



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**Third Session of the Tenth Parliament**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**SENATE**

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2020

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**Senate Meeting**  
**Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's**  
**On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2020**

**Attendance**

**PRESENT**

Senator the Honourable Chester A. A. Humphrey	- Mr. President (In the Chair)
Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell	- Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management and Information
Senator the Honourable Judd Cadet	- Member
Senator the Honourable Norland Cox	- Minister for Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts
Senator the Honourable Dr. Winston Garraway	- Minister of State wrf Disaster Management and Information
Senator the Honourable Kim George	- Member
Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams	- Member
Senator the Honourable Glynis Roberts	- Member
Senator the Honourable Kerryne James	- Member
Senator the Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead	- Member
Senator the Honourable Dr. Dunstan Campbell	- Member
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie	- Deputy President
Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis	- Member

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**Prayers**  
**Minutes**

***The Sitting of the Senate began at 3:00 p.m.***

**Mr. President:** Senator the Honourable Winston Garraway.

**(Senate Prayer was said)**

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Winston Garraway:** Fellow Members, join me in the Lord's Prayer.

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

**Mr. President:** Honourable Members, pray be seated.

**(Sound of gavel)**

**Mr. President:** The Session of this House now commences.

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

Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2019 be taken as read.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

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**Minutes taken as read.**

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceeding of the Senate, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2019 be confirmed.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019 be taken as read.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

**Mr. President:** Could you just turn the mike off. Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceeding of the Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019 be confirmed.

**Question proposed.**

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Nay

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**Mr. President:** Senator Roberts.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Yes, Mr. President, there is a slight error on Attendance, Present and Absent. It has Senator Ron both present and absent. But I think he was absent and your humble servant is not there at all, so I was present.

***(Inaudible comments)***

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Repeat?

**Mr. President:** Yes please.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Under Present, Senator the Honourable Ron Redhead is there. Additionally under Absent, Senator Ron Redhead is also absent, excuse tendered, and in the body of... under 'Announcements by Mr. President', first paragraph', second paragraph: **"I have received another absence from Senator the Honourable Ron Redhead who indicated that he would be absent for this Sitting."**

***(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)***

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Yes that Senator Glynis Robert is not present, but I was present.

**Question proposed.**

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Mr. President. Thank you very much, Mr. President, that's November 4<sup>th</sup> yes.

**Mr. President:** Yes, that's the Minutes of Monday November 4<sup>th</sup>.

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**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** The same thing under Present, André Lewis is present and also absent at the same time. November 4<sup>th</sup>, yes. **(Inaudible comments)** No, André was present but I'm saying it is listed as both present and absent

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** I think we now need to move the confirmation.

**Mr. President:** Oh sorry, corrections yes.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2019 be confirmed.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

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

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**Announcements**

Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Honourable Members, I wish to take the opportunity to say a few words on a very important issue that has drawn the attention of the entire world. And I speak of no other issue than the current pandemic sweeping the globe, the novel Coronavirus 2019. Honourable Members, I am certain that I express your view and sentiments when I say that the world is in a very difficult place. The lives of countless numbers of persons from different countries have been lost by virtue of the infestation and infection by this virus. And while we are saddened by these events and while these events have profoundly altered life and living as we know it, there is still deep in the human psyche more than a ray of hope, more than the glory of humankind in its quest to survive. And I stand here to applaud all of those workers, medical personnel, those who are on the frontline of this battle, staring death in a fight to defeat this disease.

I think it is proper for me on my own behalf and on yours, to salute all of those champions, some who have fallen in this ongoing battle. I also wish to salute those medical personnel and others who are involved in this fight in our own homeland. The Nurses, the Doctors, the Orderly, the Ambulance Drivers, the Attendants, the people who prepare the meals, the Police Officers, other persons who have by necessity to attend work in order to ensure that society still continues and they do this in the face of great danger to themselves and their families. I think a salute to all of these champions is in order.

In this salute, we must conjoin those combatants who have come from the land of Cuba, who have left their families, who have left their countrymen and who have journeyed far and wide of the globe, bringing their skills of medical relief to the suffering of mankind in order to assist in saving of lives and to curing and making better those who would have fallen victim to this disease. I think of the countless thousands who have fallen in places like Italy and Spain. And the fact that a small Caribbean country in enamoured only with its will and commitment to a better humanity, can find its place to help the rest of the world. Today we have a contingent here in Grenada, in several



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other Caribbean countries, over a hundred medical personnel in Barbados. I think there is close to 200 in Jamaica from Cuba delivering service.

Additionally, Honourable Members I will also like to salute the assistance that we have received not only from Cuba but also from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; a country like Cuba that currently faces a brutal blockade where medicines are prevented from being delivered to their people. I also wish to salute the contributions made by the People's Republic of China, the way in which they tackled this disease which broke out on their own home soil and the sacrifices that they have made and the knowledge they have garnered and have been able to assist the world in fighting this pandemic; the fact that they have been able to deliver very important supplies to Grenada and to other parts of the world. Honourable Members, I think it is fitting that we stand in a moment of salute and to applaud the efforts of these countless numbers of persons all throughout the world and our own home soil for the contributions which they are making in this fight.

**(Members stood and applauded)**

**Mr. President:** Thank you Honourable Members, pray be seated.

**Ag. Clerk Assistant:** Item 7 - Ministerial Statements.

**Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams:** Mr. President, if I may, I believe we have bypassed the Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2019. I don't think we have... I see it on the Order Paper but I don't recall that we addressed those Minutes.

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

**Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams:** I believe the last one we addressed was the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019, but yes...

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**Minutes (Recommitted)**  
**Papers / Reports**

**(Inaudible comments)**

**Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams:** No, we didn't do December; it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of November.

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

**Mr. President:** ...most accurate and simplest way to go...

**(The Clerk conversed with the President in private)**

**Mr. President:** The Hansard is confirming that we did. Could we proceed?

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

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the following Papers be laid on the Table:

- i. Compliance Assessment Report - Supplementary Budget 2020; and
- ii. Supplementary Budget 2020.

**Mr. President:** Honourable Members, the following Papers and Reports, Compliance Report - Supplementary Budget 2020 and Supplementary Budget 2020 be so laid on the Table.

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**(Sound of gavel)**

**Mr. President:** As ordered.

**Ag. Clerk Assistant:** Item 9 - Petitions.  
Item 10 - Government Notices.  
Item 11 - Unofficial Notices.  
Item 12 - Questions.  
Item 13 - Personal Explanations.  
Item 14 - Motions.

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motions standing in my name:

**WHEREAS** it was necessary to provide for the services for the State of Grenada for the year 2020 by means of a Supplementary Appropriation Act; (sorry... yes sorry).

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Supplementary..., (sorry).

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Sorry, Mr. Chair... I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

**Resolution for the purposes of section 17 subsection (2) (b) of the  
Constitution**

**WHEREAS** there has been a worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global pandemic;

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**AND WHEREAS** on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2020 the Ministry of Health of the Government of Grenada confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada;

**AND WHEREAS** on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020, the Governor General at a time when the Parliament was not sitting by proclamation pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution and section 3 of the Emergency Powers Act Chapter 88, declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada;

**AND WHEREAS** section 17 subsection (2) (b) of the Constitution provides that where a declaration is made when Parliament is not sitting, a declaration of emergency shall lapse at the expiration of a period of 21 days beginning with the date of the publication of the declaration unless it has in the meantime, in approved by resolution of both Houses;

**AND WHEREAS** section 17 subsection (5) of the Constitution provides a resolution of a House of Parliament passed for the purposes of section 17 of the Constitution shall remain in force for 6 months or such shorter period as may be specified therein;

**AND WHEREAS** it is now expedient and necessary in the public interest in the State of Grenada that the declaration of emergency by the Governor General dated 30<sup>th</sup> day of March 2020 be approved by the Houses of Parliament;

**AND WHEREAS** the Leader of Government's Business proposes that the Senate makes such a Resolution;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate that the declaration of the emergency by the Governor General dated the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 as set out in the schedule of this resolution be approved.

Mr. President, I seek to make an amendment to the resolution before us, the final paragraph to add in the text, "**a majority of all members of the House**" in terms of how we vote on this matter. So that paragraph should read... "**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by a majority of all the Members of the Senate that the declaration of the Emergency by the Governor General dated the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 as set out in the schedule to this resolution is approved.**"

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**Mr. President:** Could you just re-read this again.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by a majority of all the Members of the Senate that the declaration of the emergency by the Governor General dated the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 as set out in the schedule to this resolution is approved.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, just by way of introduction of this Resolution and it's introductional to speak to the two Money Bills that are also before us. They are all in response to these unprecedented and extraordinary times that we find ourselves and this is not a crisis that's just impacting us just here in Grenada, within the region, but every corner of the globe as we speak. My colleagues on 'This Side', Senator Cox, Senator Garraway would speak to some of the measures that has been taken specific to the sourcing of equipment and preparations that have been put in place, are being put in place for us to tackle this issue from a health perspective. But as I said, whether we are speaking about the Resolution or the Bills, which speak to the financial relief that we are seeking to bring, they all speak to our initial response to this global pandemic. And it's a global health crisis unlike any that we have seen in the past 100 years.

Mr. President, its killing people, its spreading misery and turning people's lives upside down. To date, the death toll of COVID-19, of this pandemic, stands at over 145,000 people, with well over 2 million persons infected and the projections are that these are going to continue to rise. But this is more than just a health crisis, it is also a social, human and economic crisis that is devastating communities all over the world.

It's impacting not just our most vulnerable, the initial findings, statistics showed that it was the elderly or those with underlying health conditions that were most at risk

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and they are. But this virus has no respect for age, religion, class, politics, social standings, from royals to Prime Ministers to celebrities down to the poorest, Mr. President, have been affected by this virus, it respects no one. And the measures that we have taken and the measures that are outlined in the Proclamation and the resolution before me... before us, speaks to some of the drastic measures that we have had to take nationally but countries around the world are also doing. Whether it's the closing of our borders, whether its stay at home orders, curfews, social distancing, closing of our schools, no more public gatherings, closure of churches, our workplaces, closure of non-essential services. Mr. President, these are all measures that have been taken to prevent the spread of this virus and as difficult and as challenging as we find this, whether on a personal level or on an economic level, these measures are all there to save lives, I repeat, these measures are to save lives.

Mr. President, because of the early action that was taken here in Grenada, we have a relatively low number of confirmed cases and to date no deaths, Mr. President. **(Applause)** The Minister of Health in the 'Other Place' announced this morning that of the 14 confirmed cases, 6 have been retested and have been tested twice and those results were negative. So those confirmed cases, those persons have recovered from this virus. **(Applause)** So it's a very, very positive sign, Mr. President, but we are not out of the woods yet. This isn't a time to celebrate; this isn't a time for us to ease back and to be complacent. As I said, Mr. President, no country, no Government, no leader could have prepared themselves for what we are facing, there is no rule book to tell us what we are supposed to do. There are no perfect solutions; one size does not fit all. There is some who tell us here in Grenada that some say that we started too early in our measures, some say that we started too late. There are no perfect solutions, and when we look at what is happening in some of the most developed, in the most developed, the wealthiest of countries, countries with infinite or what we thought was infinite resources, are struggling, are on their knees. The Great United States of America, New York City is now the epicenter of this virus. And what we are seeing is country by country in the developed world, are medical services that are overwhelmed,

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absolutely overwhelmed by the number of cases that are being presented to them as this pandemic, as these infections take root.

I said we have no losses here in Grenada but, Mr. President, many Grenadians have died in the Diaspora, in the United States, New York especially and the United Kingdom, where the number every time I look at it, it's increasing, over 50 Grenadians, Mr. President. Family members, friends who we know have succumbed to this deadly virus, these are truly, truly troubling times. For us, as with all other countries, we are trying to balance the priorities of protecting the health and the lives of our people but balancing that against ensuring that there is a state of calm and a state of order as the harsh measures... these difficult measures that are being enforced, restricting the movement of our people, restricting our way of life and us as Caribbean people, we are highly sociable people. And those very freedoms that we have taken for granted, that define who we are culturally have been removed in order to save lives. So balancing saving lives with calm, with order, ensuring that essential services or certain fundamental services are still needed to continue ensuring that those services especially those on the frontline, our health practitioners who are a vital tool in protecting us. How do we keep those services going? And then there is that component, the economic component of this and how do we manage, how do we limit the financial, the economic fall out of this. Mr. President, it is a near impossible task, we are trying to square a circle. We have great challenges doing, as most developed and most advanced of countries are equally as challenged. Mr. President, every country has adopted their own approach to fit the dynamics, the culture of their country and the situations that they face. What works for one doesn't necessarily work for another.

But, Mr. President, if any of us are questioning why are we taking these draconian measures? Why are we restricting the movement and freedoms of our people and that this virus is a distant thing, it is happening on other shores, it is just something that you see on a television screen. Mr. President, you just have to look at what is happening in the rest of the world and how these countries are being overwhelmed and the death that is being wreaked... the havoc that is being wreaked by this virus. So as we look at our own numbers, 14 confirmed cases of which 6 have fully

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recovered and no deaths. As I said earlier, Mr. President, we cannot be complacent. So far we have managed and we have managed well, but we need to continue the level of vigilance and the approach to the measures whether it's increasing those measures, whether it is easing off those measures in a very deliberate and measured way, that is led by the science, that is led by our health practitioners, that is led by best practice to ensure the safety of our people.

Mr. President, the approach that this Government has taken with this virus, (as I said we were one of the early movers), is to mitigate, it is to prevent community spread, it is identifying those imported cases and all of the cases that have been confirmed are either imported or related to those imported cases. And you mentioned, Mr. President, in your statement that at the beginning and the origins of this pandemic, the focus was on China and there was... locally there was considerable concern about the origins of this. Globally, heavy focus, but when we looked here in Grenada and we looked at where those cases, where was the real threat with regard to the importation of this virus, it was not from China; it was from the UK and from the United States. So the measures that we have taken in terms of closing our borders and ensuring that those borders remain closed, air tight until a point where it's not just a case of getting to a stage where the virus is under full control, it is eradicated and there is that possibility and that is what we are working towards; that there are zero new cases in Grenada, but it is not until the rest of the region and internationally is at that same state, can we ever start to think about opening those borders.

So the impact of this is profound, extraordinarily profound, Mr. President. But again as far as that approach is concerned, it's about identifying those cases, isolating those cases, testing and tracing... contact tracing and to date, Mr. President, it has proven a successful strategy. So, Mr. President, as I stated before, this is not only a health social issue, it is also an economic one. And as we move through the Order Paper and we look at some of the financial measures that we are taking to try and soften and cushion that impact, we get a real sense of all of the challenges that we face. So, Mr. President, just to close off this piece, the threats that are before us are very,



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very real and those threats remain high. There are concerns about second waves in other countries that have seen a reduction; we cannot be complacent, Mr. President.

So, Mr. President, turning my attention now specifically to the Resolution before us, the Proclamation, the National Emergency and other legislative measures taken by the Government in the fight against COVID-19. Mr. President, in an effort to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in Grenada and to protect against threats to public health and safety, public order and to ensure the maintenance of goods and services essential to life, a declaration of a state of national emergency was necessitated to impose serious restrictions and freedom of movement of persons.

Section 17 of the Grenada Constitution expressly endows the Governor General with the power to declare a state of emergency in Grenada by Proclamation. And that declaration is time bound and the Proclamation that was presented by the Governor General has an expiration of a period of 21 days from the beginning of the date of that publication. Section 17 of the Grenada Constitution does not impose any time limitations on the exercise of the Governor General's powers. Nonetheless as a fundamental rights and freedom of movements under section 12 of the Grenada Constitution is being curtailed, there is an expectation that the Governor General's powers must be reasonably exercised in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public health and to maintain goods and services. And those powers that are exercised must be reasonable and proportional to the threat posed. The Emergency Powers Act Caption 88, an Act passed in 1987 is an Act which seeks to provide for various reasons, non-exhaustive when declarations of a state of emergency may be issued. Section 3 of the Emergency Powers Act provides for circumstances under which the Governor General may declare a state of emergency in Grenada which are based on threats to the maintenance of public order, public safety, provision of essential services and to life and community. And such a Proclamation is published in the gazette and can be revoked at any time.

