



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**Second Session of the Tenth Parliament**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**House of Representatives**

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2019

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***House of Representatives Budget Presentation  
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's  
On Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.***

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP, MBE	- Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	- Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology, Finance, Planning, Economic Development and Physical Development
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Infrastructure Development, Public Utilities, Energy, Transport and Implementation
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister wrf Forestry and Fisheries
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Agriculture and Lands
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Trade, Industry, Co-operatives and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	Minister wrf Tertiary Education, Skills Development and Education Outreach
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development and Religious Affairs
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health, Social Security and International Business
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker

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Honourable Tobias Clement, MP  
(St. George North-East)

- Member

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***The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 10:00 a.m.***

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, let us pray.

***(House Prayer was said)***

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

***(The Lord's Prayer was said)***

**Mr. Speaker:** Pray be seated.

***(Sound of Gavel)***

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

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

Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

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

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

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

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed**

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

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

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

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2019, be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

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**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 Special Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

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

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2019, be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

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

Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I greet you well, and I welcome you today to the 20<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2019, to the Second Sitting of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament. Today, among the matters on the Order Paper to be dealt with is the presentation of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure or the Budget for 2020, which will be presented by the Minister for Finance and Prime Minister. I am sure that every Grenadian wait in high expectation, to learn of the impact of the Budget on their lives and on the development of the country.

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I must remind the Parliamentary Representatives, as they debate the Budget, to adhere to the Standing Orders with special reference to Order No. 40, which deals with Budget Debates and 42, Rules for Members not speaking. At the same time, I want to urge that all cellphones carried by persons in the Gallery, be turned off, so that we would have no interference, or during the Session, no taking of photographs, or anything like that. So, please turn them off. May the grace of God be with us all. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

1. Annual Report of the Grenada Development Bank (GDB) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018
2. Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Grenada National Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC) for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017 and 2018;
3. Report of the Director of Audit Grenada on the resources managed for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, by the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) within the Ministry of Finance, Safety Net Advancement Project (SLAP);
4. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada on resources managed for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018, by the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU), within the Ministry of Finance, for the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Programme (CARCIP) and the Income and Expenditure for the accounting period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018;



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5. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on resources managed for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2017 to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, by the Project Coordinating Unit, within the Ministry of Finance, Eastern Caribbean Energy Regulatory Authority (ECERA);
6. Annual Report , Office of the Ombudsman, for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018;
7. GARFIN Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018;
8. Report of the National Insurance Board (NIB) for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018;
9. Office of the Ombudsman 2020 Budget and Plan;
10. Office of the Integrity Commission, 2019 Budget;
11. Minutes of the proceedings of a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, held at the Houses of Parliament's Conference Room on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2019;
12. Grenada Citizenship by Investment Report to the Grenada Houses of Parliament for the reporting periods:
  - i. 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2018;
  - ii. 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2018;
  - iii. 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2019;

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13. Government of Grenada Reports
  - i. Budget Framework Paper, 2020;
  - ii. Medium Term Fiscal Framework Document, 2020 to 2022;
  - iii. Fiscal Risk Statement;
  - iv. Compliance Assessment Report 2018 to 2019;
  - v. 2019 Economic Review and Medium Term Outlook;
  - vi. Medium Term Debt Strategy 2020 to 2022;
14. The National Sustainable Development Plan, 2020 – 2035;
15. The Minister for Finance's response to the 2018 Report of the Fiscal Responsibility Oversight Committee (FROC); and
16. The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2020.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. These Reports and Papers are so laid on the Table.

**Ag. Clerk Assistant:** Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business0

Item 10 - Questions.

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

Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Item 13 - Personal Explanations.

Item 14 - Motions.

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

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**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As today is a very special day, I beg your indulgence and so move that the Order Paper be reordered, Mr. Speaker, such that Motion (f) by the Minister for Finance should be taken first.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Order Paper rearranged to take Motion (f) first.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Minister for Finance.

**Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name. It says:

**WHEREAS** it is necessary to provide for the State of Grenada for the year, 2020 by means an Appropriation Act;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2020 be approved.

**Question proposed**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence before I proceed to speak on this Motion, it is not often one is able to have his mother here at a major event as this, just celebrating ninety-seven (97) years of life. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, you wonder why I have so many blessings. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the Regulations for the Public Finance Management Act, and the Public Debt Management Act, I wish to advise that the following Reports are being submitted to this Honourable

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House, which, of course, were already indicated by the Leader of Government's Business:-

1. The Medium Term Fiscal Framework document, 2020;
2. The Progress Report in compliance with the Fiscal Rules and Targets;
3. Budget Framework Paper 2020; and
4. The Medium Term Debt Strategy 2020-2022; and
5. The Fiscal Risk Statement.

Mr. Speaker, as this Administration continues actively engaging with all stakeholders, to chart the future of this beautiful country. I am moved to commence the 2020 Budget Presentation with a few words from the Holy Scriptures, taken from Galatians Chapter 6, verse 9, and I quote: ***“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.”*** Mr. Speaker, this biblical quote advises us to continue to work, in partnership, to do what is good in the interest of this country, not just for individuals, so that tomorrow, we can all reap the benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the efforts of our people to participate in meaningful public discourse on the National Sustainable Development Plan, 2020 to 2035. It is instructive to note that this Plan provides a Blue Print for the development agenda for Grenada for the next fifteen (15) years, outside of the scope of partisan politics.

The Plan represents a cumulative efforts, as Grenadians, from all walks of life, both Home and in the Diaspora, contributed to the consultation process. Achieving this vision, enshrined in that Plan, Mr. Speaker, requires a number of critical actions, namely, putting the people at the center of development and transformation, creating a vibrant, dynamic competitive economy with supporting climate and disaster resilient infrastructure and promoting environmental sustainability and security.

Mr. Speaker, in October, while delivering the Throne Speech in this Honourable House, Her Excellency, the Governor-General, eloquently pronounced that the

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overreaching focus of the Government will be to commence the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Plan.

Having developed the Plan, with the engagement of the people, it is incumbent, Mr. Speaker, on Government to design operational plans, programmes and policies that would ensure the goals of the Plan are achieved. As such, Mr. Speaker, the Theme chosen for the 2020 Budget, and I quote: ***“Towards Vision 2035, Empowering our Communities, Growing our Economy, Protecting our Environment and Strengthening our Institutions”***. Mr. Speaker, this is a deliberate choice, intended to adequately capture the priorities of the Government, at this time. It is also in full acknowledgment of the fact that while we are experiencing consistent economic growth, our management efforts must be strategic, or we run the risk of jeopardizing the economic gains being made.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities enshrined in the 2020 Budget, are framed within the context of the Government's Medium Term Agenda, which captures the essence of the National Sustainable Development Plan in a 3-year cycles.

Mr. Speaker, with this introduction, I want to turn your attention to the economic developments, globally, regionally and locally to provide the context of this Budget.

***Global Economic Performance and Prospects***

Mr. Speaker, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Economic Outlook Report released in October 2019, the Global Economic upswing, which started in 2017, as it says, lost momentum during the second of 2018 and into 2019. The subdued global expansion, Mr. Speaker, was underpinned by several factors, most notably, the rising trade tensions that negatively affected business and consumer confidence in some of the most powerful countries and the tightening of the financial market conditions that affected the emerging market economies and by extension, the Global Economy. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, the IMF projected that the global growth would decelerate to 3% in 2019, from 3.6% in 2018, before edging back up to 3.4% in 2020.

***Regional Economic Performance and Prospects***

Mr. Speaker, regionally, the average Gross Domestic Product growth in the independent countries of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM, is projected to accelerate to 2.7% in 2019, to 8.8% in 2020, largely driven by the oil finds in Guyana. In the Eastern Caribbean Currency, ECCU that is our area, the average growth is estimated at 4% in 2019, and is projected to decelerate to 3.6% in 2020. The rehabilitation activities in Dominica, especially in 2019, and Tourism activities in other member countries underpin the relatively robust average growth rate estimated in 2019; while the projective slowdown in economic activity in 2020, largely reflects the softening economic conditions forecasted for the economies of the ECCU Member countries.

***Domestic Economic Performance and Prospects***

Mr. Speaker, Grenada continues on the path of positive growth. Preliminary data for the first half of 2019, that is the first half, indicates that the economy is poised to experience its 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of growth estimated at 3.2%, in real terms. Growth in 2019 is mainly fueled by activity in Tourism, Education and Transport Sectors, complemented by relatively strong performances in the Wholesale/Retail and Manufacturing Sectors. It is anticipated that Grenada's growth rate in 2020, would trend above the ECCU average; and, Mr. Speaker, that would become clear before I end this presentation.

