



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Second Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday 3rd May, 2019

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019***

Table of Contents

Attendance	3 – 4
Prayers	5
Minutes	5
Announcements	6
Papers/Reports	6 – 7
Statements by Ministers	7 – 23
Motions	23
Bills	23 – 30
Adjournment	30 – 33

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday 3rd May, 2019*

Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP	- Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport and Implementation
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister with responsibility for 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 Pamela Moses, MP (St. Patrick East)	Minister with responsibility for Tertiary Education, Skills Development and Education Outreach
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development and Religious Affairs
Honourable 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

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday 3rd May, 2019*

Attendance

ABSENT

- | | |
|---|--|
| Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP
(St. George North-West) | - Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology, Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development
(Excuse tendered) |
| Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP
(St. George South) | - Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business |
| Honourable Kate Lewis, MP
(St. Andrew North-East) | - Minister with responsibility for Youth Development
(Excuse tendered) |
| Honourable Tobias Clement, MP
(St. George North-East) | - Member |

**House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday 3rd May, 2019**

**Prayers
Minutes**

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:05 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, let us pray.

(House prayer was said).

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

(Prayers were said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

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

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

Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, 16th April, 2019 be taken as read.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday 3rd May, 2019

Minutes

Announcements by Mr. Speaker

Papers/Reports

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday, 16th April, 2019, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

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

Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Members, I have been informed that the Honourable Kate Lewis would be absent from today's Sitting. Also, that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew North-East would be absent today; the Honourable Member for St. George North-West would also be absent today.

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

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

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday 3rd May, 2019*

*Papers/Reports
Statements by Ministers*

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

- 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, 2017.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the Report of the Director of Audit (Grenada) on the Financial Statements of the T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) is now laid on the Table.

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

Item 10 - Questions.

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

Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

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

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this brief opportunity, this morning, to say congratulations, and, of course, thank the Executive and other members of the Carriacou Maroon Festival Committee, and, of

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

course, the Carriacou and Petite Martinique Festivals Board for the successful staging of yet another Carriacou Maroon Festival, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, our culture during the days of the 26th to the 28th of April was on full display to the world. It was, in fact, Mr. Speaker, a very memorable experience, and, of course, our preliminary reports, Mr. Speaker, indicate that we saw an increase in the number of visitors, visiting our lovely islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique during the period, and, of course, also an increase in the number of persons participating in that all important Festival. Mr. Speaker, I can say that planning for next year's Festival has started in earnest, and, of course, we are looking forward to a bigger and better Festival next year, God's will.

Up next, Mr. Speaker, of course, is the Petite Martinique Whitsuntide Regatta Festival, which Festival is to run from June 7th to the 10th. And, so, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take this opportunity to just extend an invitation to all, to visit Petite Martinique during this important period, to witness a spectacle, put on by the people of Petite Martinique. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Legal Affairs and Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs. Honourable Representative for St. Andrew North-West and Minister for Social Development.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, please permit me to update this Honourable House on two (2) important issues. Education, Mr. Speaker, is an elemental human right, and it is essential for all other human rights. It is a powerful tool by which socially and economically marginalized children can lift themselves out of poverty. It also consists of the right to freedom of education for all. And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Programme for Adolescent Mothers (PAM) is one Agency within our Tri-island State that provides education for teenaged mothers.

Mr. Speaker, in recent times, in the News, we have been hearing that there are some issues at PAM, some issues that can affect the performances of the teenaged mothers. Mr. Speaker, while PAM is an NGO, Government provides two hundred and

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

forty thousand dollars (\$240,000.00) per year, plus the provision of teachers for the Programme for Adolescent Mothers (PAM). And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, we cannot sit idly by while the children's lives are at stake, at present, Mr. Speaker. And, therefore, as a Government, we are committed to providing education for those children.

And, while the issue within PAM is now at the Court and there seems to be many issues with members of the Board, we, as a Government cannot tell the Board what to do, since it is an NGO. However, we can put plans and programmes in place, and we can work together to see how, while all these things are drawn out in the public, we protect those girls. And, therefore, we will be asking for legal guidance from the Ministry of Legal Affairs in how we can protect those vulnerable girls, who are now suffering, because of the issues that are at PAM.

We have asked, based on the allegations by one side, we have asked the Audit to do some investigation for us, but we realize that there are serious issues there, and we will do what it takes, as a Government to protect the vulnerable girls, to ensure that they can get an education, so that they can be lifted out of poverty.

