeoman service during this time. And, even their two weeks they had, well, they realise that they had to sacrifice. And, maybe a couple of them made plans to do things with their family and to go and see friends. Even some of our friends here were planning to go home to Carriacou for the two days which they always do. They call it a long weekend. You leave Friday, you come back Monday afternoon or Tuesday or even Wednesday. And so, with that out, that cannot be done again.

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But, Mr. Speaker, I would tell us, and I can look at it from a scientific point of view because in my humble opinion, and in my liberal disposition, I studied science. I stand in this Parliament here, Mr. Speaker, and I never did political science as a degree. I did chemistry and biology and as an instructor of biochemistry and molecular biology, I think just before COVID, just the week before the lockdown, I had a class where we were changing a bacteria by placing in E. coli, a plasmid DNA and you could change the form and so forth. And, remember the last time when I was here, Mr. Speaker, I said I had the opportunity to read, probably one of the biggest text that I ever read was on the Spanish Epidemic of 1990. And, it is said that the Spanish epidemic killed between 40 to 60 million people worldwide before it was over. That's a lot of people. Mind you, we did not have the medical facilities that we have now and the knowledge and the medicine. And, I said then that the world went into three lockdown stages. The first one, the second one and the third one and they could not get over it. In that same documentary, too, I read that in the city of San Francisco, they had a curfew order and the police was ordered to shoot anybody violating that curfew. We do not have that in Grenada. I do not ever believe we will get to that point. But, what I am saying, follow the science.

You know, as Opposition Leader, I was called, Mr. Clement, you're not doing your work because here, three persons leave Grenada and go to Trinidad and they're positive, and you're not saying anything. I had a conversation with the Minister. I asked him, he said to me, we found out that one, were the people around tested. He says the roommate of the guy was tested, and he did not have it. The wives of the two gentlemen were tested and they did not have it and with the virulence of COVID-19, how could I be living with somebody or even my wife, I test positive and they did not. And what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, unless that PCR Test is done to verify that there is indeed COVID-19 in one's body, and even at a certain amount that can be transmitted, then we cannot say that person is definitely positive. The test, the scientific test must be done; so important it is.

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I pray that we will all take a step back because it is as serious as it can get. I know earlier on, you spoke about losing one of your friends and I remember one day I was home and my wife call out to me and said “Toby I have something to tell you but you have to sit down” and I sat down and she said to me “Mum just called and said Roy just passed away in New York” and if I know Roy Clement which is Glen Clement and Osprey and them brother; he is one of my biggest fan and supporter. And it was like it hit home and it is in situations like these that you realise that maybe what happened 100 years ago, is happening again today. We are in a little better position because we have the science, we have the training, we have the medical facilities, we have the machineries to help us but if it is a little longer that we may have to stay locked down or in this form of difference, then let it be so.

I say too, Mr. Speaker, that protocol, that's why when I speak to people I say, go even beyond the protocol that is established because you're not only protecting yourself, you're protecting your family, you're protecting your friends, and you're protecting others. You know I remember when I first saw the news, the virus was still in China and I remember telling my work colleagues, I said to them, make sure you get your masks and everything. I went into Ace and I got some mask, then later on I had to distribute it because it was N 95 masks. The first time when I went into Ace, maybe a couple days after with my mask on, the security chastised me, that I was wearing the mask. **(Inaudible comments/Laughter)** But, Mr. Speaker, you see and this is knowledge is power and so this is what we have to continue to educate our people in the virulence of COVID-19. It's not to be played with, it's not to be trifled with especially in this time. And in this times, I also do, Mr. Speaker, understand our limitations here in Grenada and I know we have to open up but what I am most concerned about, Mr. Speaker, we cannot look at somebody and say that they have COVID-19. Because probably 85 to 90% of the person who contract COVID-19 will show no signs of symptoms, they're asymptomatic. And even so too, you might be tested and test negative fine, but what about the test, the test that was done in Trinidad, they were false negative. Some of the test give false negative some of the test give false positive so

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even if people come in and they test negative, we still have to let them exercise that precaution and to behave as if you want to stop that transmission. Because it is possible that the plane that came in last Wednesday, maybe the test that is done might have missed one or two. What happened in that case? Is it that someone is moving around Grenada with COVID-19? We do not know. The test that is done, Mr. Speaker, is not exactly 100% bullet-proof so we have to behave ourselves and behave ourselves wisely so that we can live maybe to fight another day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, thank you. Honourable Minister for Finance and Prime Minister. I moved it, as it is finished.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, therefore I take this opportunity to move that the... to resolve ourselves into the Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, well I will have to move it.

(Laughter)

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, I thought so.

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I think we both got a bit lost, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What happened, I proposed the Bill to allow for the debate.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, but you didn't ask for the vote.

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Bill read a second time.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, therefore I move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

House resumes.

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

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

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

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. George's South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill entitled Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2020.

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Mr. Speaker: This one went first.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Sorry, sorry, Mr. Speaker. Public Finance Management (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. That is number three on the book.

Ag. Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Public Finance Management Act (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance. Sorry, for Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Yes, for Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)** I don't know how to add. **(Chuckles)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The designation doesn't fit at all, I know a little maths but this statistician there, is way, way above my limit. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Bill on the Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2020. I beg to introduce this Bill for first reading. The Act is shortly entitled Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: The Bill we are dealing with now is the Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, first reading. For the first reading.

Ag. Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Tourism and Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark.

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Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of this House be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Authority Act, No. 42 of 2013, it confers on the GTA, the Grenada Tourism Authority, the right or the responsibility to regulate tourism accommodation facilities in this Tri-Island State. This responsibility is extremely important, it is critical to the integrity and the growth of our industry and so this body, the GTA is responsible for setting standards and monitoring to ensure that there is compliance with all the standards that have been set. We have built a brand that is well regarded within the region and worldwide and this must be maintained and allowed to grow. The Act, Mr. Speaker, we also know that in this day of social media it just takes one bad apple, one establishment that doesn't comply with the standards, that is not regulated and whatever goes wrong could be sent worldwide could go viral and this one act, negative act, any one negative act could tarnish the name, the brand of our destination and cause persons not to come and of course

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negatively impact on the ability of our destination to really make a serious contribution to the economy of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is very short and simple, it has four Clauses and one of these Clauses speaks to the interpretation and it speaks to the number of room and that is the main thing that has to be dealt with in this amendment. The Act of 2013, it describes an apartment **“as a sleeping accommodation and self-catering facility which provides three (3) or more self-contained unit.”** And so, we are saying that whether it's one (1) unit, whether it's (2) units, once you offer services to people it must be of a certain basic standard that is acceptable nationally and is acceptable regionally and internationally. Any visitor who comes should find acceptable services and more than acceptable service but exemplary service.