Mr. Speaker, it is without doubt that the impact of this growth is being felt by all Grenadians. You would recall that when this Government took Office in 2013, the unemployment rate was over 40%. Mr. Speaker, data collected for the first Quarter of 2019 Labour Force Survey indicates that the unemployment rate fell to 15.2%. **(Applause)** The average inflation, Mr. Speaker, as measured by the Consumer Price Index remains subdued in 2019 and estimated at 1%.

***Fiscal Performance***

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's fiscal position continues to be strong, with an expected primary surplus, after grants, of 6.8% of GDP, at the end of 2019. The performance is anchored, Mr. Speaker, in our adherence to the Fiscal Responsibility Act. By the end of 2019, the following results relative to the approved Budget are expected:

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- Current and Revenues of \$782.1 m, compared to a target of \$780.4 m.
- Grants expended, Mr. Speaker, and that is important, \$98.1 m, compared to \$183.7 m received.
- Current Expenditure of \$614.7 m, compared to a target of \$637.8 m.
- A Capital Expenditure, \$105.5 m, compared to a target of \$196.4 m.

**Public Debt**

Mr. Speaker, lest we forget, when this Government took Office in 2013, the Public Debt as a ratio of GDP was 108%. To date, the Debt to GDP Ratio is on the path of decline, moving from 62.7% at the end of 2018, to an estimated 55.8% at the end of this year, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** In other words, Mr. Speaker, we have cut the Public Debt to GDP Ratio by over 50% in just seven (7) years.

It is instructive, therefore, to note, Mr. Speaker, that the expected outturn is not only below the 60% target, established by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, but it also will be achieved way ahead of the 2030 deadline set by the Bank, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the following is very instructive. This decline, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in a reduction in our debt repayments requirements by one hundred and one million dollars (\$101 m) between 2013 and 2020, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this has enormous implications; to reduce your debt burden by one hundred and one million dollars (\$101 m) in seven (7) years. I do not think that another country could claim that, in that period of time.

Mr. Speaker, when we constantly reiterate the need to stay the course of fiscal responsibility, it is for reasons precisely like this. The reduction in repayment obligation, Mr. Speaker, reduces the burden on future generations, and it creates the space needed to advance the developmental Programmes that would keep this nation on the path of growth and development. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we cannot play games with the future of our children and grandchildren. Oftentimes, I am shocked by the flippant remarks made about amending the Fiscal Responsibility Law, merely to accommodate the demands made by some persons. It is not about us, Mr. Speaker, it is about this country's future. Mr. Speaker, Grenada is deriving too many benefits from being fiscally prudent to alter that course for

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any group. I encourage all Grenadians to pay close attention to the numerous benefits Grenada stands to lose, if we forego fiscal prudence.

Mr. Speaker, having the international, regional and local context that sets the tone for the country's 2020 Budget, I wish now to turn my attention to Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

***Budget and Financing Summary***

Mr. Speaker, the 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure provide for a total expenditure (including principal repayments on public debt) of one billion, one hundred and forty-six million, ten thousand, seven hundred and five dollars (\$1,146,010,705.00), and, Mr. Speaker, I say a real billion. The Budget is summarized as follows:

1. Recurrent Revenue	-	\$786.2 m;
2. Recurrent Expenditure	-	\$633.7 m;
3. Current Account Surplus	-	\$152.5 m;
4. Capital Expenditure	-	\$225.3 m;
5. Primary Surplus after grants	-	\$212.8 m; and
6. Overall Surplus, after grants	-	\$145.8 m
7. The Principal Repayments and Amortisation	-	\$287 m

I now turn, Mr. Speaker, to ***Empowering our Communities***. Mr. Speaker, Government regards empowerment as a key pillar of long term development and has therefore adopted a multi-pronged approach in empowering the people of our country.

***Empowerment through Education***

Mr. Speaker, our Government recognizes the value of Education, as a building block for the sustainable development of this country. Through capacity building for Teachers, Principals and Education Officers, we expect to see a significant improvement in the delivery of Education Services across the country, and we could feel the temperature rising already.

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue investing in our educators in 2020, because we understand too well, that the benefits to workers in the various Sectors of the Public Service should not merely take the form of periodic wage increases.



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Towards this end, 2020 would see the rollout of Leadership Training and Professional Development Programmes for Principals, Deputy Principals and Administrators. Prospective Teachers will also benefit from pre-service training.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government, we have a responsibility under any circumstances to ensure the future of our students is placed above all else. Therefore, a Substitute Teacher Initiative would be advanced by the Ministry of Education in 2020, to address the Teacher shortages in the System that may be caused by factors such as illness and Leave Entitlements.

Mr. Speaker, the efficient and effective management of any system requires clear lines of accountability. Plans are therefore on foot to introduce extensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as accountability measures for management at the school level by the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, Government will also pilot an E-book Platform Initiative, in some Secondary Schools, as part of a new technological approach to learning. Anchored on this improved digital Platform, this initiative would be a precursor to the wide scale provision of tablets; now we are ready for tablets for students throughout the length and breadth of this country; **(applause)** before that, it had become a toy.

Mr. Speaker, these efforts at Capacity Building and Education Sector Modernization must be complemented by the efficient and effective maintenance of our schools' infrastructure to support service delivery. We have therefore introduced nineteen (19) School Maintenance Projects with a budgetary cost of three million dollars (\$3 m). Further, three (3) Zonal Maintenance Supervisors have been appointed to oversee the maintenance of schools. Their efforts would be supported by the institution of a School Inspection Protocol.

Mr. Speaker, reading must be seen as a fundamental part of learning and through the support of a major Private Sector led initiative, (Grenada Schools Incorporated it's named), twenty-eight (28) Primary Schools across the country have new Libraries. **(Applause)** To date, they have spent over nine million dollars (\$9 m) on this invaluable initiative, and we must commend these Private Sector holders for their initiatives in this important undertaking. I didn't ask for their names, because I didn't

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want to state it without their knowing. We are happy to note that many more schools are earmarked to benefit from similar facilities under this Project.

Mr. Speaker, ***Empowerment through Youth Development***

Government has taken a strategic approach to this, identifying various Programmes to target specific strata of the youth population.

**1. *M-Power***

One such Programme is the M-POWER, which provides opportunities for unemployed males in the area of small business support through grant financing or access to further training at T.A. Marryshow Community College or Certified Skills Training Centres. Mr. Speaker, in 2019, three hundred and fifty (350) of the nation's unemployed young people benefited from this Programme. Seventy (70) of them have created sustainable development activities for themselves. It has proven to be a valuable turning point in their lives.

**2. *Youth in Agriculture***

Mr. Speaker, Government is actively stimulating the interest of our young people in the Agricultural Sector, and at least one hundred (100) young men and women have been identified to participate in a Youth in Agriculture Project. The allocation for this project is three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00), and it will get on the way in January 2020. Four (4) Government Estates in Grand Bacolet, Grand Bras, Laura and Poyntzfield will be utilized for different activities in that Sector.

**3. *The New IMANI Programme***

Mr. Speaker, the New IMANI Programme, one of the cornerstones of our youth empowerment initiatives continues to provide valuable apprenticeships and scholarship opportunities for our Nation's youth. I point to the success of Anderson Peters, who was one of the persons that went through that important Programme, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, recognizing the shortcomings, and we are always ready to accept our weaknesses of the IMANI Programme, Government is working aggressively towards an exit strategy, aimed at creating sustainable employment for the unabsorbed youths from the IMANI Programme. We have listened to the voices of our youths, who have suggested transforming the programme to offer more skill based exposure to

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trainees to better prepare them for the job market and for self-employment. Therefore, work on the skills based approach and its alignment to national needs has commenced. In 2019, Government expended \$22.2 m on the Programme, and with the restructuring and reallocation, 2020 would now receive an expenditure of \$17.8 m.

***Empowerment through targeted interventions***

Mr. Speaker, there are many among us, who are not able to provide for themselves, and it is our duty to ensure they are not forgotten. Mr. Speaker, and that's something all of us, as people in this country, must always remember, not only ourselves, but everyone else. Therefore, Government has initiated a number of strategic interventions to support the less fortunate.

***The Needy Assistance Programme*** is one such Programme, Mr. Speaker. This Programme is designed to provide medical support to vulnerable families, with no medical insurance and also assistance with surgeries, eye care, medication and also other support services, which include reallocation support for abused women and other persons in our society, who may need to be rescued.

***The Seed Programme***

Mr. Speaker, Government is committed to ensuring a decent standard of living for those who are vulnerable. As such eighteen million dollars (\$18 m) was spent in 2019 to support families with little or no income and who have chronically ill or special needs persons in their household. This year's 2020 Budget will see \$14.3 m allocated.