Another issue... May 15th is celebrated as International Family Day. This year, the Theme is: **'Family Matters, Step Up Your Parenting Game.'** So, this year, the Theme is asking parents to step up their game in taking care of their children. This year's activity will be celebrated in St. Andrew, Telescope, on Sunday the 19th, where we will have a Family Fun Day, with games. There will also be a Health Fair with the Ministry of Health and the Grenada Conference of Seventh Day Adventist. We are inviting families to come out there and celebrate with your families. Let us celebrate our mothers, celebrate our fathers and celebrate our boys and girls. Let us work together to build strong families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019*

Statements by Ministers

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, this morning, to update this Honourable House, on programmes and activities of the Ministry of Agriculture, since my last presentation here.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure this Honourable House that the Agriculture Sector can and will be the most viable Sector, but this can only happen, when the issue of Praedial Larceny is put to rest. Considering this, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has embarked on an aggressive pursuit with the Royal Grenada Police Force in resuscitating efforts in curbing this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report today that the Praedial Larceny Multi-Sectorial Advisory Body has been reactivated. The Ministry of Legal Affairs has offered the necessary support, with respect to the Revised Act and as such, I am very optimistic of having such amendments represented before this Honourable House during this first quarter.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will institute a Pilot for the installation of cameras on Farmers' farms. We have started the project, we are ordering the cameras and they are well on the way. This, we believe, Mr. Speaker, will reduce the incidences of Praedial Larceny, significantly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House would recall that during my Budget presentation, mention was made of the Mirabeau Station being developed as one of the flagship stations of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, under the UNDP/JCCP Project, we have just witnessed the completion of two (2) Greenhouses, 43 meters by 29 meters, which will be used to resuscitate the Citrus Industry. One of the Greenhouses, Mr. Speaker, would be used as a Germplasm for citrus and the other, as a Citrus Nursery, as we continue in the fight against the dreaded Citrus Greening Disease. Mr. Speaker, this is, indeed, great news, having not been able to propagate citrus for over the past two (2) years.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is finalizing its plan for the Annual Farm Labour Programme and Plant Distribution. These programmes are planned for mid-June to mid-July. Mr. Speaker, this year's Plant Distribution would see heavy emphasis being placed on Soursop and Avocadoes. Unfortunately, citrus would not be available for

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

distribution this year. While we are aware of demands for citrus, the decision is taken to avoid the spreading of the Citrus Greening Disease, and those two (2) Greenhouses that are already installed, at Mirabeau, will deal with the matter of clean planting material, etcetera. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is encouraging farmers to cultivate guavas, as an alternative, which is also an excellent source of Vitamin C.

Mr. Speaker, the Government remains committed to providing support to the Nation's farmers, notwithstanding the value of the Farm Labour Programme. Each year, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry tries to improve and enhance the delivery of such a Programme. It is a very difficult Programme, because all farmers want to be involved in the Programme, and that is an impossibility, at this point-in-time.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry recognizes that many of the beneficiaries of this Programme leave their farms abandoned for an entire year and return to the Ministry for Farm Labour support each year. This cannot happen. We cannot continue with that. This practice requires the Ministry to hold farmers accountable for the support received, and in this regard, Mr. Speaker, all farmers receiving such support this year would be required to enter into a Contract with the Government of Grenada, through the Ministry of Agriculture.

If we don't get serious about this Programme, Mr. Speaker, we won't get anything out of it. Farmers with even less than quarter of an acre come to the Ministry for support and they are not working, they are home and so; so we have to straighten out this Programme. We have to put our focus, which is soursop and avocados and other things on the farms. We have to make sure that these farms develop and they develop properly.

Mr. Speaker, after some delay, I am pleased to say that the AGRICOM Project is finally moving into full implementation. As of April 30th, 2019, the full complement of staff is in place and the Project Office is equipped and functioning. The Project started the sensitization process with the execution of an Agri-Business Round Table discussion. This event brought together stakeholders from the Agriculture, Financial, Hotel, Restaurant and Retail Sectors.

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019*

Statements by Ministers

The objective of the Agri-Business Round Table was to present the AGRICOM Project and establish opportunities for network between stakeholders under the Theme: **'Building Competitiveness in the Agriculture Sector through the Productive Alliances.'** And, I must say, Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent Round Table discussion for moving the Sector forward through the Programme.

The Project Implementation Unit, Mr. Speaker, will intensify the Project Sensitization effort over the next few weeks. The Project Implementation Unit is now doing all the preparatory work for the issuing of the call of proposals on, or around the 15th of May of this year.

Mr. Speaker, SAEP is moving very soundly and things are moving with that project. The Units, the Extension Officers are in place, Assistants are in place, and they have completed a two-week orientation and are placed in the various Agricultural District, so that they can engage the farmers. Mr. Speaker, I can say much more, but I just want to highlight the partnering of the Ministry with ARIZA Credit Union. They have partnered with us to develop some Training Programmes, and I want to say how very pleased we are. We had a very successful Training Programme in the Northern District and we continue to work along with them. So, I want to give them some kudos for partnering with us, the ARIZA Credit Union, and it was a very successful Training Programme, with young people in Agriculture. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Member for St. Andrew North-West. Honourable Representative for St. Patrick East and Minister in the Ministry of Education.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Mr. Speaker, good morning and to everyone else here today. Permit me to share, from the Ministry of Education, in our Tertiary Education Department, on what has been happening in the area of Scholarships.

Mr. Speaker, thus far, for this year, and we are not even halfway through the year, seventy-three (73) scholarships have been awarded by the Government of Grenada in collaboration with St. George's University. **(Mr. Speaker makes inaudible)**

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019*

Statements by Ministers

comments). Yes, Mr. Speaker... (is that better?). **(Adjusting mike).** Ok, thank you so much. Yes, Mr... right, so thus far, seventy-three (73) scholarships have been awarded from SGU in collaboration with our Government.