And so, we have a number of facilities in Grenada, one (1) bedroom facilities, two (2) bedroom facilities and well of course, three (3) and up, as has been traditional and the three (3) and up have been licensed and registered by the GTA but those of one (1) and two (2) bedroom facilities have not been. So apartments, guest houses of three (3) bedrooms and up, villas of three (3) bedroom and up are not included in the 2013 Act, Act No. 42. And therefore we thought that we needed to include them for two reasons: one, ensure that there is uniformity of a basic standard in our country and we keep our pure Grenada brand pure, but also, secondly because these facilities, they are growing they are going in our country. At this time we have about one thousand (1000) facilities that have active listings, we perhaps have double that, that are not listed, maybe another thousand that are not listed. But we do know, in every nook and cranny persons have facilities that they offer for a fee, sleeping facilities, that several of them are not registered and they have not been breaking the Law because the Law speaks to three (3) and above. But we believe that these need to be regulated and that we must give them the opportunity to be able to market themselves as a registered facility.

Only very recently with the COVID-19, with the Stimulus Package, a number of different entities in the industry, not just accommodation, but other things like transportation and so on, they had to be advised, go and get registered first. Get

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registered with Grenada Tourism Authority, get registered with NIS and so on, do what you have to do, the prerequisites, to ensure that you are operating legally.

And we find these facilities... this Airbnb facilities as we call them, Islandwide. So it gives various areas, every corner in this country, and the great thing about Grenada is that anywhere you go, any Parish you go, you can find facilities, you can find attractions, you can find entertainment. If well developed and well managed, you can find entertainment, you can find beautiful sceneries that people could go and live in these areas and thoroughly enjoy it, especially if they love the environment and they love nature. So that gives the existing ones the opportunity to operate in a licensed manner and it also gives other people the ideas. Well if they're licensing one bedroom, let me go and use my one bedroom because there are still many people who have a one bedroom or a two bedroom facility that they are not using. People love Airbnb, some people prefer it to a hotel, they like to go and live in community and so through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to encourage our Grenadian people to get into Airbnb, it is a thriving business. As I said there are a number of people that this is their preference and we want to see Tourism, really genuinely be everybody's business and it cannot be everybody's business if it is only limited to the very South of the Island. We want to let them roam wherever, be free to wander wherever they could.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that what it does is increase the room stock. When we go to discuss airlifts or flight into Grenada, one of the first question is how many rooms you have? And they don't only ask how many 5-star rooms you have or 4 because a room is a room, because 5-star has its people, 3-star and one-bedroom has its people, but it does give us leverage in negotiating for airlifting to the country. So it's one (1) more seat, two (2) more seats if it's a couple, whatever, but overall, it does add to our room stock and it does give people Islandwide, the opportunity to earn a living.

So, Mr. Speaker, in this three definitions, where it speaks to an apartment, where it speaks to a villa, or whether it speaks to a guest house, we can change it around to mean every facility, every establishment where accommodation is provided for a fee. So if we just remove the three (3) bedrooms, the terminology under apartments, if we

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remove three (3) bedrooms in the case of the apartments, three (3) units, three (3) or more self-contained units in the case of the apartments. In the case of guest house and the villa, three (3) or more bedrooms that would suffice to make the change that we want to make.

Mr. Speaker, also, Clause 2 of this Bill... Clause 3 also seeks to decrease the penalty for noncompliance with licensing requirements. So as I will read, it moves it from a fine not exceeding \$50,000.00. So the penalty for noncompliance with the licences requirements in the principal Act, it has a fine not exceeding 50,000, it means that it could go up to \$50,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding three years. And this, we are requesting, Mr. Speaker, in this amendment that this be reduced to a lesser penalty of a fine not exceeding \$1,000.00 from 50 to \$1,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding six months.

Mr. Speaker, this part, Mr. Speaker, continues where the person is convicted and fined and where the offence continues after that person is convicted, that person is guilty of a continuing offence and is liable to a fine not exceeding \$250.00. In the principal Act, it says \$2,500.00, that is the fine for noncompliance with the licensing requirements. So we are moving again from \$2,500.00 to \$250.00 for each day during which the offence is continued. So while we are going to lessen on it, we do not think that this in any way should lessen the magnitude of the offence. It is very serious and it is a serious transgression against the Tourism Industry and everyone who makes a living out of that, because this can have rippling effect and in these days of Information Technology and all the social media, one person just has to send something on Facebook or whatever and it could negatively impact us. So the fact that the fine is being reduced doesn't mean that the offence is any less and given any less consideration.

Mr. Speaker, Clause 4 allows for a grace period of ninety (90) days for the facilities or the accommodation of one (1) and two (2) bedrooms. We know it will take some time for persons to adjust, some time for them to find the money and perhaps come up to speed with the requirements. So ninety (90) days will be three (3) months,

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is given in the first instance. Mr. Speaker, I say this being very much aware that we are in a difficult period and persons might be disincentivised to do any serious effort to bring their facilities up to the standard, because they might feel who is coming now; when are they coming; how will I get my monies back? But I just want to end by saying that Tourism is a very resilient industry. Even now, as we're speaking to the Cruise Lines, we're speaking to the Airlines, people are still booking, not in the not in the numbers that they have been booking but one would think, because as my brother from St. David's said and I don't know if it's St. David's East or West but, my brother from St. David's said "I don't want to go anywhere," but some people are hearing about us. This morning we are named, this country was named in BBC Radio Station number two, (whatever that mean) by a certain gentleman and that is a well listened to station. And otherwise you have seen other programmes on BBC and elsewhere where the Caribbean as a whole is being spoken about. The cruise ships want to come back and we are just saying take your time, don't get frightened brother Bowen, we're saying let us take our time with that. But the point is if we're not ready when people start coming back, some people will get left. So let us not be daunted by what is going on now, this Industry has rebounded time after time. After Hurricane Ivan, after a number of hurricanes that swept Windward and Leeward Islands and so on, Maria was a very serious one, but countries are rebounding. And so we will, and if people take the time off now, it will pay back.

I just want to say finally that the Government has provided a very nice soft loan, I think it's about seven million (\$7 m) with the Grenada Development Bank for facilities to improve themselves, to upgrade and while there has been some uptake, I do not see enough. I think that is a great opportunity; it's 2% interest for a while so catch it while you can. And I also think there is a moratorium but the details can be had at the Grenada Development Bank. I want to encourage everyone to ensure that your facility is in line in keeping with the Grenada Bank. Let us keep pure Grenada on the Map. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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Mr. Speaker: Thank you Minister for Tourism. Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatwain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Minister for Tourism in presenting this very important Bill, amendment to the Tourism, the GTA Act. Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the Minister or the Member for St. Mark, that in an expanding industry, where accommodations are increasing, whether it is hotel room stock, villas, apartments, condominiums, there is need to regularise or to standardise those facilities and mention was made of that emerging sector or product, Airbnb, Breakfast and Bed. This is a rapidly growing subsector, as a matter of fact over one hundred (100), close to two hundred (200) countries now, consider this to be an integral part of their Tourism product. And in terms of monetary value, we are talking about over 25 billion dollars annually, generated from Airbnb. In our context, Mr. Speaker, it is an important sector as well and many homeowners especially on the countryside are now getting involved because they do have spare rooms, one (1) or two (2) rooms that they will rent to make available for guests.