***Uniform and Transport Allowance***

Mr. Speaker, many vulnerable families in this country are blessed with highly capable kids who simply need an opportunity to succeed. As a Parliamentary Representative for three (3) decades and counting, I have heard numerous stories of mothers, who have to ration how and when they send their children to school. Could you imagine that? Mr. Speaker, in good conscience, this Government cannot and will not ignore the needs of those vulnerable families. As a son of a farmer, coming from humble beginnings myself, and as an advocate for youth empowerment and development, ignoring that is simply not an option, Mr. Speaker. In 2019, twelve thousand (12,000) students benefited from the Uniform and Transport Allowance, to the

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tune of two million dollars (\$2 m). This year, we have increased it to \$2.2 m.  
**(Applause)**

***University Tuition Assistance Programme***

Mr. Speaker, any Grenadian attempting to advance themselves by pursuing higher education has the potential to impact positively on this country. Essentially, it is a plus for Grenada. Government is therefore committed to providing tuition assistance, I must make the point, to students, who have not received a scholarship and cannot afford the tuition fees, or, at least, some of it.

In 2019, two hundred and forty-three (243) students attending St. George's University and other regional and international institutions, benefited from this programme, at a cost to the State of over five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00). We have, again, budgeted five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) in 2020.

***The House Repair Programme***

These are all targeted interventions, Mr. Speaker, may I remind us. Mr. Speaker, among all the Social Programmes, the highest level of demand is in the case of house repair for the vulnerable members of our society. All Parliamentary Representatives have reported receiving numerous requests that they cannot meet from their Constituents. Faced with this significant demand, we have increased the combined allocation for the Housing Assistance, Home Improvement and Soft Loan Programmes to fifteen million dollars (\$15 m. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I may add, this is still not enough, but we are doing the best we can, in the face of demands for budgetary allocation in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, ***Affordable Housing***; Government remains, Mr. Speaker, resolute in its commitment to address the ever increasing demand for safe and affordable housing. Work is progressing well on the Chinese Donated Housing Projects in the Parishes of St. Mark, St. David, St. Patrick and St. George's and in the Sister Isle of Carriacou. These projects, which would add six hundred and forty-seven (647) Units to the country's housing stocks are slated for completion in 2020. A total of one hundred and sixty-one million, six hundred and forty thousand, six hundred and forty-four dollars

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(\$161,640,644.00) have been invested into these Units and accompanying infrastructure and amenities, such as roads and electricity. **(Applause)**

I add, Mr. Speaker, for the Caretaker of St. John to know, work will commence on the St. John's Housing Project in 2020. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker we are aware that Public Officers and other middle income families are seeking housing solutions and they ought not be left out. Accordingly, Government is currently holding discussions with Private Sector developers for middle income Housing Projects, which will serve the needs of those families. We are at the stage of identifying the lands for such development, some of them have already been identified.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Housing Brigades remain active across the Tri-Island State, continuing the important work of repairing, constructing and rebuilding houses for vulnerable citizens of this land. Government spent \$6.4 m on this Programme in 2019 and \$6 m is allocated for this year, 2020 coming. More than one hundred and twenty (120) persons have been employed permanently in this Programme.

***Farm Labour Support***

Mr. Speaker, this Programme is directly linked to the food security of this Nation, and, in some cases, empowers farmers to be even more productive. Mr. Speaker, we intend to revamp this Programme to address certain weaknesses identified, and in 2020, it will begin. The allocation for this Programme is one million dollars (\$1 m).

***Special Projects***

Mr. Speaker, to complement the work of the Ministry of Infrastructural Development, Government has embarked on a community based initiative that empowers the communities at the Constituency level in small infrastructural projects, sometimes providing... the materials and labour provided by the community. These projects are determined based on the needs identified through engagement with the communities. In 2019, Government invested \$7.5 m in Special Projects, creating one thousand and ninety (1,090) jobs for both men and women across the Tri-Island State. For 2020, seven million dollars (\$7 m) have been allocated to support these community based projects.

***Top Up for Retired Public Officers***

Mr. Speaker, Government has honoured the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Public Sector Trade Unions regarding pensions for Public Officers. There is no issue with pensions for Public Officers. That was understood in the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Trade Unions. Although the Unions' leadership have abandoned the Collective Bargaining Process and took the issue to Court, which is their right, Government has proceeded to implement the Agreement, because there are many retired Public Officers, who have been hurting and are still hurting.

In October, Government upgraded the payments received from the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), to ensure that the total monthly income of these retirees, meeting the established criteria, is no less than 70% of their last wage. Government has therefore expended so far, close to seven hundred and fifteen thousand dollars (\$715,000.00) on this initiative, with a future monthly payout expected to be over twenty-two thousand dollars (\$22,000.00).

Mr. Speaker, ***Support to the Elderly.*** Government is particularly concerned about the well-being of Senior Citizens, like everybody else, who in their productive years made invaluable contributions to the development of this country. In 2019, we spent \$1.3 m to the Geriatric and Roving Caregivers programme operated by GRENCASE. More than two hundred (200) of our Senior Citizens have benefited from this Programme, and it has provided permanent employment for one hundred and sixty (160) persons. Another elderly care initiative by the Ministry of Social Development has also been implemented. Mr. Speaker, Government also provides support for those, who are really in need for burial assistance and support for toddlers and preschoolers.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to ***Strengthening our Institutions.*** Mr. Speaker, there are areas in the Public Service that are in dire need of institutional strengthening. It is not just under this Government, but there is a history in specific Sectors that must be addressed. It is imperative that we improve those areas of weaknesses to further propel economic growth and development.

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Mr. Speaker, one such case, the issue of exorbitant charges and the misuse of Government cellphones have revealed significant leakages and malfunctioning in the System. The misuse of cellphones by persons within the System and those who have already left the System cause major embarrassment to this Government and to myself, specifically, as Minister for Finance. A complete review has been undertaken and we have just had the results which have indicated the persons who are already out of the system and should no longer have access to this service. Steps are now being taken, with support of the Service Provider to recover those monies; that is a commitment of this Government in this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow systemic failures to manifest themselves through irresponsible expenditure and poor accountability. We must, as a matter of priority, improve our expenditure management systems so that we can protect and consolidate the immense economic gains we have already achieved. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, during the first quarter of 2020, Government will undertake a comprehensive review of its Recurrent and Capital Expenditure, as part of efforts to improve accountability in the Public Service. The Review will also provide concrete recommendations to strengthen expenditure controls and institutional mechanism for expenditure management, as well as improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of public spending.

Mr. Speaker, to complement this work, which is being supported by our international partners; we are getting grant support for this, the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General Office, in conjunction with the Public Service Commission, have established procedural guidelines for investigating financial abuse in the System, with a view to impose disciplinary measures on Public Officials found guilty of such abuse. These procedures are expected to take full effect next year.

***Ministry of Health***

Mr. Speaker, the health of our country's people is one of the key pillars of the development of the people; and knowing what we all know, we cannot let rest on our laurels, we have to do something about this. As such, we must work towards a Healthcare System that is responsive to the needs of the people, at all levels. Mr. Speaker, to do this, we must accept and strategically address existing challenges,

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which include shortages of Doctors and Nurses, lack of adequate Dialysis services, inadequate facilities and lack of universal health coverage, all these we have to deal with. Some of these issues, or probably all of them, noting what takes place in countries all over the world, were some of the major discussions in every election, and all over the country is about healthcare services. Some of these issues are not unique to Grenada, therefore, and money, Mr. Speaker, alone cannot and will not address all those problems. But, there is a clear need for a multi-pronged approach to improve the Healthcare System, and we need all hands on deck. I repeat what I said at a recent session on Monday by JIPA; "Healthcare is not about NDC, NNP or NDC, it's all ah we."

Mr. Speaker, the human resource aspect of the Healthcare System, the Strategy; Mr. Speaker, for years, other countries have actively sought to recruit Nurses from Grenada and other Caribbean countries. In light of this, Government has developed a Human Resource Health Policy and Plan for the Healthcare Sector that seeks to establish a framework for recruitment, professional development and succession planning. This Plan includes a Retention Programme that offers incentives and professional development opportunities for our Nurses and our Healthcare Practitioners. The Minister for Health will elaborate, when he is doing his presentation.

***Inadequate Dialysis Services***

Mr. Speaker, the lack of Dialysis support for our people is unacceptable. Over the last few years, we have partnered with St. George's University to provide clinical support and services to dialysis patients; they are providing. However, this must be complemented by a Turnkey Dialysis Operation, and Government is actively pursuing Public/Private/Partnership in this regard.

The Minister for Health will elaborate on a specific proposal, which we should get going very soon. Mr. Speaker, this one touches me personally, because I have had so many people over the years, coming to me, where they are unable to pay for the dialysis services and seeing them deteriorate in front of my eyes and giving them just what I can afford, made me feel guilty, knowing that they were dying slowly. This is a responsibility for all of us, particularly, when I was in Opposition, when I was less able to help, it burnt my heart. We cannot sit idly by, Mr. Speaker.