In the area of Arts and Sciences, we have a total of forty-one (41) scholarships, eleven (11) of which went to Nursing and thirty (30) went to the regular Arts and Sciences Programmes. This, Mr. Speaker, is valued at a total of US, two million dollars (US\$2 m). Our Medical Scholarships, thirty-two (32) in all, with twenty-four (24) going to Pure Medicine, five (5) to Pre-Medicine and two (2) to Masters in Public Health, one (1) to Veterinary. Mr. Speaker, this, again, has a value of US\$6.5 m.

Six (6) scholarships have been awarded to our Island Scholl's, at a value of EC\$1.2 m by our Government of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, to the outstanding performers in the 2019 CSEC Examination, in the field of Natural Science, Social Sciences, Humanities, Technical, Vocational Education and Information Technology.

We have had some collaboration with the Grenada/Houston Association. They have given seven (7) Bursaries, at a total value of US, five hundred dollars (US\$500.00) each, to outstanding students at various Secondary Schools throughout the Island and the T.A. Marryshow Community College.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with the limited time, let me just mention, briefly, about TAMCC restructuring. I just want to let this Honourable House know that this Initiative continues with a CDB funded consultancy that is undertaken by the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business, at the University of the West Indies. They have been in and out of Grenada, over the last year, or so, and they were here up to two (2) weeks ago, observing all that is going on at the Institution. Mr. Speaker, the overall objective of that Consultancy is to provide the T.A. Marryshow Community College with a gender responsive and socially inclusive Action Plan, that will enhance its capacity to undertake its role, as an exemplary National Tertiary Institution in the 21st Century.

Mr. Speaker, this is valued at US five hundred thousand dollars (US\$500,000.00), and the Action Plan would include improvements in the Finance and Resource Mobilization Plan for TAMCC, improvement in students' service for the Institution, a Gender Action Plan, Environment and Social Management Plan and, finally, Mr.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

Speaker, a Physical Development Plan that is going to cost this Government millions of dollars. The consultation is not yet completed, but, Mr. Speaker, you can imagine how much it will cost this Government to improve the whole structure of TAMCC, to improve the structure of all the three Campuses throughout the island. So, our Government has undertaken this project, and the funds from this will be, as a loan from the Grenada Development Bank (GDB).

And, I just want to end by thanking all who have been involved in the improvement of the Institution, and just note that our country will continue to collaborate with everyone and all who are willing to do so, and we will continue to invest for a premier Tertiary Institution. We will continue to invest in TAMCC, and as a Government, we are committed to doing so. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative and Minister in the Ministry of Education. Honourable Representative for St. Andrew South-East and Minister for Education.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise, this morning, just to make mention of a couple things, as it relates to the Ministry and to give a couple updates on matters that I think are relevant.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the St. Andrew Methodist School. As you know, School re-opened on Monday and we had to take a very tough decision not to re-open that school, and so classes have been suspended, generally, with the exception of Grade (6). And, that has to do, although, publicly, most people are aware, the collapse of the structure that accommodated a water tank in the school yard. And so there are some other issues, structurally, in the building that we felt it was necessary to protect the children and not have them go back to school until we are very sure that the Engineers are satisfied that the school is in a state that the children can all be accommodated, because, as you know, that school is one of our largest Primary Schools in that area.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

So, Mr. Speaker, where we are, the Ministry of Works, the Engineers, the Team went to that school, the assessment was done, the reports submitted, the scope of works is completed, as well, and we are looking at a plan of action to ensure that in the shortest possible timeframe, we can have the students back at that school. Very important, the preparation for CPEA is not being affected, as the students are accommodated in a wooden building that was used for another class. We have shifted that class, of course, out and the CPEA students are now accommodated there.

Constantine School, which has also been publicly referred to; there were some questions, as it relates to mold in that school. We brought in the experts from the Ministry of Health. The concerns are not as wide and detailed as those expressed publicly, and so the official report would have guided us, as to what is needed, in terms of action. But, Constantine School, as I said before, because of the humidity in that area, most of us know it is very similar to the Grand Etang area, what would happen if we had a school in Grand Etang; because of the humidity, there are always challenges there. We want to thank St. George North-West, their team, the Environmental Wardens, were very helpful. They went in and they would have done some trimming and cutting and drainage and so on, to assist, to ensure that the water is managed in a way that we don't have the level of humidity within the classroom area.

