



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday 30th October, 2020

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***House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 30th October, 2020.***

Attendance

PRESENT

Mr. Speaker
The Honourable Michael Pierre

Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Forestry and Labour
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	- Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information

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Attendance

Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and Minister wrf Hospital Services and Community Health Services
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of the Opposition

ABSENT

Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	- Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management (Excuse tendered)
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***Prayers
Minutes***

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

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

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of the Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: This Honourable House is now in Session.

Clerk: Item 3 - Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a New Member.

Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 11th September, 2020 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

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Minutes

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 11th September, 2020, 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 Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 9th October, 2020 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 9th October, 2020 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes Confirmed.

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

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Announcements
Papers / Reports

Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, just a few announcements. Members are asked to read and review the Corporate Plan of the Houses of Parliament, which present the plan for the next three (3) years. (This thing is not moving from where it is).

(Clerk converse with the Speaker)

Mr. Speaker: And, secondly, we have an invitation to participate in a Westminster Seminar, where seven (7) persons associated with the Parliament are asked to participate, two (2) Senators, two (2) Parliamentarians and three Members of the staff of Parliament, the Clerks and so on. So, we would have to give today, the names of the persons, who would be willing to participate. Further information is sent to you electronically, and so I would ask after the Adjournment, for Members who are willing to participate, two (2) Parliamentarians, two (2) Senators and three (3) persons from the staff of the Parliament, the Clerk and two (2) others. End of my announcements.

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

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

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with the Papers, and I was listening for your announcements, and I don't know if it has reached you, but the Prime Minister has indicated that he is not of the best, what we say, ill-disposed a bit, and he will try to be here. But, it doesn't appear that he is here. So I am advising the House. I know that he may have tried to get to you, Mr. Speaker.

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Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that following Papers be laid on the Table.

1. Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended 31st December, 2019;
2. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the National Insurance Board for the year ended 31st December, 2019;
3. Audited Financial Statements of the Grenada National Stadium Authority for the financial years ended 31st December, 2016 and 2017; and
4. The Financial Statements and Audit Report, thereon, of the Grenada Airports Authority for the financial year ended 31st December, 2017.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, it is ordered that these Papers and Reports are lie 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 Minister for Community Development, Housing and Hospital Services.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since our last Sitting, I have been given additional responsibilities, that of Minister within the Ministry of Health with responsibility for Hospital and Community Health Services.

I want to go on record, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Prime Minister for the faith he has shown in me, in asking me to take on such a significant portfolio, added with Social Development, which is already a heavy portfolio.

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But, Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on record, while the Prime Minister added these extra responsibilities, it is important to note that extra remuneration was not added. I think it comes with the territory. It's what you get as a politician. But, Mr. Speaker, commitment and passion are what are important in those important agendas.

When the Prime Minister made his position clear, I felt fearful and anxious. But, Mr. Speaker, at this period, I am settling down with the task ahead. Many long days and even longer nights, working with the team from the Ministry of Health, to deal with all the issues that are confronting us, even during the pandemic, when our Senior Minister is really dealing with all those issues that affect us, as it relates to COVID-19, and those other issues that are already pertinent at this particular period.

Mr. Speaker, we have begun to build a good team, at the various Management levels, headed by our newly acting Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Hannah St. Paul, who in these early days has already proven herself to be a tower of strength.

Mr. Speaker, even while speaking, I want to place on record my commendation to the entire team of the Ministry. I also wanted to thank the Minister for Health, my colleague, Minister Nickolas Steele, for his advice, his guidance and his counsel, as well as, his leadership in promoting the understanding that both Ministries will have to work closely together, if we are to achieve the goals we have collectively set, and if we have to fulfill the mandate of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on record, coming in just maybe less than a month, or a month before the next Budget, it means that after working along with the different Management Team and identifying the way forward, we would have had to work overnight, in terms of getting assistance, in getting into the Budget for 2021, because we cannot talk reform without talking being involved in the Budget and having allocation.

And, so I want to also place on record my commendation to the entire team. But, I want to single out, this morning, Miss Carmel St. Louis, the Chief Planner in the Ministry of Health, for her hard work and dedication, even at a time when she was ill. When she was home on sick leave, we had to be going back and forth, trying to

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organise and prepare documentation to ensure that we dealt with all those issues to get into the Budget for 2021.

There is no doubt that a lot of work has to be done in the area of Hospital Services that has proven a major challenge throughout our history. But, Mr. Speaker, we shall not be daunted. We do not see it as a historic challenge, but instead a historic opportunity. We are determined to lead a new trust in the Sector, and we have already sent out the signal that it will not be business, as usual. The people of Grenada are rightly depending on us to succeed in this venture. Health, Mr. Speaker, is wealth. You cannot do anything if you do not have health, and therefore, as a Government, the entire team, we are committed to improving.

I am pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that from next Monday, the 2nd of November, there will be less waiting time for people having to do surgeries. A new plan has been developed for this Department. In terms of strengthening capacity to provide services, we have purchased and are purchasing the necessary equipment needed within the Department. We have also hired a Paediatric Surgeon and Urologist in the person of Dr. Josè Tristan, who is a seasoned surgeon, Mr. Speaker, with a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Speaker, I will also like to place on record our immense gratitude for the widespread support, for the voluntary clean-up of the surroundings of the General Hospital two weekends ago. The spirit of national commitment is highly commended to be replicated and should be replicated in all facets of the national public life.

I have seen in the public domain, Mr. Speaker, uninformed comments, which suggest that the clean-up exercise took place without consideration of all the values that should go into such an activity, at such an important Facility. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The cleaning exercise was carried out under the complete guidance and supervision of the Management of the Hospital. They were involved at every stage, including being there on the Saturday to supervise and to ensure that the outline directions were properly executed. Comments that suggest otherwise are grossly unfortunate, to say the least. But, Mr. Speaker, we are not daunted, we will press on. Mr. Speaker, so that's speaking about the baby. You know,

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in a family you have the baby and the baby gets a little more extra attention, but you cannot forget the rest of the children.

So, I want to turn to the Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment, and to update Cabinet to say that the Support for Education Empowerment and Development, (SEED) Programme is currently in its recertification method. And, recertification, Mr. Speaker, is the reapplication of the Grenada Living Condition Index (GLCI), to determine the eligibility of existing SEED household. Mr. Speaker, after every two (2) years, there ought to be recertification according to the Manual. The first thing I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, SEED is Support for Education. It also provides assistance for elderly citizens. SEED is not a pension. It's a conditional cash transfer that provides for the most vulnerable, for persons. It really aims at persons who are unemployed, and it's meant for graduation. So, when you get gainfully employed, you are supposed to report that I am employed, so you're no longer supposed to be on the programme, but, Mr. Speaker, people are not doing that. And, therefore, it is important that after two (2) years, we deal with recertification. This recertification will be at a phased approach, where we target those families whose condition have improved, because you can see, you know that they go into a job, and, also, Mr. Speaker, those beneficiaries who are receiving through financial institutions.

Over the last few months, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity to go into the different villages and communities and to see, in terms giving the assistance, and so we were able to identify certain issues, but we weren't able to deal with those who are getting in the bank. So, they will be the first who will be part of the recertification. I am pleased to say that nine hundred and eighteen (918) letters were issued to the selected household in the first phase.

The team for recertification will be led by the Social Worker, who will be responsible for ensuring that the process is conducted in a transparent and fair manner; that the data collected is an accurate reflection of the household. All teams have already been established. In the data of collection, the SEED officers will be involved; however, there will be rotation. So, if you're from St. John's, then maybe you'll be

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working in St. Mark, to give an opportunity to work elsewhere, whereas the other people can collect the information within your area.

Assessment

The household data will be assessed using the GLCI. The results will be carefully analysed to determine the impact of SEED on this beneficiary's household since their enrolment.

Expectations

- i. That data collected will ensure that the Beneficiaries' Management System is updated and regularised;
- ii. To analyse developmental outcomes in line with the programme's objectives and goals;
- iii. Identify and record emerging trends and social ills, affecting vulnerable communities;
- iv. Provide opportunities for intervention in households deemed necessary.

The recertification process will employ a phased approach and after every segment, the process will be evaluated by the teams for the purpose of enhancing weak areas of operational strengthening.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to report that last week Tuesday, we had a virtual launch of the programme, Building Effective Resilience for Human Security in the Caribbean, the Imperative for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in a Strengthened Agriculture and Related Small Agri-Fisheries Business. Mr. Speaker, this project is funded by the UN Trust Fund and will be implemented by UN Women together with ILO and UNDP. It is aimed at empowering women farmers by fully integrating gender equality in resilient and human security strategies.

This project covers five (5) countries; Grenada, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica and St. Lucia. Mr. Speaker, we believe that this project is timely, as food security is a very essential part of our Nation's development, for our country is as vulnerable to the extent it can feed its own people. The current COVID pandemic, Mr.

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Speaker, would have brought to the fore the need for us to focus more on food security. It's a necessity, not only for food security, but economically and healthier choices.

Mr. Speaker, this programme will provide employment opportunities and finance for our women farmers, to help our unemployed women in vulnerable communities across Grenada. I look forward to the full implementation and the benefits for our women across our Tri-Island State. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Delma Thomas, Minister for Community Development. My microphone is giving a bit of bother at this time. So, we will want to just pause for a moment. We will stay where we are, just about three (3) minutes, so that our IT person can make the necessary correction. I'm sorry about that.

House adjourned at 9:35 a.m. due to technical problems.

House resumed at 9:38 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you for your patience, Honourable Members. It seems that we were back. Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to, as always, to speak in this House, but in particular, to speak after my colleague Minister for Hospital Services.

Mr. Speaker, we still remain under the threat of COVID-19. We currently have three (3) active cases. One of those three (3), I am hoping, may be medically cleared, today or tomorrow, in the next round of testing. Mr. Speaker, all three (3) are asymptomatic, no symptoms. By the grace of God, all three (3) remain healthy and we continue to keep our track record, Mr. Speaker. We have a total now of twenty-eight (28) cases since the outbreak of COVID-19, zero deaths, Mr. Speaker, and those cases that have been recently discovered are from quarantine or individuals coming in. One, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, is as a result of someone breaching the quarantine.

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Mr. Speaker, it speaks to the seriousness of the three (3) lines of defence that we have and the need for all to respect those three (3) lines of defence, Mr. Speaker. The first line of defence is in our testing and border control, having individuals test before they come to Grenada and must be negative, and then having them go into quarantine for a specified period to then be tested again, to be cleared and not to leave the quarantine until cleared. That is the first line of defence, Mr. Speaker.

The second line of defence is our contact tracers and wardens, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to strengthen and add more persons there, more administrative support there. As of this week, further administrative support and more individuals. Mr. Speaker, this week too, the Ministry announced that it had started its phase of re-evaluating those institutions that were cleared to be quarantine sites. And we did find some that had discrepancies or shortfalls and they have remedied, or been given a fixed time frame, twenty-four (24) to forty-eight (48) hours to remedy any of the shortfalls and then to be re-inspected, otherwise they would be removed from the list of approved facilities. This includes security mechanisms put in place, sanitisation, protection of their employees and the general COVID guidelines, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as such I want to, really congratulate the Health Travel Desk, the individuals working there. They literally have been working 24/7, dealing with all of the processing of individuals who apply to come to Grenada, all of the processing of individuals who remain in quarantine while in Grenada, as well as the wardens and that Administrative Desk that deals with the monitoring and enforcement of the various quarantine mechanisms and also contact tracing. Our contact tracers continue to perform yeoman service in our ability to find, identify, and isolate persons, whenever we have a threat, Mr. Speaker, and I think they are worthy of recognition in this House and by this Nation, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we have literally a full complement of flights back at Maurice Bishop International, in terms of flights, back to our pre COVID-19 figures, or as close as possible. Virgin Atlantic twice a week, British Airways, American, I believe six (6) days a week, JetBlue. Regrettably, we don't have LIAT, but we have InterCaribbean, One Caribbean and CALT, as well as our SVG.

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So, Mr. Speaker, since the first of October, to date, that Travel Desk and the wardens have processed over eighteen hundred (1,800) individuals in one month, coming in, going into quarantine, and safely being discharged from quarantine, with four (4) exceptions of breaches in quarantine. Finding someone with a positive is not an exception, because that is what is meant. The exceptions, I am speaking of are four (4) individuals who did not respect the safety of this Nation and the processes that we have put in place to protect us and them, four (4) out of eighteen (1,800), Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, four (4) is too many, so we're putting additional mechanisms in place. I may have to come to this House to ask for strengthening of those mechanisms, if necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have received over four hundred (400) applications for home quarantine in the last week and a half. All are being processed, not all will be approved, many may be denied based on the criteria that we have placed to make sure that persons can safely home quarantine. It is my desire and our desire to have as many people, as possible do the quarantine in their home. They will have to wear a GPS arm band, they will have to do additional testing, at the Airport and then on day four (4), but we will try to accommodate as many as possible, while maintaining the strict protocols, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the Christmas Season approaches, we are very much aware, in the Ministry, that it's seen as a period or a season of festivity, of gatherings, family gatherings and gatherings with friends, or fetes, of parties, of celebration. I do ask the Grenadian population to maintain a certain level of discipline in this period. We would hate to know that in our celebration of the birth of Christ, coming together to appreciate, if not recognise and celebrate our accomplishments for the year that we were to throw it all away.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry, very much cognisant of that, is going to be stepping up, further, its domestic testing. This is to confirm our local epidemiological situation. We have said, we have no evidence of COVID-19 in Grenada, community spread, and we will continue. But, in order to continue and recognising that the Christmas Season is coming up, we are going to ramp up a little bit more. So, quite

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possibly, where activities are found, where persons are noncompliant, then everybody there would be tested as well, just as an additional precaution. If they are the ones carrying out high risk activities, they are the ones probably that may get infected, as well as the wardens stepping up and doing further, more aggressive enforcement of the rules and regulations.

But, at the same time the Ministry's team is stepping up to approve those who apply and are able to be compliant to have activities. It must go hand in hand. It is not just a simple case of no. It is to accommodate, as best as possible, because, as I have said previously in this very House, we must find the balance between health and livelihoods, between saving lives and maintaining livelihoods, and we will continue to do our best there.