***Inadequate Facilities in the Healthcare System***

Government will continue to upgrade our Health Facilities in 2020. In addition to the refurbishment and retrofitted work already undertaken at some Health Facilities including the Grand Anse Medical Station, the Melville Street Health Center and the Vincennes Medical Station, several other facilities will receive similar upgrades in 2020, under the OECS Regional Health Project. Additionally, Phase Two of the General Hospital will now be getting ready to be opened. Occupancy for this new building is scheduled to begin in early 2020.

***Universal Health Coverage***

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the Ministry continued work on the health financing initiatives, aimed at achieving a system of universal health coverage, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, its roots are being taken there, Mr. Speaker. In this regard, the deliveries for the first phase of the National Health Insurance Project have been completed. The second phase which will develop the implementation plan to institutionalize such coverage is expected to commence before the end of the year. Government has already contracted the Miami Based Firm Joint Independent Provider and Association (JIPA) to complete the process of development for the implementation of the National Health Insurance Programme and this project is valued, could cost as much as US\$1.5 m.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health, with the support of the European Union, has completed an assessment of the Primary Healthcare Policy and Implementation Plan, to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Primary Healthcare. That framework is expected to strengthen systems for Programme Evaluation and evidenced-based decision-making for Health Sector planning and programme implementation.

***Management of the Healthcare System***

Mr. Speaker, admittedly there are some serious weaknesses in the area of stock management and control and the approach to patient-centered care. It is then Government's intention to enhance the system of Procurement and Management at stores at health facilities to reduce wastage and pilferage. Mr. Speaker, there are

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fundamental prerequisites to delivering patient-centered care; a listening ear, to delivering patient-centered care, Mr. Speaker, a kind and caring demeanor, a display of empathy, and patience.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of Healthcare Professionals, who are giving us yeoman service. I have been advised by many persons, local and foreign, who have come to my office and praised some of the officers and the workers, Nurses, Doctors, all service providers, at the General Hospital that you will hear little or nothing about, because they don't blow their trumpets. But, Mr. Speaker, it's only when something goes wrong you hear of all the weaknesses and that's all you hear about; and, as we know, there is no room for the display of hostility or anger or impatience. Government, therefore, plans to invest heavily in training our Healthcare providers to enable the delivery of the best services possible.

Mr. Speaker, **Gender & Family Affairs**. Mr. Speaker, Government takes very seriously, its obligation to protect women and children from sexual and other forms of abuse. Some of the things that we see and hear today sickens the heart. You wonder what sort of human beings exist among us. With the establishment of the Special Victims Unit and Hotline, significant progress has been made with the investigation and prosecution of various sexual crimes and the cases of domestic violence and child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, the draft Bill for the registration of Sexual Offenders is complete. It is now being considered by various stakeholders before being submitted to this Honourable House of Representatives for debate and, hopefully, enactment. Mr. Speaker, Government plans to develop various administrative and legislative mechanisms to provide greater protection for children and other victims of sexual offences.

Mr. Speaker, by the end of this year, Government will open the doors to the Home for Girls. Over \$2.5 m was invested in this Facility, which represents a major step forward in the provision of institutional support to protect our young girls and young boys too. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, Government's goal is not only to protect the victims, we want to totally eliminate violence and abuse against women and children.

***Modernizing the Public Sector***

Mr. Speaker, this Government is embarking on digital transformation, as part of efforts to modernize the Public Sector and improving the efficiency and resilience of Government services. In the coming months, Government will launch a Master Governance Platform, consisting of a whole of Government portal and an E-services Delivery Platform, developed and delivered by MGRM. This Platform will now provide a single point of access to all Government information, initiatives, projects and services, significantly stimulating Grenada's transition into an emerging digital economy. **(Applause)** It leverages advanced digital technologies to deliver a host of E-services and also promotes digital inclusion while creating the opportunity for greater efficiency in the Public Service.

***Digital Government Services***

Mr. Speaker, we are also poised for the rollout of the Digital Government for Resilience Project, which is funded by the World Bank. Once again, because of our sticking to fiscal prudence, we have been able to get fifteen million US dollars (US\$15 m) from the World Bank for this project. **(Applause)** This project will help to revolutionize the provision of Government services through digital transformation, continuing to enhance the efficiency, usage and resilience of select Government services via a digital platform. Mr. Speaker, this project will digitize critical public records such as Births, Deaths, Marriage Certificates, Motor Vehicle Licences and Registration. Mr. Speaker, these services, for the first time would be obtained online, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

***CARCIP Project***

Mr. Speaker, a critical enabler for Government's digital transformation is the delivery of High Speed Broadband Network under the CARCIP Project. This incoming High Speed Network will be utilized in the delivery of services to internal clients across Ministries and Departments and to residents across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, this CARCIP Project is expected to help advance the development of ICT-enabled services industry. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this project

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demonstrates the achievement of the ideals of the CARICOM Single ICT Space at the network and infrastructural level.

***The Integrity Commission***

Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Integrity Commission continues to fulfill its mandate in accordance with the Integrity in Public Life Act of 2013, and has been recognized, regionally and internationally, for its high level of professional excellence. In 2019, the Commission completed the investigation stage of its probe in the affairs of the Marketing and National and Importing Board and on October 1<sup>st</sup>, it commenced the inquiry stage of the investigation. A temporary roadblock has since halted that inquiry for a while, but the commitment to provide greater accountability remains undaunted. Mr. Speaker, all I wish to say, if you do no wrong, I don't know why you want to slow down the inquiry. I want it bad. Mr. Speaker, it is quite baffling why some people who talk loudly about accountability and all sorts of things are the same ones blocking serious inquiry to, in fact, tell us what happened. Mr. Speaker, in 2020, the Integrity Commission will seek to complete a number of investigations it has commenced.

***National Security***

Mr. Speaker, Grenada remains one of the safest countries in this Region, **(applause)** a fact which is important, not only for the well-being of our citizens, but also necessary to attract serious investment and growth, as we have seen. Mr. Speaker, these notable achievements can be attributed to the dedicated and committed staff of the RGPF, as well as the improved relationship and collaboration between the RGPF and the communities across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, Government continues to provide the necessary human resources for the efficient functioning of the RGPF. Fifty-eight (58) new Police Officers were recruited in 2019, and sixty (60) more will be added before the end of the year. Mr. Speaker, the RGPF must be commended for its exemplary work. Special mention must be made of the Drug Squad for the historic seizure of four hundred and sixteen (416) kilos of cocaine, valued at forty-one million dollars (\$41 m), recently. Mr. Speaker, this is in addition to many other seizures that they had.

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Mr. Speaker, I must also commend the Officers within the Immigration and Passport Division for the excellent service they provided, as Frontline Ambassadors to this country. Their dedication to duty and willingness to go above and beyond was demonstrated recently, when faced with the significant increase in Passport applications, receiving over three hundred and fifty (350) applications per day, compared to the normal average of about forty (40), **(applause)** and they did so without compromising the quality of service.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to ***Growing our Economy.***

***Small Business Development among the Initiatives***

Mr. Speaker, Government remains committed to supporting the development of the Small Business Sector to further stimulate economic growth. Support continues to be channeled through the Small Business Development Fund, the local Hotel Loan Facility, Business Services Support and Trade Readiness for Small Businesses. This Small Business Development Fund is supported by Government to provide soft loans to small businesses at the GDB. The fund has led to the creation of five hundred and seventeen (517) new businesses and seven hundred and forty-eight (748) existing businesses in the Fishing, Agriculture, Tourism and Retail Sectors, have also benefitted. Mr. Speaker, one thousand, five hundred and fourteen (1,514) jobs have been positively affected, six hundred and sixty-one (661) of them being new jobs. **(Applause)**

***Trade Readiness***

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Co-operatives and CARICOM Affairs continued its thrust to implement the National Export Strategy to help expand Grenada's export trade. This major initiative included working with over forty (40) small manufacturers on improving the packaging and labelling of their products for the external market, and an Exporters Consultation has been held with major fresh produce exporters.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, major emphasis will be given to implementing the National Quality Policy through support from a regionally respective Produce Chemistry Lab, which is identified as the best in the OECS.

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Mr. Speaker, effective January 2020, all fresh produce exporters will be expected to meet the required standards of packaging and have their exports inspected before leaving Grenada. These efforts take on added significance, as we prepare for participation in Expo 2020 in Dubai, for which fifteen (15) Manufacturing Enterprises have already confirmed participation.

***Rural Development***

Mr. Speaker, for the country's growth to be truly meaningful, it must encompass all geographic areas. As such, Government is particularly keen to ensure that rural development opportunities are created as part of its overall development agenda. In 2019, Government created synergy in its Community Engagement and Poverty Reduction Strategies, with the creation of the Rural Development Unit (RDU), which serves as the overreaching body for the Climate Smart Agriculture Project (SAEP) and the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF).