Professional Cleaners, also, were engaged and that process continues. There is a particular classroom of concern, and a particular area, so they are doing some professional cleaning, you know, removing any doubts in persons' minds, despite what the Ministry of Health has confirmed. We have brought in the Bureau of Standards, they have done their official checks. The report shows that it is not as was indicated, but, again, we want to satisfy persons, mentally and otherwise, so we have gone even beyond what we were asked to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also mention, not in detail, that we continue to work on some of the schools we have mentioned before, in terms of upgrade, in terms of expansion, a detailed report would follow soon.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

In terms of the marking of SBAs, Mr. Speaker, that has been in the public domain for some time. Sometime ago we had a call from the Grenada Union of Teachers, asking Teachers not to mark SBAs. Fortunately, by that time that the call came most of the SBAs were already marked, so the question was really about entering the scores.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say, as I have said before, at the time of the call we had, probably about three (3) schools that did not enter scores, and I did indicate, publicly before that all schools went on to enter scores and the process continues. We want to wish our students all in the best in this year's exam, under the circumstances that they face. In light of all of this, we thought it was necessary, proactively, to engage CXC, and so the Head of CXC is currently in Grenada on a three-day visit. Very, very successful, yesterday, his engagement with teachers, feedback was extremely positive. The feedback that I have got is, you know, we are very, very happy for this. We have learnt a lot. Things we should have known, we probably did not know. As a matter of fact, one teacher said to me, she felt really bad, when she was directed to the CXC website for some information that has been there for years, that she was not aware of. So, Mr. Speaker, the Team went to meet with parents yesterday, a group of parents, and, again, the feedback from parents was extremely positive, which tells me that sometimes the problem is information; that we need to inform people more, we need to educate people more, we need to make sure that people are aware more of things that probably they should be aware of.

And, I want to make mention of a point that came out yesterday in the session with teachers, very critical, that SBAs are not meant to be a final exam. And, sometimes you listen to persons and you get the impression that an SBA is an activity that a student has a one-shot at, and that is totally against the intention and the reason why SBAs were introduced in the first place. SBAs were introduced to give the children all the possible opportunities to develop their skills. And, so, sometimes one particular skill, the child may get three (3) different opportunities to improve on that particular skill, and so, we have to make sure that we work with our teachers. And, I believe the Ministry of Education has a lot of blame to take, as it relates to that, and I am first to say this, because we ought to be doing far more supervision and monitoring of what is

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

happening in our classroom, because if a child is starting an SBA two (2) weeks before the deadline, something is fundamentally wrong somewhere. And, so it means that we have to take responsibility, we have to accept responsibility, and it cannot be business as usual, as it relates to our officers, who are supposed to be monitoring what is happening in our classroom.

Mr. Speaker, as I am saying this, at this time, CXC should be meeting with officials at the Ministry of Education. So, we are not just doing teachers, parents; our Ministry officials must also hear the message, and they must also be reminded of what their role is in this process.

I want to also quickly mention, at this time today, we have a team that is in Antigua, unfortunately because of this Sitting, the Clerk is not able to be there in another capacity. But, Mr. Speaker, this visit is extremely important and that's why I am mentioning it. We've been speaking a lot about laptops for every child and sometimes it's thrown at you, politically, and I always respond that if I knew, then, what I know now, I would have discouraged our Political Organization from that commitment. Because, you see, Mr. Speaker, it's not really just about providing a child with a Laptop; it's so much more than a Laptop; not a Laptop, but a Tablet is what we said then.

As a matter of fact, most of our children in Grenada already have a Tablet, anyway, and they probably have more than one, and more than just a Tablet. So, the question has to be, how do you ensure that there's a platform, not just a Tablet, a platform that caters for the development of students and support of teachers in a holistic way, and that is the focus of this Government. So, we're not contained and we're not focused too much on a Tablet for children, we're looking at a broader picture. So, yes, a child can have a Tablet, and we've learnt from the countries who have said, please don't go there, you have probably heard us announced, you've probably saw us did it, but the disaster that we ended up with, please don't go there. So, we have been examining what is the best route and, we prefer to not deliver on that promise to make sure that we end up in a place where we are all better off, because of what we introduce.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

So, right now, that team is in Antigua, because Antigua has introduced a platform for learning that we believe it's a model. Other countries have gone on. The BVI has gone on to adapt. Trinidad is now looking at adapting. St. Lucia has gone on, and we believe it's the right time for us to do so. But, Mr. Speaker, we've started the process here, in terms of the platform, with the MGRM Project, and, Mr. Speaker the benefits. Currently, we are training Principals, we are training Teachers, because that's another thing. Having Tablets, without proper training of Teachers, without a content for that Tablet, it's useless. So, we are working on content, we are working on connectivity, that's another important pillar. We are working on training and we are working on the right device, the right platform to facilitate what we want to achieve. So, it's not really about what, but it's about the end product, what do you want to achieve.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, about two (2) weeks ago, I had the opportunity to speak at the Grenada Union of Teachers' Annual Conference. And, one of the things that I did during my presentation was to congratulate the new Executive and to remind them that one year ago I extended an invitation to meet monthly with the Executive of the Grenada Union of Teachers. I am happy to say that the new Executive has accepted. And, so I received a call requesting that we have a meeting, which takes place today, and I am extremely happy about that and again, want to extend best wishes to the new Executive. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Education. Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs (sorry), Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Honourable, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform this Honourable House and by so doing, inform the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique of just one issue that is being taken up under the Ministry of Tourism. There are many, but in the interest of time, I would just confine myself to the issue of Airlift, which, of course, involves LIAT. And, I am very much aware that Grenadians all got a scare, in recent times, when an utterance was made that LIAT was going to sell some planes and that LIAT was going

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

to shut down its services. And, while this, in and of itself, was not good news, I think it made us all aware of the importance that LIAT plays in our being able to move within the Region and even outside of the Region.