Mr. Speaker, another area in the Ministry of Health that is worthy of recognition by this House and the Nation, is laboratory services at the General Hospital and at WINDREF/SGU. Mr. Speaker, every individual that has come in has had to be tested, and, some twice. These individuals are working seven (7) days a week and long hours, not just those in the Lab, but also and in particular, our Nursing Staff and Public Healthcare workers, who are out there swabbing the individuals and then transporting these tests to the Lab. They're doing this seven (7) days a week, while still performing the other duties that they have, as Public Health Officers. Some of our Senior Public Health Officers are themselves assisting in swabbing individuals, not just our nurses, as well, all coming together to perform that duty. So, I think they are worthy of recognition, as well. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, while we're on the topic of laboratory services, I'll just touch on some of the issues that have with the kind assistance of my sister here, that we have accomplished, or are in the process of accomplishing within Hospital Services, as well.

Laboratory is functioning at the General Hospital, in the Phase II building and we intend to increase the capacity there. So, between now and the first quarter of next year, there will be increased capacity at the Labs in the new Phase II building. The elevators at the original building are in the process of being changed. Brand new elevators are in the process of being put into Phase I, if we want to refer to it as that.

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This, in the interim is going to cause, like in any effort to improve existing facilities, it will cause some inconvenience, in the use of the elevators. It is going to be a three (3) month to four (4) months process, because one elevator has to be completely removed and the new one put in, and then, you can go to the other one, completely remove it, and put the new one in.

Mr. Speaker, dialysis, we continue to work to implement dialysis and expect to have our dialysis up and running, if not by Christmas, most definitely in January, and that includes the training, as well as Nephrology Services.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Nickolas Steele: So, Mr. Speaker, these are some of the areas, one worthy of mention to this House in giving an update, and the other where we are seeing the benefits of the team work, not just my dear sister and myself, but all of my colleagues in Cabinet and in Parliament, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health, you mentioned about eighteen hundred (1,800) tests being conducted in one month. What's the cost of one test?

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, one of those tests cost four hundred and ten EC dollars (EC\$410.00).

Mr. Speaker: Who pays for the test?

Hon. Nickolas Steele: All of these individuals have been tested, gratis from the State.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Minister for Youth and Culture.

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Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: I have to correct you, Mr. Speaker, Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Cooperatives.

Mr. Speaker: Oh. I am sorry. I missed some.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Just a little correction.

(Laughter)

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Mr. Speaker, since I have taken up the portfolio of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Cooperatives, I have been meeting with all the Heads of the different areas, the key stakeholders and other persons that relate to the different Divisions and that's the normal procedure when you take up a portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the work of the Division of Sports, Culture and the Arts, as it has been done in all areas of Government. It has forced us to be innovative, to bring out the creativity that we have in ourselves and to refocus our short and medium term objectives.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Sports, the Ministry's previous emphasis of working with the schools in enhancing all Sporting disciplines through training and competition, all of that had to be halted, Mr. Speaker, due to the COVID-19. Instead, the Ministry has been concentrating on the following:

- Coach development sessions;
- Training of Senior and Junior Coaches in COVID-19 preventions in the Sporting area and also the Code of Ethics for Coaches;
- Training of Sports Outreach Officers, Sports Officers, IMANI trainees, HOPE Apprenticeship Personnel in the following areas:
 - a. Coaches roles and responsibilities;
 - b. Leadership in Sports;
 - c. Physical Education sessions, etcetera.

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Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has been examining its Sporting Facilities throughout the Island to assess what work can be done during this COVID period and the following facilities were chosen for upgrade.

The Willis Playing Field - A contract was awarded to upgrade the field, at a cost of one hundred and sixty thousand, eight hundred and seventy-seven dollars and thirty-four cents (\$160,877.34). 60%, Mr. Speaker, of the work has been completed and all of the work should be completed by the end of the year.

The Limes Playing Field - The Limes Playing Field was upgraded, too, Mr. Speaker, by levelling it with top soil. The drainage for the field is yet to be completed. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development has been requested to construct the drains and a row of concrete bleachers on one side of the field.

Progress Park - Mr. Speaker, the installation of Cricket Practice Nets was completed at Progress Park. This means, Mr. Speaker, that cricketers in the North of the Island do not have to travel to St. George's to practice in the Nets, **(applause)** and that's a big plus for the Cricketers of St. Andrew and surrounding areas.

The La Sagesse Playing Field - Mr. Speaker, the Ministry had to redo the entire plumbing of that Facility. Things are really bad there, and they may have to do the entire plumbing of the Facility.

Mr. Speaker, I must mention the support provided by the Ministry, to the students on Sports Scholarships. During the period, June to July, virtual meetings were held with these students, to identify their areas of concern and to give general support. Financial assistance was also provided for these students for a period of three (3) months. Also, assistance was provided to repatriate three (3) Athletes from Central Arizona University, since their classes are held virtually, and this allowed them to attend classes and train with their local Coaches.

Mr. Speaker, I must recognise the two (2) Grenadian Cricketers, who have been selected to tour with the West Indies Team for the New Zealand Test Series and T-20 International. Congratulations to Preston Mc Sween and Andre Fletcher, who are presently at the West Indies Training Camp preparing the West Indies tour to New

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Zealand, from November 25 to December. **(Applause)** We ought to be proud of these young men. They are lifting our noses and we ought to support them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the presence of the COVID-19 protocols has forced the Division of Culture and the Arts, to review its methodology and operations for its plans and programmes. This has drastically reduced the Division's capacity to engage its clientele and the needs of its programme. So therefore, based on the following three (3) factors, the Division of Culture and Arts, now has to implement new methods of engagement with its clients.

The focus will not be changed, but the methodology for teaching will be changed, from physical classroom sessions to virtual and online teaching. The process for the next six (6) months will include the development of teaching modules that will be recorded and produced to be distributed to available Government-based Platforms, or agreed Social Medium Platforms for students already involved in the programme and for new students coming on.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of a new programme geared at the development of sound production for audio recording is proposed to be introduced to two (2) locations on the Island. The two (2) facilities for training have been conducted at Mac Donald's College and St. Andrew's Anglican Secondary School, and we are now awaiting the arrival of all the equipment for final installation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the Division has engaged the Ministry of Education for the approval of a Certified Course Outline, previously approved for TAMCC to be implemented by the Division.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Co-operatives play a pivotal role in Grenada's economy by providing meaningful employment to our citizenry, therefore increasing economic activities and contributing to the reduction of poverty in our society.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I must mention that the Grenada Co-operatives League Limited celebrated sixty-two (62) years of its operations this year. The League consists of twelve (12) affiliates, ten (10) Credit Unions and two (2) non-financial Cooperatives. The Credit Union combined, has a total of 1.04 b dollars in assets, and I heard that they have over one hundred (100) plus persons working at those institutions.

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Mr. Speaker, the main role of the Department of Co-operatives is regulatory. This involves monitoring, supervising, assessing and inspecting all functions of Co-operatives. And, Mr. Speaker, they have achieved quite a bit, in terms of PR (Public Relations), they have a programme on GBN. They had a number of trivia sessions, I think, twenty (20) completed. They have been sensitising the IMANIs and other Entities that want to get themselves into Co-operatives. They have produced a Newsletter and they are on Facebook now. They have a Facebook page, encouraging persons and explaining the role of the Co-operatives here, in Grenada. So, Mr. Speaker, they have a lot of challenges, because they have some of the Co-operatives that are not functioning effectively and these are challenges that they have to deal with in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Fisheries development, we have embarked on several initiatives, which will position this Sector to obtain growth and development, especially in the Export Sector.

Mr. Speaker, the closure of various Regional and International Ports to which fish is exported by Grenada, created further hurdles to this Sector. However, as of June 2020, fish exporters were able to resume the exportation of fish on a limited scale. It is important to note that in 2019, fish landings amounted to £4.8 m pounds, with a monetary value of thirty-three million EC dollars (EC\$33 m). To date, Grenada has exported, mainly, Yellow Fin Tuna to North America, with a total weight £1.4 m, amounting to a monetary value of EC\$17.5 m. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates that the Sector is indeed resilient. The Ministry is certain that the Sector can bounce back strongly, by the end of 2020.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I just want to inform that the Captains' training is going very well, throughout the Island. The target number is three hundred (300) captains of boats to be trained. Two hundred and twenty-seven (227) have already been trained, and they are given equipment, certificate, IDs,

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etcetera, and it's going very well, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. We want to thank WINDREF for all the support they have given to this programme. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we have the inspection of boats and five hundred (500) Fishing Vessels in Grenada will be inspected. Announcements will be out in the airways, letting them know the times and the areas that they will be inspected.

And, before I close, Mr. Speaker, there are several other things, but I want to cut by saying that the Fisheries Division is collaborating with the Grenada Community Development (GRENCODA) Agency to implement a three (3) year EBA Project within the Parish of St. John and St. Mark.

The project will employ an EBA, that's (Ecosystem-based Adaptation) approach, from ridge to reef management of the coastal resources. A main component of the project is the establishment of the proposed Gouyave Marine Protective Area. So, Mr. Speaker, these are a few of the things. There are several more that we are undertaking and I am sure, when we meet next, I will be able to expound more on those areas. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Sports, Culture, Fisheries and so on and so on. Minister for Education and Religious Affairs.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise just to give a very brief update on what we have been calling the CXC matter over the past couple weeks. Mr. Speaker, as we would recall, at some point a couple weeks ago; well over a month ago, the Ministry did hold a Press Conference and we repeatedly said that, that Press Conference was to discuss CSEC results. We also said at that Press Conference that we were extremely happy with the performance of our Secondary Schools in the examination and that there has been some significant improvement in performance there.

I also went on, Mr. Speaker, at that Press Conference to highlight the fact that there was going to be a separate forum in which information regarding CAPE results was going to be given and that was because many of the students there had an

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ungraded result paper that was presented to them, meaning that CXC had not given them a grade.

I reiterated, over and over why that was so and that was because, when the Lecturers and others at TAMCC attempted to upload the scores for the SBAs, those were not accepted by the system, and I assume, because in that batch of students, they were uploading after that final deadline that was given.

Mr. Speaker, I also said that at that time CXC was contacted and they gave all assurance that, at whatever point the information was received, those students would receive a grade. And so, immediately that those students received ungraded, CXC was again, contacted. They immediately made a folder available, all the students' scores were entered by the College and all the students received a grade, about two (2) weeks after, as promised by CXC.

Mr. Speaker, that therefore left one (1) piece of the puzzle that remained incomplete, and I've always said the issue is not about the ungraded, because we understood why, it had absolutely nothing to do with CXC, if you were to access it carefully. So, that missing part of the puzzle would be any student, Mr. Speaker, who feels that the grade that they receive is not the grade they should have received.

Mr. Speaker, we did have some students at the College, even before that last batch of students received their grades, who felt that the grades they got did not represent what they think they should have gotten, and we did have, one or two very, very small numbers, I don't think it would have gone beyond five (5), at that time, at the Secondary level, who felt the same way. So for example, in terms of academic results, the very top performer, eighteen (18) passes, he requested a review for two (2) subjects, one, where he felt he should have gotten one (1) and he got a two (2) and that's fair enough, that's allowed; that's the system.

For many years, CXC has accommodated any person, who feels that the grade they got could have been better based on their assessment. And, and there is a system where the school enters what is called; "A Request for Review" of that student's performance. So, they review that student's paper, review their SBA, and then come back to the student to say: "This is the grade." Now, that has been a normal for many,

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many years. So, nothing is different this year in that regard. And, so, when we had students come forward in this case, I am speaking specifically to CAPE now, we said: "Follow that same procedure, there is nothing different, as it relates to the procedure, it is the same." And, what is important to note is that there is a deadline. So, what you don't want to be doing is to be protesting and miss the deadline. So, you want to enter your request, you can protest, you can raise any issue, no problem. But, let us be wise and not miss the deadline.

The second issue is that some of these students felt that they should not have to pay anything at all, to request a review. A review is normally thirty US dollars (US\$30.00). And that is fine, as well, absolutely within anybody's right to feel that if I request a review, it's COVID, I should not have to pay, that's absolutely fine. But, Mr. Speaker, the important thing to note is that we don't control here if CXC decides not to charge, or to charge for the review.

Now, at the time the Ministers of the Region has been in engagement with CXC. As a matter of fact, in the OECS, we wrote to Sir Hilary Beckles, who is the Chairman of CXC, asking for a representative on that Review Committee that he established, and he gracefully accepted our request, which was written on our behalf, by Didacus Jules, the DG of the OECS Commission.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I always say this, before we talk, before we complain, before we make noise, we have to make sure that we are examining the facts and the realities and this is what I did. I know some people felt I should have joined with Guyana and Trinidad and so on and we should attack CXC and we should demand this and we should demand that. Mr. Speaker, in situations like these, I believe approaching the right forum, the forum where it matters, is what is important. So, I am not sure if saying something in the Media in Grenada, is going to have any effect, or impact on what the Council of CXC decides at the end of the day. And, so, Mr. Speaker, the OECS was well represented on that Committee, which was appointed, and the independent Committee met and they presented an official report to us, as Ministers.

And, I just want to make a couple points, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the findings of that Report, which I think is extremely important. So, the Report generally looked at

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the grading process, it looked at the moderation process and the modified approach, all of which consultation with CXC was held prior to the exam, and that all levels, even as high as the level of COHSOD, all of these were done prior. So, it was no surprise, to anybody, or should not have been a surprise that the exam was going to be fully moderated this year; meaning that in the past, generally, you had sample SBAs presented, scores of sample SBAs. This year, every student SBA was expected to be considered and moderated.

Now, some countries and this is one of the recommendations that CXC ought to do an audit across the board, across countries. And, that is why I have always said, every country's situation may not be the same. So, some countries, or schools are used to no moderation, so whatever the teacher said you got, that is what you got.