However, Mr. Speaker, I do have an added concern with the onslaught of COVID-19, I think there is greater awareness as to who are the people coming into our country, where they are going and hence the reason why regulations have been put in place to govern the operations of hotels, guest houses so as to contain this virus. However, I cannot recall any mention being made of those one (1) or two (2) bedroom facilities that are primarily in private homes. So whereas it might be very easy to establish regulations for hotels or guest houses, where you have private homes being used for public purposes, a one (1) room in my private house, I am wondering how effective or how significant will be those regulations if you want to standardise? Can you standardise this? Can you say that the same regulations that you apply for hotel rooms, you could apply for those Airbnb facilities as well in my private home? That would be one of my concern because you have intermingling of guests with private

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residents in the same house. So, in terms of regulations, not only in terms of standardising what the Member said, but in terms of the COVID Regulations, now that we are in this new norm, how can that be done? I would like further explanation on how effective those regulations could apply to those facilities.

I'm also a bit concerned that at the time when we need to strengthen regulations and enforce those regulations, we are lowering the penalties. I would have thought that in a COVID environment, we will want to increase the penalties for noncompliance because, you know, you're talking about something very serious. Yeah. So, I'm wondering whether that was taken into consideration in making the change in terms of lowering the penalties now that we have an environment where we want people to comply, because failure to comply because if you look at the COVID Act that was supposed to be submitted here, stiff penalties. But, yet I'm seeing a reduction in terms of application in this particular area.

So, I, Mr. Speaker, while, I support the idea of including facilities with lower number of rooms as part of the overall tourism regulation for consistency, and for ensuring that you have a standard, standardised facilities and the quality of service, I am concerned about two things, one, how applicable will be the COVID regulations for such facilities in private homes and why should we be reducing penalties in an environment that necessitates higher penalties for noncompliance? These are the two concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Peter David: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the amendment to the Bill as presented by the Minister for Tourism, the Member for St. Mark.

I absolutely agree with this amendment and the implications for the Tourism Industry. There is a need to expand room stock, and I think the Minister said it and I'll

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just be repeating, but one of the biggest challenges in getting airlines into the country is rooms. You know, it's the chicken and the egg. Do you have the... which comes first? And, the truth is, if you don't have the rooms, the airlines do not come because if they come with the craft, people have no place to stay, people will not be booking. So, it's absolutely important to expand that base of rooms. A lot has been done with this Minister and previous Ministers with respect to getting the hotels, we have hotels coming in St. David. I think there's a lovely project, the Six Senses Hotel, now starting construction in David. There is Royalton, there are several hotels in the north of the Island, in Levera. There are many hotels coming on screen, the larger hotels, and that is fine and that's the 5-star brand as the Minister alluded to. But, as the Minister did indicate, there are various levels that people want to come and spend their time. Not everybody wants to go into a 5-star, not everybody can afford a 5-star, some people want a 2-star, 3-star, some people like rooms and the Airbnb, as the Member for Patrick just indicated is an up and coming. In fact, I have many friends who have converted their houses, their homes, into Airbnb to take advantage of this new and emerging market.

So, I want to say that this is good, but I want to ask that, not only do we approve or decline the request, but we work with the... and the Minister alluded to that, we work with the new small hoteliers, if you may call them that, the persons with the small, we work with them to improve the standards because it's, you know, we need and I know the Minister has been working on this, our hospitality, more hospitality training facilities. But, we must ensure that everyone who is involved in the Industry has some level of training, so that Grenada is not only known for beautiful beaches, known for lovely, hospitable persons, but our service must be to the standard, when we go to places in Southeast Asia, in India and places like that, services is amazing because they have had a long history of a Tourism Industry. Our Tourism Industry is relatively new, relatively recent. We've come from an agricultural traditional, now we're combining Agriculture and Tourism, so, we're having Agri-Tourism, if you want to call it that as our main economic base. So, I want to urge the Minister and the Ministry and the GTA to

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work with the persons with the one and two bedrooms to do training to ensure that everyone, not only the guys in the 4-star and 5-Star hotels are well trained, but the persons in the smaller units are just as well trained to take care of the persons who are, not that Airbnb requires much, but whatever they require that the requirements are met with a certain standard. So, I want to urge that. I want to urge to move quickly to get more hospitality training. So, I want to support it.

I understand the reason for the fine, deduction because now, you're addressing very small hotel, very small units and you have to adjust it to suit that. So, I know the Minister will address that issue, but I just want to stand to give full support to the move by the GTA, the move by the Minister and the move by the Minister for Tourism to ensure that rooms are provided and that Grenada, Grenada's Tourism Industry expands and achieves the potential it is capable of achieving. With that, I beg to support the amendment as presented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible comments/laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative. Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems that my two brothers did some serious research on it. And you know, I realise the time, but Airbnb is an exciting thing in some countries. I mean, they set a whole thing around, they order babysitters, so if it's a family, so the owner of the facility, two (2) bedroom, one (1) bedroom, three (3) bedroom, you have one (1) or two (2) people who are babysitters that you train or get them trained. And so, if the parents want to go out, they know that their children are in safe hands. If the parents don't want to go out and they want to go to Fish Friday, they have a taxi, like a family taxi man, he comes and he takes the children to Fish Friday, he takes them back. And so, there's a kind of security that people find. I mean, Barbados has done it par excellence, Jamaica and a

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few other countries and, Grenada is growing as they said, and I take the points that my colleagues would have mentioned.

I think we have to go to the drawing board a little bit in terms of the training that we have to do, and the support and while we have decreased the fine tremendously, we hope that the advice on the training and support that is given will compensate for any kind of misunderstanding and it's a small fine, so it's not important. And so, let us leave it as a fine that will never have to be paid, I hope and we don't want to be draconian either. But I take the points, Mr. Speaker, and I will relay that to the GTA to see how we can give support. But, as was said before, everything that was said, is very much in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I again want to commend this Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Mark, Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

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Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I beg that we recommit again to Committee just so that we can clarify one issue.

Question put and agreed.

House in Committee (Recommitted).

House resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Well, we have to go back to it. I have to report it back. So, we went in Committee, so we now coming back.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the Chairman report progress on the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Well, let me first tell the House that we were in Committee and we have resumed. I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with one amendment.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I beg that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

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Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I now move that the third reading of the Bill be had.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

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

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the Praedial Larceny (Amendment) Act 2020.