Mr. Speaker, a Memorandum of Understanding under the SAEP stream, signed with the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation, provided for the refurbishment of the Training and Outreach Centre located at Símon in St. Andrew. The refurbishment project, valued at EC \$6.7 m, is complete, and the Centre is expected to provide training opportunities to five hundred (500) young people in the area of Entrepreneurial Development. **(Applause)** To date, two hundred and eleven (211) young persons have registered to participate in the first batch of training, scheduled to start in January 2020.

***Agriculture***

Mr. Speaker, three million EC dollars (EC\$3 m) will be spent in rehabilitating ten (10) farm access roads, as part of the Climate Smart Agriculture and Enterprise Development Programme (SAEP), that's only in SAEP, under the Rural Development Unit. This will create employment for forty (40) persons in the rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, Government has also identified Crop Insurance coverage, as a priority area for the Agricultural Sector, and, therefore, we will develop a Pilot Project for Agriculture Risk Insurance for the Nutmeg and Cocoa production for the 2020 Hurricane Season. The projected investment is three hundred and seventy-six thousand dollars (\$376,000.00) for the insurance coverage.

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Mr. Speaker, Fish production is on the upswing and Government recognizes the vulnerability of this Sector. Government, therefore, will assess the results of the Caribbean Ocean Assets Sustainability Facility (COAST), insurance pilot project, supported by the World Bank, to determine the best way to safeguard the gains recorded in this Sector.

Mr. Speaker, by June 2020, Government will amend the Praedial Larceny Control Act to guarantee more robust and efficient prosecution of such offences. A 24-hour Praedial Larceny Prevention Hotline will also be commissioned in 2020, enabling persons to report the theft of agricultural produce and livestock. Additionally, EC two hundred thousand dollars (EC\$200,000.00) will be used to enhance public awareness and to procure additional surveillance cameras, making them available to farmers at cost price.

Mr. Speaker, Government will develop and implement a Livestock Policy and Action Plan in 2020, to guide the development of this Sector. Government will also invest in upgrading the Small Ruminant Facility at Laura Land, St. David.

Mr. Speaker, with the support of the Inter-American Institute for Corporation in Agriculture, Government has secured financial support from the CARICOM Development Fund to enhance the functioning of the Mirabeau Abattoir. The support is valued at six hundred and seventy thousand and fifty dollars (\$670,050.00), and the funds will be used to procure equipment and to provide training for the staff at the Abattoir.

Mr. Speaker, as we push production, we also have to push agricultural competitiveness. Through the OECS Agricultural Competitiveness Project (AGRICOM), Government will support a minimum of ten (10) Private Sector investments in the Agricultural Sector. Government will provide grant financing, again, grant financing of \$3.8 m towards the execution of these investments. Additionally, five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) would be spent to improve the capacity of extension personnel through training and the provision of equipment.

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Mr. Speaker, the various initiatives outlined have resulted in an increase to the administrative budget for the Ministry of Agriculture of \$1.9 m, from \$16.7 m in 2019 to \$18.6 m in 2020. **(Applause)**

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that other major projects affecting the Agricultural Sector, which is also part of SAEP, which is a thirty-eight million dollars (\$38 m) Project, is also managed by the RDU under the Ministry of Finance.

Additionally, the investment of Agricultural Feeder Roads of \$100.62 m will bring the total investment in the Agricultural Sector to \$157.2 m, the largest of all Sectors in this Budget. **(Applause)** I hope I would not hear, “well, they didn’t put enough money in Agriculture.”

***Tourism Product***

Mr. Speaker, Grenada continues to see significant growth in stay over visitors. Data for the first three quarters of 2019 show a tremendous increase for over the same period of 2018. To properly accommodate the growing numbers of visitors who come to our shores, Grenada must increase its room stock and Government eagerly anticipates the completion of the projects that will facilitate this. Grenada’s current room stock is two thousand and eighty-one (2,081) rooms. In 2020, that number should increase by six hundred and fifty-one (651) new rooms, with another nine hundred and sixty (960) added by 2021. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the budget of the Ministry of Tourism has increased by six million dollars (\$6 m), from \$21.4 m in 2019 to \$27.4 m in 2020. **(Applause)**

***The Productive Sectors***

That increase, Mr. Speaker, would facilitate Airlift support and improvement to select Tourism sites, which are critical, including the site that currently houses the Police Headquarters, which will soon become a major Tourists attraction.

Mr. Speaker, negotiation for the commencement of the Maurice Bishop International Airport upgrade is at an advanced stage. It took longer that we would have loved to complete the negotiation. More than US fifty million dollars (US\$50 m) will be invested in this project, with a loan coming from the Chinese Government and People, and we expect to sign the Agreement very soon. It is anticipated that about one



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hundred and fifty (150) jobs will be created and that project should last for a couple years.

On the Sister Isle of Carriacou, Mr. Speaker, while we continue to do the assessment for a new Airport, in the long-term, we will move to improve the safety of the current runway by lengthening it by five hundred feet (500 ft), Mr. Speaker. The budget allocation for this project is five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) and forty (40) persons would be given employment in Carriacou.

**Culture and the Arts**

Mr. Speaker, Government is committed in maintaining, protecting and enhancing our Nation's tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage and its related industry. Government is moving forward, therefore, with the ground works for the construction of the Cultural Centre at Simon. **(Applause)** The survey and geotechnical studies have been completed, and we have just been greeted with a design work and assessment by a Grenadian Firm only on Monday of this week and the Contract has already been awarded for the fencing of the grounds. Construction would, therefore, certainly be started before the middle of 2020.

**Sports**

Mr. Speaker, the Division of Sports continues to play a critical role in the lives of our young people and in communities, by providing an avenue for meaningful engagement in several Sporting Disciplines. In addition to assisting Sporting Associations and Clubs with hosting local competitions in 2019, the Division of Sports provided support for the participation of Grenadian Athletes in competitions regionally and internationally. The Division will also work collaboratively with the Local Olympic Committee to ensure that our Athletes are properly prepared for participation in the 2020 Olympic Games in Japan.

Mr. Speaker, through our continued partnership with the National Lottery Authority, 2020 would see the lighting of numerous Playing Fields across the Island. Work would also continue on upgrading all Playing Fields and Hard Courts to further promote Sporting opportunities for all.

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Mr. Speaker, I now turn to **Major Government Projects**, which go to the heart of the growth and development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the following represents the major projects, which is a subset of what we have in store for 2020 and beyond.

**Government Buildings**

A major undertaking in 2020 will be the refurbishment of Government-owned buildings to help minimize expenditure on rent and to generate additional revenue. Government is spending a lot of money on renting buildings, when some Government buildings are left in decay; that will stop. An Infrastructure Refurbishment Committee has been established and several buildings have been identified for renovation in all Parishes, including the Ministerial Complex to be built in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** The estimated value of this project is ten million dollars (\$10 m), and it is expected to create over one hundred and fifty (150) jobs.

**The Agriculture Feeder Road Phase III Project**

Mr. Speaker, that total project is financed by the Government of Grenada. Mr. Speaker, could you imagine that? The Government of Grenada is financing a project for US\$37.71 m, which works out to be EC\$100.62 m. This project could only have been done, because of the soft loans that were given by AIDA, because of staying the course, and ensuring that we have fiscal prudence and keeping the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the only country in the Caribbean that have been able to access such loans. **(Applause)** And, I repeat, Mr. Speaker, it's a forty-year loan, 0.75% interest, and a ten (10) year grace, Mr. Speaker.

Component 1 involves the rehabilitation of 20.25 kilometers of road, including bridges and other infrastructural activities. Some of the roads are: Claboney Road, Munich to Bacolet Bridge; Limlair Road; Apres Toute to Pomme Rose; Brother's Road, Willis to Constantine Road and several others, Mr. Speaker.

Component 2 involves the rehabilitation of 24.06 kilometers of road including Bridges and other infrastructure, and that include, Cherry Hill Road; Bailles Bacolet to La Pastora; Belle Vue Road; Morne Delice to Old Westerhall; Flamingo Bay Road; Mango Road; Happy Hill to Mt. Moritz, among others. Construction will begin on

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Component 2 in March 2020, and is expected to create employment for over two hundred and fifty (250) persons.

***Grenada Education and Enhancement Project (GEEP)***

Mr. Speaker, this project, funded by the Caribbean Development Bank, is at a cost of EC\$43.54 m, and it is designed to improve the quality of basic education by enhancing the teaching and learning environment and improving the capacity of our educators.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I make the point, that in addition to the recurrent expenditure on the education budget, when one looks at what is investigated in education, one has to the Capital area where we are building facilities for the improvement of education in our country.

Several schools are earmarked to benefit from this rehabilitation and upgrading of their physical infrastructure; and these include, among others, Bishop's College; Grenada SDA Comprehensive School; Presentation Brothers' College; St. Joseph's Convents in St. George's and Grenville, both; J.W. Fletcher Memorial Secondary School; St. David's Catholic Secondary School to be rebuilt; the Grenada Christian Academy and the St. Andrew Anglican Primary. Work on these schools would begin, some would start in December 2019, while others will begin in 2020. The employment opportunities for all the schools, as they take shape in 2020, would be over four hundred and fifty (450) persons.