The Governor General exercises these powers under the advice of Cabinet. The Emergency Powers Act which endows the Cabinet with regulatory power, make regulatory making powers in section 4 to manage the period of emergency which

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includes measures such as imposing on any person restrictions in respect of his or her employment or business. So imposing restrictions on persons with respect to their employment, business, place of residence, association with people; so the closing of businesses, quarantine, staying at home orders etc; prohibiting people from being outdoors, the curfew, having the prior notifications of your movements in those restricted periods; prohibition of travel without permission and authorizing any such measures that is deemed justifiable.

Mr. President, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020, on the recommendations of Cabinet, the Governor General issued Proclamation under the Emergency Powers Act, declaring a state of emergency in Grenada and that state of emergency would be a limited one. At the same time, pursuant to section 4 of the Emergency Powers Act... passed the Emergency Powers COVID Regulations (SRO 13) to implement a number of reasonably required measures in response to threats of COVID at that time. And those Regulations focus primarily on physical distancing and the implementation of a curfew which was effective from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. for each of the days until the 1<sup>st</sup> of April apart from essential services. However, these limited measures did not achieve the required social distancing prescribed by the scientific and medical experts. A decision was then taken to issue new Regulations and the Cabinet asked the Governor General to make a new Proclamation declaring a state of emergency in Grenada pursuant to the powers under section 7 of the Constitution and the Emergency Powers Act which were made pursuant to the National Disaster Emergency Powers Act, Cap. 203.

The new Proclamation which was made on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020 that is the Emergency Powers Proclamation, new Regulations were subsequently passed by the Cabinet in accordance with that new Proclamation and it is that, that is being considered by this House. This Proclamation on its face did not stipulate an expiry date; however it was made at a time when Parliament was not sitting and section 17 of the Constitution makes express provisions governing the lifespan and declaration which states an expiry date of 21 days from publication unless it has in the meantime been approved by Cabinet. So on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, there were no Sittings of the Parliament as specified, therefore under the Constitution and how that applies to the Emergency Powers

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COVID-19 Proclamation, would therefore expire 21 days from the date of publication of the declaration unless in the meantime it was approved by a Resolution of both Houses of Parliament. And that as it stands is the Proclamation; as it stands, this Proclamation expires at midnight on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April.

So, Mr. President, Cabinet can either further advise the Governor General to issue a new Proclamation or can bring it to Parliament as is now being done for the purposes of determining whether the state of emergency should continue. As there is no expiry on the resolution presented, it should stay in force for a period of 6 months from approval. So, Mr. President, the Resolution that is before us will remain in force for a 6 month period. It will prevent... it will negate the need for the constant issuing on a 7 day or 21 day cycle by the Governor General for the renewal of those Proclamations. So this would stay in force for a period of up to 6 months but it could be revoked at any such time.

So, Mr. President, the passing of this Resolution would enable Cabinet to continually monitor our national and global development of COVID-19 either maintain, reduce or increase the emergency measures already in place to ensure the health, safety, security, well-being of our people and as a nation as we battle through these unprecedented and challenging times. And it is for those reasons, Mr. President, I commend this resolution to this House.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you, Mr. President. On this Resolution, I am just seeking a bit of clarity through you. Looking at the schedule, I want to know just to confirm that the Governor General had indeed make a declaration and gazetted on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March. I'm just seeking clarity because the Trade Union Council had written seeking information on this on the 19<sup>th</sup>. So this is an opportunity for me just to get what I will consider to be an official response. Mr. President, through you

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I was just seeking from the Leader of Government's Business, that under the 'Whereas', I didn't see it mentioned although I have seen that it is revoked... the one of the 25<sup>th</sup>, revoked on the 30<sup>th</sup> but I didn't see any mention under the 'Whereas'. So I was just seeking clarity.

**Mr. President:** I am not quite clear on what you are trying to...

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I am seeking to find out whether or not there was a state of emergency declared and gazetted on the 25<sup>th</sup>... in relation to the 25<sup>th</sup>, March 25<sup>th</sup>. Yes, that's what I'm seeking. In other words...

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** So yes is the answer.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** The answer is yes, thanks.

**Mr. President:** Senator Christopher De Allie.

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to support the Resolution being proposed to the Senate and just to say that where we sit in the Private Sector, there is this debate about which one comes first, lives or livelihood. And that is something that is being debated and you see countries deciding on what they need to do. Sweden is a good example of this situation and the whole issue of the herding...

**Mr. President:** The question proffered was what? Which one came...?

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** ...Lives or livelihood, or which one takes precedence... and some countries and I cite Sweden as an example believing the herding immunity principle and that we could afford to lose some to gain immunity wider and as a result, we continue with some level of normalcy which would reduce the impact

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of the economic fallout, because business will continue as usual. And there is this debate, I think the UK went along those lines initially and then had to retract based on the loss of life and what was happening. And of course my own thoughts on this is that I think we're missing two important things, we don't fully understand this virus as yet and the science have shown that, and how it operates. And it continues to challenge the scientific minds of many of our best. And of course when we make choices on who must live and who must die in terms of how the virus attacks, who it attacks, I think we stand a chance of losing and creating a gap of intelligence and experience that is possibly something we cannot replace. And I don't know if we can put figures on those things.

So I say that to say, Mr. President, that, I support a lot of the comments made by the Leader of Government's Business through you, on the issue of why it was necessary for us to go a state of emergency and the harshness of it and of course the restrictions it imposed. I believe the results today is an example of some degree of success of those measures and the difficulty that it brought. A lot of us in Grenada of course thought that those things were very harsh but as the Leader of Government's Business did say, there is no play book. None of us know what is the right thing or the wrong thing to do in this pandemic, even in business we don't know what to do but we have been putting lives first. I can tell you that and from where we sit in the business community, we have introduced many protocols, even some more extreme than what Government has done. So for example in my business, Mr. President, every customer that was coming when we had the limited SOE had to fill out a form and give us information on where they were in the last few days, who they were in contact with and so on to assess the risk before they come into our Plant and if we felt that that risk was too high, we didn't allow them to come in. We took it that far, because the idea for us was our employee's lives was more important than the business **(applause)** so we were very careful. And I say that to say that we supported all that we... the Government did in this issue and we think that it is important that we continue along the lines that we are going. Yes, the issue is tough for all of us. My business have been closed for the last 20+ days, we haven't made a cent in revenue but we still have expenses and a lot of

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other businesses in our country are in that position and when we come to deal with the package, I will say more there but I want to say, Mr. President, through you that we believe and, Mr. President, you did it earlier on where we give a standing ovation to the people in the frontline. I want to endorse that further, I want to express thanks to the COVID Committee and our leadership in this country on all sides. Because I think we approached this without no set rules but we approached it from a humanistic point of view, understanding what is critical and as a result we took decisions that we believed that was important to protect people's lives, understanding the cultural and possibly social fallouts that these things will have and economic as well. So I want to, on behalf of the Business Community express our thanks to the leadership, politically, business and otherwise that we have engaged in and been able to put things in place for us to take certain decisions that we took. And I believe that we have to thank all the people that were involved and all the frontline people as you said that we did and gave the standing ovation. I also want to thank the general public because I think generally and the police have said that initially it was difficult, they had a lot of arrest but as time went on people understood I believe and those reduced, even though it was difficult for us at that time.

So, Mr. President, with these few comments I want to support the Resolution for the extension and giving the Government the possibility to go six months but we could shorten it and gives us the flexibility to make adjustments within that period as we move along to assist our county and our people in these difficult and uncharted waters time. Because none of us really understand this virus yet and I know we talk a lot about vaccine and opening and partial and so on. I will talk later on that when we come to the economic side but I think for the time being we are doing an excellent job and I commend the Senators on the 'Other Side' on the Political Side, although I don't think this has anything to do with politics, this is about country and people and there should be no sort of segregation whether along any line at all. And unfortunately we see that in other places but, Mr. President, I think we have done well so far and we have to continue what we are doing. So I support the extension of that six month period on the

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Resolution as moved by the Leader of Government's Business. Thank you, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Thank you Senator De Allie. Senator Cox.

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I too stand to give my support to the Resolution before this Honourable House. Mr. President, I think this Resolution's extension and not just the extension but initially what was proclaimed, when the initial state of emergency was passed it was also essential then and also essential now. Mr. President, on the basis that we see this novel coronavirus going across boundaries, geographical boundaries in such a way that it is unseen, it is unknown and creates a significant impact, both from a health standpoint and an economic standpoint. Mr. President, I think it is somewhat fitting for me to say that I feel a deep sense of spiritual gratitude to be standing here and also for Grenada as to where we are, for experiencing something what we're seeing as an unknown. You see countries cripple without a missile being fired. I mean it is just basically lends us to put things in perspective how simple and how vulnerable we are as a people, not only here but throughout the globe.

Mr. President, this state of emergency, this Resolution is quite important because one of the things that we have observed is that it required now that for our health system, our hospitals and health centers to respond in a particular manner outside of the ordinary and that lends itself to more resources, it lends itself to more support in terms of technical persons, medical persons to respond to this health crises, this pandemic. And so in Grenada's case it was no different, hence your mention earlier on of nurses coming from Cuba to give support and also our health personnel who would have stepped forward, who heeded the call to be on the frontlines to deal with this virus. Mr. President, our response in this regard in terms of trying to assist on the health sides was one that was very complex, Mr. President, and I think it is important to put things into perspective because sometimes persons who were not intimately involved in the whole response may not have an understanding and appreciation for how difficult it is,

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not only for Grenada but for other countries. And you see, you look on the news where you have States in the United States, countries choosing who should be given a ventilator, who should receive a bed. Those are scary scenes and we believe that because of those impacts that we ourselves have to be proactive in terms of how we respond to ensure that we do not find ourselves in that position. We must be grateful that we didn't meet there and we are very hopeful that we do not have to do that. But I believe it is important that we plan better because, for if and when another pandemic do meet us, Mr. President.

Mr. President, to some specific responses from Grenada... the Government of Grenada and as a people how we responded to this, is that from our last, the last infection... community infection that we had, I think was the H1N1, our airports had the capacity where were installed a thermal cameras; cameras that have embedded in them thermometers that can, from a certain distance, can take person's body temperature. So initially, when we heard about the outbreak, persons were clamouring and saying that oh, we see persons walking and nobody coming with a thermometer to take their temperature. Mr. President, that wasn't required. We were fully equipped with those thermal cameras so person's temperatures were automatically being taken and there was a room where the health officials would see it and look at the temperature readings so that was actually happening and I think... And hence the point that I made that this was installed when we had H1N1 and you see how important it is now for the COVID-19. It is one of a sensible approach for us to plan for something else that may come going forward, Mr. President. So I think that is important.

Mr. President, we also did... instituted some of the same protocols for businesses and work places, how they should engage persons, how they should respond. I think that is also critical, Mr. President, to mention. And most importantly our ability to procure and to source supplies to better prepare our people and our Health Sector in this response. Mr. President, we were quite fortunate to have our own testing capability on island, Mr. President; that is a significant achievement for us as a very small Island State. And I think we must be lauded for that. So we can do testing now where within four hours we can have test and we also have rapid testing which can get



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results, which is a stereological test, can be done, you can get results in 5-7 minutes, Mr. President. So, I think that is very important.

Mr. President, the task in terms of securing supplies for appropriate response continue to be challenging, but we must take into consideration the support from our partners, friends, institutions outside who have been working with us to help us to achieve this important task. Mr. President, it has been very difficult and I think it is important to make mention further for persons to get an understanding of where we are. Mr. President, if I can give an example, there was one incident where we placed an order for some test kits and let's say today Friday we placed the order for a particular amount, by the following day, we were called and indicated that the new minimum changed so we had to increase it by another 60%, not knowing whether or not we could have paid. By the day after, they called and said that the order was too small so they sold it to someone else. So that is the kind of reaction that is taking place in the market, it's pretty challenging. We are also aware that some countries have implemented some executive orders whereby if certain medical items or supplies pass through their country it will automatically become theirs. So these are the real challenges that we are facing as a country, as a Government, trying to find supplies to keep our people safe.

You have supplies, we're having to navigate supplies, right now, just recently, just a couple hours ago, we have 30,000 mask, N95 mask coming from a donor in China and we had to route that mask so they just confirmed that those masks are in Chile, and we are trying to see how we can get it here. That might be the possibility of a charter flight we might have to look at, so those are the challenges.

We were also exploring a charter flight some time aback, Mr. President, and when we were quoted to charter the plane, the quote was quarter million US dollars. The question is do you take this quarter of million dollars and pay for a plane to bring supplies, not sure that if they stop in a country to fuel up, that those supplies might be confiscated or you use that monies to provide support for persons here in Grenada who may have challenges in terms of business who have been closed, persons who have been out of a job. Mr. President, these are the real decisions that this country, that this

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leadership, that the Prime Minister is being faced with on a daily basis. Just to give you a snap shot of what we are basically facing, Mr. President.

So this Resolution will help us to have more leverage in terms of being able to pool those resources together, Mr. President. Mr. President, one of the things that we had to do, as you know the Government of Grenada, the Ministry of Finance I believe do not have a corporate credit card and budget... a representative from budget is here, because what is happening is that if you find this bottle now, you need to purchase it right away. So this idea, oh send us a quote and then you go and you wire money, 2-3 days, forget that, you will never get that supply, you would never get it. So, Mr. President, we had to establish a relationship with a private person for them to use their credit card and then for we to pay them thereafter. That is the only how we were able to secure important supplies. So, Mr. President, this I believe is something that the public needs to understand and know the challenges that we are facing in terms of keeping our people safe. And we are looking at a longer term plan and, Mr. President, in terms of supplies, we believe our country 110,000 people, we believe that we can have enough mask or some type of face covering for persons, we should be able to provide that, that is not a large number and so we are working towards that going forward.

Mr. President, we are also looking at initiatives from a local standpoint, we have a number of persons here... I have noticed that some persons and even right within the House have beautifully made local mask and so we are also exploring the possibility of engaging our local persons here to take up that responsibility to provide that critical resource in terms of face mask for persons as we move forward. Mr. President, we don't know, the uncertainty is that we may be required to wear this face mask or covering maybe for the next six months, who knows, maybe for the rest of the year or maybe until we can have a viable vaccine which might be between inside to 15-18 months. So those are the realities that are before us, Mr. President, and so it is important I believe to really express that in the context of where we are and the reason why we believe that this Resolution is so important.

So, Mr. President, with these few words, I want to just close by just singling out a few key persons or key institutions and countries who have assisted us in terms of

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getting critical supplies here and those that we have on the way to Grenada and one of the things that happen on a daily basis is that we just have to keep our fingers crossed. When I say so, I mean it literally, because you have some of the traditional shipping arrangements have tripled their prices to move goods, those are the things that we face. So we are very hopeful that we can continue to get that support in terms of materials and supplies... essential supplies so that our policemen, our health officials, they can feel safe and comfortable in doing what is necessary to keeping the entire nation safe, Mr. President. So I just wanted to express some significant gratitude, Mr. President, to our fellow persons... institutions like PAHO and CARPHA, they have been critical in giving some technical guidance and support to how we respond especially when we started to do our own local testing, they were critical in terms of validating our testing capabilities and walking our local persons here through the readiness and preparedness for those testing to ensure that they are going to be authentic in what we present to them as results. So that was critical.