Now, because of the absence of Paper 2, CXC places greater emphasis on the SBAs, meaning that what your teacher said was quite welcomed, but somebody else will, independently look at that SBA, to see if what your teacher said you should get is what you should get. And so if my teacher said so, you have heard some people say: "I went into the exam with 100% in my SBA." My son did one subject and he said to me: "Mummy, I don't understand how I got 'B' for creativity," and well, of course, that represents the SBA, right. Now, he got a Grade One, but he felt like he should have gotten A, A, A, across the board. And, I said to him: "Great, that's your opinion. It doesn't mean that your opinion determines the final result." So, that is what moderation does. And the assessment of the Report or the conclusion of the Report clearly says that they have not found anything to say that the moderated approach used had any flaws. If anything what the Report is hinting, that there is greater reliability in that approach as compared to the means that were used in the past.

So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the findings, scores moderated was lower compared to last year, but students performed better on Paper 1. But, if you look at the Report, it is also saying to CXC, be careful with Paper 1, increase the number of questions in your banks, because we are concerned that there might be security issues, leaks of questions. And so it means that on both ends, the assessment is saying, there are

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things to be done on CXC end, Policy wise, and there are things to be done, at the level of schools.

Mr. Speaker, there was some recommendations coming from that, and I want to just highlight, very briefly, and hopefully, to end the conversation on this subject today. The extension; that was one of the recommendations that was endorsed by CXC, extension of the date for request for reviews, so that should have ended on the 23rd of October, that has been extended to the end of the first week in November, and I continue to appeal to everyone concerned, if there is a feeling that there is a need for a review, please follow the procedure. It is the only way that a review will happen.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: The second thing, and, Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me, just two (2) minutes to...

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you. The second thing is that the Committee did endorse a reduction in the cost, because the Committee did not think removal of the cost was the best route to go, because the question is, who incurs the cost?

The Ministers of the Region, again, met with CXC to see if there was any way, at all, their board could consider the total removal of the cost, and the response to that is that they cannot consider anything under 50%, and sometimes we have to remember, who pays because CXC's funding does not just come from examination fees; Governments of the Region also contributes to be able to continue the operation. And even when countries made very bold statements, we will pay; I sat in a meeting where the Minister now comes to the meeting and say, we say we would pay, but we don't have any clue how possible that would be, because the minute time you say there is no fee attached, let's be real, the number of persons requesting a review will automatically spike to almost everybody, because note, Mr. Speaker, it was already accepted that

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even if people who have started requesting a review, the independent review is showing that the grade is going downwards, in some cases. A decision was taken, in light of the situation, in light of the credibility, in light of the pandemic, in light of everything, no grade will go downwards. So if you request a review and your grade should go downwards, it going to remain, as it was.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is automatic now is that if you remove the full cost, every single person, who did not get a Distinction is now likely to request a review, and I guess, in that wisdom, the Review Team said 50% and that is what now applies.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, the review also pointed to the need for urgent training of teachers, and as it said: ***“To arrest the difference between teacher award scores and CXC moderated scores.”*** So, there is a big discrepancy between the teacher score and the moderated score, in many cases. And this does not speak specific to Grenada, but the entire Region.

Greater support for Teachers, and CXC is asked to provide greater support to help students prepare for the SBAs, because there seems to be some significant weaknesses there, throughout, as it relates to teachers' ability to help some students prepare for the Exam; and greater training of teachers, on preparing and uploading of SBAs, and, of course, in the process, greater support for students.

So, CXC has accepted, in its meeting with Ministers, to provide additional support, at the country level, particularly, for the empowering of teachers, especially our new teachers, to better understand, and to better be able to administer and support SBAs.

And, just finally, Mr. Speaker, the conducting of the audit, this is very significant, of the standardisation process for moderation of exams, because what this has shown, and I won't speak about big and small, or where countries are located, that some countries were never moderated in the past. Some Colleges were never moderated in the past. And, so, one of the things coming out of that, let us create an even playing field. And, that is why I have always said, Mr. Speaker, in closing, what we respond to may well be issues that are not specific to our country's level. And what came out of

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this very clear, is that when you look at the broader CARICOM Region and you look at the OECS Region, the magnitude and the issues were slightly different.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that while we do have a few students, who have expressed an interest in having a review, I believe in all fairness, it should be done. And again, I close by appealing to them; it's going to happen by one means only. The Ministry of Education cannot do it, because the Ministry of Education does not upload SBA scores, it does not request the review. That is done at the school level, at the College level, and we have been giving all the possible support that we can give to the College and to our schools, in any case where they feel that there is a need for a review, and will continue to do that until the end of the first week in November. Thank you so much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Education. Thank you, Honourable Ministers. Let me just say that it will be remiss of me not to commend our Ministers, who have new portfolios, or added portfolios to their already heavy load. I pray that you will be guided, so that you can perform the task that you are expected to do and to continue to do it as well as you have been doing and even better, as circumstances change.

So, let me commend all of the Ministers. I know who to go to for money, I know who to go to for land, I know who to go to for cricket bat, I know who to go to about the youth, I know who to go to for some services in Health. So, let me commend you and say that I think our country is better off for it, even if it means additional work. Minister for Health Services, even though it means additional work but not the thing that goes along with it.

Let me also say to the Ministers that, again, I encourage you to put your Ministerial Statements, write out your Ministerial Statements. The reason for this is, even if you have not been able to speak to a certain issue in the Ministerial Statement, we would be able to still document it, because, you see, we are moving, very rapidly, in having our website on board, and we hope that by the first quarter of 2021, we would have our website, the Parliament's Website. So anything you want to know about

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Parliament, you go to that website and it is there at your disposal. So putting your Ministerial Statement in writing could be of great help to everyone. Thank you.

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 (a) 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 Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament, on Friday, 9th October, 2020, was deferred to a date to be fixed;

BE IT RESOLVED that the said Address be now debated by the House.

Question put and agreed to.

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

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 70:

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 70, subsection (1) of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives provides for the election of a Committee to be known as the Standing Orders Committee;

AND WHEREAS it is further provided that the Committee be elected at the first Sitting of each Session at which business of the House other than the reading of the Throne Speech is transacted;

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BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House doth now elect the Members of the said Committee.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I now propose that the Members of the Standing Orders Committee be: the Honourable Gregory Bowen, Chairman; Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, Member; Honourable Tobias Clement, Member.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the Members nominated for that Committee, the Standing Orders Committee are Honourable Gregory Bowen, Chairman; Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, Member and Honourable Tobias Clement, Member.

If there are no objections, Honourable Members, the Committee is now formed.
Leader of Government's Business.

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

WHEREAS Standing Order 70, subsection (2) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the Speaker, as Chairman and four (4) Members, to be known as the House Committee;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House doth now appoint the four (4) Members to the said Committee:

Question proposed.

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Mr. Speaker: If there are no objections, Honourable Members, the House Committee is now formed. Leader of Government's Business.

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

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 70 (3) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the Speaker, as Chairman and four (4) Members to be known as the Committee of Privileges, which shall be elected as soon as may be after the beginning of each Session;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House doth now appoint the four (4) Members to the said Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the Members related to serve on the Committee of Privileges: Honourable Michael Pierre, Speaker and Chairman; Honourable Clarice Modeste-Curwen; Honourable Oliver Joseph; Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford and Honourable Anthony Boatswain now form the Committee of Privileges.

If there are no objections, any objections? None. The Committee of Privileges is now formed. Leader of Government's Business.

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

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 69, subsection (1) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to be known as the Public Accounts Committee, consisting of a Chairman and two (2) Members;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House doth now appoint the Members to the said Committee.

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Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members the Public Accounts Committee be comprised of three (3) Members: Honourable Tobias Clement, as Chairman; Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie and Honourable Anthony Boatswain now forms the Public Accounts Committee.

Any objections? None. Honourable Members, the Public Accounts Committee is now formed. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move a Motion standing in the name of the Leader of Government's Business, which reads:

WHEREAS it is provided by section (4) of the Quarantine Act, Chapter 271 (herein referred to as "the Act"), that the Minister may make regulations, as respect to the whole, or any part of Grenada including the ports and coastal waters thereof, for preventing-

- (a) danger to public health from ships or aircrafts, or persons or things therein, arriving at any place;
- (b) the spread of infection, by any means, of any ship or aircraft about to leave any place, or by means of any person or thing about to leave any place in any ship or aircraft;

AND WHEREAS it is provided in section 4 of the Act that regulations made under section 4 of the Act shall not have any force or effect until confirmed by resolution in the House of Representatives;

AND WHEREAS on the 4th day of September, 2020, the Minister with responsibility for Health, made the Quarantine COVID-19 Regulations, 2020, and on the 11th day of September, 2020, the House of Representatives, by Resolution, confirmed the Quarantine COVID-19 Regulations, 2020;

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient that the Quarantine COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations, 2020, attached hereto, as a Schedule to be confirmed by the House of Representatives to amend the Quarantine COVID-19 Regulations, 2020;

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NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the Act, that the Quarantine COVID-19 (Amendment) Regulations, 2020, be now confirmed by the House of Representatives.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, the amendments in question in this Motion, speak to, first off, specifically, the CARICOM Bubble, or what we had envisioned to be the CARICOM Bubble. And, Mr. Speaker, not making any light of it, because it truly is a disappointment, but I would have to say that the bubble has burst. The bubble, as we wanted it to be, is not, for several reasons, some outside of our control, or some most unfortunate. Some of our CARICOM brothers and sisters are experiencing significant community spread, and as such cannot be included in a CARICOM Bubble.

But most significantly, for those of us who are not, is that we have not been, to date, able to find a common protocol for all of us, our entry and quarantine protocol. There are variations in every Island. Some, in our case, we believe, are stronger than others, and in other places, they believe are more accommodating or stronger than ours, and as such, there isn't a CARICOM Bubble, or special treatment for CARICOM citizens. So in the Act, we are requesting for the time being, that it be removed. I do hope, in the not too distant future, we may come back to have it included. But in its inclusion right now, forces a special treatment that cannot be done, at our Ports of Entry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the rest of the Resolution speaks to the testing period and the prescribed types of tests that are to be administered, with respect to quarantine procedures here, Mr. Speaker. And, again, Mr. Speaker, as the science develops and our knowledge and experience of this virus changes, increases, there would be cause again, quite possibly, to come back and adjust, types of tests, periods of quarantine, observations, isolation, etcetera, Mr. Speaker.

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So, in this instance, we are making these adjustments, based on the current science and the current accepted norms for us to maintain that first level of defence here. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Resolution, as presented by the Member for St. George South. I am disappointed to see that, as he said, to put it in his own words, that: "The bubble has burst." As Minister for Tourism, I had looked forward to see how that would play out, because when we compare the Caribbean to other countries bigger than ours, richer than ours, the CARICOM countries have, by and large, comported themselves very well, especially the OECS, in terms of keeping the numbers down, keeping our Region safe. I had looked for a CARICOM Tourism, inter-CARICOM, or Caribbean Tourism, taking or contributing significantly to the Industry for Grenada and for the Region. However, that has not worked, and so, I support the deletion of this imaginary bubble, so that we are not hampered by it in any way. I do hope that, at some point in time, the Caribbean, or even the OECS, would find some harmonised way to deal with this COVID, or any other disease that becomes a pandemic, but, for the moment that is not to be, and therefore, I support that.

And, Mr. Speaker, also, the replacement and the specification of time, specified times for certain things to happen and specified tests, I think that this will help to minimise any misunderstanding, real or imagined. So, for example, somebody cannot say well, I thought the specified test was seven (7) days, or it's five (5) days, and that is why I left quarantine, or that is why I didn't do 'x' or didn't do 'y.' I think it is very useful for us, and especially where these infractions on these Regulations, or these guidelines can either cause a fine or cause imprisonment, we do not want anyone to be guessing or wondering, and so, we know for now that the PCR test is what we call the Gold Standard. It is what is recognised globally, as the most reliable test, given to us and supported by the International Technical Bodies like CDC and WHO, etcetera. So, I

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think, Grenada will do very well, to stick to that for now. I expect, maybe, at some later date, the Ministry of Health may come up with another test, as recommended by our Technical Advisors, both regionally and globally, and of course, locally. But, for the moment, I think it is very important to specify, so that on either side, no one misinterprets. Mr. Speaker, and it's for those reasons that I support the Resolution as brought in by the Member.

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion, but, primarily, to recognise the fact that this Motion is here without our having to use numbers and to amend the Standing Orders to get it to be debated today.

I want to recognise the part played by the Leader of the Opposition. We recognise, Mr. Speaker, that this Motion did not have the necessary seven (7) days' notice, as required. But, I consulted the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, and he made it abundantly clear that the health of the Nation is of paramount importance, and that, in his view, we could not delay with ensuring that we have the best control at our borders. And he indicated that we should get it, put all haste to get it to the House, and it is in that context that I contacted the Clerk, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I would not know the inner workings, but in telling him that the Leader of the Opposition had no objection to it, whether or not, like I say, the internal workings with your Department and himself and we immediately got it on the Order Paper, because it would not have been on the Order Paper, if the Leader of the Opposition did not give his consent, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So, I just want to recognise him for that. And, we did not have to come here to, you know, suspend Standing Orders and to just use, you know, the weight of the Government. So, again, I commend the Leader of the Opposition for the part that he has played in our debating this Motion here today, without using, as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, the majority of the Government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as was stated by the Leader of Government's Business, yes, he did indicate to me this Motion to be brought. But, as I said a few months ago Mr. Speaker, and probably it can be repeated again, it's almost a case of, am I my brother's keeper?

You know, we talk about the bubble, and it seems as if we will continue to approach COVID-19, every man to himself. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say today, this would never work. One hundred (100) years ago, it did not work. So, if we here in Grenada believe that we will take care of our business, or the United States says we will take care of our business and to heck with the rest, now, with the ease of travel and communication. And, this is why I repeated and said that if one case of COVID-19 is anywhere, Mr. Speaker, it can be everywhere. And, so, we have to continue to be diligent, as a People, and I would emphasise the word 'People.'

In my research and in my reading, Mr. Speaker, I looked at two (2) countries, the Czech Republic, from March, April, May, June, July and August, it was a model within Europe; that quickly they went on lockdown. They instituted universal masks wearing and they stuck to their guns, up until August.