Mr. Speaker we have had several meetings with LIAT. As a matter of fact, a few days ago, last Friday, two (2) members of the Management of LIAT came down to meet with a team from the Airlift Committee, and we had discussions, as to how we could look, what is the way forward for LIAT, because, obviously, LIAT is in very serious financial... a very financial situation crisis. A few weeks ago, they sent out an SOS to all Member States to put an immediate injection of finances into LIAT, otherwise they could not operate.

I am pleased to say that our Prime Minister and Minister for Finance recognized the importance of that, and the urgency of it, and contributed \$1.3 m to the cause. Now, some people were happy, some people were not, some people could think of a lot of other things \$1.3 m can do. I can sit here and think of a number of things I have on my list for St. Mark, for example, and I am sure everywhere has similar things. But, Mr. Speaker, reason is very important. And, I just want to take this opportunity, through you, I want to beg your indulgence, to just read a little bit of statistics on Grenada only.

Flights that take people from Grenada, or from other destinations within the Caribbean to Grenada, and, this doesn't take us to further afield like the United States, because some people do connecting flights, through Barbados to the US, when they cannot get local flights. Some people do connecting flights to UK, through Barbados, as well. But, the number of passengers for arriving through LIAT to Grenada in 2018 was forty-four thousand, three hundred and thirty-three (44,333) persons; forty-four thousand (44,000) people, forty-four thousand, three hundred and thirty-three (44,333) person arrived, and between arrivals and departure LIAT accounted for ninety-one thousand, five hundred and thirty-seven (91,537) persons.

So, \$1.3 m, when you look at ninety-one (91) million, in excess of ninety-one (91) million persons, one \$1.3 m is well justified. Forty-four thousand (44,000) people come into our country, generate income, many of them as tourists, many of them would be people from the Diaspora coming back to their country, but the majority come as tourists

*House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019*

Statements by Ministers

and they do spend money and they are important to the Economy of this country.

(Applause)

These people, who visit our country, by themselves, could generate the \$1.3 m, and much, much, more than that, so I think it's important. Sometimes people make utterances, why spend that money, but, Mr. Speaker, when the threat was made that LIAT would shut down, I believe all of us understood the importance of keeping LIAT afloat. So, I am happy to say that the threat would not be carried out. We are hoping that, progressively, political interference would be removed from the Management of LIAT, because we expect LIAT and the mandate LIAT was given on Tuesday, when I went to a meeting in Antigua, was that they must begin operations, as a business. But, operations, as a business mean that the flights that are not viable, the routes they say that are not viable, not giving the kind of yields of passengers that could make a profit, or even a breakeven could potentially be taken out, and only the lucrative flights like the Grenada/Barbados routes and so on would be left.

And, LIAT understands the importance of servicing the non lucrative flights, as well, because let's say, for example, Grenada/St. Vincent is not yielding the amount, but somebody wants to go to St. Vincent from Grenada, or a Vincy wants to come to Grenada, what happens to these people? They are important within the CARICOM mix. And, therefore, while the yield may not be satisfactory, but the demand is still there. So, LIAT has come up with a formula called the MRG, and that means Minimum Revenue Guarantee. It means that every flight that takes off, LIAT flight that takes off, must expect a breakeven revenue. It also means that flights that have less than that are at risk of not going at all. So, maybe the Ferry that we have been talking about, we have to start conversations on that. But, the formula recommends that the flights that do not yield a certain amount, and what they have done is calculate the routes, and what is the breakeven number of seats that must be occupied. And, sometimes you go on a LIAT and the plane is full or pretty full. Sometimes you go, and you can count the number of heads on the LIAT flight. And, so we have to ask ourselves, you know, how can LIAT survive with the ups and the downs?

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

You go on a Jet Blue, from New York to Grenada, and it is full, and there is a demand now for more flights from New York to Grenada. There's even a demand for Canada, even though Air Canada is doing daily flights. There is a demand for that during certain periods. So, imagine for LIAT where the demand may not be so high, how can they compete with other Airlines? Not compete, in terms of where they travel to, the routes, but compete, in terms of generating income. And, so that formula was presented to us that when above a certain threshold, Governments do not have to pay anything. But, below that, if they do not reach break-even, Governments have to contribute, and, therefore, we have been looking at that. The team of us who met with them, didn't like the formula, and we asked them to revisit the formula, but we are aware that it's a business, and for LIAT to continue to run to service one hundred thousand (100,000) people per year, that they must take a businesslike approach.

But, we have also said to them, knowing full well that some routes are very good for Grenada. Grenada is one of the three (3) countries in the Caribbean, only three (3) counties showed growth in terms of visitors and travel in and out of destinations, one of three (3). All of the others showed either the similar level as before or they decreased. And, therefore, we are doing very well, in terms of visitors from the Caribbean, and we need to maintain this. So, Mr. Speaker they're going to revisit the formula.