Mr. President, of course the People's Republic of China continues to provide support for us moving forward and we want to thank them very much. Ambassador Zhao and his team here in Grenada and of course Cuban Nurses and Doctors who continue to be there with us throughout. Mr. President, you have... you couldn't put it any better, how they have continued to exemplify themselves as a people and not only in Grenada but throughout the world; it is truly outstanding. Mr. President, I also want to thank Canadian Bank Note and they have been supporting us significantly, thousands of dollars in support and they have availed themselves to give more support wherever it is needed. I think that is critical to mention.

But I think, Mr. President, I want to close on this note, when I look back at everything and how we are going and where we are, Mr. President, why we have persons in the forefront, our healthcare workers and policemen. My assessment of our entire response as a country has been a national one. **(Applause)** When you see how our people in the public come out and trying to abide by those difficult guidelines, that, I am truly impressed by how Grenadians have responded to this call. And I think we should be proud of how we have responded and where we are, and not to ease up, but

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to continue to be vigilant and for us to be successful in this fight. So with these few words, Mr. President, I want to lend my support to the passage of this Resolution. Thank you very much.

**Mr. President:** Senator the Honourable... **(Inaudible comments)** Senator James you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Kerryne James:** Thank you so much, Mr. President. Mr. President, I want to begin by saying that I am very pleased that the Lower House and this Honourable House has finally met after such a long period to deliberate of course the business of the Nation but more so to deliberate on the Bills that will show how we recover from this pandemic, COVID-19. Mr. President, I also want to take this opportunity as well to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition and I wish him well on his journey.

The COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. President, has indeed paralyzed and some may say reversed global progress and so Grenada and the Caribbean are no exception from such. I am guided by the Compliance Assessment Report, Supplementary Budget 2020, Mr. President, submitted to the Parliament, indicated that our local economy will contract by 12.9% in real GDP this year and this is one of the things that stood out most to me. Mr. President, I also take this time to express sympathy to all of the Grenadians in the Diaspora who would have lost loved ones and also those that would have been afflicted by this deadly virus in the different parts of the world.

Indeed, Mr. President, it has not been an easy task for each and every one of us and Government is included and so far I think that the Government should be recognized for trying their best to manage this ever evolving situation. Mr. President, with the same breath, it will be of gross negligence for me to not commend our frontline workers, in particular our health care workers and also members of the Royal Grenada Police Force for the exceptional job that they have done and continue to do during this crisis and I can attest to this hard work from personal experiences. So I think that we should commend them for that. I also want to commend the Government of Grenada

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COVID-19 Response Coordinating Team led by the Ministry of Health. We have seen or at least I have seen progress in terms of how they go about trying to ameliorate some of the issues that are rising with new protocols and so forth and I think that they are going in the right direction, slowly but surely.

Mr. President, I also want to take this opportunity to advise my younger colleagues that this is no time to engage in deviant acts that go against the protocol established to protect us in the long run. Let us as young people act responsibly and be conscious citizens. Mr. President, there is no denying that the economic repercussions that COVID-19 would have on our lives, our livelihoods and our long term growth and sustainability from such a pandemic are far reaching and goes well beyond the lockdown measures and the instances of non-compliance by members in the public.

Mr. President, our country faces the risk of major, major health crises, a limited number of ICU beds are one of them, our oxygen and other medical supplies are another. Our country faces the risk of social crises as well; Mr. President, low wages and female workers are at high risk for falling into poverty and increased health risk. Our low skilled workers are hardest hit by employment losses and overall, social cohesiveness can be undermined. Mr. President, I must admit that I am even more deeply concerned about the mental health of our young girls and women. We cannot deny the fact that some of them may be even prone to experiencing higher levels of abuse; be it domestic or sexual which eventually speaks to their sanity and overall well-being during these times and under such protocols. Those that are in school, Mr. President, enrolled in the educational institutions throughout the country are faced with so many other hardships that are blindly overlooked by some. Mr. President, as a student, though I am equipped with the necessary tools to assist me with successfully completing my 5<sup>th</sup> semester, others may not be or may not have that means of doing so. The environment may not be conducive to learning due to noise pollution, lack of internet, computer, printing materials among other things that require them to do work under these circumstances. All of these things, Mr. President, can negatively affect their general learning outcomes and I am not quite satisfied that I find that there is enough emphasis placed on these areas. However, I am guided by the later news and

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later responses surfacing after the Minister responsible for that aspect may give an update to suit.

Mr. President, we may also face the risk of an economic collapse. The Tourism Sector amounts to just about 25% of the GDP. Closure of hotels or the drastic reduction of services, the premature end of the cruise ship season, taxi drivers, the vendors and tour guides will all be affected. Not only during this immediate period but we may see a total cancellation in months and years to come. Now is the time, some may say it's too late, but I think that now is the correct and right time for us to diverge our focus in strengthening our Sectors of the economy so that we can also have something to fall back on in times of hardships like now. Now is the time for us to go back to the drawing board and also to the land as the Minister in hindsight alluded to. Mr. President, it is of utmost importance as well, for our key operational and policy responses to this pandemic be categorized or guided based on safety net measures, particularly so for vulnerable citizens, measures directed at, if possibly restoring and or increasing productivity and employment and fiscal policies to lessen the economic and social impacts described.

Mr. President, now that the context with regards to our responses to this pandemic is established, I am guided that Government is seeking Parliamentary approval for 50 million dollars, if my memory serve me right, Mr. President, I recall...

**Mr. President:** Senator James, I don't want to unduly interrupt you but what we have before us is a Resolution for the purposes of section 17 (2) (b) of the Constitution, which specifically deals with the Proclamation and continuation of a state of emergency. You are sort of entering the Bills so I don't want to break your trend of thought but, you know if we could focus on the Resolution, get that out of the way and then sort of come back to... yes. I hope I'm not disturbing you unduly, that's not my intention but...

**Sen. the Hon. Kerryne James:** No, Mr. President, not at all. Thank you so much for that. Because I also wanted to seek clarity along that lines as well. So, thank you for that. So on that note, Mr. President, I will conclude by saying that as a result of

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some of the minor loop holes that I have previously mentioned regarding how we go about these things, I think that we must ensure that there is a proper strategy in determining how we go about the developments of the protocols going forward. I also want to recommend that all these things be done with the assistance and input of supporting information and data with input from all necessary stakeholders, because that will determine how effective these protocols will be laid out. And moving forward, can the Grenadian public, Mr. President, expect the formation of a Committee of suitably qualified persons that will assist in charting the way forward economically or otherwise? Through you, Mr. President, I would want to relay that question to.

**Mr. President:** You will have another opportunity. I mean, I just don't want to derail you but the subject before us now is the Resolution dealing with the state of emergency, so you can always come back. I think you have a lot to say in this regard. So I'm just trying to manage the relevance of what you are saying at this point. I don't want to derail you, I'm sorry.

**Sen. the Hon. Kerryne James:** Thank you so much, Mr. President. So, on that note I will end.

**Mr. President:** Senator the Honourable Dr. Dunstan.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Dunstan Campbell:** Mr. President, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. To just add a little bit to the debate, I rise to support the extension and I rise to also... my colleague with regards to lives and livelihood, the cohort of people that I represent, this statement is extremely important; life or livelihood. This theme life and livelihood is one that is debated in social and economic development. We know that when, for people as you get poorer, as you move up the scale from poor to rich you will find that people would be... life is more important than livelihood. Or in other words the difference between life and livelihood, right as you go

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up the scale and when you go down the scale, you find livelihood is more important than life.

I can give you two examples of this coming out of Jamaica and Guatemala. In Jamaica, for every hurricane that comes, the fishermen are warned, move out from the area, pull up your boats and leave the area and the fishermen would not leave and they will tell you, simply, if I leave I have life, if I remain I have livelihood. So they put livelihood above life. And the same thing in Guatemala, that we have found... when I say 'we' FAO and at that point in time I was with FAO, we have found that the same strategy, that an impending disaster, they are asked to move, they will tell you yes but they would not move because livelihood is more important. And as we're going forward, this six months that we are asking for, the people that I represent, the farmers and the fishers. We need to understand the means to achieve that end, the end we all know what it is. We want to have a State that is safe, a State where we can continue to do our social and economic activities.

So I don't want to go too much in this, but I just want to state that in the next six months, three months or whatever that we decide, I want us to look at the fishers and farmers and understand them a little better so that there can be a relaxing of the means so that they can do their work and this very important input in the development of Grenada, food security. If we understand that livelihood for these persons is more important than life, then I think we will get there. Thank you, so much, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Dr. Campbell. I find it very intriguing; maybe you and I could have a side bar on that. I understand what you are saying but you know at the basis of it all, is life. Because without life, there will never possibly be livelihood.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Dunstan Campbell:** You tell the fishers that.

**Mr. President:** So it's an interesting thing... as I say it's an interesting discourse. Any other... Senator the Honourable Glynis Roberts.



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**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. I stand to support this Resolution to extend the state of emergency and to add my compliments to all those who have been working in order that we can manage this pandemic or seemingly enemy that have made all of us aliens to each other.

However, although we are made to be confined, we have to remember those who do not have television, who do not have radio nor cellphones so that they are not caught, because a lot of them got trapped with the state of emergency, not having vehicles to move, not having busses to move, not having family or friends to attend to. So while I support this extension, I want us going forward to look deeper into how we can best support the elderly and not those that are necessarily on the SEED Program or the GRENCASE Caregivers Program but those who survive but need assistance to survival within this time.

I also want to say in relation to persons who are abused, domestically and also the children, that although the reports may not be going in under this state of emergency, that people are probably under added stress because the perpetrators are in the same space as the persons who are victims. So we need to find a way to look at our database to see those who we have had constant complaints and to find a means to check in with these people.

So I want to, additionally, I would make more comments later on. But I think in this COVID... what COVID has brought us to, is a time to relax, reflect to restart. Because what is staring us is the inequality that exist in the world when we are all now on the same page and it's an opportunity for us because we know a lot of the people who are not from let's say structured employment, let's look at the barbers, the hairdressers and so, they are struggling as well, the store clerks. But again we have the disparity where the store clerks and the minimum wage is also a challenge for persons going forward. So on this note, Mr. President, I want to commend the Resolution and add my support, thank you.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Roberts. Senator Ron Redhead.

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**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** Yes, Mr. President, thank you very much. While I am going to comment on the economic side of things a bit later, I did not want to really want to say anything on the extension but I will add my voice only to say, Mr. President, that in hindsight, we know the importance of, in fact what the extension has done in terms of safeguarding lives, protecting individuals from being exposed to the risk of the virus. So in that sense we should, whenever it is necessary support the initiatives for the extension of curfews, that sort of thing.

It is important, Mr. President, that while the Government is doing that or while the COVID-19 team is doing that, that we seek to provide sufficient information. Try at best to make it timely because, Mr. President, the experience of the last... well the first one sorry, it was not a pretty sight. In some countries, Mr. President, the lockdown measures although necessary are causing riot or causing civil unrest, that sort of thing. So Grenada must be mindful of that in its approach. The need, Mr. President, to say to people, listen we are doing this for your protection, this has nothing to do with your fundamental rights, we are trying our best not to encroach on it because it is important because it's going to safeguard lives. That is the sort of thing that is important. So, Mr. President, the extension must not just be seen as the six months, because I had to spend a long time this morning trying to explain that to an individual that it does not say that we are going into another six months. But what it said is that it gives the authority, Parliamentary authority to the thing to be extended if necessary. So in that context, Mr. President, again as was mentioned, the social side of things, we need to be mindful of that.

I would like to see, Mr. President, NADMA playing a greater role, either in distribution of mask, that sort of thing during any curfew measure, Mr. President. Meet with people, try to bring things, give them the assurance that we are not under any kind of martial law, but we are doing this because of protection and it's important to save lives. Thank you.

**Mr. President:** Thank you Senator Redhead. Senator Stiell.

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**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Thank you, Mr. President. Well if there are no further comments, I want to thank the Members on Both Sides for their contributions. Just pulling out a couple of points that were mentioned and Senator Cox, I think, gave us a real flavor of some of the challenges that we are facing in terms of knowing what we want to do, doing all of the right things but all of the unpredictable, unexpected challenges and the logistics of trying to secure equipment that everyone else in the rest of the world is also seeking and some of the games that are played there. But his statement about his pride in being involved in the effort to ensure the effort to ensure the safety of our people is one that I think most Grenadians can actually feel proud when we see in these difficult circumstances how we are responding in the main and how others are faring in other parts of the world. Senator James, the economic pieces, we will cover those and your concerns are understood and we believe are at least somewhat addressed in the Finance Bills that follow.

The lockdown measures that Senator Redhead mentioned that were... this is just difficult. I mean, there is no perfect, there is no smooth way of carrying out some of the measures that we have to but we believe, we have seen as the general populous understands what it is we are trying to achieve, how we are achieving it and with better communication and greater sensitivity, we are seeing much greater levels of compliance, notwithstanding the challenges that is still faced. And the comments that this is not necessarily six months, it's not that the measures will be in force for six months. It simply means gives and the purpose of this Bill, of this Resolution is, it provides Parliamentary cover for a period of up to six months. And based on over that period, it gives Government a chance to monitor the threats, either throttle back in terms of some of those measures, throttle forward based on the levels of threats, based on the medical and scientific guidance. But it gives us that breathing space to do all of the things that we need to do without having to come back to Parliament to ensure that we have sufficient freedom to do the things that we need to be doing. And it's for that reason, Mr. President, that I commend this Resolution to the House.

**Question put.**

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**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Sorry, Mr. President, I believe we should put this to the vote and a division. I think that is required in terms of ensuring that we have a majority of the House of the Members here in the House.

**Mr. President:** Division.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell, how do you vote?

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Judd Cadet, how do you vote?

**Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Norland Cox.

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Winston Garraway.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Winston Garraway:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Kim George.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim George:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams.

**Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams:** Aye.

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**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead.

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Livingston Redhead:** Aye, Mr. Clerk.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Kerryne James.

**Sen. the Hon. Kerryne James:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Glynis Roberts.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Dunstan Campbell.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Dunstan Campbell:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie.

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Aye.

**Ag. Clerk:** 12 total, Unanimous, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** The ayes have it, the ayes do now have it. The Resolution is passed; unamended and passed unanimously.

**(Sound of gavel)**

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**Mr. President:** It happened so long ago that it slipped me. The Resolution as amended, the following amendment being, '**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by a majority of all Members of the Senate that the declaration of emergency by the Governor General dated the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution is approved.**' The Resolution is passed unanimously with that amendment.

**Motion approved as amended.**

**Ag. Clerk Assistant:** Item 15 - Bills.

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to introduce for first reading of the Bill for an Act Shortly entitled Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2020.

**Mr. President:** Clerk.

**Ag. Clerk:** A Bill to make provisions for the appropriation for an additional sum to service the State of Grenada for the period 20<sup>th</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020, shortly entitled Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2020.

**Mr. President:** Minister Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the relevant Standing Order of the Senate be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

**Question proposed.**

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**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. Mr. President, as this is a Money Bill, I wish to signal to this Honourable House that it's been endorsed with the Speaker's Certificate and I have the necessary consent to proceed. Mr. President, the Supplementary Appropriation Bill before us seeks approval from this Honourable House for extra budgetary spending and that is monies not appropriated in the 2020 Estimates for Revenues and Expenditure, for a Stimulus Package that seeks to cushion the negative economic impacts of this global pandemic.

During this crisis period, where we seek to contain, manage and eradicate COVID-19 in Grenada and we await similar control measures and outcomes regionally and internationally, Grenada would continue to experience a significant negative impact on its economy. As long as our borders remain closed or restricted; as long as regional and international travel restrictions continue, businesses remain closed or their operations curtailed. The collapse of the global Tourism sector, people aren't travelling, Mr. President, depressed global economies, not just what happens within our shores but we are subject to the external impacts of these major global economic powers. So once these conditions remain or take the necessary time to recover and none of us know how long that will be, the economic impacts on Grenada will continue... negative impacts will continue to be felt. So in order to stimulate and bring relief to our economy during this period, an initial package of fiscal measures is presented which forms the basis of this Supplementary Appropriation.