Ag. Clerk: An Act to amend the Praedial Larceny Act CAP. 250, shortly entitled, the Praedial Larceny (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North-West. Oh, my apologies. Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move for leave to introduce for the first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the Supreme Court Fees Bill, 2020.

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Ag. Clerk: An Act to make provision for the methods of payment of court fees and percentages, and for the repeal of the Supreme Court Fees Act CAP. 315, shortly entitled, Supreme Court Fees Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker on the adjournment and section 17 of the Order Paper, I stand to move the Motion that is in my name and it reads thus:

WHEREAS section 29 (1) of the Grenada Constitution makes accommodation for representation through Constituency elections for Members of Parliament;

WHEREAS Members of Parliament may not be part of the Executive Branch of Government;

WHEREAS in the performance of his or her duties as a Parliamentary Representative, each Member of the House of Representative is entitled to an Office within his or her Constituency and to organise the activities of that office as he/she sees fit in accordance with approved Parliamentary policy;

WHEREAS the Office of the Houses of Parliament is responsible for providing guidance on the procedures and policies of the operations of the Constituency offices in keeping with democratic standards;

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AND WHEREAS the Clerk of the Houses of Parliament as the Accounting Officer for the Parliament is responsible for ensuring financial accountability for funds expended for the operation of all Constituency offices in accordance with democratic standards;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the House of Representatives hereby authorise the immediate restoration of the financial administration and oversight of the Constituency offices to the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today, as what was said to me a few years ago, and from where I sit...

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Tobias.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, having read the motion, I must now present the Motion.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion has been proposed. This Motion was proposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on second thought...

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business. Just a while please.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker the Motion needs a seconder. You are ruling on that, Mr. Speaker.

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Mr. Speaker: Yes, the Motion needs to be seconded.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Is it going to be seconded after or now, the motion?

Mr. Speaker: You can go and present and then we second afterwards. Oh, it should be seconded before the debate on it. You have to second the Motion before the debate on it. Leader of Government's Business. Yeah. It must be seconded before debate on the Motion. Honourable Members, a Motion has been moved by the Representative for St. George North-East and Leader of the Opposition

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, can you point out which part of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: If you look at... Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Seconding of Motion, which reads, "**in the House, the question upon a motion or amendment shall not be proposed by the Speaker, unless such motion or amendment has been seconded, provided that government business requires no seconding.**"

Mr. Speaker: What is the number on this?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Page 24, 31 seconding of Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Do we have a seconder to the Motion? Honourable Representative for St. John.

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Hon. Alvin Da Breo: I'll second the Motion.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member of John for seconding that Motion. I did not indicate to him whether or not I wanted it second.

Mr. Speaker, as I look today, and I changed the trajectory in which I am heading as to introduce this Motion, I may take a page from the Member for St. George North-West. And, just before he left here, he said, leadership is to stand up for what is right. And, if you stand up for what is right, it will pass the test of time and it will stick.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to this situation before, in terms of our Constituency offices, and in terms of the Houses of Parliament, and in terms of our democratic principles. You know, I sat here today, and I remember, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after, but it was 25 years ago that I first came into this House, and I looked at the books and I saw myself and brother Bowen signed as Senators in July 28 of 1995. And, Mr. Speaker, I remember well that as a very young man, my first time into York House, I was brought into Chambers by old respectable men, they are since long gone, Dr. John Watts as President of the Senate, and Sir Curtis Strachan. And, Sir Curtis Strachan, sat me down and he gave me a little green book that he himself authored and he said to me, young Clement, the principles of the House of Representatives, the Senate and the House must not be violated at any time by anybody.

I was reminded again, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, that it is said that in the Parliamentary Democracy process, it is the Parliament that wheels the Executive and not the Executive that should wheel Parliament. And, the process of standing up for democracy begins with us in this 'Honourable Place.' And, as one spoke to me, and as I hear, the Prime Minister just said that one should stand up for what is right, and one

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should stand up on principle, I am reminded again that my neighbour expounded that to me. And, I would say today, Mr. Speaker, God bless her soul.

I have had the opportunity to sit with a lot of people. Maybe this is why, probably you might find that I never studied politics, but politics is in the blood; H. A. Blaize, Winston Fleary, Sir John Watts, Sir Curtis Strachan, Dr. Mitchell, Sir Danny Williams. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, for the last nine years, I have had the company of a neighbour, Lauret Clarkson, she was my neighbour in Morne Jaloux. And she said, Mr. Clement, in your position, all that I should ask you to do, stand on principle and stand for what is right. Miss Clarkson, as you guys would know was a juggernaut here in Grenada, in terms of Union business, and in terms of the nursing fraternity. And today, I know that you guys have expressed your sympathies and your condolences to the family and she was a stalwart in terms of forwarding the stand on principle. But, Mr. Speaker, let's go back to where we are. I have searched the globe where we have burdened democracy and where democracy is at play. I looked on the website of different countries, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Vincent, I looked throughout the Commonwealth to find a construct like we have here in Grenada and nowhere else could I find a construct. Mr. Speaker, what is at stake here and I do not believe it will stay because it is not right.

For all this time that I served in Parliament, the Constituency offices were administered and rightly so, under Parliament. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament give directives as to the behaviour of the Constituency offices. Can I say that it is so now? No it is not so, and it is troubling to me. Because a couple years ago, we felt that the Parliament was not properly staffed to provide the necessary service to the Constituency offices so it was taken from the Parliament and brought under the Prime Minister's Ministry and given to a private entity. It was said that we will do a review, a one year review, a 2-year review; I can ask the question, Mr. Speaker, was any review done as towards the services?

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I spoke to how we behave in the Constituency offices in terms of the staffing at the Constituency offices. Now, Mr. Speaker, if we are engaged

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in governance of country and good democracy practices... we talk about the separation of powers; the Judiciary, the Legislative, and the Executive; can the Executive Branch of Government determine to the Judiciary, in terms of staffing and hiring? Maybe the only institution that could do that is the PSC, Public Service Commission. Can the Executive Branch of Government determine to the Parliament as to the staffing in the Parliament or should the Executive Branch of Government now determine to the Constituency offices as it is done now the staffing at the Constituency offices? And this is the question and the Motion that is before us.

Mr. Speaker, moreover, I do not want us to go down the slippery slope of eroding our democracy because it must just start one place. You know, Mr. Speaker, on the 14th of April, I moved to the Governor-General and asked for the instrument and I got the instrument and when I did, I know you guys wished me well. I came in here into the Parliament of our country because I know that there is a position, there is an office and an office for the secretary of the Leader of the Opposition because I was told that when the building was constructed these facilities were placed there. I asked that the gentleman show me the office and he said he could not because he doesn't have the keys. The keys for the Parliament Building is controlled by a worker from the Ministry of Works. So I cannot get into any of the officers, you know up to this point today, Mr. Speaker, I do not have a key if I want to come into the Parliament Building. I have to check the security to let me in. Mr. Speaker, there is a reason why I asked the question, that I be shown the floor plan of the office space provided. Because I was told that there is such an office here but it was not given to me as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, I wonder who has that office today?