In September, all Regulations were pulled back, and today, in Europe, the Czech Republic is the epicentre of COVID-19. You can compare that to Sweden, where no restrictions, but the people were well educated to take it on their own and be their brothers' keepers. So, they did not have to institute any harsh realisation, in terms of social distancing, but the people were put in that mode.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I was reading a second case, a second country, Taiwan. And, today, it was reported that Taiwan, with a population of twenty-three million (23 m) people, today went two hundred (200) days without a single case. I think, over the last few months, they had eighteen (18) deaths. But, in that case, Mr. Speaker, again, it was the rapid movement of the Government, in terms of masks, in terms of testing, and in terms of education of the people.

And, regardless of what we do in Grenada, we are open up again, and we, well, they say, no man is an Island. But, even though we are an Island, we are still open. And, Mr. Speaker, probably, I may ask for a little bit of clarification, in terms of the

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testing that is done in Grenada. I know we have seen the Rapid Tests, and we have seen the PCR tests. And, even in the United States, we have seen the failure of the Rapid Test and we have seen some of the results of the failure of Rapid Tests in Grenada, because if you get the Rapid Test or the Antigen Test, it may not tell you that you have COVID-19. A positive test may be that you are exposed to it. You have gotten over it, but the antibodies are still there, and it will say that you're positive. But, the PCR test is the definite test, and still, it is only about up to 90% accurate, because if your viral load is not high enough, it may not register. But, we will work with what we have, and we will have to work quickly, Mr. Speaker. And, this is why we are here today, because the importance of COVID-19 Regulations to our country is paramount. And, I am seeing in the news that we are looking at, maybe, 2021/2022 before we may get over COVID-19. What do we do then?

I would say to our Nation, we have to continue to be on our guards, continue to be on our Ps and Qs. And, even if regulations are lifted, but we still have to be mindful, mindful of who we are, where we are, in terms of COVID-19, because look what is taking place. Our main trading partners around the world, the United States, Europe, Canada, everybody now is on the rise. I think so far, we have reported worldwide, over forty-five million cases. In the United States, it is probably up to two hundred and thirty thousand (230,000) deaths already, over eight (8) million cases, and Europe now, is a hot spot. We have to move as a country and individually, to continue to protect our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Thank you. Honourable Minister for Health, do you have any wrap up to this? Oh, I am sorry.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise, just for one moment, to say that I fully support the Resolution and all of the measures that the Ministry of Health is putting in place to protect us. And, I want to use the opportunity also, to commend the Ministry, commend all of the frontline workers and all of those who are involved in the fight.

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Mr. Speaker, I took the time to rise, even if I am sure my colleagues would have been very, very clear on why they support this Resolution, and I rise in the context of Education. It is very important that we take all the measures that we have to take as a Nation, because it's the only way that our schools would remain open.

Mr. Speaker, one of our neighbours, only last week, I listened almost like an SOS, from the Minister there, because of the community spread, moving from about zero (0) to about fifty something cases, in that particular Island, not very far away from u and so, they had to shut down all of their schools. Mr. Speaker, we are very, very fortunate here for the management systems that we have in place, the rigorous way in which we are approaching this, and I really want to commend the Ministry of Health and all of those involved.

But, I want to use the opportunity to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry of Education doesn't decide to open or close schools. That call is made based on the facts, before the Ministry of Health, their technical team and they advise the Cabinet and Ministry of Education, then takes action.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I remain very confident in the decision that has been guided by the Health Professionals that our schools can remain open at this time. And, they have been guided, not just by the facts and the research from the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Health Organization (WHO) has an outline that was actually shared a couple of days ago, even with the Executive of the Grenada Union of Teachers, by Dr. Shawn Charles, as to why Grenada is comfortable, at this time, with no community spread, that we can keep our schools open.

But, there's a further point that must be considered, Mr. Speaker, two (2) points actually. One, the longer we keep our students at home, is the longer it would take for some of our ordinary people to go out to work and that is the first thing. We have to ensure that we put our people, all of our people back to work.

And, then the second thing is that organisations internationally, and they don't have to tell us that, we can see it, that the risk of destruction of a child is greater, when they are not in a safe place, even with the exposure to COVID-19. So, what our children are exposed to, when they are not in "a safe haven like school," we do not want

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to take that high of a risk. And, Mr. Speaker, I fully support all of the measures that are being taken by the Ministry of Health, because it rebounds to us being able to keep our schools opened based on what the experts have been able to provide, as enough evidence that we can afford to do that at this time. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their support and most definitely, the Leader of the Opposition for his accommodation of this. And, Mr. Speaker, just to finally say that this speaks to the first line of defence. This is border control and testing. There are two (2) other lines of defence that we must always make sure as well, which is our ability to contact trace, isolate and our general protocols, as a Nation, the wearing of the mask, physical distancing, the ability to keep our schools opened, to conduct business, to maintain livelihoods, it is dependent on all three (3) levels of defence, not just this, but all three (3) levels of defence, as we have seen with our very own neighbours, Caribbean Nations, who have similar level one (1) defences. But, if you slip on level two (2) or level three (3), you end up with community spread. So, I thank you and my colleagues for the support on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading, the Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Tax Administration (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Clerk: A Bill to amend the Tax Administration Act No. 14 of 2016, shortly entitled, Tax Administration (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that relevant Standing Order of the House be suspended in order to take the Bill through all stages at this Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill seeks to amend the Tax Administration Act, No. 14 of 2016, which was brought into force on the 1st of May, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, there are three (3) primary objectives to the Bill. In Clause 4, the Bill seeks to insert a new Schedule, to insert a Form for administration of a fixed penalty

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regime. We know we have fixed penalties in traffic, Mr. Speaker, they have their Form. But with respect to the Tax Administration, there was no Form, so we want to introduce, Mr. Speaker, a Form, the notice of opportunity to pay the fixed penalty.

Mr. Speaker, Clause 2 seeks to amend section 12, to establish the requirement for a Registration Certificate to be issued to every Body Corporate that is registered with the Comptroller of Inland Revenue, Mr. Speaker. So, there will be a Registration Certificate for every Company and they, Mr. Speaker, will have to display the Certificate. It's a requirement for the Body to display the certificate, and failure to display the certificate is a fixed penalty offence, and we know what a fixed penalty is. You can refer to it in the traffic realm, as a ticket and you pay that ticket, Mr. Speaker, or if you don't want to pay the ticket and if you challenge the ticket, then it's your right to go to the Court, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we introduce this, there is a transitional period of six (6) months during which the Inland Revenue Division undertakes to issue the Registration Certificate to all Bodies Corporate that are currently registered and no Body Corporate, that is no Companies or legal person will be charged for failure to display the Registration Certificate.

So, when this Act is called into effect and you have someone who did not have a certificate and who will get a certificate, two (2) weeks, three (3) weeks, one (1) month, four (4) months after, no one will be charged or issued so-called tax tickets. We have six (6) months to comply, and this is what Clause 2 seeks to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under sections 77 to 85 or Division 2 of Part 9 of Act No. 14 of 2016, the specified maximum penalties and specified fixed penalties for persons who wish to accept guilt and pay the fixed penalty instead of challenging and going to court. So, Mr. Speaker, this section gives you all the areas.

The following would be criminal penalties. What you have, Mr. Speaker, you have a ticket and we only have the tax ticket if you want to refer to it, as opposed to the traffic tickets, you are given the ticket; two (2) things, you decide, you see me, I don't have this time to go to Court and challenge it, even if you feel you may be right, so you pay the ticket. The other side of the coin is, well, I will challenge it. And, if you

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challenge it and you go before the Court, the legal professionals will tell you that the Court may ask you, what are you doing here? What you got the ticket for is no criminal offence, so you should not be here.

So, the Law must indicate, very clearly, those offences, or those actions, or lack of actions that will be considered as a criminal offence, and they will match hand-in-hand with the ticketable offence. So, you get a ticket for this, but if you don't pay it, it is recorded as an offence. You could now go to the Police, or the Comptroller, or his authorised personnel could now take the matter to Court, Mr. Speaker. If we do not specify these, then we would not have a leg in order to force you, when you did not pay on time, Mr. Speaker.

So, here are some of the offences and the criminal penalty. While, the tickets may be quite small, as we know, in the case of the traffic, one hundred dollars (\$100.00), one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150.00), two hundred dollars (\$200.00), but if you don't pay the ticket and you go before the Court and the Court finds you guilty, then you have to pay a fine.

“Failure to register a criminal penalty, five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00); the fixed penalty is two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00).” So, if you're given that Administrative Tax Ticket, and you pay it, because after the six (6) months, you would fail to register, then you rush and you pay to the Clerk in the Magistrate's Court, the two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00), or if you go before the Judge and you fail, five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00).

“Failure to display your Registration Certificate”; so, it is not only registering, you must display it. Similar charges, **“two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) fixed penalty; five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) before the criminal penalty, if you're found guilty by the Court.”**

“Failure to notify, or specified information”; in other words, when the authorised person comes before you, ask you for information and you refuse to give, same fixed penalty, as opposed to the criminal penalty. Falsification of invoices, receipts, credit and debit notes; unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, some persons, some businesses, some companies may falsify documents. So, if the authorised person,

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whether it's somebody from Inland Revenue, they come in, that person shows you, well yes, you've falsified this and you accept guilt, you pay two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00). If you fail and you refuse and you want to go to the Court, if the Court finds you guilty, then it's five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00).

Now, Mr. Speaker, this one is ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00), and twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00) for falsification of invoices. **"Negligent or fraudulent underpayment, 25% of the underpayment, if not exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00), and exceeding 75% of 25% of tax liability for the period, or underpayment, if greater than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00), or greater than 25% of the tax liability for the period."** This is what the fixed penalty will be. So it is not a sum now, it's 25% of the underpayment. So, if you are underpaid, one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00), and you wilfully did that, the authorised person will come to you and show you that this is what you cheated the taxpayers persons from. You admit, so you pay 25% of that. But, if you go before the Court, the criminal penalty will be twice times the applicable fixed penalty, so we are keeping the ratio, 1:2. So, since we cannot state a figure, whatever, like I mentioned, if it's one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) is the underpayment, you pay 25% fixed penalty, because it's 25%, but you would pay fifty thousand (\$50,000.00), because the Judge is allowed to charge you from the Act, twice times what is there, Mr. Speaker.

"False or misleading statement, two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00)", or if an amount payable by the person will be less than it is, it will be twice that amount, Mr. Speaker. **"Failure to maintain documents, fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day for the failures"**; so the authorised person comes to you, you didn't have it this week, he tells you about it, the clock starts to tick and he comes back next month, and you still do not have the documents, you did not keep it, then he counts the days, and it's fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day, or whatever that figure is, if you decide to challenge it in Court, then the criminal penalty is twice times. The ratio is always kept, Mr. Speaker, twice.

"Failure to comply with third party notice, 25% of the difference between the amount payable by the third party and the amount paid to the Comptroller by the due date specified in the notice under section 68." Again, if you challenge, you

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go, the criminal offence will be twice times, whatever the fixed penalty should be. **“Failure to provide facilities, one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00)”**, again, twice in Court and **“failure to comply with notice to give information”**, Mr. Speaker, **“two thousand, five hundred (\$2,500.00)”**. This one is a fixed penalty, again, Mr. Speaker.

So, at the end of the day, it is really to ensure that we can get quick and swift movements, with respect to those who fail to comply and to set, specifically and clearly, in Law, the offences, so that you can now take this ticket of fixed penalty offence up to the Court. And, in the Law, when you look at the books you'll see, yes, this is an offence in Law, Mr. Speaker. So, I recommend this Bill, Mr. Speaker, for its second reading.

Question proposed.

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

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to this Tax amendment. If you have a Bill like the Tax Administration Act and you have no penalties, it's not likely you could get any enforcement. So, the first statement I wish to make clear, the purpose for these penalties, as outlined is not for Government to raise revenue, you know, it's to get greater compliance.

I have heard it said that Government puts a penalty for not wearing mask, because the Government wants to raise money. The Government wants to make sure that people are safe, so it does not cost them money, afterwards. So, if you wear your mask and you're not transmitting the infection, then the Government has less money to spend, so it's not to raise money.

These penalties, as outlined here, are to ensure greater adherence to the Tax Administration and other Tax Laws. The idea of fixed penalty for offences, Mr. Speaker, is one that I like very much, because I think we spend too much time in Court with petty offences. Obscene Language should have a fixed penalty? If you don't pay the fixed penalty and you choose to go in Court, the chances are that you may pay more. But,

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we need to look at a lot of petty offences and issue fixed penalty. The only fixed penalty started with traffic offences, where they give you a ticket. Under this Law, in a number of instances, or all of the instances, you have fixed penalty. So you can pay or choose to go to Court. When you go to Court, sometimes it is double the amount, because you're going through a whole legal process of hearing and everything like that, and therefore, it's under this Law, we hope to see greater compliance.

Mr. Speaker, the presenter the Bill mentioned this, and I just want to stress, that in the eleven offences, there are eleven (11) areas in which you can commit offence: failure to register; failure to display the Registration Certificate. So, even if you register, you are supposed to display the Registration Certificate, and if you don't do that, then that is an offence. Failure to notify any changes in the tax information and falsification of invoices; now for falsification of invoices, the penalty is much higher. In the previous three (3) that I mentioned, the fixed penalty, two thousand, five hundred (\$2,500.00), and in the Court, no less than two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00), but not exceeding five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00). In the case of falsification of invoices, receipts, credit and debit notes, the fixed penalty is ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) and on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00). So, all the fines for the offences vary. You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that falsification obviously, is a more serious offence than not displaying your certificate in your job. So, for falsification of invoices, the fine is much greater.

For negligent or fraudulent underpayment, that is the sixth offence, the fixed penalty is done on a percentage basis. It is 25% of the underpayment, or 75% of the underpayment, if the amount of the underpayment is greater than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) or greater than 25% of the person's tax liability for the period. So, there again, you have a variation in the payment, the penalties then, varies there.