The total value of the stimulus measures in this package included in the Supplementary Appropriation is 50 million dollars and comprises of the following elements over this initial period of three (3) months. So the first is 20 million dollars of support in payroll and income support and this is to avoid staff layoffs, loss of livelihoods in the Tourism sector. That 20 million dollars' worth of payroll support be focused on

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the hoteliers, restaurants, bars, small travel agents and income support for transportation for public buses, taxi drivers, tourist and vendors and other such identified hospitality based businesses. Mr. President, with hotels closed, borders closed, no visitor arrivals, hotels having to send workers home during this emergency period, we cannot allow workers to be sent home and not receive any income. So the purpose of this payroll support is to provide supplement incomes that they will not be receiving due to this.

With income support to public busses, the taxi drivers, conductors, tourist vendors, these are groups, Mr. President, that are also dependent on the performance of the Tourism Sector and will be negatively impacted by the drop in visitors. And then with public buses, these, we have no public bus service, all privately operated... owned, with less people travelling, social distancing on those buses, the reduced number of passengers, there will be a significant drop in income so this package of measures are to help those workers during this period.

Mr. President, to also include in working with the National Insurance Scheme to provide unemployment benefits to benefit support due to the fallout of the pandemic and the initial estimates for the additional contributions there, is 10 million dollars. With NIS only paying benefit for sickness, that's how it's been set up with a doctors certificate, in these extraordinary circumstances, that modality does not apply. So this will enable workers who have to stay at home due to the emergency as qualifying workers can claim unemployment benefit during this period. And we are encouraging the Trade Union Movement to work with business communities in support of using vacation leave and accumulated vacation of workers as the first option during this period rather than going straight to benefits, whether it's through NIS or through payroll facilities.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** The Deputy President in the chair.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. Deputy President, there will be an additional 7 million dollars for the small hoteliers facility at the Grenada Development Bank. So through the GDB adjustment to the small hoteliers facility to support small indigenous



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hoteliers and this is by injecting an additional 7 million dollars into that facility with a reduction in interest rate from 3.5% as it currently stands down to 2%. So access to additional resources at a lower interest rate, with fees... processing application fees for these loans waived for the period of April to June, 2020.

Mr. Deputy President, there is also an expansion of the small business soft lending facility at the GDB by an additional 5 million dollars. And these are additional resources that will help the small business sector, the small businesses such as trade persons, hairdressers, barbers, small retailers, fishermen; our small businesses that make up such a valuable part and valuable contribution to our economy. So the unsecured, access to unsecured loans within this facility has been raised from \$7,000.00 to \$10,000.00. And then for secured loans, the order of magnitude increased from... loans from up to \$25,000.00 increased to \$40,000.00 and a reduction in the interest rate of those loans from 6 to 3%. So, Mr. Deputy President, this is providing vital pieces of support for our small businesses that is certainly an important part of our economy and important generator of jobs.

30% reduction in electricity rate over a three month period and that is subsidy valued at 3 million dollars for that three month period in the first instance, to all consumers with a few exceptions for companies who are already receiving special concessionary arrangements. And the modality of this subsidy is currently being worked out as a measure of priority with GRENLEC. And this, Mr. Deputy President is to counter the burden all households; all businesses have with the high cost of electricity. So the support that is provided here will provide important relief there and this Government continues to be committed through its actions in the liberalization of the Electricity Sector. Some of them are difficult decisions that we have made in that area, breaking the monopoly that existed on our Energy Sector, we're removing that yolk that has been around the necks of Grenadians for so many years. So, vital support there to all households and businesses.

5 million support for other severely impacted groups and this will include our farming communities with increases in Farm Labour Support Program so that we could start boosting our Agricultural output nationwide as we stop pushing this whole

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necessity for us to strengthen our food security, especially in these times. Consideration should also be given to our Fisheries Sector. We are working with the Ministry of Finance, with the Fisheries Division to identify the most vulnerable in the Sector. The dynamics of the Fisheries Sector is broad but it is identifying those that are the most vulnerable at this time and need the appropriate support to get them through this difficult period. Other severely impacted groups will include our debushers, there has been no work for them and we know how dependent they are on those fortnightly work programmes and in the absence of that, highly vulnerable Sector that requires support and the other area, the special project contractors; those small projects in our communities, in our villages, those contractors requiring support. So the Ministry of Finance is working together with the Division of Fisheries and the Ministry of Implementation to work out how best to serve and provide appropriate support in those areas.

And then 10 million dollars for health care investments in fighting COVID-19; this 10 million dollar allocation to the Ministry of Health is for testing materials, personal protection equipment for health care workers and other equipment as ventilators, monitors etcetera required to support the fight against COVID-19. And then support for private laboratories, again, with the demand for testing. And then the placing of price controls list and the focus on preventing price gouging on essential products, such as hand sanitizers, bleach, hydrogen peroxide, hand soaps, some of those critical products that are required to keep us safe at this time. And, Mr. Deputy President, financial institutions has also agreed in principle to provide a moratorium on principal and interest payments to their clients on one condition for a three month period in question. So again this will bring relief.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** The President in the Chair.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, so that will bring important relief. These measures, Mr. President, outlined, are preliminary and work will continue towards looking at some longer term actions as this crisis unfolds. Mr. President, in

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adherence to the Fiscal Responsibility Act, a Compliance Assessment Report providing analysis of Government's adherence to the Fiscal Rules has been produced and has been laid before this House and these Fiscal Rules within there would include whether it's a Primary Expenditure Wage Bill Rule, Primary Balance, Contingent Liabilities, Public Debt Target, the Compliance Report speaks to the adherence to that. Now with the economic impact of COVID-19, which has had a broad based impact on our economy, we will see, so the impact on the Tourism inflows, a 50% reduction in those inflows is projected, a 20% reduction in private education by the St. George's University, 3,700 students for their safety and to ensure that they. The students, the international students aren't a burden on our health care system in the event that they would get infected, have left. We do not know at this time when they will return but the expectation is that we will see a decline in economic activity from the Private Education Sector and a 15% decrease in Private Construction, as well as wholesale and retail trade.

Mr. President, this is in contrast to where we had come from. From 2013 through to the point just before the pandemic broke out where we had made significant progress in transforming our economy from where we were with seven years of consecutive economic growth; one of the fastest growing economies within the region. A reduction in our Debt to GDP Ratio from 108% down to 57.3% in 2019; significant drop in the unemployment rate from over 40% to 15.9% at the end of last year and five years of consecutive surpluses. So, Mr. President, this is now in contrast to what we face as a consequence of this global pandemic. So as a result and compliance with the Fiscal Rules and the targets based on this additional expenditure as part of the Stimulus Package and if there are other measures to be taken, the estimated contraction to our GDP based on all that is happening, lowering of revenues, will translate into a breach of three out of the four Fiscal Rules that we have up to this point adhered to. And as a result there will be a suspension of the Fiscal Rules and Targets for the fiscal year, 2020. And there is provision, Section 10 of the FRL which speaks to an escape clause where by Order you could have the suspension of adherence to these Rules not exceeding one fiscal year and the causes or the triggers for that, natural disaster, Public

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Health epidemic as we are seeing with COVID. The second condition is real GDP experiencing a decline of 2% within a given fiscal year which is predicted. And the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank has certified in writing, that financial sector crises has occurred and that will come. Therefore, Mr. President, Government's response to two out of those three criteria required for invoking the escape clause, and has been met.

Mr. President, as I conclude; with the initial Stimulus Package that is being presented here, we recognize, this Government recognizes our responsibility to protecting our people at all cost. But we also recognize that it is efforts and this sacrifice that is required... requires the support of not just Government, but all. We recognize that we cannot support everyone; therefore the focus of this... in this first instance has been on protecting the most vulnerable. Those who can help themselves at this time must do so and we all must step up to making our contribution in these difficult times. So, Mr. President, the focus of the relief package is on the Sectors that are hardest hit by the global crisis and in protecting the incomes of those that have little or no income. And it's for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for its second reading.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. President:** Honourable Christopher De Allie, are you indicating you need the floor?

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Mr. President, it would appear so. Thank you very much. Mr. President, as I rise to give my support to this Bill, I preface my support by saying that I think it is not enough and I am going to give my reasons for that and contextualize by what I want to say in terms of what the Leader of Government's Business has said.

I hear the Leader of Government's Business talk about the vulnerable, but I believe this economic package is about people. And if you put people at the forefront and the focus whether they are self-employed or whether they are people who are

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employed in the traditional sense, it is about people and people first. That is what the Economic Stimulus Package in my mind is about, so I cannot support 50 million in that sense and so I lend limited support. I would have like to see this Stimulus Package be 100 million, and if we have violate the FRL and we are violating as you say three sections of the FRL which deals with the areas of Primary Balance, Wage Bill and Primary Expenditure less Capital Grants and of course the only one we're going to be in conformity with is PPP one and of course Public Debt. And, Mr. President, I don't think the financing is an issue of the 100 million because we will have opportunities to suspend debt payments as some of our agreements would say that in a pandemic situation.

The Government have indicated that they will move money from the expected PSIP Program and divert some of those funds to help in this promotion and I am also aware that the IMF or the World Bank have indicated that there are billions of dollars put aside to support health and economic situations in these countries that we have access to and can apply for. So I am of the view that 50 million dollars is not sufficient, 100 million at least should have come to this Parliament for approval.

Why? Mr. President, let me give some context. The IMF in its latest projections say that we are going to experience a global recession, a global contraction of economies by 5.2%. And for regional economies in the Caribbean we expect that to be... sorry 5.2% and our own local prediction based on the reports that I have submitted is about 20+%. But of course we expect a recovery in 2021 and 2022 and we have also projected that here based on what has been given to us. And we will talk about the recovery process later because I believe the recovery process as we look at the effects of the pandemic now, and I want to separate the Public Health issues from the economic issues. Because the Public Health issue of the 10 million that is being proposed in the Bill, I have no difficulty with that aspect of it at all and we probably may need more or need less based on how we manage going forward.

But I also want to say, Mr. President, we had a long debate, in previous debates about whether Ministry of Health and the Hospital should be given more focus and how we do things as it relates to our health system. And this Government has gotten a lot of

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flak and Governments before this, about how we manage our health system. None of us expected a public health crisis that we're seeing today and none of us expected this particular little virus to bring in such sharp focus what public health is about and the importance. You hear about public health, and I mean I can admit, I have been hearing about public health but you never understood how important it is to have the necessary people in public health and what they do, and the importance of what they do. I mean the first time I hear about a Respiratory Therapist is now, I never knew it had people like that. Because when you hear about ventilator and management and administration of ventilator issues, you need these kinds of people and I never knew there was qualification like that. But I say that to say, Mr. President, that it brings into sharp focus what public health is and what public health can do and if we don't manage it properly, the impact of that on the economics. And some of us would have never understood this without this virus coming and showing us and amplifying the necessity to pay attention to that particular aspect of the health system and what we do there. And I am going to come to the new normal in a little while, Mr. President, and why I think 50 million is just not cutting it.

We have a situation, Mr. President, in my thinking and from based on what we have read so far, none of the experts, none, whether on the economic side or on the health side, know what this thing is going to be, where it's going to be and how it's going to pan out. When they look at the history of all the major public health issues from SARS, from Ebola to H1N1, everyone had... the experts are saying there is no pandemic when you look at these historically and its impact as this COVID-19 pandemic as it is proven to be. So there is no historical information that we could use to say that, this is how we expect this to unfold, so we're in totally new waters and on the economic side as well.

So in my layman's thinking, if I am going to this Parliament for money, I want on the high side, not on the low side. And I hear the Leader of Government's Business say, this is initial, and I hear that but I think the initial should be on the high side. We should err on the high side rather than the low side. It will mean to me, Mr. President, that if we have this thing protracted beyond June, July and we go into August and

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September, we may have to come back to the House for more support and I think we could have avoided that. And why I am going to say that and I believe it's going to be protracted, Mr. Leader of Government's Business, through you, Mr. President, we are an economy that is heavily based on Tourism, without a doubt and services, Education Services in particular and we know that the education service contributes 20-25% of our GDP. If we were to look at that and the 3,000 students that left, I don't believe that, that facility will back up to normal until sometime next year. And I am saying that from the position that if the United States and New York is the epicenter of this, and they're trying to flatten the curve and they're having difficulty flattening, I don't see us opening our borders to Americans coming into our country with a possibility that we could say that they certified negative and they pose no risk. So I believe the resumption of private education to the level that it was before is going to be more than a year out, and that is my humble opinion on that.

And let's take Tourism, most of the pundits are saying that the Tourist Industry will come back but it's going to come back very slowly. So if our support of 20 million for Tourism related... direct Tourism related businesses and those related to it, our vendors, our taxi drivers and so on and so forth, very good initiative by the Government, I have no issues with that and I think we need to give income support but I think it's going to be a longer period than June, July or even August. And by the way I think Carnival is going to get postponed; I'm not hearing all you mention that, but I cannot see we're bringing in people for Carnival to jeopardize what we have.

But that aside, Mr. President, from the Tourism point of view, this is going to be a protracted thing and then let's take the airlines, I know... I have been seeing in the last couple hours American Airlines offering packages, JetBlue offering packages, when you look at Sandals, Sandals continue to book vacations on their Sites for early next year and that's all good and that's positive. But the issue of confidence and people saying that they feel confident enough and safe enough that they would not be exposed to any sort of thing like that, travelling with a plane load full of people or a boatload full of people to come to a destination, I think that confidence is going to take longer to mature than it is that we expected. And I believe our Tourism Industry is going to be under

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severe stress for a longer period than we're talking about and it is going to come back even slower.

Because I support this Government in the sense that, we cannot open our borders just willy nilly and I believe that we have to have a committee apart from COVID-19, that looks at the strategy going forward for getting our economy opened back up and how and in what phases and what Sectors we're targeting to do that opening up into. Construction has been highlighted as a Sector, because construction could bring short term jobs in the quickest time possible, if we locally, have managed the disease to the point where we feel confident that the curve has flattened and we're seeing no more new infections. But if we take the example of China now, China is now seeing new infections happening in some parts of China, even with their Wuhan Management which was exceedingly well done and all their disinfections, we're seeing now it's springing up again because they have started opening up. So this opening up is going to be a challenge for us going forward and I want to suggest; I know my colleague Senator spoke about it earlier, that we must have a Committee set up, wide enough Committee, Labour, Private Sector, Government, NGO's to discuss how we open back up, first internally, regionally and then otherwise and that has to be highly managed. And if we take that into account, Mr. President, July, August, it ain't happening. So 50 million ain't enough from where I am sitting and we look at that.

And when we look, Mr. President, at what have been suggested in the 50 million and the detail, I'm looking for it, can't find it. I want to just say that the income support to the Tourism Sector is great. The small business and micro business and the support that has been put there, there is some concern from us in the Private Sector that it is more a loan situation and you have to have certain criteria both secured and unsecured to access and the reason I'm raising that is, a lot of us in the micro and small business don't really keep good books and accounts. So when you come to GDB and GDB ask you well show me what you have been doing for the last nine months or a year, some of us can't say and they will have no access to these funds. So we need to be careful when we put these funds there, how we allow access to the funds and the access must be not strictly based on a loan type secured or unsecured arrangement but whether or



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not some portion of this must be grant for income support for these rural businesses who have three employees making a pepper sauce business and you have two, the owner and two, doing this kitchen business and these two people have to go home because they cannot sell their pepper sauce now to the hotels or anywhere else, so they need income support for these two people that is going home that may have two and three children and a senior person living with them and you cannot afford not to have money to buy little medication and buy food.