Mr. Speaker, moreover I asked, well you know when things like that happen you begin to wonder. I asked about the security personnel here at the Parliament Building, do they have access? Yes. You know something happened; I went into one of the offices and I smelled smoke and I said why is this office smell like smoke and they said they have their suspicion that maybe at night people open the office and sit and smoke in the office so it's ok. I was shown an office by you, Mr. Speaker, I hired the Secretary,

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Miss Joseph, well qualified young lady. As a matter of fact, this is not the first time she work in the Leader of the Opposition's office, she was sent to me a few years ago by the then Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Mitchell. What he gave me, I keep and she is still here.

Mr. Speaker, she was in the office, they came to clean, she left for a while and when she went back into the office the young lady almost went wild. Because she just came from the bank, took out \$700.00 to go pay her bills and when she came back the money was gone. Friday afternoon she went back to the Bank, Bank close so she wait until Monday morning to present to the Clerk that her money is missing. Not knowing that probably the investigation had already started because this was not the only incident. You might have heard about this incident but there was other incidents. The suspect were the people who clean the office and I must say thanks to the Royal Grenada Police Force who moved quickly and swiftly that the culprit were caught. They were investigated and they confessed and the monies were paid back. But then I asked the Clerk, where did you get these people to work in the Parliament of our country as cleaners? Lo and behold, the Clerk said he's not responsible, he did not hire them. How did they get hired to work within the Parliament building without even being vetted. They were working in the Parliament here and not being vetted and maybe a couple of them have already had criminal records.

I therefore, Mr. Speaker, I went to ask about the security. Mr. Speaker, you as a principal officer of this House, were you or the Clerk responsible for the security that is present here now? I asked the question again, do they have access? Yes they have unfettered access to the offices. Who vet these people in this Honourable House? You know, Mr. Speaker, I left, I went to Antigua, I went to Canada, I went to Trinidad, I went everywhere and outside of the Parliament building, providing security is the Royal Police Force stand-up most predominate not by private security firms and this is what we have here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker let us not go down the road that start the eroding of our democracy.

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It was Winston Churchill who wrote that he said that **“our democracy is not perfect, but is the best form of Government we have now”** and any time we start that slippery slope we're going into something else. I would not want to say we're going into a creeping dictatorship, but if that word was used, I was never the first one to use it. We have to take a hold and bring back our democracy where it's supposed to be. Mr. Speaker, you see I stand here today as the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition and I would stand up for democracy anywhere and everywhere it is necessary. And today the debate that we are having in this House where the COVID Bill has been withdrawn, the Standing Orders says that... the Standing Order says that in order for the Parliament to happen Bills and Motions, seven (7) days' notice must be given in advance. Myself sitting here for the last two years and brother Boatswain here from St. Patrick West can tell you that there were times when the Bills were sent the night before and we had to look at it the night or not even look at it at all and sit the next day. But today, Mr. Speaker, if we respect must be given to the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, Bills, Motions whatever it is must be sent on time and at least the seven (7) days' notice must be given. If you look, Mr. Speaker, in terms of our democracy where we are, and I make mention of that and I will mention it again; from time to time to time for the last seven (7) years, you would get the Bills, the Motions the night before. Case in point, the last Budget Presentation on the 20th of November, the document 464 pages was sent the night before and I stayed up and I perused and I have to make a contribution the next day, and how could you? The Bills for now... for this Sitting of Parliament was sent again, this time the time was given. So, Mr. Speaker, I got it the Friday and I stayed up the Friday, the Friday midnight Friday, 2:00 Friday, 2:30 just as the little storm was beginning to start, I was up reading and perusing the Bills so that we can bring effective debates to this House. Mr. Speaker, our democracy and the life of our democracy requires for us to do the right thing, because that is what will stand the test of time.

Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing in this Parliament is a moral issue, to do the right thing in this Parliament it's a spiritual issue. Mr. Speaker, you would remember the first time I stood here in front of you 2013, in this House, I went on to say, **“blessed is**

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the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful but his delight is in the law and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” Mr. Speaker, that was not idly said, you know. Because if I go there and you look at the plaque that is on the wall of this building and you will see that the plaque says that, **“that together we Aspire together we achieve as one Nation under God,”** it's on the Coat of Arms written outside there,

Mr. Speaker, as I am directed by the Constitution and by the Standing Orders, Sir Curt Strachan tells me that these are the principal books that I have to hold in this Parliament and I will hold them dear. And as Leader of the Opposition, I am not subjected to any other officers besides the Speaker of the House while he is in this Chamber. So when other men of any other House want to direct me as to what I should do in this Chamber or outside of the Chamber, I can tell them **“blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,”** who wants to walk in the counsel of the ungodly that is their business. But I will stand and I will stand firm for what I believe.

Mr. Speaker, moreover we look at the Constituency offices and I wonder about that because I've been around a long time. I did not just come by NNP, like two (2) years ago or five (5) years ago or ten (10) years ago. I came by NNP 30 years ago and I know what NNP stood for then, not for now, Mr. Speaker, and I saw the clashes through the times. I was there, brother Bowen could testify, with Grace Duncan and Archibald and Sir John Watts and you know we had our differences and tie up over the time and maybe we can tie up some more. Mr. Speaker, and I look at the Constituency offices and I must say that let us be real and let us be fair and let's give justice where justice is deserved. I read an excerpt last year and nobody took me on and I said, Mr. Speaker, in a Motion like that, can we use the Constituency offices as sub offices of the NNP? Should we? Who pays the workers, the staff at the Constituency office, isn't it taxpayers monies? I do believe the answer is, yes, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers are the ones who fund the payment of... And then you asked me well what am I talking about? How is it that NNP Secretariat can be using the Constituency office as sub offices that is

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paid for by Grenadian taxpayers money? Here is it, Mr. Speaker, if you do allow me, this is a letter from the NNP Secretariat, I read it before so it can be read again.

“To all Office Managers,” and to me, this is this is outrageous, just so outrageous. “Dear Office Managers, in an effort to create a database entry organisation team for the Party through the constituency, we are asking each constituency to provide the names and contact information of two people that fit the following guidelines.” I don't have to go on anymore, the first line speaks for itself. Mr. Speaker, let us get away from using taxpayers monies to do our parties' political work in the different constituency. Let us get away from the Constituency offices under private entity and private firms. I ask any of my colleagues sitting here today, do you know what kind of disbursement is given? I would like to know, what is the size of the contract that is given and how it is disbursed. Isn't it, Mr. Speaker, if we have to have a fair game, isn't all Constituency offices equal? Shouldn't the money spent on every office the same? Is it that way now? Mr. Speaker, probably there is something going on here, maybe I burn up the AC, I'm getting awfully hot, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Something is happening with the...