False or misleading statements, that is an offence, and again, the value of the goods that is, in terms of the penalty is looked at. Failure to maintain documents is a next offence, because you need to maintain all your documents. So, it says: **"The taxpayer, who fails to maintain proper documents, as required by the Act or any**

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Tax Law, commits an offence and is liable to a fixed penalty.” And, here it varies again, Mr. Speaker, **“For failure to maintain documents, the penalty is fifty (\$50.00) per day for each day the failure continues.”** So, you see, it goes with the offence, and then the penalty, fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day for each day, if you fail to maintain documents.

And, your failure to comply with third party notice, a next offence, failure to provide facilities and failure to comply with notice to give information. So, it is very comprehensive, very, very comprehensive in this Tax Administration Act. And I want to end where I began by saying, it is in order to get greater compliance in the tax areas. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you Mr. Speaker. And, I thank the Member for his comprehensive support statement with respect to the Tax Administration (Amendment), Bill before us, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out, too, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the public, it says that section 76 of section 1 that: **“Where a fixed penalty notice is issued under Section 74, the person to whom the notice is issued may pay the fixed penalty in accordance with the notice.”** So, the notice should tell you, when and to whom it should be paid.

“The time within which a fixed penalty is payable is thirty-one (31) calendar days from the date of service of the notice.” So, in other words, if you have decided that I will not contest this, please go to pay within the thirty-one (31) days. In some jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, you pay sometimes, forthwith, five (5) days. You pay the ticket, “on the spot,” as some Magistrate might say. But, in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, when you are given the notice, the company, that corporate person is given the notice, they should really try and pay.

And, as Minister Joseph indicated, the Member for St. David, it is not a matter to collect revenue, it is really to ensure that everyone who has to pay, pay their fair share.

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And so, we do not want you to say, well, I am going to pay it, so you have to pay ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00), and then you let forty (40) days run. In which case, when you bring the monies, the Law says you're supposed to give it back to the person after thirty-one (31) days. So, the fixed penalty should be observed and the payment should be made within the specified period, to avoid it going before the Court. If you plan for it to go before the Court, you should so indicate, so that the Court proceedings can start. But, if you decided to pay the two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00), don't let the time run out, please pay before. Mr. Speaker, I recommend this Bill for its second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause. Or, Mr. Speaker, if you decide to change it to Part by Part, that's fine.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee

House resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

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Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Clerk: A Bill to amend the Road Traffic Act Cap. 289A, shortly entitled, Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the House be suspended in order to take the Bill through all stages at this Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two (2) years ago, or thereabout, we commenced the process of a total overhaul of the Road Traffic Act, Mr. Speaker, and associated Acts also, because there is also the Road Act. They work and are complementary to each other, but the Road Traffic Act is more specific to the exact traffic on the road, as opposed to the infrastructure to facilitate the traffic, Mr. Speaker.

We held a lot of consultations, Mr. Speaker, more towards the periphery, as we move inward, and we discussed with garage keepers, persons who used to park a lot of vehicles on the side of the roads, we refer to them as the roadside garages, hindering traffic, etcetera. We also discussed, Mr. Speaker, the environmental impact of what we refer to as the old oil, the engine oil, used engine oil being discarded, not in the proper way. And, we found, at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, some of the garages, even the so called, roadside garages were collecting the used oil, in drums and bringing it to be disposed, while others did not, Mr. Speaker. So, they know that we will be, indeed, amending various legislations and including in it, Mr. Speaker, the environmental requirement to safeguard our environment, and other actions required to ensure that we have a smooth and safe traffic throughout Grenada, Mr. Speaker.

At that point in time, too, we had the New York University, working with the Green Climate Fund, doing a study, so as to make it possible for Grenada to become one of the countries with a Climate Smart City, making St. George a Climate Smart City. At that point in time, we noted that it was taking over, or almost two (2) hours for those persons who travel to the South, at certain peak hours, to go from the Town of St. George to reach Grand Anse proper, and you will just be tied up in traffic, day after day. So, this is the background, Mr. Speaker, with which we delved into certain areas.

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Coming out of this, Mr. Speaker, was the Road Wardens, referred to, as the Traffic Wardens, and these Traffic Wardens, Mr. Speaker, were placed under the Transport Board, as it was, then. We have since looked, Mr. Speaker, and revised all of this, the constitution of the Transport Board, to ensure that we have them performing certain regulatory functions, as well. At that point in time, they were issued Bus Stickers, only. So, it appeared that the focus was simply on the Bus Operators. What about the Taxis? And, even more important, Mr. Speaker, what about the Truckers?

We had complaints that concrete was falling out from trucks and are spilling onto the roadway, others carrying gravel and sand, making the road unsafe and so forth. But, the Transport Board's focus was simply on the transporting of passengers. We have gone a long way, Mr. Speaker. We have consulted. And, so all will understand why we want to change the constitution of the Board to give it this broader perspective of transport, *per se*; in other words transport is not only transporting passengers. We have private people transporting themselves. They were not in the picture at all, Mr. Speaker. Although most of the vehicles owned in Grenada are owned by private persons.

So, we refocused, Mr. Speaker, and we have made the first amendment. Many more amendments will come, Mr. Speaker, as we consult and put things together and then we may have at the end of the day, one consolidated Act, which would replace all of those. It may take us three to five years, but we realise that we must do it with consultation and as we get one piece in, the others will follow, Mr. Speaker. I make this comment, so that the people will understand, when we come with amendment two (2) and amendment three (3).

When we discussed this particular amendment, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet indicated that we must go out for consultation. So, since then, Mr. Speaker, we recognise that we wanted to enhance more, the Traffic Wardens, in particular, and that is why, Mr. Speaker, a component of the Bill, you will see that now we call the organisation, the institution, not the Transport Board again, but the Transport Commission. The name that first came out was the Transport Authority. But, we do have a Road Act, which refers to the Transport Authority. I think the Legal Department

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thought, and I agreed with them, that it was too close to call; you have Authority, here, one, the Transport Authority and one, the Road Authority, all within the same Ministry. This could be confusing. So, the name chosen is the Transport Commission.

That does not mean, Mr. Speaker, after two to three (2 – 3) years, when we will be amalgamating everything together and we put the Transport Authority, the functions within this one Body, then we could refer to all of it as the Commission or all of this as the Authority. It seems to be that throughout the Region, we are not talking about Boards and so forth again, we are talking about Authority, maybe because the NIS and the National Insurance Board came in long before, that is why the term 'Authority' was not associated with them. But, whenever we are forming things like that now, it seems like the term 'Authority' is what we normally go to, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the component we will refer to is the constitution of what was referred to as the Transport Board and we will now see, Mr. Speaker, it is now section 2: **“The principal Act is amended by using the term ‘Commission’ instead of ‘Board’,” and “the function of the Grenada Transport Commission is hereby established, which shall be a Body Corporate to which section 49 of the Interpretation of the General Provisions Act, Chapter 153 shall apply.”** So, a Body Corporate can do a lot more things than just simply a Body that cannot be sued etcetera. And, we recognised that a long time before, but we sent it out so that the legal profession can see it, so that the same bus operators can see it, etcetera.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the functions, there have been twelve (12) functions, which include regulation of public transport infrastructure including our park facilities, terminal facilities, bus stops, roundabout, etcetera. I would not go through all, Mr. Speaker, road safety, the regulation and control of traffic.

And, at this point, I want to recognise the part played by the Police Division. They are always there, Mr. Speaker, with the Ministry of Infrastructure, as we perform, not only traffic, but even in designing roads. Should the road curves be a little wider at this spot? Where will the Roundabout go? They all participate, Mr. Speaker, and in this particular instance, because we have the Bus Terminal under the control of the

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Grenada Ports Authority, they all participated, and we have a cross sectorial team that went out, Mr. Speaker, to the Consultation.

Now, it is the Commission that will be the employer, the Board was, and now, as we change it to Commission, they will be the employer of the wardens. So, for the avoidance of doubt, the Act provides that, whoever, employees of the Board will now become employees of the Commission. We have changed the name, but we have also changed the structure as a Body Corporate. So, the wardens should have no fear, their employment continues. As was in the other case, while it is the Board and now the Commission, a Body Corporate, who employs them, they work directly and they take instruction from the police, because they are into a field that's controlled by the police. And, so the Body Corporate has no problem with this. They have instituted that in their Terms of Reference for their employment.

And, so I want to commend now, at this point in time, the work of the wardens, Mr. Speaker. They are well-respected and they are doing a remarkable job (**applause**) so far, as all Grenadians are concerned, Mr. Speaker. In fact, one person, who said: **"We don't want the police to be involved in the control of traffic with respect to buses."** So, I asked why, and he said, **"don't play you don't know, the police own buses, so we don't want them to regulate themselves fundamentally."** They said: **"Give us a warden every day."** And, that's where you have a lot of praises for the wardens coming through. So, they are not only recognised in the fact that they have no conflict, but also that they are doing their work in a very remarkable and fair way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, **"the Board consists of a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson,"** who will be, Mr. Speaker, selected from the seven (7) members of the Board: **"the Commissioner of Police, or his designate; the Permanent Secretary, with responsibility for Transport; one (1) senior representative from the Ministry with responsibility for road infrastructure with expertise in engineering; one person with knowledge and experience in management of transport and traffic policies; and three (3) persons with knowledge in other matters pertinent to transport such as insurance in law."** And, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a small

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amendment there, when we reach into the Committee stage, just to add, perhaps, another discipline, Mr. Speaker. And, two (2) from these members will be designated by the Minister, as Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Mr. Speaker.

And, I wish to refer here again, coming from a consultation that I saw my two (2) colleagues here, the Member for St. Mark and the Member for St. John. We were on a Zoom meeting, by a very austere Body and they indicated to us that we should continue to educate the public that when we say the “Minister”, it means the Minister in Cabinet. So, it is not the Minister for Infrastructure that will simply wake up one day and say, I pick this person, I pick this person. No, Mr. Speaker. Of course, he must lead and make recommendation, but any other member could make recommendation and it is up to the Body in Cabinet, because it is felt every day a next one again, giving the Minister powers and powers for the Minister. It is the Minister in Cabinet. No one Minister will appoint this Board. And so, taking the advice that they have given us, every time we refer to an Act, they indicate that we should say, there and then, it's not a particular Minister, but it is the entire Cabinet that will be doing the selection, Mr. Speaker.

One of the considerations given here, Mr. Speaker, in Boards, not only here, but in Boards, in general, we use it a lot, when we have Institutions that have served more than one country. You have a member and you have an alternate; in other words if that member cannot attend, the alternate has the same full powers. The alternate and the member, they are entitled to attend every meeting, together. They are given documents of the meetings for that particular institution, they all receive and they both can go in. However, if you have the alternate and the full member, the alternate may be able to discuss, but he or she cannot vote, it is only the full member to vote, and this is working remarkably well. It is not new, it came in years back, because institutions found that you could not attend, there was no time to select somebody else to attend, so from day one, select it. In ECTEL and in many institutions that serve the OECS and the Caribbean, the State or the appointed Body must appoint a member and an alternate. If the member cannot come, the alternate goes, so the business of the institution continues, and you cannot say that I am fighting for a quorum.

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Too many times, you hear, Mr. Speaker, well we couldn't find a quorum, we must do this and we must do that. If we follow the principles of members and alternates; and you need not put alternates for every member. You know of members, who are very busy, and so I think, in this case, or in those cases, there should be an alternate. In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, the Transport Board, at the point in time kept complaining, about they cannot form a quorum. So, the Act here, Mr. Speaker, and I will be making in the Committee Stage about certain positions that we should put an alternate, and I guess everyone here will know a lot about the Board and we could do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it says: ***"The Public Service Commission may, subject to such condition, as it may require, approve secondment of an officer in the Public Service to an office within the Grenada Transport Commission."*** Now, the Grenada Transport Commission is a Body Corporate. It must have its own CEO, as the Law provides for that, and it must have its own staff. So, the Public Service, as per usual, can now second someone from within the Public Service Commission into the Transport Commission.

Formerly, it was just a Board, without a staff. The staff there was served from Personnel within the Ministry of Infrastructure. No longer so, Mr. Speaker, they have now to manage staff. They have close to one hundred (100) wardens, and so they must manage them, and not allow the Ministry to manage them. They are a Body Corporate, that is their business, and this came out of a lot of consultation.

What we see there, Mr. Speaker, is that no one should be there on the Board to regulate themselves; in other words you should not have a trucker there, you should not have a taxi there. Okay; the taxi men, *per se*, from the Associations, it was there before, one of them should be on the Board. But, now, with the Body Corporate, who must take serious decisions, then no one should be on that particular Board. It is conflict of interest and, I think that was discussed at length. My two (2) colleagues, who were at that meeting with that Body, indicated what conflict of interest is, and it is wide, Mr. Speaker, and it was shown the problems that could occur, when you do have conflict of interest.

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And, that was one of the reasons that the Cabinet said: **“Go out there to consultation, the Bus Association and the Taxi Association must understand why the amendments are now being made,”** and so we went out there, Mr. Speaker. Months ago, this amendment was prepared, and we came back with all the necessary advice that we got and pertinent advice was incorporated into the Bill. And, so, Mr. Speaker, at this stage, I recommend the Bill for its second reading.

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

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support this Bill and give a few points where I think it should even go further, because transportation, Mr. Speaker, is very important to the development of a country and with good transportation you need infrastructure, good roads, because we do not make parts here, so it is very expensive to keep importing those parts. So, you could bring down on your imports, if you maintain good quality roads.

We notice, Mr. Speaker, that... I would think... sometimes the way I see it, when you are driving, they really treat the motorists with disrespect. We have a Litter Act in place, but yet still you see dirt, and everything people just drop it on the side of the road and they forget it months, grass grow and then the roots would penetrate the pavement and you start losing roads.

I saw, on Fisherman Birthday, Mr. Speaker, on Edwards Street, there were vehicles there, park up for years. The registration you could tell it's about three years old, but then the Tow Truck would come and it's towing the vehicles that just parked there, because they know they might be able to collect the revenues. But, the vehicles that have been there violating the Law for years, no registration, they leave them right there, and you see this happening. There is an old derelict vehicle parked up, but then then they would tow the one the driver just parked, and then they leave this other one there. And, sometimes, again, even the signs, because, to me, everywhere is: “No Parking.” But, but there is a difference between parking, stopping and waiting, right,

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because you could be stopping and waiting, but that doesn't mean that you are parking. But, there is no differentiation, in terms of the enforcers. Once the tires are not moving, they think you're parked.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, is, I wish the wardens could have expanded responsibilities, because I see sometimes, even in my Constituency, you just do a nice piece of slipper drain, and you do the slipper drain, so that if the vehicle is driving and the road is too narrow, at least you could safely go on to the slipper drain and have the traffic moving.