So these monies that we're putting with GDB and so on for small and micro and the fisherman and the hairdressers, we need to understand what is the reality on the ground. And GDB and them supposed to know that, the NGO community supposed to know that. So I am suggesting, Mr. Chairman, humbly that putting the money there is good but we need to understand that a portion of that must be grant for income support. Not necessarily business survivability because that is a different conversation and we might have to remodel that differently because there is a new norm... a new normal that is going to come. The new normal after the financial crises was a different thing, the new normal after 911 was security in all the airports change, there is a new normal coming with COVID. And the new normal is going to be around how we market and how we do business digitally and on that e-commerce platform. Our Central Bank and our Governor of the Central Bank must have had real foresight in deciding to digitize and go the route that he is going with the Central Bank with our monies in the region. That is now going to prove to be an excellent decision because we are way ahead in terms of the region of moving into a digital currency and being able to pay seamlessly on the digital platform. Of course we know the drawbacks with security and so on but going forward, all of us in the business community will have to now know the new normal is going to be that. All of us have started preparing to start marketing our businesses on these platforms and we are seeing, even in the Agriculture Sector, when you look at social media platforms, the number of farmers are now putting together a WhatsApp page and saying send us your list on WhatsApp, we will fill it out different packages at different cost with different combinations and we deliver it to you, that is going to be the new norm. We no longer have to go by the side of the road and sell as

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a vendor and a farmer, the fisher folk will be doing the same thing, that is going to be the new norm. Everybody is going to get on that digital platform. So COVID-19 is going to change how we do business and how we operate and how we pay and for my colleague friend and Senator on the 'Other Side', the Leader of Government's Business, RRD just launched and we did their digital platform. Well, I am happy that it's back and I know my friend from the Ministry of Finance is here but there is still a lot that is not on the platform. So for example the latest data is 2018, I can't see my taxes for 2019 and 2020. I know it's a work in progress but we have to get there faster, not slower, faster, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** I spent two hours in line to pay my license yesterday.

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you. We cannot, Mr. President, continue like that and COVID-19 is going to change that you know. I have always been complaining in this Senate, this Upper House, that I don't understand why the Gazette have to be coming in this physical form especially for businesses like us. Some things must be printed, yes, because of the law of the gazetting and so on. But why must Sissons pay to get a big copy of the laws and everything printed, when I could get that digitally and pay a subscription for that; I don't understand that. And it's done digitally at the Government Printery, I'm not... and that's the kind of things that frustrates us in this thing, but COVID-19 is going to change that I believe.

You know, Mr. President, I heard my colleague talk about livelihoods and life...  
**(Time bell ring)**... that is me? Good, so I would not...

***(Discussions between the Acting Clerk and President)***

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** I didn't know we had a time...

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

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**Mr. President:** Senator, could you just temporarily take your seat while I discuss.

**(The Acting Clerk converse with the President in private)**

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** I was just fighting for you democracy, that's alright. **(Chuckles)**

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you, Mr. President. Probably I wouldn't take too much longer but say a couple things.

**Mr. President:** No, no, no. There are no restrictions.

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you. To continue my line of thought...

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

**Mr. President:** Except that some Senators may wish to be reminded that it's Friday evening.

**(Chuckles)**

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Yes. I'll keep that in mind; I'll keep that in mind.

**Mr. President:** But it's quite an interesting engagement.

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**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** I'll keep that in mind, Mr. President, and for my colleagues on the 'Other Side' as Well. You know, Mr. President, if we have to violate the FRL... not violate but if we have to suspend the variables under the FRL in a situation in this pandemic where none of us have a playbook and none of us know how it's going to unfold, whether it's going to take two months, three months, six months or whatever the case may be. But all seems to be... when you read all the Reports coming out of the IMF, the World Bank, IDB and all of them; it appears it is going to be protracted more so than short lift. And if we have to not meet our commitment under the FRL, I am saying lets go for the whole hog, 100 million and not 50 million. We're in violation already, let us take it. When we did the FRL and we passed it in this Upper House, we did it with the clear understanding that in very unusual circumstances, it can be suspended and all our targets for GDP and all of those things can be put aside until we get back to some level of normalcy.

The projections from the Ministry of Finance is that in 2021, we will start to see some normalizing and that we will have very small growths in terms of GDP and we will move from a contracting situation to one where we can come back to some level of growth. Excellent, in terms of my view of being positive, but I am of the view that that may not happen as we would like it to be because of how difficult this world is going to be. And you know, Mr. President, it's not so much Grenada but what is happening outside of Grenada economically. So take for example transfers, a simple thing as remittances coming to these countries and how important it plays in the economy of our countries. I don't see remittances coming at a level that it was prior to COVID. And the reason I say that is that the unemployment figure in the major developed countries that we know traditionally, the US, England and so on is at a phenomenal rate, phenomenal, never ever seen before and our Diaspora unfortunately caught in that. So if a remittance used to come to the average family here of 100US a month or a week, trust me, that is going to decrease to almost zero with this situation. And of course, God forbid, we have many Grenadians caught and dying with this thing in the Diaspora and that... and the effect of that... the ripple effect of that and their families down the road,

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that again is a major issue that we need to highlight. Again I say 50 million is not enough for this situation.

And you know, Mr. President, we spoke about... I'm not saying to the Committee... because the Committee is doing the best that they can in this situation and I think the fear of the unknown is the greatest enemy we have apart from COVID now, the fear of the unknown. And if in some way we could put some sort of cushion around the fear of the unknown then we stand a chance of mitigating the response or the knee jerk response of our people to certain situations. And to deal with the fear of the unknown, you need a greater buffer in my view. And I put this simple example of when we had the panic buying in the supermarkets in recent times, it wasn't because people wanted to panic buy, it's that people didn't know when the next buying time and the next supermarket day will be. So when you say you could have buy Monday and then you shut us down till Saturday, when Saturday come you saw lines because nobody knew when would be the next day to go and buy stuff. So they were panic buying, and it's the fear of the unknown that we have to manage, more so than the known. And that is why I say when I talk about this package, we must take and err on the higher side than on the lower side so that we will reduce the possibility of the unknown and try to mitigate it, so that people know in their minds that if they're getting income support, it's not going to dry up in two months or three months, it could be longer than that.

And you know, Mr. President, I recently had a conversation with a supermarket person that said he runs three shifts in his supermarket. With COVID, one shift goes automatically because less buying power, less people to buy, so we have one shift of employees gone home and we have to give income support to that shift. So how do we do it in this limited and what we have proposed here, the details here, 20 million here for Tourism, 5 million for... I know at one time we had proposed 10 million to go with NIS to help for other business and income support, I'm not seeing that here, the Leader of Government's Business probably could correct me if that is so. But even though we said we want to put 10 million in NIS, I think we should triple that, it should be 30 million to NIS for income support for business people and for rural people and so on who are

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registered with NIS, that come to NIS and apply for support, for income support and at whatever level we give it.

So, Mr. President, I welcome the 50 million but I believe we are making a mistake in the sense that we have not asked for more and I believe we could finance the more as I said before. And I think the least we should come to this House for is 100 million. I know we passed it in the 'Other Place', unfortunately, because you know they don't have people at this level to discuss that thing at the 'Other Place' but... so I think it should be 100 million and I know my friend in the Upper section will probably support me because it has to support the worker. And I said it initially, this is about people, this is about our people and that has to be the focus. On the public health side, excellent job and it's about people. On the economic side, it cannot change; it is about people as well. And I know the Leader of Government's Business will agree with me, it is about people. And they are doing everything to support but in my view, the issue of not giving people comfort of the unknown could backfire and that is why I am suggesting through you, Mr. President, that 50 million is not enough. Thank you.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator De Allie. I am supposing as they would say that there is no Chinese World and that the Houses can always... the Executives can always come back to the Parliament as it sees it fit, but I think it will be indeed heartwarming for the Leader of Government's Business, now that you have indicated that you have an appetite for making more funds available as we face these uncertainties together as a country. Senator Cox, I think I see your indication. So you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Yes, Mr. President. Thank you very much. I too want to stand in support of this Supplementary Appropriation Bill. Mr. President, I think it is... and I agree with most of the comments and suggestions by colleague Senator representing the Business Community. But I think it is important to kind of help bring some clarity in where we are and some of the measures that the Ministry of Finance and of course the Government of Grenada would have taken.

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And I think just to correct the Leader of Government Business, I think the initial measure that was put forward by the Ministry of Finance and of course the Government of Grenada was 2 million dollars, EC dollars was the first measure and the same utterances were echoed throughout the public about being insufficient and so we are at a second measure where 50 million dollars, Mr. President, is being allocated through this Bill. But I think what is most instructive, Mr. President, is the source of the 50 million dollars. I think that is critical to highlight, that it is from local allocation... from our local budgetary allocation. I think that is instructive indicating the country's capacity to put that out at this point in time, so I think that is very instructive. Also, Mr. President, in 'Another Place' the Minister for Finance did indicate two separate sources of income that is coming from the international community and I think from one source some 17 million dollars and I think another some 20 million US dollars, Mr. President. So there are other efforts that I believe that are going to be incorporated to complement the efforts that we are actually doing now.

But, Mr. President, I want to also make mention that how we have been approaching this is one with some measure of reservation and because of the uncertainty... because of the same uncertainty we are taking it step by step. And so I do not believe that the Ministry of the Finance or the Minister for Finance in anyway does not have a clear understanding that there might be more to be done going forward which he has also indicated from public utterances. But because of that... but this is where we are going to start now. As you can see from what is being proposed, it is a surgical approach, Mr. President, it's a surgical approach targeting a particular Sector initially and then you have other areas that we can go into... more the business people, the small businesses, the incubating businesses. That support, I believe will have to come, but as I said we are dealing with the Sector that is initially impacted which has to deal with the hospitality area, so, Mr. President, I wanted to highlight that.

And one of the things also, Mr. President, as the word stimulus indicate that it must create some level of reaction and I think even not just from its implementation but also from its announcement and nobody cannot deny the fact that the announcement of this Stimulus Package didn't create that effect. So I think that also must be recognized

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and commend **(applause)** the Ministry of Finance for creating such a Stimulus Package to create that response.

Mr. President, I want to make mention of something important that Senator De Allie touched on and that has to do with the issue of the panic response from persons. I think there are two critical things that contributed to that, yes in terms of persons not knowing when is the next shopping day and I give reasons for that and the second thing is that, Mr. President, when everybody is home now, when persons put their television on, all they're seeing is death toll, there is this little pin on the side of the TV, 700 today, 500 yesterday. Mr. President, anybody is going to get scared seeing that, so I think that in itself had a significant impact on the psyche of our people here in Grenada. Seeing and hearing even our own citizens in the diaspora succumbing to this virus.

But, Mr. President, just to explain further, one of the critical challenges where the COVID Committee had to take a decision with the advice of the surveillance team, the epidemiology team in not making certain information public, it is because of certain strategic actions on the ground in terms of what they wanted to do. So they could not have disclosed certain things at that point in time because they wanted to achieve certain level of engagement with persons on the ground. So I think that created a little bit of uncertainty but as I say it's a bit of give and take and it was a little bit of risk but it was necessary as we can see now the dividends in terms of where we are. And just recently I received a message indicating now that we have a seventh person who has been cleared from COVID after receiving test twice. **(Applause)** So, Mr. President, we are moving forward speedily.

I think one of the things that is most instructive that I want to make mention and given my agriculture background, I think I'll use an agriculture analogy in this regard and it has to do with the recovery process. Mr. President, when you have a pasture that is overgrazed and it's overgrazed over a short period of time, often times it takes twice as much time for that pasture to recover. But what is most important to also know that when that pasture start to come back, not grass alone that's growing. Sometimes all sorts of undesirable weeds and parasites grow with it as well. So one of the challenges that we are going to have as a country is that through our recovery process, we may



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have to work on other things apart from what was damaged on the way to the erosion of the economy and that is something that we will have to pay attention to. **(Inaudible comments/Laughter)** Mr. President, I... we've heard all types of utterances as to what some of those issues may be, but I reserve that for a private deliberation, not in the House at this point in time.

So, Mr. President, with these few remarks, I just wanted to bring some clarity especially for the public to understand that not just because that we announce 50 thousand dollars, that it's just a closed measure... 50 million dollars, sorry, that it's a closed measure and that is where we are. But what we have been able to do is to approach this response in a phased approach and that is what we are doing from on the economic side. We are looking at it from a phased approach to ensure that we bring some comfort to persons as we try to get the Grenadian economy back to where it was previous to this virus, Mr. President. Mr. President, with these few words, I commend my full support to this Appropriation Bill. Thank you very much.

**Mr. President:** Ok, Senator Cox. Senator Redhead, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to begin my presentation, Mr. President, by paying homage and appreciation to our nurses, our doctors and our men and women in uniform, because it is important, Mr. President, that they get the commendation that they need during this period. Mr. President, also essential workers, cooks, garbage collectors, dock workers, farmers, fishermen, workers, Mr. President, who are providing care to the vulnerable at their homes during this time, Mr. President, we want to pay homage to them. The list can go on.

We thank each and every one of them, Mr. President, for their service during this period. It is not easy, Mr. President, it is a difficult situation that we are facing and they are working tirelessly around the clock. We thank, Mr. President, also the COVID-19 Committee, the Ministry of Health, the Acting CMO, Dr. Martin. We thank the Coordinator, Dr. George Mitchell, the COVID-19 Coordinator, Dr. George Mitchell; the

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Commissioner of Police, Mr. President. Our Epidemiologists, we thank them, Mr. President, dearly for their service.

Mr. President, we also empathize with families who have lost loved ones and you heard the point repeated today that Grenadians have died in the UK, the US, Mr. President. New York, for example is the epicenter that is true, at least the latest figures suggest over 40 or close to 50 Grenadians have died in the Diaspora as a result, Mr. President, of COVID-19. And you could imagine families having to deal with protecting their loved ones from the pandemic itself and on another hand having to deal with burying their loved ones. It is a difficult situation and we want to say that we empathize with them and we know it is very struggling. I myself, I have families in New York, Quebec, UK and we are very concerned, Mr. President, as to their safety but we continue to send prayers, we continue to share information and we continue to hope for the best.

Mr. President, we also thank countries who have assisted Grenada, namely China, Venezuela, Cuba. Cuba for example as you have mentioned, Mr. President, in your opening is providing tremendous, Mr. President, medical internationalism and being a great grandson of a Cuban on my mother's side, I want to say to the Cuban nurses and doctors, thank you very much from the bottom of my heart for the assistance that they are giving to Grenada. We appreciate it dearly and it will go a long way, Mr. President, in helping to stem the tide of the pandemic... the global pandemic, COVID-19.

Mr. President, to countries who have offered assistance namely, Mr. President, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we thank them for the gesture and that is what we must do diplomatically. And we understand, Mr. President, that look, you wouldn't always get it right, I don't know that the comments were being directed as an instruction. However, Mr. President, it was more an offer and a gesture and I believe what really should happen is to see how we can discuss for the people of Petite Martinique and with the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, some sort of Trade Agreement in the future. Mr. President, these are things that we must be doing post COVID-19.

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In addition to congratulating the Cuban doctors, Mr. President, the region I believe, can learn of the knowledge and the expertise of the Cuban people and begin to assert or put them, Mr. President, in a position... it's not just enough... I heard that this morning, it's not just enough to call for the embargo to be lifted and so on. It must be more than that and this has nothing to do with the ideological standing of Cuba but everything to do, Mr. President, with the health and the quality of the health especially in public health that they are providing. And I believe, Mr. President, as we emerge from COVID-19 that is the type of thinking that the region must have going forward.

Mr. President, lastly, we want to welcome the opening of Parliament as my colleague said earlier on. During this period, Mr. President, as we know the gravity of this disease is far beyond just the health crisis, it's far beyond, the economic, the social and the long lasting impacts that it can have. We understand that, so the need, Mr. President, for the Parliament to meet is very essential and important. Mr. President, I will like to take the opportunity as well to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tobias Clement and we wish him all the best.