Hon. Tobias Clement: Something is happening, but that's ok I am accustomed with the heat. So I will deal with the heat, but the AC is off. Mr. Speaker, and these are the important points to be raised and these points cannot be contested because it is there. Mr. Speaker, I ask you, or I ask any Member here to search the globe, search Commonwealth, search the OECS, search the Caribbean where democracy is practiced and tell me if you ever see this construct here with the Constituency office in any other jurisdiction. It would not happen, it will not happen. You know I did a Workshop in terms of Parliamentary Democracy with the Clerk of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, she was almost agast as to notice how did this ever occur in Grenada. After all, what is it that we are succumbing to? Really? Really? In this day and age, where anybody now could go on any website and read the Standing Orders

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and the Laws that govern all Constituency offices in any of the other jurisdiction and we stood for that. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I believe and I truly believe the power of the MP starts in the constituency and the Constituency offices and when that is taken away from you then everything else is taken away from you. Mr. Speaker, is that the time?

Mr. Speaker: Extra has been given already.

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

Mr. Speaker: Extra has been given already.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Extra has been given already, thank you. Mr. Speaker, therefore, I would make an urgent plea for this Motion where it says here as I wrap up **“NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the House of Representatives hereby authorise the immediate restoration of the financial administration and oversight of the Constituency office to the Houses of Parliament.”** Mr. Speaker could you imagine that the Constituency offices of the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition is run by a private entity? Only in Grenada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Do we have any contributions? Would the seconder to the Motion like to speak to the Motion? Honourable Representative for St. John.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: I am not too *au fait* with the details of the Member for St. George's North East. I know however with the Constituency offices it was the... I think it was the former Clerk of Parliament that wanted it move out from Parliament because they were having difficulty with its management, that is as far as I know but I am not too familiar with the other points raised. I second it because I don't want, it would be embarrassing to have the Opposition Leader not have anybody to second his Motion, so

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I entertain the debate because I think this is what this House is about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think my memory serves me similarly to what the Member for St. John said about the burden that was placed on this Honourable House and the Clerk and the staff of this House and so they requested that it be moved. But I just want to say in defense of the Constituency office in St. Mark that, that office is not an NNP Office. As a matter of fact when the Government and by implication our Party advised us that we should not even use Constituency office, because constituency conveys a sort of political boundary and that we use Parliamentary Office, I was happy to do that. As a matter of fact sometimes people even say that... NNP people would say that NDC people getting more than NNP. And sometimes I get knocked out because of that on services that the office offers.

Our office offers Government Services, they assist whenever there is a need to assist. The SEED people to go round take monies to them. We provide information, scholarships or any opportunities and we make it public. We even had a blackboard and recently I noticed they're not so enthusiastic about putting it out. Well we blame COVID for everything and I said we put these opportunities out there and I think everybody knows assistance for school, for anything that people you know, vulnerable people need, that the Ministry of Social Development may not be able to reach everybody, this is what we do. And we serve, we serve without fear or favour, affection or illwill, Mr. Speaker. And I do not want what is said here to convey the idea that our offices are political offices because while I cannot vouch for everybody, I know that generally our talk is that this and our mandate our directive is that it must be impartial,

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that it must serve the public and this is our guidance and this is what we strive to do and from time to time you will hear every Member saying that.

So I have no problem with the Member having an office. I think he was elected and he has a right. But if the Member imputes improper motive on us in our constituencies or Parliamentary Offices, I think it is very sad for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Anthony Boatwain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to make a few brief remarks on the Motion as presented by the Member for St. George North-East and Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. Mr. Speaker, first I want to associate myself with the sentiments as expressed in terms of the use of the Constituency office. I cannot say that it is being used as a Political Office and therefore I will not say anything more. However, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am a bit concerned when the Leader of the Opposition, as Leader of the Opposition, he does not have an office, or he cannot access his office. I think this is unfortunate and I must say that because his position is statutory. It is almost mandatory that he should have an office and if there are any obstacles in the way of the Leader of the Opposition having his office, I believe that those obstacles should be removed. And I am not talking about Tobias Clement as the Member for St. George North-East. I am talking of the Leader of the Opposition regardless who run. It could be him today, it could be somebody else tomorrow. So I'm saying that whatever blockages there might be, let us see how we could remove those blockages. Let us see how we could give some dignity to the Leader of the Opposition and let him have an office. That's what I will like to say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Patricks West. Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North West.

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Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to share similar sentiments to my colleague from St. Patrick West in terms of ensuring that as her Majesty's Opposition that the office be fulfilled and that there should be an office for the Leader of the Opposition. And any stumbling block in the way should be removed because we do not want to stop democracy and create any problems as it relates to the Leader of the Opposition.

However, I want to address the issue of citing the Constituency office as it is in its present state as a party office. Mr. Speaker, in fact from the interviews to get office managers, this is done by a public servant, not by us as Representatives, and I know a lot of Representatives have issues with that. So it's not only the Leader of the Opposition, we believe that we should be able to choose. But the very fact that it is being done by a public servant speaks to the kind of person and the qualification and what they are looking for, for somebody who can manage the office and all the office staff, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I disagree that it is used as... from where I speak, St. Andrew North-West, my Constituency office can be accessed or is accessed by everyone despite of political affiliation. People are free to come in and they are coming in to such services from me as their Representative, despite of any political affiliation. So I do not want it or the public to believe that this is an NNP Office, in fact, I believe that before people was saying that. However with the whole change in dynamics and where the public servants are also involved, we are getting better services as it relates to Housing, the SEED Officers, they are also accessing the office. We have youth personnel who are working along with young people within our constituency.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am also very happy, Mr. Speaker, that this issue is now present on the table because you know sometimes even after we speak over and over as it relates to constituency, payment to us as Representatives, you're still hearing that as Ministers or as Parliamentary Representatives, we are receiving \$10,000.00 a month. So I'm happy that the Opposition Leader can raise here to say that we as Representatives do not collect one (1) black cent, but every cent to pay the workers is done by a private provider and that speaks volume and that should be recorded and

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that should be known to the entire public of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique because you always read... where is the ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) that you get for a month. In fact, in my constituency, somebody add up a whole year and say, almost half a million dollars I received for the year, and they want to know what I'm doing with it. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that we are here discussing that, so that people would know the truth. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that I'm surprised at the Motion and having been apprised of certain incidents that happened on this compound, Mr. Speaker, while I think all of us hold the same sentiments, that of course, the Leader of the Opposition should be provided with his official office. And, while I do not want to go into the details, I think the Leader of the Opposition should do so himself. The speakers before me have indicated the reason for moving from the Parliament into an office. And, why, perhaps it was not totally done by the Executive office, but was given to a provider through a bidding process, Mr. Speaker. That's how that provider won, they bid for providing the services, Mr. Speaker. And, I could remember and the Leader of the Opposition could say so himself when Parliamentary Representatives offices were being disconnected, the phones were disconnected, the Landlord was moving people out and then we asked, what is, you know, the reason and what can be done. Nearly all the Representatives came together and say, no, we cannot continue as is. And, that is what pushed us away from the Parliament. The Clerk made it abundantly clear that he and the staff were not equipped to do this work and they had many other things to do that demanded their time and this was a lot, a lot more than they never contemplated before, was never part of their remit. And so, we agreed mutually to move into this new construct, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. George North-East and Leader of the Opposition, could tell us if he was having the

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same problems because we know you know, the records are there and why at the point in time, he agreed. If he says, well, I agreed then and this is an opportune time to move back.