Sometimes, some people come and they put a small sized culvert in the drain, or they block it with some piece of concrete so that they can step into their property, and this creates havoc, because in the last rainfall we had on Mongo Road, the people, who live going down by Shanty Town, in St. John, they were flooded, because somebody put a slab right over the drain and then the water coming down with some leaves, blocked there and flooded everybody, and now the people coming to me now for compensation. And, they are not going to the person that blocked the road.

So, I think the Ministry of Transport should come in with some standards and enforce it, so when you're doing a driveway or anything like that, you know that you maintain the standards, because at the top of the hill, you might see a big culvert and as you get lower down the hill, where the water intensity is greater, you have a small culvert, and you see it is coming in to the road. So that's an area, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the Transportation people should look into.

Another one I noticed is that of humps, and you probably passed on it recently, coming through Grenville by where La Qua is, they put a huge hump there, and you could see, on the hump itself, where vehicles are scraping. Either there are no standards or they are not following the standards, that's why I say they are treating motorists and people with vehicles with disrespect. If you're having a hump, maintain the standard, so that people would not be damaging their vehicle there.

Another thing is, they would put a hump and there are no signs. So, you pass in the morning, driving, in the evening time you come and you almost breaking your neck. I have seen, right by Dr. Bell gap in Maran, they put a hump there and a guy from

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Victoria on a bike, almost lost his life, because they put it there and there were no signs. One time, in Grand Roy, they put a hump there, no sign and there was a crowd laughing at the motorist, who, you know, was surprised by the unpleasant experience going over this hump. So I think, again, Mr. Speaker, the people who are responsible for the Transport, treat the motorists with some respect and have the roads adequately painted, because sometimes they paint the road and then they forget about it, because paint is something that has a limited life, so if you are doing a good job in maintaining it, make sure that after every few months you paint the road.

The other thing is, on the Telescope Bridge, you could travel there, when you see no light is on. You know what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, because one is broken. When it is red, there is one lighting; when it gets green, there is nothing lighting. So, if you are not familiar with that, in that area, it's problems, because you might think that current gone and nothing working, and you go on the Bridge and nobody wants to back up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is time that we move forward and we are importing a lot of vehicles into Grenada that the Transportation Board needs to step up and give us some respect. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the presenter of this Bill, the Honourable Member for St. George South-East and also the seconder, before me, have been very detailed, so there is not much that I can add.

But I noticed that the Transport Board must advise the Minister on matters pertaining to road transport and traffic including a number of things, Mr. Speaker, a wide range of things, and I just want to add one little area, as a Member from a Parish or Constituency that is distant to the city. And, for all of the persons who live in rural areas or areas distant from the city, they will understand the difficulties they experience, if they work in the city, whether it is right in the city, proper, or in the south, and we do have

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quite a number, in the Tourism Industry, working in the Restaurants, working in the Hotels and so on, and, on holidays, and on times that we will call after hours, you have no transport available to take persons into the city, or outside of the city, or very little transport.

And, a number of times, while some of the businesses, if they are large enough, will have some arrangements for those persons, most times it doesn't take them close to their home or to their homes. So, we will find that a person, who works in a facility down in this southern part of the Island and lives in St. Mark, St. Patrick they get dropped off at Gouyave at 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock in the night, and sometimes we have solitary females and even males are vulnerable, just the same way. We have them walking by themselves and having to solicit rides from vehicles and in the night. God knows who is coming in a vehicle, what kinds of persons. And, so these people their safety is at risk and while we do not have a Transport Service, the means of transport, which is, usually the buses are owned by the Government and they are privately owned, but they provide a public service, and I think this is one of the things we would like to see looked into; that there is an off-hour Transport System. It may not be as regular as the others and maybe it needs to rotate.

I have noticed, at one time, somebody tried to do a late run, and the person was doing well, and a number of other persons started to do the late run, and so it became over saturated and it was not profitable, and then everybody stopped doing it. So, if we have this Regulatory Body, they can advise and work with the owners and come up with something reasonable, to ensure that our people get to work and leave work safely; and it is not just the safety, there is another issue.

Some business places would not employ people who live far. So, if they know that they do not provide transport, they ask you where you are from, and the only way somebody from a rural area or distant area, can get it, is by lying and say: ***"I live in the Limes, or I live in Grand Anse, or I live somewhere."*** And that should not be, because most of the development, no matter what you do, and we have to strive to decentralise development, but most of the developments still happen in the south. People still love Grand Anse Beach. People still love certain things, being near to the

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city, the Market Square, and so it will take a long while before you get significant decentralisation, so that there is a better spread of the dollar and the revenues.

But, in the meantime, I just want to, through you, Mr. Speaker, and through this Honourable House, send this message to the forthcoming Transport Board that they look seriously at holidays, weekends, especially Sundays and what we call after hours, to ensure that there is a flow of public transport that can facilitate persons looking for jobs in the City. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Bill, and I want to just expand a bit on the comments made by the Member for St. Mark, because I think it's an absolutely critical issue, not only with respect to persons working in the Hotel Sector and other Sectors in St. George's, but just in order to enhance economic activity. I think one of the things that I guess the Board has to do, the Commission, as mandated by the Act, is to look at the link between the economy and transport. Don't treat transport simply as a result of economic activity, but it can also enhance economic activity.

For example, there are areas in the country where we need more economic activity, but there will be no more economic activity, if there is no transport to the area. So, I think a study must be done. I know we have done a whole lot of studies, but a study must be done, and transportation must be treated as a main pillar for economic activity. And, I think the Member for St. Mark is absolutely correct, when she says that persons in the rural areas are not able to access some of the jobs in the south because of the unavailability of transport. But, also that economic activities are not developing in some areas, because of the unavailability of transport into those areas. So maybe the Government and the entity can have discussions with the Private Sector. She is also correct, and I don't think we can get around it, that the major players in transportation

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come from the Private Sector. But, maybe the Government can, in a sense, provide incentives to certain players in transport, to do a service.

So for example, persons who decide to work at night are given additional tax concessions, or gasoline, or tires, some kind of concession to persons who choose to operate at that hour, or persons who choose to go into a particular route are given some other concessions. In other words, a way in which the Government can influence these actions, not just through simply ask them, persuade them, beg them to do it, but actually provide an economic incentive to the persons who are involved in transportation to run these routes so as to enhance the lives of persons in the rural communities, who may want to come into St. George's, but also to help spur economic activities in some of the rural, more remote areas of the country.

Another issue is the congestion. There is a serious congestion problem arising and that is biting into the person's ability to work. So for example, rather than getting to work 8:00 o'clock, if you don't leave home at a certain time; it's like Trinidad. We know what's happening in Trinidad, some places you have to leave home 5 o'clock, in order to get into Port-of-Spain. So persons getting to work late, it is affecting hours of work of persons, so we have to find ways to reduce the congestion.

One thing used by some people is limiting importation. There is another issue of enhancing public transport, which we don't have. But there is also, you know, you go down to Grand Anse and you have three (3) pedestrian crossings that are not regulated. So one person cross, a next person cross, a next person cross and there is no regulation, no light saying that you group five (5) people and everybody crosses at the same time and traffic go. So, there are simple, little things that may be done in order to get people moving, because, Mr. Speaker, moving people... You know, I have always said to the bus drivers, who I represented in Court, for many years, they do not understand the strength of their Industry, because if we cannot move people efficiently around the country, economic activity can ground to a halt. So, I want to commend this and to say that there's a lot of work to be done in it. But, it is not, as I've always said, not just simply giving bus stickers; it is looking at transport, as a major pillar of economic

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activity in this country. So, I support the Bill and I commend it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a few comments, and I listened to the gentle lady from St. Mark and Honourable David from the Town of St. George, and he just mentioned that a study must be done, and I believe and I know he has a good memory. There was once upon a time, in this country, when we had the NTS (National Transport System). I think the Member would remember the days when he used to go to Grenville late in the night, because he knows he can come back. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, do we still have to have a study? Isn't our country today, one of the only countries in the OECS or in the Caribbean that does not have a Public Transport System? I say Public Transport System, but the Transport System that we have in Grenada, today, is mainly private, and we are trying to put Laws in place and regulations to regulate the buses, but they pay for their buses. But when you had the NTS, it was really subsidised by the Government, because the economic spinoff was tremendous, Mr. Speaker. You could have limed late in the night in Town, because you know you could have taken the bus 2 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning to go back home, or go to Grenville, or any part of Grenada. I remember that. Whatever happened to that, Mr. Speaker? But, Mr. Speaker, it goes really, more than that and we have to look at our Transport System, in Grenada, not only the buses, the trucks, the private, everything.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to address this on the Adjournment, but I will address this now. Let's take for instance, now. We have some major roadwork going on in Grenada; well, Moliniere is a different story, but I will include Moliniere there now. All traffic on the western side is diverted, and, well I shouldn't say all, a lot of the heavy

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vehicles diverted through St. George's North-East, passes through Constantine, Malfoot, New Hampshire, Willis and then go down to the western side. Marrast Hill, again, some work is being done there, and you have the traffic now, diverted up through Tempe, to Mt. Parnassus to come back on St. Paul's Main Road.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you look now, and I hope that the Ministry of Works will look into the condition of those roads, because I saw a mishap just about a week ago that a truck on that road, filled with gravel, the big Mac Truck, about 30/40 tons. The road is narrow; I do not think the road was built for the capacity of those trucks. So on its way, it just slid off and went into the drain and left a big trench. Now, the Ministry of Works have to go and dig up and put their drain now. And when you look at what is being done to these roads, because I do not even know if the regulation in terms of weight of the trucks is regulated. When you look at the other piece of road, Mr. Speaker, and the Member for the Town of St. George will tell you that. Coming from Gravel and Concrete, the Quarry, passing in front of the Housing Project, and you could tell, I mean, when you look at the indentation that is made in the road, because of the weight, no regulations, Mr. Speaker. I think I spoke about that the other day, and I had a picture on my phone, Mr. Speaker, where a cement truck, coming from the Port was loaded with twenty-seven (27) slings of cement on the flatbed truck, when it goes to turn the corner at the top of Dusty Highway, it broke and rung off.

Mr. Speaker, a flatbed truck with twenty-seven (27) slings of cement on one flatbed truck in Grenada. Do we have the engineering capacity of the roads to take those kinds of weight? No, we don't. But, whatever you can load, whatever you can carry on and so be it. I mean, I see the danger all the time.

Mr. Speaker, I saw on another occasion, the gas truck, Rubis Gas Truck, and you notice it has the cylinders in the cages and, the cylinders are stacked one on top the other, probably, about three (3) rows, and I did a quick multiplication, over three hundred (300) cylinders on the truck, Mr. Speaker. When the cylinder goes up so high, the centre of gravity also goes up, and it means, therefore, it can tip over.

In some instances, Mr. Speaker, it's just a disaster waiting to happen, and yet, no regulations, and sometimes where we must put regulations, we're not putting it. Well I

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hope that the Transport Board and this Road Traffic amendment that the Body has teeth as to bring safety to our roads and to our pedestrians and to our drivers and to Grenada as a whole. I think it will be big savings for the Government and people of Grenada, if some of these things are regulated.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I go on, I got a few calls from a few bus drivers concerning this, in terms of the setting up and they raised a lot of concerns. In that, for instance, I think we know that during COVID-19, there was a big hoopla about legitimate concerns that they have had, in terms of where the pricing is and the pegging of the bus fee and the transportation. And when you get right down to it, I mean, a few of them that I've spoken to said: ***"Look, we are here, we have been doing this, year in, year out, and the reason why we have to hustle, hustle so much, is because there are so many buses on the road and yet we have the mortgages to pay."*** And they had to work overtime and thwart all the rules in order to meet that demand.

Yet, the Board pegged them with the price then that they cannot shift, or they cannot change. But I believe that we, as a Government, a Government in place in Grenada, should sit down and have conversation and negotiations so that at least, the business of providing public transportation could be meaningful to their lives and not just doing it because they want to live. At the end of the day, let them be able to move from Point A to Point B in terms of their development. But again, let us go back to Public Transport; maybe let us go back to history. The Member was part of a Government that instituted Public Transport, maybe he can recall those days and we would not have to study it again, because the study is already there, so that our people and economic activities in Grenada, can move again, and this is what we need now, something to start boosting the economy, so that people... when people move, money move and the country will move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

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Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the persons making contributions, valid contributions and for advancing the debate, Mr. Speaker.

First, I will like to talk about the task of the Commission and maybe to recommend that at the Committee Stage, just some changes in words, in consultation with the Drafting Unit, to make it clearer, if it's not clear in the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, the Transport Board, we know they will be responsible for transport rates, fares, tolls, dues, etcetera. The Leader of the Opposition brought out that point. Licence duties and licence fees, they will also be making a recommendation on those, advising, and other vehicles of all types, Mr. Speaker. They will also be advising on the needs of any area or areas in relation to traffic, including the provision of adequate, suitable and efficient services they will be providing for that. We discussed at length, with the business people, with the hoteliers, as the Member for St. Mark says, we should have a route and a time, so that workers can move from one place to the other, not only from the Hotel Sector, but all other Sectors, so they will be advising on this, Mr. Speaker. And my comment here is in consultation with the Drafting Unit, whether the term "traffic" is not too limited, and it should be "transport", that's 1 (c), because that was the intent.

A lot of consultation went in, Mr. Speaker, into this and all that was elucidated here were discussed and brought in. So, maybe traffic does not send the correct signal that the areas where the provision of adequate and suitable transport should not be, maybe transport and the word "traffic", they would advise more, Mr. Speaker.