***The Integrated Solid Waste Management Project***

Mr. Speaker, these are not pie in the sky, Mr. Speaker, these are projects that designs have been done and are ready to go, and in some cases, have started. Some cases are in the middle of completion. Mr. Speaker, the Contractor for this project has been selected for the construction of a new Landfill, which will begin in 2020, as part of the Integrated Solid Waste Management Project. EC\$40.9 m project is intended to improve and sustain integrated Solid Waste Management in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and would create in excess of four hundred (400) jobs. This Project is funded through a mix of grants, loans and counterpart funds.

***The OECS Regional Health Project***

Mr. Speaker, Grenada would use its allocation, which is \$16.1 m of the OECS Regional Health Project, that is the OECS Project, with I think, it's Dominica and St. Lucia, to invest in the upgrade of five (5) facilities, the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital, the St. David Health Centre, the Rathdune Centre, and Phase 1 of the General Hospital would also be given some support. Work would also be undertaken to upgrade the Public Health Laboratory at the General Hospital to achieve Tier 1 accreditation to enhance country compliance with the International Health Regulations, and to strengthen the National Health Emergency Response Operating System. At least one hundred (100) jobs will be created by this project, which seeks to strengthen the capacity of the Health Systems to ensure the continuity of services following any extreme weather event.

***Natural Disaster and Rehabilitation and Reconstruction - Gouyave Extreme Rainfall Project***

This Project, Mr. Speaker, is funded by the Caribbean Development Bank through a loan of twenty-three million dollars (\$23 m). Final designs were completed for slope stabilization areas in Brothers, Clozier, Gross Point, Maran, Market Square, Millette and for the Brothers Bridge, reconstruction. Construction will begin in the first quarter of 2020 and is expected to create over one hundred and fifty (150) jobs.

***Emergency Operation Centres in Grenada and Carriacou***

Mr. Speaker, construction will begin, early in 2020, on the Emergency Operation Centres, NaDMA Headquarters, that is, and Warehouses in Grenada and Carriacou. This Project is funded by the US Southern Command and it is valued at \$6.5 m, and will include the installation of state-of-the-art communications equipment; about one hundred (100) persons would be employed on both project sites.

***The St. Patrick Road Rehabilitation and Upgrading Project***

Mr. Speaker, this project will cost \$27 m, and it is funded through a loan of OPEC Fund for International Development. The scope of work entails, the construction of 16 kilometres of road, including all bridges, drainage and ancillary works. Section I is from Duquesne to Sauteurs, comprising 6.2 kilometres of roads and five (5) bridges; Section

Il from Poyntzfield to Mt. Fendue, including four (4) bridges and 2.13 miles of roads. That project, Mr. Speaker, would last for twenty-four (24) months and is expected to employ two hundred and eighty (280) persons. Construction is now ongoing on that project.

***The Western Main Road Corridor Upgrade***

Mr. Speaker, the scope of works for the Western Main Road Corridor Upgrade Project has been finalized, long awaited. We have received ten (10) expressions of interest for the project and these are currently being evaluated. This project is funded by a grant of \$46.7 m, from the Department of International Development under the UK Caribbean Infrastructure Facilities. We would remember when the Prime Minister came here, that was one of the announcements he made. The design phase of this project will commence in the first quarter of 2020 and the implementation of this project will provide about six hundred (600) jobs for Grenadians.

***The Grenada Climate Resilience Water Sector Project***, the biggest of them all. Mr. Speaker, this project was first mentioned in the 2019 Budget Presentation. It is financed through a grant, totaled one hundred and twenty-five million dollars (\$125 m), predominantly provided by the Green Climate Fund. This project will contribute to a system-wide Climate Change resilience in the Water and Sanitation Sectors. All agreements are in the final stage, Mr. Speaker, and the project is poised to commence early in 2020. Several major infrastructure investments in the amount of \$105.7 m will be undertaken under this Project including improvement in the water supply at Mirabeau, Les Avocats/Petite Etang, Vendomme, Victoria and St. Patrick Water Systems. The water supply in Carriacou and Gouyave would also be expanded. Over fifteen hundred (1,500) jobs are expected to be created throughout the life of this G-Crews Project.

Next, Mr. Speaker, ***Grenada Water Supply Expansion System Sewerage Improvement Project***

There are so many of them, Mr. Speaker, you might even get them mixed up. Mr. Speaker, this project is financed with a Grant, again, of US\$12.9 m, which works out to be EC\$34.7 m, from DIFID/UK under the UK/CIF Project. NAWASA is the

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Implementing Agency for this project and which will contribute to the strengthening of the Water Sector in Grenada, reduce water sector risk and build resilience to the impact of Climate Change in the Sector's infrastructure. The project will complement the work of the G-Crews Project I just mentioned.

***NAWASA Headquarters***

Mr. Speaker, work has started on developing a new Headquarters for the National Water and Sewerage Authority, which is on Lucas Street, not far from here. About one hundred (100) construction jobs will be created during the life of this project with a cost of seven million dollars (\$7 m).

***The Integrated Physical Adaptation and Community Resilience Project***

Mr. Speaker, Government has signed the required agreements and instruments for the 2020 Implementation of Pilot Project, Integrated Physical Adaptation and Community Resilience Programme. This fifty-four million dollar (\$54 m) project, financed through grants from the Green Climate Fund is intended to enable the Public Sector, Civil Society Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Communities to access grant financing; that is not just Government, for Climate Change Adaptation and vulnerability activities and investments. This regional initiative is also being implemented in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

***The Basic Needs Trust Fund Project***

Mr. Speaker, funded through a grant of \$6.9 m from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the ninth cycle of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) is geared to enhancing key physical infrastructure in various communities. The eight (8) projects are expected to provide employment for more than one hundred (100) persons in 2020. The projects include the expansion of the River Saltee Pre-school; the construction of a Happy Hill by-road, the refurbishment of toilet facilities at St. Dominic's R.C. School; the construction of new toilet facilities in Better Village; the construction of Paradise Pre-School and the Brizan/Happy Hill Pre-School and Munich Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Speaker, ***the Solar PV Battery Hybrid Project***

This project is funded by a grant under the UAE/Caribbean Renewable Project Energy Fund in the amount of US\$3.2 m. The funds would be used to design, construct

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and install a Solar PV Battery Hybrid Plant in Limlair in Carriacou. This project is expected to have tremendous impact on electricity generation in Carriacou, through a significant reduction in fuel costs; about seventy (70) persons would receive employment.

Mr. Speaker, through our longstanding relationship with the People's Republic of China, Mr. Speaker, this longstanding relationship with the Chinese Government, has yielded a grant of thirty-eight million dollars (\$38 m) to the refurbishment of the Kirani James Athletics Stadium and other important infrastructure projects. **(Applause)**

***Japan Caribbean Climate Change Project***

Funded with a grant of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000.00) from the Government of Japan, Mr. Speaker, this project is aimed at advancing the process of low emission risk resilience development, by improving energy security, integrating medium to long-term planning for adaptation to Climate Change. Several community projects are funded under this important programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Morocco has just announced a three-year programme of support in education scholarships, funding for more agricultural activities and a five hundred thousand dollars (US\$500,000.00) grant, each year, for the next three (3) years. The use of this grant will be determined jointly by the Government of Grenada and of course, the Government of Morocco.

Mr. Speaker, the last project I need to mention is the ***Climate Resilient Agriculture Project for Integrated Landscape Management***. This Project, Mr. Speaker, will see the implementation in 2020, of the Climate Resilient Agriculture for Integrated Landscape Management, which is funded by the Global Environmental Facility to the tune of US\$3.7 m. Through this project, we will maintain biodiversity conservation, in a production landscape and increase resilience of the Agricultural Sector. In other words, more targeted support for the Agricultural Sector, and this project **(applause)** would again, commence in 2020.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have listed nineteen (19) such Public Sector initiative associated Projects. There are several more that I did not name. This highlights, Mr. Speaker, the tremendous amount of economic activities and job creation in 2020, and

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beyond. We are very cognizant, Mr. Speaker, that, that would necessitate the enhancement of competences in the Ministry of Infrastructural Development, Implementation and Works and other supporting Government Agencies in order to execute such projects. We had such weaknesses in 2019. We have faced it and we are doing something about it to ensure that we can take advantage of all these projects that are given.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, new hires have already been made in the Ministry of Agriculture; engineers, planners and management personnel, and we have now put an additional \$3 m grant support in the 2020 Budget to contract more engineers, planners and project managers to continue this work. We have also made the call to our friendly countries, for example, China, to provide us additional engineers. Next year, we will have a lot of them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to all these personnel, we're not stopping there, serious discussion is now taking place with the Ministry of Finance personnel to engage a Private Sector Management Group, to aid in the management of these various Projects. In other words, if you have things given to you, you must use it effectively and have the available personnel and support to ensure that you do not waste it.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Government has been able to have raised over \$253 m in grant financing for Public Sector Investment Initiatives, not loans, grants. **(Applause)** The question we ask, how did we accomplish this? Mr. Speaker, this remarkable feat was accomplished, because we have stayed the course of fiscal prudence and it is imperative that we continue to do so. **(Applause)**

The enactment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Public Management Act, the Public Procurement Law and the Public Finance Management Act, Mr. Speaker, they are not just Acts for someone's ego. They are all important initiatives that sends the message that we are behaving ourselves and give us more and more and more. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, while some may clamour for the Government to arbitrarily amend the fiscal rules to satisfy on certain objectives, we must understand, Mr. Speaker, the magnitude of the losses that we stand to incur, if we abort this part of fiscal prudence.