Mr. President, in just three weeks, we have seen the Grenadian economy turn to a point of almost devastation. Now it is not due, Mr. President, to Government's doing, I am not coming here to say that. We all understand the magnitude and extent or impact that COVID-19 had. We have to take into consideration, Mr. President, and I just want to say that I agree with the Member... the Representative from the Private Sector and I am going to get to those points just now in terms of explaining why the Stimulus Package is insufficient at this time.

Now, Mr. President, let us get an appreciation as to what occurred, SGU closed its doors. SGU accounts for about 600 workers in the workforce... in the labour force and SGU generally accounts to close to 23% of the GDP and they pulling out in that sense as a result of COVID, it will have a significant impact on the situation going forward. Mr. President, the question of the collapse of the Tourism Sector, again not just looking at it from the standpoint that you're stopping flights and you have to stop flights and so on. But looking at the long lasting impact that it will have, I will get to that later. Mr. President, the closure of the hotels, the closure of the construction site, again

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we heard it mention from the Private Sector Representative, the question of a reduction in our remittances coming from abroad. Mr. President, in the United States of America alone, you have a situation where close to 20 million has filed for unemployment. And Mr. President, that is a situation due to COVID so you can understand the impact it will have. Families will not be able to get their little dollars from foreign or from abroad to be able to sustain themselves to survive. So you see an impact in terms of that alternative source of income, so we can understand that.

Mr. President, on the question of the closure of small businesses, we are talking fishermen, fisherfolk, vendors, small service providers, farmers, generally, Mr. President, they are all affected as a result of COVID. So we are looking at the gravity and impact of the situation. The slowdown, Mr. President, in our view is going to create a debt crisis. So in my mind and just to add to what the Private Sector representative was saying, we should not only do this now and then have to come back later, and in my mind I believe we are not only going to have to be passing stimulus packages but we are going to be looking in terms of debt restructuring again in the near future. We must keep that in mind, Mr. President, and we must begin to chart the course forward along those lines.

Mr. President, the disruptions that is taking place is going to have far reaching implications for our economy and our population as a whole and you know I just want to go back to something that I said in 2018. The total reliance on the two pillar economy is insufficient, we need to diversify things. Mr. President, Tourism and Construction are important sectors, we can agree with that. However, Mr. President, the question of their vulnerability to the external forces is being demonstrated here as a result of COVID-19, the global pandemic and we must keep that in mind. Therefore, Mr. President, in our view, things has to change; things have to change and so the quality of the policies that we are going to be putting forward, it must make sense in that context. Where do we go from here, the question of recovery, it is repeated over and over today and what we are going to do different, not the same. Not just put something there and a loan here and so on but something different, that is the kind of thinking that must merge. We believe,

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Mr. President, for example that the key policy responses to combat COVID must be looked at in four categories and let me just read it out if you would allow me to do so.

One, measures aimed at strengthening health preparations and response capacities and we should be doing and thinking that for the long term as well. Two, safety net measures for the vulnerable groups, but do it in a way, Mr. President, because we expect that in addition to those who already existed on social programmes, we expect more people will fall under the bracket to be able to receive benefits and we must think how expanding that in terms of the impact on the economy. Look at the long term because we cannot provide only this safety net style of economy because the economy would not grow. We must think in the long term, Mr. President and think about employment, job creation, productivity, how can all of this tie in. So a stimulus as the Member responsible, Mr. President, through you was saying, responsible for Sports was saying, it's a stimulus so it is going to generate something; that is what we are thinking. The idea of just passing the stimulus, it's important but it's insufficient when you place it into the context of the broad picture that we are trying to come up with. It's something new so we don't have the numbers as the Member said, so we need to look long term and look at all possibilities.

Mr. President, fiscal policies to lessen the economic and the social impact and I heard the Leader of Government's Business saying that NIS will provide xyz, xyz, xyz. The point is, Mr. President, we have the power in Parliament to amend Laws to be able to suit that interest and if it is that NIS only gives certain types of benefits, then we need to look at how we can amend the Laws to facilitate this during this pandemic. Again it requires a new type of thinking, not the old way of doing business and we must put these things forward, Mr. President, so in future if we are coming back to the Senate or other Sittings, what we are doing is not just coming just to get Appropriation and additional sums but we're coming with sweeping measures of packages as well, in addition to coming for the funds. Mr. President, when we compare policy responses globally to COVID-19 we find a trend and just allow me to read quickly the trends. Packages to protect people and jobs, that is most countries are doing that and we are seeing it here demonstrated today; stimulus packages to promote recovery; measures

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to support businesses so that they don't close, they don't fall under; income support for workers who cannot work from home, Mr. President, that is a serious problem. So on one hand you have to be saying we're going to give you payroll support but on the other hand, Mr. President, you are not working. The productive capacity of the business is not functioning, that sort of thing.

And, Mr. President, unemployment benefits targeted social assistance as was mentioned earlier, so you have to look at the thing in a long term way and not just for now. So I am not too satisfied with the amount appropriated as well, I don't think it is sufficient. Before, Mr. President, I get into the numbers of the Stimulus Package, I just wanted to compare and the Member did so in terms of saying the 50 million is not enough, we need about 100 million at least as a start. Jamaica announced a 25 billion dollar stimulus equivalent to about 497 million EC dollars; St. Kitts and Nevis, Mr. President, they announced a stimulus package 120 EC million dollars; Barbados, Mr. President, 200 million Bajan dollars in addition to other sweeping measures that is equivalent to 270 million EC. Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago 1 billion in the first instance, equivalent to about 400 million EC. In other words, Mr. President, the magnitude and the extent of the impact of COVID-19 goes just beyond 50 million dollars when you look at how the impact is being felt. All sectors and we don't expect the Government to provide for all Sectors but in terms of generating that recovery, stimulus packages do that and the 50 million may not be enough. So in trying to get, Mr. President, to what was allocated in... or trying to explain it rather what was allocated in the proposed Supplementary Estimates, I want to speak on a few areas. I am not certain that I am going to touch on all but let's see how it goes.

Now, Mr. President, it's important to note that from the Minister for Finance's explanation at a press conference, I believe sometime this week, he indicated that we are coming to Parliament to pass something that is in addition to what is already available in the Contingency Fund I believe, that was his words. The point is, I need clarity in terms of whether or not this 50 million takes into consideration the already 2% of the total Recurrent Revenues, Mr. President or is it that this 50 million is in addition to that? So let me give you an example or an idea as to what I am referring to. In

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accordance with the Public Finance Management Act, Section 22, every year the Government is supposed to put forward that or provide that Contingency Fund. That Contingency Fund... **(The lights went off in the Chamber)** Mr. President, I will be a little impacted, I don't know if the lights could come back on **(inaudible comments)**, it's automatic, ok, sorry about that. Thanks. Yes, Mr. President, so **(inaudible comments/laughter)** ...so it must be no less than 2%. Based on the totals that were estimated, Mr. President, in terms of Budget 2020, we are seeing 786.2 million dollars was the total Budget for the Recurrent Revenue, that was the estimated figure and 2% of that would be just around \$15,724,000.00. In other words, Mr. President, that 15 million is supposed to be the 2% that should already be established in the Contingency Fund. So if we are coming to the Parliament, what I would really like to know, are we doing this in addition, the 50 million, are we doing it in addition to what already exist?

But moving along because we have to look, Mr. President, as to what this Stimulus Package would really provide and let's begin with the payroll assistance. I heard the Leader of Government's Business explain it. Again, just like the Private Sector, we are happy that workers are going to be getting benefit, its important. But, Mr. President, remember payroll assistance should not only stop there, remember you are asking the company to continue on your behalf for a temporary period its obligations with the worker but you're closed, they are not functioning, they are not operating.

Remember the Government always would put forward the argument that it is not the amount of debt you have but it's the ability to repay. The question is, Mr. President, if businesses are going to keep their workers on, how will they make the necessary revenues and you heard the Member just made the explanation with the supermarket. You have to cut some shifts because it's becoming a demand on them just the same, in the long run it will. And you have to look at this question of uncertainty. The payroll assistance is important but will it help, Mr. President, the business to recover properly coming out of the situation especially when we do not know how long this will be for.

Mr. President on the question of the small hoteliers' facility; now, what I am going to give here is all my ideas and opinions specific to that. Now let me say this, Mr. President, indigenous hoteliers require a different level of attention and care especially,

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Mr. President, when you are looking at how they stack up with the bigger ones. Of course the international backing from Sandals will be different to one of our local indigenous hotelier. Now to go and place a debt, (this is how I see it) on a small hotelier at this time when we do not know when the Tourism Sector will return... Mr. President, the question of the Hurricane Season is coming up, a number of uncertainties in my view exist. To place this debt on them whether at concessionary rates or not, it's not in the best interest in my view of the business itself and what it really will cater or what it really will have to experience, Mr. President, during COVID-19 and the pandemic, not knowing how the future would be, how long this would be for, if flights would return in 2021 or 2022, that sort of thing.

Mr. President, I believe what should have happened, you look at the businesses, their expenses, you provide assistance but it should be grant funding. The Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. President, needs to be working; that is just the message that I want to send. They should be engaging these small hoteliers in a serious way, the Ministry of Finance as well, putting them sit down and plan on a program as opposed to just announcing that. 7 million dollars, Mr. President, they said in the first instance, now that is insufficient in my view to the magnitude that they face, again I am saying that, I have a problem with that.

The third area, Mr. President, small business soft lending facility, again I hope that we will see proper checks and balances during the disbursement of whatever funds that is going to the barbers and so on, they need it, Mr. President, but remember it must not go to leisure. We hope that we are not going to hear people using the funds to go and party or to build things and so on. We hope that proper management is being put in place to at least ensure that how these businesses utilize the funds is in a way that will help to make them rebound and keep their businesses afloat, Mr. President, at least for a sufficient time. Again we do not know how long the impacts will be felt.

Mr. President, the fourth area, but before I go there, Mr. President, let me just make this point with the small business. I think that Government should have looked carefully in terms of who they are giving that now. For example small manufacturers, we spoke earlier on about the mask right, we know people are producing hand



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sanitizers as well. These are plans and strategies, Mr. President, that you could use to help to improve employment, Mr. President, and productivity. So for example, Mr. President, we should be able to say that we're giving them x amount to increase production, so much so, that we can begin to export to other countries, neighboring Islands, hand sanitizers, mask, that sort of thing if they need it. That is the kind of thinking you would want to see with a stimulus in order to build recovery, right. So just putting it into a barbershop and so on... because, Mr. President, I can't wait for the things to lift, I need to go and take a proper shave etc. So as this thing over I am going to be heading to the barbershop, they are going to recuperate, they will. Remember they are not using electricity, they are not using other things at this moment, so to say that you're providing assistance to them, is it going to be in a way that you want to bolster their revenues or you're just providing it because they ask for it. The hairdressers, as this thing is over you going to see an increase in the demand for their services, so they are going to come back up irrespective if we give the assistance or not. So the question is should we take these resources and place it in the productive Sectors?

Agro processing for example, Mr. President, as you heard from the Private Sector representative through you, Mr. President, farmers are no longer going to be going on the streets and so on. They are doing it digitally, that is the new type of thinking that is emerging post COVID-19 or at least that we are beginning to see emerge. So we should try and capitalize on that in the initial stage, not to wait too long when we don't have an understanding and appreciation and then the world leave that already. We must look, Mr. President, at the future in terms of how we give these stimulus packages, it must make sense in my view as to trying to help to enable the recovery. I am not satisfied that this will be doing that.

Mr. President, when we look at the last area in Vote 20, the Ministry of Finance, 8 million dollars is allocated and the purpose that is outlined here, upfront payment to GRENLEC. That doesn't make any sense. Now the comments seem to be the purpose, I think that is a typo. I hope that is a typo, I hope it's not 'the purpose is upfront payment to GRENLEC' because that does not make any sense. And the

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question, Mr. President, I want to ask in relation to that, the Government is saying that this will help people, this will do etc. I agree that a stimulus package should do that but an upfront payment to GRENLEC, how is that going to help anybody? GRENLEC is a multi-million dollar company, we know that. The point about it is. Mr. President, if you're going to have 8 million dollars and you're giving it to pay to reduce energy by 30%, you have to ask yourself this question, if you do not have an income, whether energy reduce by 10, 20 or 30%, will it affect you? What you are looking for, Mr. President, is something more concrete.

A stimulus package in my view should address key areas, in my view the Government's claim that it is because people are so concerned about energy and the rates and so on. That have nothing to do with COVID, this is a stimulus package for Covid-19, it has nothing to do with the talk about energy and so on. GRENLEC for example, Mr. President, as you know announced that it will not be putting out its disconnection officers, GRENLEC said that they will relook the situation etc. GRENLEC is not an unreasonable company, so we don't have to force a point to make some case about you providing Grenadian people with 30% drop in energy. What that doing in the long run? Absolutely nothing.

So, Mr. President, we must look, just for three months right, we must look at key ways, 8 million dollars, Mr. President, just to do that. You're just trying to achieve in my view some promise that was made as a golden opportunity and that doesn't make any sense right now. Again, right now we should ease up on the partisan politics and focus on the politics of the people which is our business and do the thing in the right way.

**Mr. President:** Just help me a minute Senator, the 8 million dollars in respect of GRENLEC, where are you seeing this because I'm hearing you, but I'm not following?

**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President).**

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** Mr. President, I got the latest document.

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**(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)**

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** I got the latest documents via email, the night before unless that was not the latest document? It says here Vote 20, Mr. President, the 4<sup>th</sup> part...

**Inaudible comments**

**(The President converse with the Acting Clerk in private)**

**Mr. President:** Continue.

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** Thanks, so it's 8 million. So, Mr. President, again I break it down, for consumers and commercial entities, so it's actually separated, Mr. President, at least from what I'll gathered here. But in its totality, it was 8 million.

**Mr. President:** So your contention is that, that 8 million dollars is... to summarize what you are saying if I get it right, that 8 million dollars in your opinion is not properly allocated, is that what you are saying? I am trying to get your contention.

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** No, Mr. President, my contention is...

**Mr. President:** Because it's broken up into two parts...

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** Right.

**Mr. President:** For commercial business that is heavily impacted and that would be businesses that either still in business and struggling to survive, they will get an assistance to the value of 5 million dollars. And for domestic consumers, there is a 3 million dollar support to be paid over a three month period. In other words, a subsidy of

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your electricity consumption. What I'm trying to gather from you is, your conclusion on that allocation is what?

**Sen. the Hon. Ron Redhead:** So let me put it this way, Mr. President. GRENLEC could provide that, we do not have to take taxpayers monies to do that. That's the point I am trying to make. Negotiate with GRENLEC, I'm certain they would have provided something like that. As I mentioned, Mr. President, the assistance to the small hoteliers, they don't want another debt around their necks, what they want, Mr. President, is to be able to say to the company GRENLEC, I am certain, look, COVID, its impact is too much for us, give us a break. I am sure the hoteliers through Government's intervention could have allowed a negotiation between the hoteliers and GRENLEC, that's the point I am making. I am saying, Mr. President, if it seems that resources are scarce and you can only afford 50 million in the initial phase, if 8 million of that is to pay for people bill, that is not a serious enough investment into the recovery process because GRENLEC can negotiate something like that.