But, we also said that when we exceed, and you make profits, we have to look at how we can offset a bit what Government needs to pay for the non-productive flights and give us some credit for that. So, hopefully, we would not have to pay as much. But, we in the Ministry of Tourism, we are aware that we must do more marketing, we must create more incentives for people to visit Grenada, so that our flights are always above the breakeven level, and we already have started to have meetings. We will be having a number of Consultations in the next few weeks.

On Tuesday, when I went to Antigua, there was a Consultation with the Private Sector, and I am pleased to say that there is a growing PPP relationship between the Government Entities and the Private Sector, and that has augured well. They have come up with excellent suggestions. They are willing to help us execute those and

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers

implement those suggestions, but very importantly, several of them have come up with the finances to assist... to assist in the financing of those things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to let the Grenadian public know that they can rest assured that for now the planes would not be sold. There is not a serious risk of LIAT shutting down, but there is a critical issue that we must look at, the flights that are not viable. What we're going to do? We either pay, or the flights would be discontinued. We are in these discussions, and several proposals were made as to how we could keep LIAT viable. We are all in this together, because, Mr. Speaker, several of the Islands have said they would look to other Airlines. But, when we looked at the track record, all of the smaller Airlines that came within the Region to provide services, they folded in short time. LIAT is the only Airline that has survived over the years and has continued to work for the Region at a deficit.

Now, LIAT is not paying me to do that, but the statistics are there. And, therefore, since LIAT belongs to us, I want to say that I support, very heavily, working with LIAT to make it viable, financing when it is necessary. Because, Mr. Speaker, we do not talk about it, but most Airlines that come here, we are either contributing in one way or the other or have contributed in the past. American Airlines, we contributed heavily to get them to come back to Grenada to provide services for Grenada. And, now they are doing so well, and we do not have to pay anything, at all, because their flight is full, so we do not have to contribute anymore, but there was a time when we did. And, we hope that in the near future, similar things will happen with LIAT, if all of us put ourselves around LIAT and give the support. But, we have said to them and my Minister for Finance said to me that I must say that, and I told them I couldn't come back home without saying it. Unless, there is less outside influence in LIAT, and unless LIAT is allowed to operate as a business and not on the whims and fancies of some shareholders, we would continue to be in that problem and Grenada will not put any monies into LIAT, if that situation occurs.

But, Mr. Speaker, the public will hear much more about that, through other means, and certainly to this very Honourable House, but I am happy that we are doing what we have to do and others have seen what we have to do. As a matter of fact, two (2) other

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Statements by Ministers
Motions
Bills

countries committed to helping LIAT financially, and Grenada has paved the way in that regard, and I am proud of my country. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 13 - Personal Explanations.

Item 14 - Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion 14 (a) standing in my name, which reads:

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

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

Motion approved.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019***

Bills

Ag. Clerk: An Act to amend the Annual Stamp Tax Act, Cap. 16A shortly entitled, The Annual Stamp Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: 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 Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. Mr. Speaker, the Annual Stamp Tax applies to all Companies and is based on sales, receipts from sales, gross sales, that's how this tax is. So, even before you deduct anything on your gross sales, you are charged the Annual Stamp Tax.

And, in 2013, when we came in, the Annual Stamp Tax was at the rate of 1% of your gross sales, and in 2015 it was amended to .75%. And, after a request by the Private Sector to consider the rate, as I said, because it's based on gross sales, in 2017, the rate was dropped further to .7%. So, the current rate for the Annual Stamp Tax is .7%. And, we have listened to the Dealers/Suppliers of petrol products, who complained that the margin, this Annual Stamp Tax on gross sales is affecting their business and, therefore, they cannot replace their tanks. They would have the tanks there for a number of years that need to replace, the storage tanks, and they were finding it very difficult, because of the payment of the Annual Stamp Tax and the fixed margin.

Now, the first thing that had to be done, Mr. Speaker, is that we had to make an amendment to repeal Section 15A of the principal Act. Under Section 15A of the

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

principal Act, it says: "Where a person fails to register, in the manner required by Section 3A or to furnish the Comptroller with information under the registration process, in breach of Section 3A, he or she is liable to a penalty of two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00).

This Section had to be repealed because it conflicts with Section 77 of the Tax Administration Act, 2016, which also provides for a penalty. And, what the Tax Administration Act says: "Wherever there is a conflict, then the Tax Administration Act will take precedence." And, because of this conflict, we had to now move to repeal Section 15A of the principal Act and allow Section 77 of the Tax Administration Act to take precedence; so that's the first change that we are making.

The second one is to amend Section 19 of the principal Act, and insert a new subsection, which will exempt Licensed Service Stations from paying Annual Stamp Tax on the petrol component of their sales. Now, I need to explain that, Mr. Speaker. It says: "The Annual Stamp Tax on the petrol component of the sale will be exempted..." because, you know, Service Stations now sell all different types of products. They have lubricants, all sorts of thing you could get for your vehicle and others. Some Service Stations have Mini-Marts, and it is registered under the same Company name. So, in this case, only the petrol component will be exempted from the Annual Stamp Tax, not the other things that they sell, because part of the problem with the petrol is that, they might say, well, why give it only to the petrol sales.