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Mr. Speaker, it will highly irresponsible and significantly detrimental to our trajectory if growth, development, job creation and debt saving to the tune of one hundred and one million dollars (\$101 m) in just seven (7) years, if we allow ourselves to be taken down by loud voices, rather than be guided by what is in the best interest of all Grenadians. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I add, the Fiscal Responsibility Act is not perfect. But, Mr. Speaker, in its imperfection, it still constitutes an invaluable compass by which we can guide our expenditure. We have already received numerous recommendations from the Fiscal Oversight Committee (FROC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to strengthen its framework for consistency and clarity. However, what is undeniable and both entities are unwavering on this, the principles of fiscal prudence must remain sacrosanct. It is the only way to safeguard the gains and to achieve growth and development. For the benefit of all, Mr. Speaker, the Government is prepared to stay the course of fiscal discipline. We will not be swayed, Mr. Speaker, to do otherwise. **(Applause)**

***Major Private Sector Projects***

In other words, I just talk about Public Sector, now we have the real thing. Mr. Speaker, complementing the efforts of the State, the Private Sector is doing its part in advancing the growth and development of this country. The Grenada Investment Development Corporation continues to play an important role in facilitating development projects in the Private Sector. Mr. Speaker, to date they have received twenty-seven (27) applications for investment incentives, twenty-one (21) of them have been approved. Collectively, these projects represent an investment of billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, in the local economy, creating thousands of jobs. These approved projects are in Tourism, Manufacturing and the Service Sectors. In addition to the newly approved projects, several previously approved projects became operational in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I will just read out a short list of some of these projects, because they are too numerous to mention. Mr. Speaker, as the Student Body and the expansion of the St. George's University grows, there is parallel growth in the student accommodation sector, which remains abuzz with activity. There is continuing

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construction and many student accommodation facilities became operational in 2019, and particularly the True Blue area. This included the following:-

- The Hideaway True Blue Project - a total of \$22 m, with seventy (70) construction jobs and ten (10) fulltime jobs, when fully operational.
- The ACE Holding Honeycomb Apartment Project - fifteen (15) newly constructed single apartments, Mr. Speaker;
- The Comfort Zone Limited Project - located in True Blue, a \$4.3 m project, Mr. Speaker, now under construction, eighty (80) persons with start of operations of twenty (20) to thirty-five (35) persons.
- An estimated \$1.5 m was invested in twenty-four (24) units at Lance-Aux-Epines, the Boucan Luxury Apartments.
- The Aashirwadh Apartments project, Mr. Speaker, a twelve room Bedroom Facility costing \$1.25 m, and that project began operation in August this year.
- The Buena Vista Apartments Company Limited, this remodeling of an existing four-story building construction has seventeen (17) self-contained apartments for student accommodation, creating about thirty (30) construction jobs.

On the Manufacturing side, Aqua Natural Limited expanding its water bottling operation, with an investment of \$2.7 m. This project became operational in June 2019, creating an employment for over thirty (30) persons.

Mr. Speaker, there is even a longer list of ongoing projects, as we did projects that became operational in 2019, developments are primarily in tourism facilities, student accommodation and agri-business/Manufacturing.

In 2020, the Tourist Accommodation Sector will open the doors to the following new facilities:

- The transformation of what was formerly the Grenadian by Rex Resort, in the multi-million dollar Royalton Grenada, by Sunwing Travel Group. When it is completed, it would be the largest hotel project in the country, two hundred and sixty-nine (269) rooms, and we have been informed and assured that the second phase will begin early in the following year, with an additional one hundred and fifty (150) rooms.

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- Reese Investments has pumped \$85 m in the Commercial Complex of hotel rooms with full amenities, entertainment facilities and a business centre. They will start operation and limitedly so, in 2020.
- Phase one of the Luxurious Boutique Hotel Resort, known as Point, at Petite Calivigny Resort, is about 95% complete. It is anticipated it would be operational in January 2020, and it will add another thirty-two (32) rooms to Grenada's room stock. The second phase of this project is estimated to be one hundred million dollars (\$100 m).
- The Prickly Bay Watershed Project has invested eight million dollars (\$8 m) into expansion, which has created construction jobs for thirty (30) persons;
- Close to ten million dollars (\$10 m) being invested in Luxe Modern Residential building to develop tourist accommodation in Lance-Aux-Epines. This project is employing twenty-two (22) persons in the construction phase.
- In the ICT space, Qualishore Incorporated, a Call Centre and business processing outsourcing operation will be expanding over a twelve (12) fourteen (14) month period. Thirteen (13) persons are currently employed and at its peak, they expect to provide employment for eighty (80) persons.

There is also activity taking place in the Agri-business and Manufacturing Sector. The Renegade Rum Distillery Project is expected to soon be a significant contributor to Grenada's export earnings. \$89.7 m has been invested in that project, which is about 80% complete, in terms of infrastructure and the installation of equipment.

The key to that, Mr. Speaker, is that one hundred and fifty (150) farmers are currently engaged to cultivate two hundred and eighty (280) acres of sugarcane in six (6) areas and twenty-two (22) persons already found employment.

Construction of Excellent Farm Limited, another major initiative and a positive one, Mr. Speaker; a \$3.8 m poultry operation in St Patrick began work in mid-2019 and is expected to create employment for twenty (20) persons.

Mr. Speaker, looking to the future, there are many projects in the horizon, in addition to what I have said. In St. David, a Parish regarded as largely virgin investment Territory, two (2) luxury hotels will be developed by Range Development, with a total

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investment of over \$300 m. **(Applause)** This project would provide construction phase employment for over one thousand (1,000) persons and another six hundred (600) would benefit from permanent employment, when the hotels are operational. Range has never failed in what it says it is going to do. It said so in St. Kitts, it has done it. It said so in Dominica, it has also done it. We expect them to deliver here in Grenada, because Grenada is best of them all. **(Applause)**

In St. Patrick, what is another significant tourism project in the rural part of the country, and one, which has remarkable benefits for the Sister Island of Carriacou, a five hundred (500) room hotel would be constructed in Levera, with various amenities including restaurants, golf course, amusement park, duty-free shops and a turtle museum. Total investment is over \$1 b. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, an agricultural design for an eighty million dollar (\$80 m) Coral Cove Hotel Project is now in completion and the groundbreaking is expected to be held very soon, in the South of St. George's. This project would provide three hundred and fifty (350) construction jobs and another two hundred (200) persons will be contracted for services, when the hotel opens.

Mr. Speaker, Government is also pursuing three major projects, through the BOLT System, which is Build Operate and Lease, and the three (3) projects are, the Governor-General Residence, long overdue, Mr. Speaker; the Halls of Justice, Mr. Speaker and the Police Headquarters, also. **(Applause)** Plans for these projects are significantly advanced and Cabinet has already received presentation in at least two (2) of them. Mr. Speaker, Government will incur no upfront costs with these projects, which are expected to commence in 2020. About two hundred (200) jobs will be created in each of those. The estimated value of these Private Sector initiatives will be over one hundred million US dollars (US\$100 m).

Mr. Speaker, these twenty-three (23) Private Sector Projects speak to an unmatched level of confidence in Grenada's economy, the peace and the stability of this country and the Cabinet of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Government is pleased to witness the level of confidence, but more importantly, we are heartened by the level of employment that approved projects are

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generating and welcome the injection of capital into the local economy, particularly in Rural Sector.

Mr. Speaker, with this level of confidence in our economy and our Government and our People, it would be unwise, therefore, to jeopardize such vibrant economic activity and job creation. All of us must be on board.