But, Mr. Speaker, even before the Resolution came and after the Resolution came, I had in mind and I discussed with other Members of the Executive, speaking with the Clerk, Mr. Speaker, and with you, whether or not the situation is now that he can accommodate and take on the responsibility of doing what the private provider is doing. Mr. Speaker, the private provider will go to the offices, they will bring toiletries. Now, with the COVID they will bring all the sanitising systems, they will bring soap, they will come in, they will meet the Landlord, they try to negotiate rent down and all of these things because every time that bill comes in, everybody wants to keep it down. So, Mr. Speaker, I think I will be carrying out that task between yourself and the Clerk to see whether the office here has the resources to do it, Mr. Speaker.

And, what we must remember is that as Parliamentary Representatives it will not be silos where I will choose this person and say, no. It will be under the purview of the Clerk and your Department, Mr. Speaker. So, if you said, that they must be interviewed, then they will be interviewed and I expect no less, Mr. Speaker, from your Department.

I remember, when it was under this House that you advocated a lot of training, in fact, you yourself trained some of the senior persons, Mr. Speaker, and we were very happy with that. So, if we anticipate, even if, I converse with you and the Clerk, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of this Honourable Place indicated that we will move back there, because it was here and we moved for a reason. So, even if we can come back here all of us realise, even if we dislike the PMO's office saying that we will interview every person there, they must be of good standard, of good quality, we could recommend as many as they want, but they must go and pass the test. Many of us recommended two and three and sometimes they give us high kudos, that was a good person and other cases they send back all three and say get another three. This I expect, Mr. Speaker, to continue because my colleague Member and Leader of the Opposition, one of his main concern was, the public servants say, no, to somebody and introducing somebody

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behind or outside of the interview and the public servants putting the string and say, no way. I expect no less, Mr. Speaker, from this Honourable House. So, that is why after discussing with you and your staff, Mr. Speaker, the intention is to go back to all of us, including the Leader of the Opposition who is also a Parliamentary Representative to say, this is what will be expected by this Honourable Place. And so, we do not get the concept that all of us will be introducing whomsoever we wish and whatsoever we wish within our Constituency office, Mr. Speaker.

And, to talk about sums, it's audited, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Finance look at what is given, that is why when we're cutting, we're trying to cut everywhere and that is why the provider is trying to put rules in place, how you use electricity and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to using the offices as a party office. This is a sentiment that prevailed maybe way back from 2010, remember we started in a place where we had no Parliamentary Offices, we started where the Party paid for its office and as we move into Parliamentary Offices then people maybe continue to, once they see the Representative, to figure it's a Party Office. But, we have told, Mr. Speaker, I have done so on and I know other Representatives have done, we have told the people in the office... that is why it is so good for them to go through the interview with the public servants. They recognise it is taxpayers money, and I've told them with the constituents that no one could stop me from coming here. It is taxpayers' money, and you have your right and I've told the workers and other have done so, that you cannot stop anybody. It is their money that's paying you and must perform your service. And, if the PMO office says based on complaints and it has happened already, they call you in for an interview, the witnesses will come, that may be a constituent, then you're gone, you're not performing well. And, I think if anything happens, Mr. Speaker, even if we change, this situation should prevail.

But, Mr. Speaker, you see the reason for certain action was because some of us wanted to put exactly who we want, wanted to do certain things. So, we must know that whoever we are, this will not prevail. Mr. Speaker, and I could make the recommendation after speaking with you and your staff, you have the capacity, you're

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ready to do it, you would not be budged, will not slow up your work and, I could make a recommendation to the other Members and then we could move, Mr. Speaker, to the restoration, provided that it will be no less strict, no less efficient as what is happening now with a provider. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, on restoration, they may take a provider, may not be the same one, but you would recognise, Mr. Speaker, that outsourcing is the most efficient way in this case. When you look at staff and we have a good idea from the budgetary presentation or discourse of the staff in this place and what they are facing. And, I believe that, Mr. Speaker, the staff will come up with the same thing like that, we may manage a provider, but we do not have the wherewithal. That's how it started you know, if such is the case, Mr. Speaker, then we will continue on this discourse. I don't think, I can't tell the other Members what to say, but in my view, Mr. Speaker, I don't know that a decision should be made before consulting. And, the Leader of the Opposition, knew why we left. So, I think consultation should have gone on either through himself and his office with you and then with the rest of us to say well, I think that the staff is ready, Mr. Speaker.

I looked too at the Motion, Mr. Speaker, and there are certain inaccuracies in the Motion, that I wouldn't want to dwell too much on. But, I think we can come back here, we can do the groundwork and perhaps we'll make a decision and prepare you know, because you cannot say move here without the preparation. We might say within one year, at the end of a certain contract, we may propose that it goes that way, Mr. Speaker. But, in the Ministry, Mr. Speaker, to tell you what the feeling is, but this has been dispensed with a lot of the way. If you ask the Public Servants to get something done, then they tell you, no they couldn't find out. I say ,did you call the Constituency office and you'll see a shock. Don't you know it's taxpayers who are paying them and they are to provide a service for the people there. So, if you want information, you could ask for it because what we do in Ministries is to solve the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique and just as a private provider, the office will help us serve the people. One, we at the Ministry we don't know people in the Constituency because one time we were looking for a contractor, Mr. Speaker, months, so they came to me, help

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me get that contractor, I say did you call the Constituency office. No. I say, call the Constituency office, tell them you are a Government arm, which Ministry you from and you want to find this person. I say they find anybody you wish to know. Mr. Speaker, the next day and the man was supposed to come to sign a contract, you know which he won. The next day the man was in the office. Why? He is a contractor, when he is the roof, he doesn't use his phone, safety. He gets home, Mr. Speaker, after 10 or so in the night, nobody is out there calling, after 4/5, even though you stay in the office 6 or 7 you would not get him. One call to the Constituency office, the office knows him, they were at this door 11:30 in the night, because if you call the phone he is not there, to tell him that he has this contract to do work in the Constituency to help the Constituency and he knowing that not through his fault that he had prevented the constituency from getting service, within three days, Mr. Speaker, he was on the task and since then, Mr. Speaker, I see the attitude changing in many Ministries. They're calling the constituencies when we tell them and reminded them that they're being paid by taxpayers and that relationship is getting more. You want to do a piece of road, you call the office and you say, I want to get it, the Ministry will go out there and find the road. You want to have somebody in Social Services, was not Social Services, you call the office, immediately, they will bring the social worker into the place, into the roads and into the homes, Mr. Speaker. And so, I totally disagree that offices are used and looked at as Constituency offices, Mr. Speaker.