But, Mr. Speaker, the margin, the profit margin for this Company and the Dealers are fixed by Law; they have fixed margin. For gasoline, one dollar and twenty-five cents (\$1.25) per imperial gallon for the Company, that's their fixed margin, and for the Dealers, ninety-eight cents (98¢), on an imperial gallon. So, their margin is fixed, and then you're asking them to pay the gross... on their gross makes it very difficult for them. So, they have approached the Government to increase the margins. And, we say, well, there are other things we can do for you to help you, and one of the things we could do is to look at the Annual Stamp Tax and exempt the sale of petrol products from the Annual Stamp Tax, and that is what this amendment is doing.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

For diesel the Company margin in one dollar and twenty-five cent (\$1.25) and for the Dealers it's .75, seventy-five cents (0.75¢) is their profit margin, which I indicated is fixed by Law on the sale of their product, that is what the profit margin would be. And, therefore, this amendment today is to exempt the petrol component of it from paying the Annual Stamp Tax of .7%.

And, this would be effective, Mr. Speaker, from the 1st of January, 2019, because it's an Annual Stamp Tax. So, if you start it in June, then you would have to say, well, you have to pay from January to June; so it's going to be Gazetted, and it would be done, retroactively. From the 1st of January, 2019, this amendment will take effect to give them the full relief, so that they would not have to pay the Annual Stamp Tax for 2019 when they are filing the 2020.

So, that is the effect, as I said, to give the space to the Companies and the Dealers, the retailers, so they can undertake the necessary expansion, one of which is replacing their tanks that they have for the storage of the diesel and the gasoline must meet certain requirements, international. They have to meet ISO standards, because you're storing gasoline and diesel, and in order to bring them up to the ISO standard, they need to invest in these new tanks and to do further expansion. And, so this amendment is intended to assist, to provide that sort of relief to the Company and the Dealers in petroleum products only. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member, before I propose the question, I realized that we're talking here of a money Bill which will require...

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that we have the permission of Governor-General to proceed.

Mr. Speaker: Alright. Thank you.

Question proposed.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

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

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the amendment, as presented by the Member for St. David and to make a few comments on the Bill, as presented.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Office of the Clerk of Parliament for the timely submission of making the necessary Papers available; **(applause)** not the six (6) days notice, but I think we could live with two/three days, so I am satisfied. I got my copy, electronically, and when I came here I got the hard copy.

I also wish to commend the Drafting Unit of the Department of Legal Affairs for what I consider to be a more thorough explanation of the Bill, and at the same time, to make available a copy of the principal Act, because, there are times when you have to make amendments and you make reference to certain Sections in the principal Act, and you do not have the Act. But, now you can refer to the principal Act, and I think this is very good, and I want to commend the Legal Department, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Bill for a couple of reasons; first of all, .7% might sound small, but we have to look at two (2) issues, the financial implications, as well as, the psychological implication of such a move.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that this Administration has been criticized severely, for imposing during this Structural Adjustment Programme, twenty-eight (28) new Taxes and Levies and Duties; although I am hard-pressed to identify those twenty-eight (28) new Taxes, Duties and Levies. But, we have seen, Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of years and at the end of the three (3) year Structural Adjustment Programme, that Government has taken a number of measures to ease the tax burden on the Grenadian people. **(Applause)**

We have seen the reduction in the Personal Income Tax. We have seen the exemption of pensions from the Tax. We have seen reduction in Corporate Tax, Mr. Speaker, and these are all positive moves, and now we are looking at another amendment that will provide additional benefits. So, I think Government must be

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

commended for taking those measures, Mr. Speaker, although, Government cannot be irresponsible. We have to be very careful, because if we do not manage the affairs properly; if we are not fiscally responsible, Mr. Speaker, we can go back to the pre-2013 days, and we do not want to go back to those days. So, we have to be guarded, we have to be very careful, as to exactly the measures that we take in order to ease the tax burden and to provide benefits to our people.

But, Mr. Speaker, in presenting the Bill, I was hoping to get from the Member for St. David a more, what do I call it, well, the financial implications, yes. You talked about .7 of 1% in stamp duties. But, to the ordinary person, what does that mean, in terms of actual benefits? What is the benefit? How will the Dealers benefit? What is the quantum of benefits? How much money will they be realizing and saving from that move? What is the size of the stamp tax, or the petrol component on the total taxes to the Dealer? Is it more than 75%/80%; to some Dealers, it might be over 80%, you know, so it will vary.

So, I want to have an idea, as to exactly, the financial implications. And, I understand what he said, in terms of how they will use it, but how much money will be realized from that move, removing that .7% on the petrol component of the sales of the Service Dealer. That, to me, Mr. Speaker, is important, and will the ordinary consumer receive any benefit from that? Yes, the Dealers will benefit, but will the consumers themselves, benefit from such a move? If that could be provided, Mr. Speaker, I will be happy, because I am still not clear. I have not done the calculations, as to exactly how much money we are talking about with such a move. And, I will be happy to get that kind of information from the Member, when he returns to speak on the Bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019***

Bills

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Let me thank the Member for St. Patrick West for his contribution, which is usually very enlightening. As he correctly pointed out, the Government is moving in the direction of gradually reducing taxes, but we have to be prudent, because we do not want to get back to where the situation was.