***Some Budgetary Measures***

Mr. Speaker, as we improve the quality of the lives of the Grenadian people, the Government advances the following measures. We would repeal the following fees in the first quarter of 2020:-

- The Home Economics training fees; I do not even know what that means, really.
- Hostel fees, could you imagine that?
- Video rental outlets and other fees that doesn't make sense. Many of them will go in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, as Grenada continues its efforts to protect the environment, by June 2020, Government will introduce a ban on the importation of vehicles exceeding ten (10) years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it might not be popular, but it is right. We've got to protect our country. Also, by June 2020, Government will introduce a 50% duty reduction on the importation of electric and highbred vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, also, Government promised relief to claimants who have secured judgment, sometimes over thirty (30) years, against the Government and have not been paid. In 2019, \$5.2 m was paid in settlement to nine (9) claimants. Mr. Speaker, one claimant, who dates back to 2004, which clearly illustrates the level of relief being afforded to claimants. We will continue to honour these claims even those that pre dates the NNP Administration.

Mr. Speaker, effective January 2019, Government increased ex-gratia payments that primary addressed Un-established Workers, to three hundred and fifty dollars (\$350.00). Mr. Speaker, we are ever mindful that this is woefully inadequate, but it is a step in the right direction.

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Mr. Speaker, while we have announced and started the 70% top-up to Public Officers, who have retired, Government is cognizant that the plight of the Un-established Workers has not been appropriately addressed. In other words, some of these Un-established workers, Mr. Speaker, I have been in Government for a while, I have seen them work harder than some Established Public Servants and have not been treated right. We have to correct this. Mr. Speaker, Government therefore would endeavour to resolve this issue by June 2020, in the spirit of equity for all workers, because, in some cases, they have worked long, Mr. Speaker.

**Acknowledgements**

Mr. Speaker, it is prudent that I thank my Cabinet colleagues for their unwavering support in the governance of this beautiful country. Many sacrifices are made individually and collectively in the interest of the citizens of this country. I don't think they have been appreciated enough.

Mr. Speaker, Ministers operate at the helm of their respective Ministries. They are, supposedly, heading the Ministry, but their salaries are not reflective of the position they hold. In many cases, Ministers of Government are paid less than Permanent Secretaries and several Public Officers, who they have to lead. Mr. Speaker, if you look at this document here, this document it would take a sad reading. I looked at it one night and tears nearly flowed. A Minister's salary here is sixty-seven thousand dollars (\$67,000.00); a Permanent Secretary and several Public Officers is over ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000.00), that isn't right, it isn't right, Mr. Speaker. If I have to take licks for this, doing something about it, I will do something, Mr. Speaker. It is just not right. God will be vex with us, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter/Inaudible comments)** Mr. Speaker, this in no way and I want to make it clear; sometimes we misinterpret when people talk with passion, diminishes the work of some hardworking Public Servants. I know a lot of them. They deserve it. But, I am saying, the Ministers deserve to be compensated appropriately too. **(Applause)**

The point I am making here, Mr. Speaker, there is a great disparity in the system, and it must be addressed. I look towards the support of my Union brothers and sisters to not make this an issue, when I move to deal with this appropriately. I look towards

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them, as Christian brothers and sisters, to help me in solving this important problem, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, it's also important to recognize the valuable contributions of the Cabinet Secretary in handling the affairs of the Executive Branch of Government and also the Permanent Secretaries for their unfailing contribution to national development. A special thank you to the staff at the Ministry of Finance for their monumental task of preparing the 2020 Budget. We have lost several leaders of this Ministry in the last three (3) years, but they continue to do their best.

Development partners, stakeholders and Public Servants are also integral to the Budget preparation process, and for this I express sincere gratitude on behalf of the Government and people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I say, despite the excellent record of economic growth we have achieved, Government recognized that inevitably there will be a cross-section of vulnerable persons and we have a responsibility to them. Therefore, as we seek to meet the demands of the competing interest, Government must allocate its resources responsibly to provide an opportunity for every Grenadian, Carriacounian and Petite Martiniquean to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, the obvious question here is what does this 2020 Budget offer the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique? Mr. Speaker, the answer can be found in the vast number of Private and Government projects, which are providing opportunities for over seven thousand (7,000) persons, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, the significantly reduced debt payment of one hundred and one million dollars (\$101 m) this year as compared to 2013 has enormous benefits for the country.

Thirdly, the Helping Hand provided through the many social programmes that are specifically targeted towards vulnerable citizens, ensuring that they are not marginalized by their circumstances.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, education must be considered an equalizer, thereby the considerable support provided by Government to enable access to higher education, propelling our people to higher levels of achievement.

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Fifthly, the various Skill Development programmes that target the youth, thus contributing to the creation of a highly skilled Sector, that can ably respond to the growing service needs of the local economy.

Sixthly, Mr. Speaker, Small Business development avenues to facilitate a growing group of self-employed persons, who can add significant stimulus to the local economy.

Seventhly, opportunities in the Agricultural Sector for the farmer needing assistance and those engaged with Private Sector through vital linkages that marry the two (2) Industries.

Eighthly, to the intervention to Health Sector, which are geared towards ensuring Universal Health Coverage.

Ninthly, the intended relief to the Un-established Public Officers who have given yeoman service to this beautiful country.

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt the 2020 Budget provides something for everyone. This Government is all-embracing. We are committed to ensuring that no man, woman or child is left behind.

Several years ago, we joined hands in making enormous sacrifices to put this country back on sound economic footing. Today, as we reap the increasing rewards of those sacrifices, we must make every effort to safeguard the gains by staying the course of fiscal prudence. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the sobriety and the measure of understanding of this concept that was displayed by some of our Union Representatives, as we negotiated the salary increases for Public Officers for the next three or four years. Mr. Speaker, we don't always agree, sometimes we disagree, and we agree to disagree, but when they have done their share, we give credit where credit is due.

The Government's Negotiating Team was able to reach amicable salary negotiating settlements with the Grenada Union of Teachers, Grenada Manual and Mental and Intellectual Workers Union, the Police Welfare Association and the Prison Officers Welfare Association.



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Mr. Speaker, these agreements provide 4% increases in salary and wages for each of the three years in the new cycle, compounded and in real terms the amounts were 13.5% increase over the next three (3) years. In addition, Mr. Speaker, with effective, January 2020, contribution to the NIS would increase by 1%, in other words the Government is paying 1% more to every single worker, which means the percentage increase they are getting is not 4 %, but actually 5%. I hear that it is being said that the workers are paying 1% too. The workers are not paying 1% to anybody. The workers are paying 1% in savings to themselves. The only person that is sacrificing is the Government and the taxpayers of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** The cost of these increases to one set of workers is \$43.5 m, over the next three (3) years. Pensioners also will receive the very same increases to their monthly Pension.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore take this opportunity to give credit and congratulate the Executive members of the Grenada Union of Teachers for their patriotic disposition, as they negotiated throughout this entire cycle. **(Applause)** But, I also say to our brothers, who have not yet signed, that, I also say to them that while we have not yet signed, I noticed the attitude is very warm, and I look forward that before Santa Claus comes that we can shake hands together. **(Laughter)**

My friends, they all bargained hard, but they were prepared to take into consideration the limitations set by the Fiscal Rules in our Laws. Mr. Speaker, we live in one economic space. Whenever the economy improves or deteriorates, we are all affected. I look forward to the end product of these negotiations.

This takes me, Mr. Speaker, to the essential need in the coming year and beyond, to begin focus on productivity; and in that regard, our Trade Union brothers and employer Organizations have a critical role to play. In other words, do what we have to do with increases, but our leadership must also call on workers to produce accordingly.

I make appeal, therefore, to the leadership of the joint Technical and Allied Workers and the Public Workers Union to work with us, to ensure that we get higher productivity throughout the Public Service, that's an area of concern. If I don't say it, I am not being honest.

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Mr. Speaker, it is the hope of this Government that we can all settle our differences, very soon, and as we move forward steadfastly to 2020, let us join hands and hearts to ensure the continued prosperity of this beautiful country of ours. May God bless this beautiful country of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister for Finance and Prime Minister. You deserve a glass of water in truth. **(Laughter)** Now, Honourable Members, you would have to take some time to fully digest all that you have heard. And, so debates and presentations on the Budget Presentation that is made would be deferred to later.

In the meantime, there were a number of Motions that we had rearranged in the Order Paper to allow for the Budget Presentation to be made. We would now revert back to the Standing Orders and Motion No. (a). Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Gregory Bowen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to propose that we continue tomorrow at 9:00 in the forenoon, if you would so permit us. So, as you say that we digest the presentation by the Minister for Finance, and so that we ourselves could make our own presentations in the morning. So, if you would so permit, Mr. Speaker, I will move the Motion for the Adjournment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. I know you are a very understanding and empathetic person, because I don't know that anybody else would want to hear anything more than let me hear what they are going to say about the Budget.

Honourable Members, this House would stand adjourned until 9:00 in the forenoon, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, when we would continue with this Session, with the Sitting. Honourable Members this Honourable House stands adjourned.

**House adjourned at 12:18 p.m. on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2019**