Mr. President, in addition to that, you have to look at the impact of the ruling WRB against the Government of Grenada will have on us. You have to look at that and we must be honest and open about the conversation, this kind off story I keep hearing about that instance, Mr. President, in future people are going to discuss this matter and the truth will be told, we need to stop that. This has added an additional burden on us, in other words we are focusing on one end on a recovery period and we are already before the impact can be quantified over a longer term period, we are already adding to the debt burden. Mr. President, we have to look at that situation as well, again, in providing a stimulus you must ensure that what it is doing is seriously impacting people. The Government said that it cannot look after everybody, we agree with that because ain't no way you're going to be able to look at every Sector during the recovery process. But, Mr. President, at least we must ensure that the monies that you're going to be spending, is going to go in a productive way to help foster the recovery that you are talking about. Again the 8 million dollars from tax payers to give to GRENLEC to be

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able to reduce the bill is not making any sense to me in relation to economic recovery plan.

Mr. President, the 10 million dollars for health, we do not have an issue with that. I wish it was more because what we need to ensure, Mr. President, now as flights may resume whenever they resume, the threat of COVID will still remain. Our airports in my view need to be upgraded to have its own little quarantine area, I'm not saying for a mass amount but things where you can immediately, if you identify somebody with the body temperature in line with Covid-19, you can isolate them and begin the process of treatment whatever it is and so on. We heard, Mr. President, about the Rapid Response Test, some airlines are engaged in doing that right now. I heard this morning that the Minister for Finance is saying that they will be required a certificate and so on. But that sounds like a long process. What I would say or suggest is that airlines should be doing the Rapid Test at the point where they pick up passengers and when they are coming in to our ports for example we should also be doing that Rapid Response Test. So, Mr. President, we must look at very creative ways to expand health in other parts of the country, taking in account, Mr. President, that COVID-19 has changed the ways things will be done.

So, for example when you look at other countries and their responses, what you get an appreciation of, is the vast different between Grenada's Health Sector and this is why we had to take these extreme measures by the way. It was important to safeguard the people because really and truly we don't have the machinery, the apparatus in place to really protect if a wide scale pandemic was to break out. We have to be able, Mr. President, to ensure that we are doing things that will protect and contain in a new and creative way and I think, Mr. President, providing some facility at the airport, providing hoteliers with assistance to be able to isolate patients as well, Mr. President, so that they can coordinate with the health sector. This is something we must look for down in the future. Infectious diseases, Mr. President, they are prevalent, they are all over the place, viruses, germs, etcetera, Mr. President, and any day a new one can emerge. So we must look beyond that. So the 10 million, we are happy, Mr. President, but we thought it could have been more.

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Again, when we are looking at the Stimulus Package, we are not satisfied that that it's going to generate the type of recovery that is necessary. I think the Government should relook a model as everyone is saying already, of including the Labour Unions, the Farmers Association, ordinary people, Mr. President, they must be involved in helping to craft something not just to be all inclusive but craft something that is substantive to the needs that will emerge as a result of COVID-19.

Mr. President, I just want to touch briefly on the issue with Carriacou and Petite Martinique as I begin to wind down. Now, I was not going to say anything on that but I heard the Minister this morning of Carriacou and Petite Martinique saying that there was not a food crisis, right, that is rumor don't worry with that old talk kind of thing. But I have to ask her this question because it's not making any sense, if there were no food crises, why during the period was she distributing hampers and that sort of thing to people? In other words, Mr. President, sometimes we must just be real and honest. I spoke to a Petite Martiniquian, Mr. President, right when the Ministry of Health team was in Petite Martinique; it was interesting to hear the comment. The people who were organized came from a particular political party and all they did or maybe they were instructed at least from that person's stand point to say things are good, things are going well, so don't worry with all the rumor you are hearing. And then, Mr. President, you see an announcement was made on a Press Conference same time and then today in fact a boat load of goods is leaving to go up. The reason why it's leaving to go up is to go and replenish the stock. So the question, Mr. President, of food security, it was being in a sense highlighted not as a partisan issue but in order to save face, we know the tricks that are always established and to protect image etcetera, this kind of story came up. Mr. President, and that is the problem with the statement in relation to Petite Martinique and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I have an issue, Mr. President, and the issue is simple as I mentioned earlier, the Minister for Finance I believe or whether it's the Minister of... the Honourable Peter David, Foreign Affairs, whether it's the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. President, what they should be doing with St. Vincent and the Grenadines is thinking long term; have a trade agreement. Mr. President, after Ivan, the assistance we got from Comrade Ralph,

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the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was tremendous. We didn't complain then, so why now because he is saying if you have an issue, this is available, do it in an organized and structured manner, we have a problem with something like that. I think that is just guilt. Mr. President, let us be honest during COVID-19, it's a crisis for all of us and we can accept the fact that we must follow measures, must follow guidelines and we must be united in the approach because it requires that type of thing, post COVID. But, Mr. President, let us remember to remain honest. So I do not believe this stimulus package is sufficient for the magnitude of work that will be required to recover this economy and we may see in the long term, Mr. President, or medium term that we have to come back here and we may also have to consider in the longer term some sort of new debt restructuring arrangement. I will like to hear that from the Government because we have to monitor that situation. They are already saying that the FRL is being breached and they are concerned about that so, Mr. President, they must be thinking along that line and measures must be put in place to curb the debt in the future if possible. Mr. President, thank you very much.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Redhead. Senator Winston Garraway.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Winston Garraway:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. I was expecting to leave this House in an hour and a half time, Mr. President, not realizing that...

**Mr. President:** Well it's all in your hands.

**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Winston Garraway:** ...so much being said. I wanted to speak with my mask but everybody else doing without it so. But, Mr. President, COVID-19 and the world being taken by storm with a little virus and fear seems to be gripping every country and the citizens of every country. Because you see man is afraid to die, that is the big crux of the matter. And death stares you in the face because one say it's a virus you can't see, a disease you can't see and people are concerned.

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But before I go into my substantive presentation, I just want to bring some comfort to us from the Holy Book, Psalm 46:1-4 and it says **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”**, you’re talking about trouble, this is one. **“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”** So in time of panic and fear I want to remind our people, let’s turn to God and turn to the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Book and find comfort to deal with the challenges that we are faced with.

It is widely accepted that the health care of a nation forms an enormous part of the country’s economy so the phrase that health is a nation’s wealth is very real. Many people’s aspirations and desires cannot be met without one, being able to living longer, healthier and being happy. Against this backdrop, Mr. President, Grenada’s fight against COVID-19 was primarily to protect our people, to save lives and to ensure that we put measures in place to keep the virus out. Unfortunately it came in and I want to take this moment here to thank our frontline staff, for being there and the proactive measures taken by Government to ensure that we close the borders and we prevent community spread. But you see these challenging times that we are faced with, Mr. President, times which has disrupted our lives that has caused us to make changes to what we once regarded as social norms; shaking hands, hugging, kissing etc. But I am confident, Mr. President, we will defeat COVID-19, but we have to do it together, we have to work together.

And the Stimulus Package that has been presented to this nation is to ensure that no one is left behind. We agree the first to really get hit by this, our service industry, hospitality, so the hotels, the guest houses took a major hit and obviously the staff within those Sectors has been... I want to say laid off, COVID did that. So you want to ensure that those persons do not fall through the crack. And the Stimulus Package is being put in place as a first step to start to bring some form of normalcy into the lives of those persons.



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But let me just take us back a little, Mr. President, you see in 2013 when this Government came back into office and took that bold decision to restructure this economy, and to avert this dangerous precipice that we were on and to put measures in place to mitigate against further slide. So we had the structural adjustment program, we didn't introduce any new taxes but we looked at a number of them that were on the books, 20 odd years and upgraded them. So where you were paying probably 10.00 for fee, we asked you to pay 25. These measures back then has created some stability in the economy and have now put us in a place to react and respond to COVID-19. Mind you, Mr. President, so many took the liberty to curse the Government and talk about you want to sap out every energy from the lives of people and you introduce 30 new taxes, which was not true but today we have to say, thank God that this Government took the measures then to stabilize the economy and to give us that place, to bring us to that place where we can meet the needs of most affected from COVID and the most vulnerable in our society.

So when I listened to my colleague Senator on the 'Other Side' saying 50 million is not enough, he may be right but what is important and my colleague Senator Cox would have said it, Mr. President, these 50 million dollars that we have advanced as an initial Stimulus Package, is from local revenue, not money from outside. So yes we have to realign and reconfigure the Budget that was made and put money into areas where we can assist people to recover; it may be enough, it may not be enough. But that's the initial step towards some normalcy or to help people to deal with the challenges that they are currently faced.

You know, Mr. President, I am happy and I know the rest of Grenada, mostly all of Grenada is happy that this Government is in office today. Because we have seen over the years whenever there is a major crisis, this Government is in office to deal with it. We had one in 2008, and we give those drivers the opportunity and they did absolutely nothing to advance the cause of the Grenadian people but to say every time they couldn't deal with an issue, World Economic Crisis. Well, as we have said COVID is the worst that we have ever seen but we have to find a way to take our country through and let's look at what is being offered to-date.

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10 million dollars to go towards our health recovery and, Mr. President, I am extremely happy that we are in a position to make that announcement. Let's look at what has happened so far, Senator Cox talked about procuring items or equipment to deal with the pandemic and how difficult and challenging it was because we do not have much money, so you buy based on, one, the size of your population and two, your ability. But at times it was said, our order was too small and we lost out, but you have to find the monies to ensure you get them. We are grateful with the help and the donation that we have received from the People's Republic of China and we want to thank them for doing that. But most importantly the Government and People of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who amidst all their trials and testings and hardship, economic, social and COVID, still find a way to provide test kits for us; over 3,000 test kits. That's a commendable feat and we are thankful as a Ministry of Health and of course as a Government for this sort of assistance. It assists us in ensuring that we can take care of the immediate needs of our people. To test and to bring that sort of relief and comfort to our people knowing that the country is getting on and as we do our testing, we can say to the people, the sacrifices that we have made initially is paying off.

I want to also thank the RGPF for martialing the forces and to control in this time. Mr. President, you know I spoke of social norms that have been disrupted because of COVID. We can't hug again, shake hands and those things and just basically lime by the road and cook, we can't do that, COVID take that away. So initially the RGPF made some arrests because people couldn't conform, because we are easy going people and we socialize. But with the constant education and the daily briefing from the RGPF, people get to realize, hey, it's not normal times. So I want to thank the Commissioner of Police, acting, Edwin Martin and his team for the work that they have done and is doing to ensure that the protocols are being followed.

And today we are happy because when the Minister for Health announced that eleven cases were tested yesterday and all came back negative and six of the eleven were persons who were tested positive and was of the count of fourteen that we had before. And I was told that they were tested twice and now we have updated the figures and say it's now seven of the fourteen, is now COVID free, this is commendable. And

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while we are not seeing, **(applause/inaudible comments by the President)** Thank you, Mr. President. And why we have not seen community spread is because the work the police has been doing. And I listened to... somebody sent me a voice note of a program and I am seeing, I mean, COVID is ravaging the economies around the world and now you're going to try to make politics with this and call this country a Police State. Come on, why don't we rise up and mature or become mature people to deal with the present reality. The present reality, COVID knows no one, it knows no colour, no creed, no political affiliation. It affects and kills, so what had to be done in this country to stem the tide is to ask people to stay home. And, Mr. Commissioner, thumbs up, thumbs up for your men and women who have taken the bull by the horn and to ensure at the end of the day, our country is protected. So it's only fourteen, where are we going from here? Last Sunday during my preaching, the church still functions and we do that via Zoom and I asked this question, probably a million dollar question, **'what will the world look like after COVID-19?'** Or maybe you could bring home, what will Grenada look like after COVID-19?

We have been able to get a lot done today via technology and again I want to thank this Government for the digitalization of the Public Sector and the CARCIP Programme and to ensure that we'll be able to utilize technology to the fullest. We are ahead of the game, why? Because we are forward thinking, and we've realized if we have to compete with the rest of the world, we have to make sure that we have the equipment and the system in place to compete. So yes, so the Spice programmes or Spice Maths programs, I can't remember the right name but we've been able to teach our children through the system virtually. We've been talking about this to get the most advanced teachers in Math or English and so forth and have them in one area to teach throughout the schools, virtually. COVID-19 is bringing this to fruition.

Government has invested millions on a platform to teach with the tablets and I have seen an excellent presentation by a team of excellent young people. And that's the platform you utilize now to ensure that our people are being trained, our young people are being taught. So the point here, Mr. President, the decisions that we have made initially towards advancing technology in our schools and in our country is paying

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rich dividends right now. Obviously, we would like to see more, obviously you would want to give some people more but the package as it is now is 50 million and it has to do quite a lot.

I am elated and I am happy to be a part of a Government that is forward thinking. So GDB was given over 5 million dollars to ensure that small businesses, micro and small businesses within the country can access funding to move the business forward, very wise thinking. Because, Mr. President, what we have seen now with COVID, what you build locally will be able to stand. So you have small business enterprise given the opportunity to develop, expand; we have had the AGRICOM business proposal where farmers and little Cooperatives can access monies through the Ministry of Agriculture to involve in local production, agricultural production because we're concern about food safety and food security. Those are the things that we have been doing before. So what COVID has exposed to us is, you build more on your local.

I remember and you will know that very well, Mr. President, back in those days as a little boy, eat what you grow and grow what you eat became the hallmark of the country. And I remember about six years ago I was making a presentation, a number of young people and others and so forth and the points was made, I made this point, you wonder why our children even before they have teeth they want KFC and so forth and they want french fries, have you ever questioned why, because we have allowed it. So when we import those mashed potatoes and other stuff in those little cans, they have chicken broth and so on in it, so we help developed a taste for our children for those things very early. As a little boy growing up, I would have seen my mom and my grand mom mostly crushing bluggo with a little bit of red butter and giving the child and I used to question it and thought why are they doing that because this is hard food. Not realizing they were developing the taste for your local food in the child from young.

Now that we are home, I want to encourage our people to spend some time in the backyard. Mr. President, if you come by my home, I have flowerpots with lettuce, I have tomatoes, cabbages, kale and all these... potatoes, yams, just name it because what I am seeing and I have been saying to my staff early this year, I am seeing something terrible coming. I didn't know what it was, I was thinking probably hurricane

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or so but the time has come when we should grow more of what we love. Our ground provisions and so forth, grow them and eat them and that is what we are doing. So the move now through GDB to ensure that our small businesses can get support to do more, to ensure that we will be able to feed our people. We don't know what's going to happen later on down the road. I heard some rice producing countries deciding that they're not exporting, so if they're not going to export rice because they are not sure what's going to happen in the next 4-12 months, we have to make sure that we grow our yams, grow our sweet potatoes, in 8 weeks you're going to have sweet potatoes, so grow them.

Mr. President, I said a while ago, that we have to be happy that this Government is in office to do the forward thinking to ensure that we protect our people. I also want to say thanks to the Minister for Health and his team for what they have been able to do to ensure that we keep these numbers tight. I heard people comment and I heard people cursing the Minister and his team, because they were too tight and too hard and I had to sit and convince a number of people. I said listen, what I am seeing happening in the big world, in Italy for example at the time where people had to make decisions. The health practitioners had to make decisions as to who live and who dies. I say you don't want this to happen here, so stay home. This is going to pass for a moment, but let's take it because the ultimate goal as I've said before is to save lives. We have now moved as to protecting the economy going forward, and as we continue to work as a Government with the ultimate goal to help our people, we will leave no stone unturned.

In closing, the decision to give a 30% reduction on the electricity bill to our people is noble. Say what you want, this is monies that we are giving to our people. I remember when we were in the Structural Adjustment Program, the Minister for Finance and Prime Minister would have said, the gains of the programme will be for the benefit of the people. This is one of the benefits, a 30% reduction on your bill because for three months, you will be laid up at home. Some folks would not be working, but at the end of the day, you still have your bills. So while I couldn't give you an income in your hand as the hotel employees would receive, I can ensure that you can get a reduction in that utility bill that you will have to pay and to say it doesn't make sense is cruel. It's wicked,

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because who benefit from this, the poor and marginalized people of this country. And say what you want, this is a relief to all of us, if you don't want it, don't take it, don't accept it. But don't curse the people who deserve it, let them have it. As a Government we have had and will continue to find ways and means to make this work and by God's grace we will come through in flying colours as we continue to work together.