With respect to the direct benefit, as I mentioned, the margins for the Dealers, they are fixed, that won't change. So, you wouldn't see a reduction in the price, and the price of gas, you know, it's based on world market price on oil, and every 18th the price keeps going up and down, based on the changes.

With respect to the amount, that information I was not able to attain before coming here. The Ministry of Finance was asked... When this came out, was asked for the calculation of how much money, really, that would be given up, but that was not made available at the time of my presentation. But, I am sure that we would get this information to look at, at the Cabinet meeting, and it would be made available to the Member. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member and to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member 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 put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019***

Bills

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report Adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member for St. David.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

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

Item 17 - Public Business.

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise to move the Adjournment, I crave your permission to compliment yourself, Mr. Speaker and the staff, as we embark now on a regimented structured programme for meetings of the House. And, I am very pleased to hear the Member for St. Patrick West complimenting the Clerk and

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

Adjournment

the rest of your staff for submitting the documents, not, as he said to meet the standard, but we are getting there, Mr. Speaker.

And, I know that it is your concern and the members of staff, in order to ensure that we give the documents to everyone on time. And, I see that even those in the 'Other Place' have a good idea of what is going on. So, I think we are moving there, Mr. Speaker, and I want to indicate, too, that the Drafting Unit, Legal Affairs, they have been doing a significant amount of this, but, perhaps, they are now sending it to everybody. But, I know they have been sending the Bills and things to, maybe, the Leader of Government's Business, and, perhaps, to other persons, but it is good to hear now that everyone is getting it, Mr. Speaker.

And, I just want to ask that they work together with your staff, Mr. Speaker, and myself, to ensure that we get the Laws. The Laws of Grenada, I think, should be given to every Member, but we don't want the big box that we got before. We are Online, which means, Mr. Speaker, that we must pay for the subscription; and once Legal Affairs tells us, I will take it, perhaps, to the appropriate sources and we could get the subscription. It should not be a lot, maybe a couple thousand pounds, but that will be very necessary and, as we come up with the other Motions to do things electronically, I think we will be there.

Mr. Speaker I beg to move the adjournment of this Honourable House **sine die**.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Just before, may I take this opportunity to make just a few observations. One of it, I should have made at my Announcements; that is, that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which will be holding its 44th Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and Atlantic Region for July 12th to 19th, 2019.

In this regard, Grenada would be represented by the Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament, Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams, who would be representing the

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

Adjournment

Women's Parliamentary Caucus and Mr. Neilon Franklyn, who would be representing the Youth and Youth Parliament Debate. So, four (4) persons would be representing Grenada at that Conference from the 12th to the 19th.

I also want to say that, Honourable Parliamentary Representatives, the Adjournment gives the opportunity to speak to your Constituents. We want to encourage... we want to encourage Parliamentary Representatives to take the opportunity. You have, I think according to the Standing Orders, ten (10) minutes... **(Ag. Clerk advised the Speaker it was fifteen (15) minutes)**... fifteen (15) minutes, we have increased it. We have increased to fifteen (15) minutes to speak to your Constituents. You are here to represent them. They want to hear you; speak to them. We hear about the Ministries, but they do not hear you speak to them.

So, I want to encourage Parliamentary Representatives to take the opportunity, at Sittings of the House, and as we try to make our Sittings schedule, we would have more time, as we would have a scheduled meeting, so you want to take that opportunity. I would say to the Constituents out there, be prepared to listen to the Parliament, because your Ministers and your Parliamentary Representatives would be speaking to you. I would tell them that, so if you did not speak with them, it means you're disobeying the Speaker.

Secondly, I want to commend the Ministry of Education for its move in taking the initiative that you are taking to bring learning, to make learning more accessible, and the weight of the books on the children's back, which, to me, is causing a serious problem nowadays, because they have this bag on their backs and so on, it's not doing very well to them.

But, I want us to hasten with caution. Grenada invested a lot of money. The Government of Grenada, this Government, invested money to bring to each Secondary School, Computer Laboratories that were supposed to have aided in the teaching. But, because it was not done, having prepared the Teachers, it was used to teach Computer Science, and the whole main focus of it was lost.

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 03rd May, 2019

Bills

Adjournment

So, we want to make sure that we train the people, who are going to be implementing this, and now you have the students, who are much more advanced than twenty (20) years ago, so it should be now an easier task. But, we want to make sure that the people who would be implementing, who would be using it to teach, know what they're doing, because the students are smart, as far as Technology is concerned, and every five (5) year old is becoming smarter every day, because they are being born with the Computer, whereas we brought the Computer to meet us. So, I want us to tread very cautiously on that.

It is heartening to hear that LIAT would not be sold, or closed down, because I was worried about my ability to travel, now, if anything happened to LIAT, so that was great news, and I thank them for it.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned sine die @ 10:25 a.m.

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