At one time the same Member, then he was not Opposition Leader yet, raised the issue of using the Constituency offices for meetings. And, many of us were in shock, for party meetings, many of us were in shock because we were not doing that. But, since then, Mr. Speaker, once he raised it about two or three years ago, if any one of us, the few of us were doing it, I could say that has been dispensed with, if one of us were failing to follow the rules.

So, I want to remind my colleague Member and Leader of the Opposition that interacting with each other, we could get things done because I'm apprised of what took place here. And, I told the person who reported to me that cannot be possible. No, one

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would go in and start a work and bring builders into a Government Building without going through the Ministry, even if you're paying them yourselves, altering a Government, Mr. Speaker, property or premises, no, it belong, it is ruled by the Parliament, but everything and the work, the question that was asked to me, is seeing this was constructed under the Ministry of Works. I say what was reported to me and when I inquired of the staff in this Ministry, they indicated that they knew nothing about it and they just saw work about to take place.

So, I found that very strange because I thought the Member even unofficially may get to me and say, listen, I want an office for my secretary, that did not happen. So, I still don't know, I have not heard from the Member yet, Mr. Speaker, of exactly what happened in the area. It was reported to me with people of integrity, that workers simply appeared and it sounds strange. So, all of us would want the Member to have good facilities, approaching the Ministry or approaching the Presiding Officer, I think would have done the work, but it appears to me now that since then you know the conversation broke down and all the things that we said here could have been mended by one either speaking to me, not as Leader of Government's Business maybe, but as the Ministry. And, if there is friction between the others, I could have bridged that gap and get together people and say, you must have an office and what is required, etcetera, etcetera. So, I'll just urge my colleague that maybe we could take it here now, all of us want you to have your office. So, let's bridge that, if there is animosity one place, I think you can work through me. I will speak with them and then all of us could sit down and solve your office problem, Mr. Speaker. And, I think from now on, you know we should try to rectify whatever is going on that is not suitable or satisfactory to all parties, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Tobias, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: As I rise now to close this Motion which I can do. Mr. Speaker, as I operated in St. George North-East as the MP, you know I always

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admonish my staff to behave themselves well, and I said to them, I say, you know I walk in St. George North-East now and I could hold my head up without nobody pointing fingers at me, in any political way. And, it is true that the offices, they are there to serve the entire constituency, but Mr. Speaker, when I spoke about the possibility of the office being used for political work, I read an email and all those, the email that I got, everyone else here got it too. And, Mr. Speaker, that should never be.

Mr. Speaker, moreover, I would not delay the point that is made but this building was constructed, tours of the building were taken during construction and Members here were shown where the office of the Opposition Leader and his Secretary should be. Hence, the reason why I believe the floor plan would show that there is a designated office for the Leader of the Opposition and his Secretary, but am I given or allowed to sit in that office today? No. Maybe you can check the drawing and maybe I stand corrected. But, Mr. Speaker, again, I urge us that this construct that we have in terms of Constituency offices with relationship to the Government, to the Executive Branch, it is nowhere else in the Commonwealth, nowhere else where democracy is practiced. And, I do believe that regardless of what was said, as part of this discussion here, it says here, **“Whereas the Clerk of Parliament as the Accounting Officer for Parliament is responsible for ensuring financial accountability for funds expended for the operation of all Constituency offices in accordance with democratic practices.”** Are we not capable inside this House? I am not saying, it said the Clerk of Parliament as directed by the Speaker and not the DPA should direct the Constituency offices or the Houses of Parliament on how to behave. The Houses of Parliament is an independent branch of Government *vis-à-vis* our budget comes from the Executive, just as the Judiciary and this is what I am asking for today. That some degree of space be put between the Legislative Arm and the Executive Branch. Mr. Speaker, I lay the Motion to this House. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Tobias. Just before, I put the question to the Motion to the House, I am a bit confused about the fact that you don't have access

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to an office. One of the largest offices on the area where the offices are, belong to the Leader of the Opposition. There is an office for the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of Government's Business both from the House of Representatives and the Senate. There is an office for the Speaker of the House, one of the President of the Senate and one for the Prime Minister. And, the largest of these offices belong to the Leader of the Opposition.

So, I am yet to, I would have to have discussion with the Clerk to find out why the Leader of the Opposition don't have access to an office. I could understand and I know that we have been trying to organise to get the flash key to enter the building. But, as to not having a key, not having access to the office, I did not know that. I'm sorry you hadn't spoken that to me before. I may have tried to address it. So, at this time I would put the question to the, I would try to look into it and have discussion with the Clerk who is the person responsible for matters of the Parliament. So, I would not put the question in relation to the Motion.

Question put and agreed.

Mr. Speaker: I think the "nays" have won in this case. The first time in this House for a long time.

Motion failed.

Mr. Speaker: I would just like to, because the Motion has already been moved for the adjournment of the House.

Let me urge, especially for Ministerial Statements. Your Ministerial Statements, sometimes you find that you have a lot to talk about, you can put it down in writing so that in that period for Ministerial Statements you can hit the highlights, but because we are moving, you noticed everybody now has their tablet in front of them and we are moving urgently to get to a website where things would be posted and so on. We want

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to say that you can send in your Ministerial Statement and all Members of the House and all people who want to get into the website could be able to read and see what is taking place in your Ministry. So, you would not be curtailed by the little period that you have and that is quarter of an hour. We have increased it from ten minutes to quarter of an hour. So, we want to urge that you prepare it, you can send it. Send it to the Clerk before and we're working with email now, we scarcely have paper. I'm asking for a piece of paper and my secretary tell me she have to search for paper for me because we're going all digital and thing like that.

Honourable Members, I know it's getting late but there is one thing that is bothering me a bit and I need the help. I don't know how, if it has been bothering you, noise. As you get a little older, noise become louder and the noise I'm talking about is those vehicles, those cars that are with modified exhaust and big boom boxes and not playing all the time, but 2 o'clock in the morning, 11 o'clock, 1 o'clock, you are sound asleep and this thing get on there and you can't call the police because by the time you call the police the man gone about his business and sometimes you look for some way to stop the vehicle, but he gone already. And, this is becoming a very dangerous practice because more and more of these vehicles are armed with their big boom boxes and modified exhaust systems. I promise that I would try to raise it with the people in the Traffic Department to see what could be done because I'm sure the volume of the noise is way above the decibel friendly to the ears.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned *Sine Die* at 6:26 p.m.

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