Road safety, that also falls within their purview. The regulation and control of traffic and regulating and control of road transport. Road transport, in the sense, that it is the Member for St. Mark's duty to guide the air transport and it is under Finance duty to drive the sea transport. That is why you'll see that it has road transport there. So, it is clear here according to (e) and (f), maybe there is a distinction between traffic and transport. Transport may encompass everything and we certainly want to ensure that the point made by the Member for St. Mark and that point were also highlighted in the consultation is really taken care of. And maybe we might add two (2) or three (3) more

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words to it to make it abundantly clear. We want to see a route, or if the route is already established that the time and the quantity and type of transport, so that the workers can get from A to B to increase the economic activity, Mr. Speaker.

(e), the standards to be prescribed for vehicles on the road, yes, all of those things that you cannot load and full up, you cannot have a truck working with five thousand (5,000) blocks on the back of it. All of those things came up and that will be the task of the Commission.

(h), regulation of public transport infrastructure, car parks, etcetera, where you should have layby etcetera, because that one already pertains to traffic. If you have a layby in an area where even if the bus goes into the layby to drop somebody off, it may still be affecting the traffic. That must not be, so the task must come to say, Ministry and Police, you must move this layby or extend it sufficiently. So, the tasks are wide, Mr. Speaker.

Measures for controlling public, private and commercial transportation and establishing conditions under which they may operate. Again, the point made by the Leader of the Opposition, the Transport Commission. That's why we now have to give them the staff you know, Mr. Speaker. They can't depend on people in the Ministry to work for them, since their duties are so fundamental and wide.

And any other matters affecting the Traffic or Transport that the Minister may refer to the Grenada Transport Commission. So, if the issue comes up, it gets through the Minister in Cabinet, they can be directed to look at those things and to go forward with them, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the studies, I want to indicate that more than one study is now underway. First, we have the E-Transport Study that got underway, financed through the Caribbean Development Bank and the GEF funding, and the (E), as you know, electronic. How do we move buses, Government vehicles, big Companies vehicles from fossil fuel to electronic motion, electrical motion? That is now on the way, Mr. Speaker.

More importantly, too, Mr. Speaker, an overall study is now being designed and discussed. The financing is now being sought, because in this hard COVID time, Mr.

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Speaker, whatever is there, externally, and we can access, we should, and this will cover fares, economic activities. In other words, if you increase the fare would that detract from economic activities? You have two (2) fundamental objectives in the fares, to ensure that the operation can take care of itself with the mandated profits and to ensure that people will move, because if the fares are too high, people will not move.

So, a study is out, Mr. Speaker, on this in particular. And, the Amendment says: **“No one should charge fares above the fares recommended by the Board”** now the Commission. And, it is only because it is the Minister that will sign the Regulation, you have the fact that, well, he will advise the Minister. So he advises Cabinet, because the Board itself cannot go and put the Regulations in place, but the Act mandates the Cabinet, listen to the Transport Commission and to then do all that is necessary to give effect to their recommendation, Mr. Speaker. We have the structure and resilience and recovery, because this emanated to some extent, out of the COVID pandemic that we have.

We recognised, Mr. Speaker, that the buses did not operate, because they were locked down and quite rightly so. I remember in discussing with one team, one Bus Association, they indicated that the people will roll the money up in their hands and throw it on the ground, they didn't want to touch each other. It's COVID time, you're touching this person, you're touching the other person, why should I touch you? And, all of those things came just before the lockdown at the end of March. So, we have no problem, whatsoever, with the busmen saying it is unsafe for them to be out there and then we lock them.

But, what happened, Mr. Speaker, in the bigger world? Buses were running, transport was running, although you had big shift, not many people could come in. That is why it is about the structure of our Public Transport. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned public in the sense of State-owned, not in the sense of providing a public service. This study, underway, will determine and I've made the statement here, Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable Place, whether we should have a mixture, some public and some private, because we have the private persons providing the public service now. I don't see us just removing them from there and going back to public or public-owned set

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of vehicles. And, this is not the place, Mr. Speaker, to discuss the problems that were faced when the public owned something. All of this will come from the study, Mr. Speaker, and, as we told the Bus Association, the Private Bus Association, who now provides the public service, that they will all be part of it. So, if we come out with a mixture of 10% public-owned buses that will ensure resilience, when we have issues like this; in other words, a continuation and we'll be able to recover faster, all of this. So, we understand the situation. It's not only for economic activities; that is ultimately the goal, but it is also for, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have resilience, as we build resilience into every Sector of the economy. That study, Mr. Speaker, is on together with the fares. The only reason it has not yet started, it is because you were mandated to look for the financing. So, the proposal has been submitted to one institution so far, the Caribbean Development Bank, since they have a great interest in resilience and recovery. It will also be submitted to other Funding Agencies, Mr. Speaker, and so we should have a comprehensive way to move on.

New York University started the debate, Mr. Speaker, in their task with the GCF, the Green Climate Fund, to making St. George a Smart City. And, I mentioned it in my opening statements of the time it will take for people to come from St. George to Grand Anse. And, as the other Members rightly say, they are going to work, so that's time lost. So, we do agree, Mr. Speaker, that all of these things will be done. I mention this to say that they are already underway, Mr. Speaker.

And, one other area that I will like to discuss at the Committee Stage, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that, you know, we have it correctly, is perhaps, an addition to deal with the Public, Private Transport area, and it is not in their mandate. Should they also be making recommendations on the structure of the public service for transport, and when we say the service, it could be done by the public vehicles, or by private vehicles. So, at the Committee Stage, Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleague to comment, so that we can adopt that. We reached up to '(j)', maybe it can be added in, as '(k).'

I really want to commend my colleagues, including the Leader of the Opposition, for seeing how important this amendment is. That is why I say, Mr. Speaker, we're starting now, and from all that we have said, we must come back with further

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amendment. And we believe we might have two (2) or three (3) further amendments along the Road Traffic Act, which we can collapse into something, at the end of the day, as we go through bit by bit. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, we can't wait and do everything together. COVID has taught us, we got to move and move now. That is why we are here with the first amendment to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, which I now recommend to this Honourable House for its second reading.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Just one clarification I would just like to get, if you may. I know they will put measures in place for controlling public, private and commercial transportation and establish conditions under which they will operate. Does that include modification of the vehicles? Let me tell you why I asked that, because what you would have is a lot of vehicles, especially owned by some of our younger folks have modified mufflers, modified mufflers and big sound boxes, amplified boxes in the back of their vehicle and woe beyond to the elderly at nights. Would that be part of the job of the Commission, to say to them that you cannot modify your vehicle to be a disturbance and a hindrance to the health of others? If it is not there, in a further amendment, I would really like to see that.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, even in the Committee Stage, the Members could propose and the Members could add and the Legal Draftspersons here could tell us, when we say their task is to recommend and standards to be prescribed for vehicles to be used in the public, commercial and private transportation, whether the standards can so include, or whether we should add two (2) or three (3) more words to ensure that we take that into consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: At the Committee Stage, I will so propose.

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Mr. Speaker: Thank you, very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, 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 resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with amendments. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed with amendments.

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Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item No. 16 - Request for leave to move the adjournment of the House on Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

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

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Just before, Leader of the Opposition, I saw Honourable Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatwain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make some brief comments on the Adjournment. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak, briefly, on a topic that has been dominating social media, mainstream media and conversations in every corner that we travelled over the past day or two. And, it has to do with the ground-breaking ceremony for the rehabilitation and expansion of our Airport, the Maurice Bishop International Airport. Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with our citizens criticising activities of the Government, that's their right, if they feel that they do not have enough information to justify otherwise.

I also believe that it is the responsibility of the Government to provide adequate information and to provide as much clarity as possible, so as to avoid comments and criticisms that may turn out to be not highly justified. And therefore, we should not view every criticism coming from our people as being malicious, especially, Mr. Speaker, as I said, if clarity or not enough information has been provided.

And in this regard, Mr. Speaker, as someone, who has been in the position of Minister for Finance for about seven (7) years, and being familiar with some of the issues surrounding loan negotiations and restructuring of loans, I would like to offer

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some clarification, or further information that might provide further clarity and therefore, to remove some of the elements of doubts surrounding that event and the Loan Agreement entered into by the Government, leading to the ground-breaking ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, from my understanding, this is a loan from the EXIM Bank of China, not the highly concessional loan that we would like to think of. Let us say a forty (40) year loan. It is run I think for... it's a ten (10) year loan. Is it ten (10) or twenty (20)?

(A Member said: "twenty (20)")

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: A twenty (20) year loan, with a five (5) year grace period, at 2% interest. I do not consider that to be... it's not the highly concessional loan that we will get, let us say, from IDA. But under the circumstances and given the nature of the operation, I think it is something that is good, and we could complement that aspect of the loan from the World Bank, the IDA, for the refurbishing and upgrading of the International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, a number of questions have been asked, and they need to be answered. For example, the question has been asked, why now? The question being asked, does Government have the capacity to borrow at this time or should Government be borrowing at this time? Question, what happens if Government defaults on the loan? Why China or why a Company from China undertaking the project? Will there be misuse of the funds? Will Grenadians be employed in the project?

Mr. Speaker, I think these are questions that we need to provide as much information on and much clarity. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the loan is a loan to the Airport Authority, the Airport Authority is a revenue generating enterprise and therefore, I believe that both the lender and borrower would have entered into that negotiating session to determine the revenue generating capacity of the Airport Authority to service their loan, ultimately.

But, Mr. Speaker, because this is a Statutory Body, I think the ultimate responsibility will rest on Government, in terms of accepting contingent liability and therefore Government cannot extricate itself from the loan obligation of the Airport

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Authority. And therefore, in asking the question, Mr. Speaker, why now? I will answer simply, why not now? The Airport is our number one economic infrastructure in terms of relevance and importance. The gateway to our country not only for human trafficking, but for trafficking cargo and therefore, if anything were to happen to that airport and Grenada is downgraded, we will be in very serious trouble. And therefore, I do not believe that, as a responsible Government, we should wait until something happens to our airport to respond. And, therefore, I am saying that Government is highly justified in supporting this loan, at this time.

On an economic front, the loan is also justified, because, as we all know, we are in a period of low economic activity where unemployment is rising and therefore, economic policy dictates that whenever the country is experiencing high levels of unemployment, as a result of recessionary activities, it is appropriate that the Government should embark on what we call counter-cyclical measures, activities that will result in a turnaround, and the most effective weapon that we can use in terms of creating the environment for a turnaround is an expanded Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). And therefore, we must see this loan, as being an aspect of Government expanding Public Sector Investment Programme to stimulate economic activity and to create employment opportunities for our people. Therefore, on this ground again, Mr. Speaker, I see this loan as being justified.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the world's financial market, it is a borrower's market right now, because as I said, activities are depressed, and if we wait until there is a turnaround, the cost of borrowing will be much higher and therefore it would not make sense to wait for a turnaround, in the global economy, to embark on this loan.

Some are saying why not do this in a piecemeal manner. Do the runway now, do the aerobridge later on, do the bypass road later on. Mr. Speaker, again, this will not make much economic sense, because every time you enter into a Loan Agreement, there are charges involved and that will increase the cost. So, it's better to take a consolidated approach, take one loan now, avoid all of those possible charges and therefore, ultimately have better conditions for the loan.

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So, on those grounds, Mr. Speaker, I think the question, as to why now could be answered. I think it is proper, it is right, and I fully support the Government, in terms of now and not postponing this thing for when economic activities increase, because, by then, the cost would have increased and what you could do now, you would be able to do maybe half or less, if you wait for five (5) to ten (10) years to undertake those activities.

The second question being asked, Mr. Speaker, does Government have the capacity to take on this loan, are we increasing the National Debt, will there be a possibility of default? Mr. Speaker, the key factor, the most important factor, in determining whether a country has the capacity to borrow, is the Debt to GDP Ratio, and we have said that over and over. This is an International Benchmark; it's not Grenada's Benchmark. And, Mr. Speaker, it is well known that the lower the Debt to GDP Ratio, better will be the terms and conditions of any loan that you will get, the higher will be the possibility of financing that loan, Mr. Speaker, and the possibility of default will be lower. So, any country wishing to embark on any loan of this nature or any Lending Agency will first look at your Debt to GDP Ratio to determine whether you have the capacity to service that loan.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this context let us look at the Debt to GDP Ratio of Grenada, as compared to the other countries in the OECS that comprised the ECCU, and I am looking now at the independent countries. I am not taking Anguilla and the BVI and Montserrat into consideration. For Antigua and Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, the Debt to GDP Ratio that was at the beginning of this year, before the onset of COVID: 88.3%, Antigua and Bermuda; Dominica, 79.8%; St. Lucia, 71.2%; St. Kitts and Nevis, 59%; St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 71.3%; Mr. Speaker, and Grenada, prior to COVID, 56.1%, Mr. Speaker.

What we are seeing here is that of the six (6) independent countries that comprise the ECCU, Grenada has the best Debt to GDP Ratio, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, in terms of debt sustainability and debt management, we are No. 1 in the OECS, apart of the other countries, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So, when we are talking about the capacity and the ability to borrow, Grenada stands out as No. 1 in the OECS.

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So, those who are challenging us must look at the figures and ask what is happening in the other countries and how come they are not questioning.

But even more, Mr. Speaker, more conspicuous, let us compare the Debt to GDP Ratio of Grenada now, to what it was in 2013, when this Government took over. The Debt to GDP Ratio then, Mr. Speaker, was 108%. It means that your debt was more than your Gross Domestic Product. But at the same time, that Government was borrowing, short-term, and you know that is the critical thing, that is the most destructive thing, short-term borrowing, on the Regional market, borrowing from the NIS, in terms of selling assets in order to meet current obligation. This borrowing, Mr. Speaker, is for development purpose, and it is even taking place at a time when your Debt to GDP Ratio is the best in the OECS. But we heard nothing then. Those who are complaining now said not a word, when Government was borrowing when the Debt to GDP Ratio was over 100%, Mr. Speaker. But, let us look at the rest of the Caribbean where we stand: the Bahamas, 60.4%; Barbados, right now, a Debt to GDP Ratio of 117% of GDP; Belize, 92%; Guyana, 57%; Jamaica, 94%; and Trinidad and Tobago, 49%. So, even within the wider CARICOM, Mr. Speaker, we stand very good, fourth. And therefore, those who are criticising, Mr. Speaker, must do this kind of comparative analysis, because countries with higher Debt to GDP Ratio, they are borrowing and yet they are not getting this kind of criticism from their citizens, as we are getting from ours. And the question is, is it because of ignorance of the facts or can it be malicious criticism? But, I am saying, Mr. Speaker, yes, you have a right to criticise, but it must be based on facts and not just emotion.

The second point that I want to raise, Mr. Speaker, the third question to be answered, will Grenada be in default? This is answered partially, in what I have said. This is the first major loan from the EXIM Bank of China, and I presume that since you have just broken ground, you cannot disburse all of the loan. So can you default on something that you have not even started? What is the possibility of default now? Absolutely none. So that to me, is not a significant issue. Those who are making those kinds of statements, Mr. Speaker, are really using the African Nation model, the Belt and Road Initiative, which is a major International Project being undertaken by the

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Government of China, to improve infrastructure and communications in Africa and some Asian countries. We are talking about trillions of dollars. And some countries may have found themselves in difficulties and are having difficulties servicing their debt.

But, I do not know, I am not aware of any kind of adverse takeover by China, of any of those projects. I know in areas where China was invited to be part of the management structure, it has been done on a negotiated basis and not any adverse takeover. So the talk that China will just take over the Airport, that thought is so far-fetched. It has not happened. There is no practical example that we can look at to say that will happen in Grenada.

Why China? Mr. Speaker, let us look at the history, the debt of the United States of America, Public Debt, nineteen trillion US dollars (US\$19 trillion). Of that debt, Mr. Speaker, China owns (\$1.4 trillion). In essence, what I am saying is that China is the No. 1 creditor, in terms of providing loans to the United States of America, No. 1. These two countries are considered to be adversarial, (\$1.4 trillion), the Great United States of America is owing to China.

China is a member of the World Bank, China is a member of our Caribbean Development Bank, and those resources that we get from the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, Mr. Speaker, they come with the support of China. Maybe, we do not realize that China is part of those Institutions. Why a Company from China?

Mr. Speaker, if you get a loan from the World Bank, if you request a loan from the World Bank, or the Caribbean Development Bank, you have to put it out to an international Tender. You must. And invariably, as it has happened in Grenada, a Company from China might win the bid, might get the tender. The building of Mac Donald College extension wing, GBSS, those were World Bank Funds, but the Company from China won, and now you have a loan being provided by the Government of China, you are saying, why a Chinese Company? Does it make sense?

If international bidding will result in a company from China getting it, you are providing it, are you saying that you will give it to another company from another country

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to do the work? That makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. So, that, again, is an argument that has no merit.

Talking about employment, oh, only Chinese will be employed. Do we have facts to support that, that the number of projects Chinese Companies has undertaken in Grenada, can we say that only Chinese workers were employed? And if that is so, then something is wrong with us, because we must be able to negotiate and say, hey, you are undertaking this project, but you can only bring in the technical expertise that we do not have. And if a Government cannot negotiate on that basis, something is fundamentally wrong. I don't see any company and the Government imposing themselves and say I must bring ordinary labour into your country. No, and that ought to be a negotiating factor in the Agreement to be entered into between the two (2) countries. So, that again, Mr. Speaker, is not something we can give much merit to.

You are hearing out there again, where a part of that money will be used for other purposes. I mean, this is so farfetched. Gone are the days, Mr. Speaker, and you know what used to happen in the African countries before, when they get money, no kind of supervision, no kind of monitoring, and the leaders of those countries take the money and they go with it, you know. That is how some of them became super-rich. It is not happening anymore, Mr. Speaker, because as it stands right now, there are procedures for drawing down of resources, monitoring and the disbursement. And a reputable institution like the EXIM Bank of China will certainly, follow the international guidelines for the disbursement of loans, in the sense that based on certificates being presented, completion of work, you disburse funds. You do not disburse all of your funds in advance; that makes absolutely any sense. Therefore to say that Government could misuse, or use the funds for other purposes is irrelevant, immaterial and of no substance, whatsoever. It can't happen. It will not happen, based on international guidelines and the EXIM Bank will have to follow those guidelines, as well. So, this is not something, Mr. Speaker, we can entertain, as an argument, as to why Government should not enter into this Agreement at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the final point I will like to raise on this is that...

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(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Oh, time is up.

(Laughter)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain): Mr. Speaker, the final point I will like to raise is that, in going forward...

(Comments by some Members)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Just one minute to wrap up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Alright.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: I just want to conclude by saying, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is on the right track. The Government is doing the right thing. But, all that we need to do, as I said, and again, this is the weakness maybe, of this Government, maybe we do not put out enough information out there to convince our people. And I am asking the Ministers of Government, because they are under attack, I mean, I listen to the attacks, use the various mediums that we have, whether it's social media, mainstream media, to explain how these things work, because in the absence of that information, ignorance could dominate.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that the track record of this Government is a good one, in terms of borrowing, the capacity to borrow is there. As I said we have the best, in terms of debt management and debt sustainability, we are number one, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that some of those arguments do not have merit. Some might be genuine, in terms of not having the information, others could be malicious. But in the ultimate long run, it is the responsibility of the Government to

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make the information available, so they could make that final determination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Patrick-West. There was a time at Item 13 of the Agenda, when I looked across. Honourable Representative for St. Patrick-West, I said at Item 13 on the Order Paper Agenda, I looked across to see if you had any comments that you wanted to make, explanations, and you did not make use of that part there, because I thought the extended time that I allowed was because I thought it was so important.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, are you saying that I could make another intervention?

Mr. Speaker: You should have at Item 13, Personal Explanations.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Oh, that should have been under Explanations instead of on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: That would have given me more time?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Then, you could have now used your time for your Constituency.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you.

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

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that you do not want to give me accolades that I don't have, as yet.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding my brother from St. Patrick-West, I hope he is not making a pitch for the Ministry of Finance. You were there before. But, Mr. Speaker, it would be remise of me, if this Parliament adjourns and I don't make a few comments. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today very sad, indeed, because of the passing of one of our colleagues, or workers at the Constituency Office, young Kedisha Alana Charles. She was, at one time, well just now presently she would have been the Youth Officer for St. George North-East. Also, she was the Secretary to NaDMA, St. George North-East. In her capacity, Mr. Speaker, she was indeed, a Youth Leader in St. George North-East, and it is with regret that we mourn her passing today.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know from time to time, in this Chamber, we talk about the health of individuals. I know we talk about the prevalence of high blood pressure, diabetes and how we should take care of ourselves. And, especially in our Grenada settings, I think I would also mention too, that everyone must be acutely aware of their disposition, in terms of their health. Especially OBGYN and female business, or women's business, again, I would urge all and sundry to be particularly conscious of where you are, in terms of your health as an individual, or even in terms of the health of your friends and family. So, I just wanted to mention her here today. She was a stalwart worker, a Youth Leader and, unfortunately, she leaves behind a three (3) year old and that is sad. But, the last time I saw her, I think she was one that had a very difficult life, in terms of being raised as she was. She came into the Office on September 7th, and she came and she hugged me and she said to me, you know, Honourable Clement today is sixteen (16) years since my mom and my sister passed away in Ivan. So, she was just a child, when she lost her mom and sister and now, again, she succumbed to the disease, Cancer, and I believe, sometime, in November 12th, that they will have the Interment Ceremony for her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and please, extend our sympathies to the family.

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Hon. Tobias Clement: Will do.

Mr. Speaker: And, to all those who have lost a friend, a relative, family and so on, we extend our deepest sympathy to all of them. And please inquire of the Prime Minister, how he is feeling and if he is okay, because we missed him here today, and we want to make sure. Please, Members let us make this concerted effort to look after our health. Nobody is not going to look after it for us. We have to do all we can to take care and look after our health. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will convey your message to the Prime Minister, but I just want to make it abundantly clear, he was ill-disposed. I know a lot of people have been saying right away, is he is sick? No.

Mr. Speaker: Ill-disposed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Yes, he was simply ill-disposed for the morning. Mr. Speaker, I wish to just add a few comments, with respect to the airport loan and the comments made by the Member for St. Patrick-West. I am looking at a document here, Mr. Speaker, which is the Loan Agreement for the Airport. And he has elaborated a lot, on the China EXIM Bank, and the fact that since 2017, we started discussions, with respect to the refurbishment of the airport runway and certain other facilities.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, we recognised that work must be done on the Airport, and so, we went out for the financing to do it. So, I would not repeat much of what the Member for St. Patrick-West indicated; 2% interest and five (5) years grace. And the 2% interest is extremely concessional.

Mr. Speaker, we came here and we told you about the IDA, the (International Development Agency) of the World Bank, with .75% and forty (40) years/ten (10) years grace. Mr. Speaker, there are very, very few countries, who get this, and it is because of your per capita income.

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As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the Heads in the Region, who already indicated that they have to pay, while we pay the .75%, they have to pay 4% and 5%, for loans from the World Bank, because their per capita income is much higher than we are, and some of them are not bigger than us, in many ways.

So, we are there. We work well, but as we work very well, we will graduate, and when you graduate out of it, we would no longer be able to get those, what you might call, really, really extraordinary concessionary loans, for what they refer to us, undeveloped and poor countries, measured by your per capita income.

And a lot of people feel that Grenada, although our GDP, when divided by the number of people, is low, that we are in a much better position than they are, and that could be correct. And they're advocating that either we strip the condition for IDA, or you change your rate that you give loans from the same multilateral institutions. So, 2% is extremely concessional, Mr. Speaker, and we don't know of any person who get a smaller loan. From that, you go to grant and gift, like they give us the one thousand (1,000) homes, as grant. If you want to get a very concessional loan, you get it 2%. They lend people at 6% and 7%, but that's not concessional.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this fundamental point that the contract that was signed, the Agreement, and the China Harbour, part of the China Communication Company, their contract was taken by the Airport and they scrutinised, using an experienced Building Airport Construction Company known, worldwide, in the Region, in Europe, North and South America, and they found, because we thought that the prices should go down, they found while we changed some things, because we had it before, that the prices were not far out. But, we ensured that we got the best prices.

But, with respect to the loan, Mr. Speaker, this sum that we borrowed, and as I indicated; in fact, one Radio Announcer told me that they were saying it's four hundred million (\$400 m), when I told them. It is four hundred and sixty-one million (\$461 m) Yuan or Renminbi, Chinese monies, which translates to about sixty-seven million US dollars (US\$67 m). But, what is out there is four hundred and sixty-one million US (US\$461 m), instead of four hundred and sixty-one million Chinese currency (¥461 m), and that's the first thing that we need to be very clear about.

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On top of this, Mr. Speaker, the World Bank came in and realised that we're not there yet, even with that loan. They were well aware of the quantity of work that we have to do to ensure that we remain there with LIAT, and remain safe and that planes can come in and land in Grenada. They have now given us a loan, Mr. Speaker, from the World Bank, of seventeen more million dollars (\$17 m) to do more, because we have to do it. And, as the Member for St. Patrick West indicated, because we have been prudent in managing our affairs and so forth, if that airport goes down and our tourism sinks, they would realise where we will be.

So, even after all the work that will be done, we still have more to do. And one fundamental role that we have to ensure is carried on, is the export of our Agricultural produce, because that is one of the pillars of our economy. That proposal, we tried to work it in with the first loan, but it was, you know, largely decided we can't handle much more, but it is recognised now. We will be having out there, for four million US dollars (US\$4 m), on the airport, a place where the farmers can come and put in their produce, it will be cooled to the right temperature, and more so for security. It will be able to scan everything that's going through, to ensure that it's a safe produce, and we do not have unwanted items in what the farmers are sending away.

But besides that, Mr. Speaker, it has the ILS. There, the Pilot can relax in the seat and the Airport Personnel will take control of the Aircraft, automatic landing and bring it down. If your airport can do that, you go up a notch and then you can attract more and more business. Mr. Speaker, in the equipment and the technology, they will also improve that to meet international standard.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the RSA, the Runway End Safety Zone, where the airport begins, you will note that there is a bit here, and you will land from there. Right now, if a plane comes in short, it can't land on that. While it may not be surfaced and as we say, asphalted, as the that the rest of the runway, an aircraft in trouble should be able to land at this end, far before, because something is happening to it and it cannot reach that point. This is now being financed by the World Bank. And at the other end, Mr. Speaker, if you're landing and you're in trouble, you're supposed to cross that regular mark, where you should and run along with it. So you do not see it asphalted as

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lovely at the rest, but the Pilot knows and the World Community knows that if you overshoot, you now have a safety running area to work with.

The World Bank will be financing this, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of seventeen million dollars (\$17 more m). This is to tell you that we have been doing all that are necessary to ensure that our airport will remain open. We are a bit later, you know, because we were just hedging the time where they would say no, nobody would now land on that surface. But, we had to do more to convince them, now, that not only have we repaired this, but we have put other safety measures, because this is a vital safety measure. You are landing on a strip, where anything could happen to the plane. So, we are correcting this with a loan from China and we also have a loan from the World Bank, we're fixing the two (2) ends of it. Safety will now go up a huge notch. Together with the landing instruments, again, you've gone up a huge notch, because everything was about safety, and we recognised that a loan alone will not do it, Mr. Speaker.

So, those who criticise and those who say, China will take it over, must recognise that there will be nothing there to take over if we have not refurbished it in time, and so, not only the ridiculous statement that is being pushed about that China will take it over.

Mr. Speaker, the loan became effective, just a few weeks ago, that's why you see the opening because it had to be shown that the combination of the Airport and the Government would be able to repay the loan. So, if we had failed this, this loan would never have become effective, Mr. Speaker. And so, everything that's being pushed out there is with one agenda. What we have to do and what will be done, Mr. Speaker, is moving forward to make our airport safe, to increase tourism and to boost our agricultural exports. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Members, let me say, I have noticed that our numbers have dwindled, but there is lunch. Lunch is already there, so please, all are invited to lunch.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned sine die at 2:00 p.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTERS

Ms. Janelle Palmer

Ms. Shanta Joseph

EDITORS

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Clerk)

Ms. Daniele Blackman (Administrative Secretary)