So this is our opportunity, the Minister for Finance and Prime Minister would have said that going forward, the social partner construct that we have had from 2013, going to be broadened and to bring more people on board because to deal with COVID-19, it will take all of us and all hands on deck. And I look forward to all coming onboard and doing it for Grenada's sake, not for a Political Party, not for your interest but for Grenada's sake and with this, Mr. President, we will succeed. And the right team is at the head leading and it will happen because what we have done is to put God first. And I thank you, Mr. President, that Grenada will overcome and the rest of the world will overcome COVID-19. I thank you.

**Mr. President:** Thank you Senator Garraway. Senator Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you, very much, Mr. President, and I crave your indulgence. I thought of doing it at the Adjournment, but I crave your indulgence just to highlight the following. We in the Labour Movement want to pay tribute to two (2) outstanding comrades who have just gone to the Great Beyond; and it is in this period it is important, because, as workers are asked to dig deeper, it is important to recognize the contribution that these Leaders have made.

First of all, I want to start in Grenada here, Comrade Cicely Samuel, a longstanding member of the Technical and Allied Workers Union and the wider Grenadian Labour Movement, passed away most recently, the mother of outstanding Grenadians Comrades Lingham Samuel and Lorna. Comrade Samuel served on the Management Committee of the Technical and Allied Workers Union and was one of the mainstays of the early struggles and building of our Union, which you would know, Mr. President. And, as we come closer to May Day, which we would be able to celebrate in

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the normal way that we would have done in the past, but which we would mark, using electronic and social media, it is only timely and fitting to pay tribute to Comrade Samuel. She carried, almost singlehandedly, as you would know better than most of us, our preparations for May Day, the international day for workers. So, I want to use this opportunity to thank her family for sharing her with us.

At the same time to extend condolences to a regional Trade Unionist, from out of Guyana, Comrade Komal Chand, who has made yeoman sacrifices and contribution to the working class, not only in Grenada and Guyana, but throughout the Region and the rest of the world. He was the President of the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union and General Workers Union. Comrade Chan, in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, which devastated Grenada, singlehandedly led the GAWU's response in helping the Technical and Allied Workers Union and its membership and the wider Grenadian community, in ensuring that we were able to receive the much needed material support, galvanize, rice and other material, tarpaulins that we so desperately needed at that time. And, therefore, I crave your indulgence, and that of the Senate in just paying tribute to these outstanding Comrades for what they have done for us. Mr. President, thank you very much.

I want to just quickly focus on the other elements I want to identify with. Almost everything said, through you, by our fellow Senator, interestingly enough, from the Private Sector, Senator De Allie, and while he was making his contribution, I wondered, as has been demonstrated by quite a number of people, over the years, that the contributions that he has made, I hope it is not an indication that, probably, he is on his way out in the formal frontline of the Private Sector. Because his contribution, which I know quite a bit about, basically came over as anyone of us in the Labour Movement, and I want to identify, despite the challenges that we have, with the statement that it would have been good to get more; and to also indicate that in this period, going forward, we have to ensure that whatever would have been budgeted for 2020, non-essential spending are directed towards what I call the COVID Response. And, it is in this context therefore, I want to address a number of matters and through you, Mr. President, in relation to some of the tasks from the Leader of Government Business in

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relation to how workers should make their contribution and sacrifice. We identify with most of the requests made, but the aspect, it is procedure and timing.

There are a number of Companies that, even if they are going through a tight period, at this moment, this is not the first time that they are into business, who would have had very good years, very, very good years, over the past five years, ten years, ten years of constant growth, ten years of meeting their targets, ten years without experiencing losses. And, therefore, we do not think it is fair, taking into account the sacrifices that are required and the unknown, that the first thing that we ask all workers to do is to utilize their vacation. We are saying that, that could be done and should be done, but it ought to be done on a case-by-case basis, because these Companies that have done so well, in the past, why is it that in the first month, (because we are in April), that the first thing that appears, and we have had that request from a number of Companies or Union, and the TUC has discussed that matter; that these Companies that we know have been doing well in the past, and in most instances, their shareholders would have already received back the investment they would have made over the years, why is it in the first instance that we are asking the employees to take their vacation, even in the period, when, for instance, as up to the 20<sup>th</sup>, and we do not know, certainly I do not know, if it would be extended. We are talking about a lockdown, a twenty-four hour curfew. We are requesting and saying that in most instances this period of the lockdown ought to be absolved by the Companies, and especially the Companies that would have performed well over the past years.

We applaud the assistance in the Hotel Industry, but we are also identifying with the call that there are other workers in the Construction Sector and there are other workers, who are in need. And we cannot understand why is it that because we are now in a period where the Hotel Industry, in particular, is certain that the aspect of occupancy will not be there, because our borders are closed, why is it that the first request is for the employees to use their vacation.

This must be looked also in the following context that even while you are home, especially in the period of the lockdown, it is very stressful, extremely stressful for a number of workers, and we support it, let me make that point. The Labour Movement



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supported the lockdown and still supports the lockdown, and we want to caution that we do not drop our guards. It is good, and we applaud and we are even very happy with the trajectory that we are seeing, and we are elated by the negative test results that have come back. We want to identify with this. But, there is also the unknown that we need to give consideration to, in terms of the possibility of the asymptomatic carrier, and, therefore, we must not drop our guards, so we support all of these measures.

**Annual Vacation**

If, for instance these Companies, because some Companies would rebound, there are different forms. If a worker, in April, uses all the vacation that they have inside, and remember I am premising what I am saying that the Companies that could afford it, and I am not making this in the context of what the experience would be this month, at the end of April, because businesses were slow. I am premising my concern on the basis of how they would have performed, over the past years, their results, the profits that they would have made. If a worker were to use all their vacation, for three (3) weeks, if that's what they have, or one month, if that is what they have, or two (2) weeks, if this is what they have, and this issue was to be prolonged, the question is, what happens? And, even if it does not prolong, but in some instances, Companies are able to operate in two (2) months' time, this period is a very stressful period, and the question of being able to take vacation where your mind, listen to me, through you, Mr. President, where your mind can be more relaxed with your family, because even if you are locked down for twenty-one (21) days or thirty (30) days, and you cannot go out and we are using this opportunity to call on every one of us to abide by the curfew, to abide by not going out, no pain, no gain, we must invest in this painful period, so that we can start to find activities that can get us out of this, without opening up our borders, without opening our borders to the unknown. And, that is why we are asking that each case, each Company be taken at its merit.

Why are we saying this? We have seen that trend, as though there is this organized approach by quite a number of the Private Sector and leading Private Sector, and I would dare harbor to say that I am confident, through you, Mr. President, and that is why I started off so that our Senator De Allie, the Company that he represents, we

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feel very confident that he will not take that approach. And he knows that because we have that sort of discussion and understanding, because there are Companies that can afford it, but yet still there are other Companies that are putting profit before people, profit before people; and, therefore, we are asking that during the lockdown period they should not be counted, as people's vacation, the Companies should absorb this. We are making this request.

We can also find scenarios where individuals can be given an option, for instance the Companies that may be stressed, or may have difficulties in doing everything as this. An individual may be able to be given the option that, look, if after the lockdown, rather than indicating or mandating, as we have seen some correspondence from some leading Companies, which says that as at so and so date, the worker's vacation would be used. There must be discussion, certainly, with the Technical and Allied Workers' Union. Certainly, we are calling on the other Unions, as we have done in the TUC to be engaged in those discussions, because you may find cases where an individual may say if and when that time arises, just as how there are layoffs, in some instances, the worker may say, I can go two (2) weeks in May, or in June, or in July, without pay, because I want to see how the rest of the year goes, that if in case I can get my vacation, because I may need to spend some time with my family, with my child, etcetera, because this is a stressful period. So, the aspect of negotiating and engaging in discussion is extremely important.

In relation to the Stimulus Package and the income support and I am zeroing here on the Hotel Industry, again. When we speak about the income of the workers in the Hotel Industry, and we made the request that the aspect of service charge must be factored in, into the income, I need to spend a little time to explain that.

It may be surprising to a number of persons inside here, through you, Mr. President, that even in some of our leading hotels what we call the 'workers' salary, the workers' income is made up of two parts. You may find that in some of these hotels, that some of the workers' pay is not much more than the minimum wage that one would expect to receive in a haberdashery store; and the reason for this is, it has been established from day one that your service charge is part of your income. So, if and

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when that request is made of an employer in the Hotel Industry it is asked what is the wage of that employee, it is quite possible that what may be advanced may be that seven hundred dollars (\$700.00), so we need to take into account the income of the worker, as we look to give support to that worker. Unless we are aware of these nuances, or these intricacies, as to how the income is made up, it is possible that one may be further disadvantaged.

If, for instance the third process is that the Government is giving support and the employer is asked to make a contribution, we need to ensure that the information, Mr. President, that is given, more adequately reflects the income of the worker, so that the employer may not find it tempting to give the lower level, and, therefore, that is what part of the portion of that employer is expected to pay. So, that is in the context; it is not that we are saying to pay someone their service charge. We are saying to pay them, and in computing, you must take into account, or you ought to take into account what is their income.

We have had the experience, Mr. President, through you, where in one or two of the leading hotels, we had to fight, even after the minimum wage was passed, to bring some of the workers up to the minimum wage. Now, we were able to be successful, because it was illegal to do that. So, it is important to bear this in mind.

It is also important, in the Companies that may venture into layoffs, these are the realities. Our Unions have engaged some of these discussions, if and when that time comes, that the processes be followed, to be fair to each.

In our Legislation, in our Labour Code, there isn't an established procedure for how you would treat with layoffs, how you would treat with an employee. Individuals Unions would have that in their collective Agreements, so you would have the process, most times, where all things are equal, the aspect of seniority comes in to play, first in, last out, how you would rotate, to ensure that there is some level of fairness; so, we are making this request in this period that fairness is one that is applied.

There is also the aspect, apart from Annual Vacation Leave of the uncertified Sick Leave. The uncertified Sick Leave, yes, is used where, for instance, one is not able to go to a Doctor, you get up a day and you are not feeling too well, you call and

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you report that you can't make it in, and, therefore, that is logged and you do not suffer any loss in pay, but we can find creative ways and means of using it now, as a possibility, as part of one of the negotiating tools of one of the ways that an employer may engage, especially in the non-unionized work places. Because we are all in this together, and the aspect of life for us comes first; if there isn't any life, there isn't anything else to fight for.

At the same time, because this is not something that we called upon ourselves, or it was through any fault of anyone of us, any mechanism that can be used to help buffer the hardship on the employee, on that worker, ought to be used; and this would demonstrate to the world, not just our resilience as a people to go through the different aspects of hardship, no pain, no gain and getting the gain after the pain. And, as I speak of resilience, permit me, Mr. President, through you, to recognize a powerful message through song, done by Comrade Finley Jeffrey, the Scholar, other Calypsonians and other Artistes would have done different things, and we want to compliment them, but this one is one of the more very timely; our resilience as a people. But, we can demonstrate our resilience by showing our humanity. Our business owners can further demonstrate our commitment to country, our commitment to people, Mr. President, by utilizing the different mechanism first before we go into aspects that may make it, I don't want to say, harder, because COVID-19 is the hardest there is; the dangers and the threats that we face from COVID-19, is left up to us, and if and when that time come, and I hope it does not come; we in the Labour Movement hope it does not come. But, we would be prepared to make all the necessary, relevant sacrifices, so that we, as a people, can survive. We are prepared to give that commitment.

But, Organized Labour's heart goes out to the colleagues that are not unionized, and at the same time, as we speak of the NIS, there are a number of workers, quite a number of workers, who work in established Establishments, if I could say so, be it in Construction, etcetera, where the employer did not pay NIS for these workers, but the Law states that once someone, once a worker can establish that he or she was employed and received payment, the NIS has to recognize and meet whatever commitments to that employee and go after the employer. Therefore, whatever

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discussions that would be had with the NIS, in whatever we do; I know the aspect of documentation would be an important one and the aspect of your contribution or not to NIS would be an important one. But, no worker, who was gainfully employed, with an employer, and where the employer did not do what the Law required, should be made to suffer. The Law is clear on this. So, I am using this opportunity, through you, Mr. President, to ask all the different employees to ensure that you would have your documentation, so that the necessary cases can be made, as we go along. We are not into this for just about who is unionized, this is about all of us.

I am subject to correction, but I am sure it is through one of those networks, either it was on CNN or the BBC, I saw a bit of information, which said that PPEs, this important PPE that is so important, the price of PPEs have gone up over a thousand percent. In this period, when it is so important to preserve life, we must not, as a business community, as a people, utilize these challenges that humankind is facing, that ordinary working class people are facing; well, let me stop, it is not just ordinary working class people, it is all of us, it is all of us, are facing and try to use this to put profit before people.

And, that is why I am very hopeful that the struggles that we have had in the past, in the recent past and the manner in which our frontline workers have conducted themselves and continue to conduct themselves, the way our people, who prepare the meals at our Hospitals, the way our people, who ensure that our Medical facilities are cleaned and sanitized, will cause all of us, as a people to ensure that at the appropriate time, not too far from now; all the workers, who have been on contract for ten, fifteen and twenty years will be made permanent, so that, as part of the contribution and the recognition that we must give to them, it will ease the burden that they have faced, over the years, that they could not have gone to a Financial Institution and they could not have invest in making life better for themselves, because the instrument that they hold of employment for ten, fifteen and twenty years denied them that possibility and that opportunity of making progress.

We must not only speak about how much we appreciate what these workers are doing, or what they have done, we must do it in a practical way; and one of the better

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ways that we can do certainly, for the workers, who have been on contract for all those years is to ensure that they become permanent, and whatever necessary instruments are given to them.

I want us, Mr. President, to take our hats off also to our Dock workers, our Stevedores. You know, Mr. President, through you, COVID-19 has brought out what we in the Labour Movement have been saying for all these years and long before us, about the importance of the working class and working people, and how it is important not to look down, not to look down, and not to feel because we are just dressed here in jacket and tie, that we are more important. You know, in a sad way, unintentionally, I genuinely believe that it was unintentional.

During the period of the lockdown, the workers who will toil and toil and toil, and because they do not drive in an air-condition vehicle, or because they do not wear a gown, had a lot of difficulties in accessing services, while on their way to ensure that we, as a Nation are being fed and kept safe. So our Stevedores, our Dock workers and our Medical facility workers, hear me, Medical facility workers, I am not speaking about our doctors and our nurses, because they are seen and they are known, but our Maids and such like, our Lab Technicians and others. On going to the Supermarkets, and going to the Gas Stations, when on a number of occasions run from the front and push back, and I will give a typical example, where it is not just a question of whether or not someone is in a uniform, because some of them were in uniform with IDs. We had the case of a Grenada Port Authority Pilot, dressed in full uniform, so there can't be no doubt, there cannot be any doubt, dressed in full uniform, with his ID, on his way to bringing in, the ship that brings in our cargo and others, was stopping off at one of our leading business places, and I would not name the place, made his way to the front of the line to get service and was sent to the back, despite the fact, Mr. President, despite the fact, that it was announced that essential services workers ought to be given priority; essential services and exempted workers. Because it is important for us in the Labour Movement to keep making that distinction between essential services and exempted workers, because there is a definition for essential services, but there are other facilities that have been allowed to function by the State, and we agree with this, to provide

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certain services that do not meet the legal definition of essential services. So, there was no doubt about that person and what work that they were doing. So, it is a reflection of how some of our population and some of our Leaders and some of our Managers have been culturized, in such a manner, that unless you are a Doctor and unless you are a Nurse, or unless you are a high ranking Police Officer, because some Police Officers had those experiences too, depending on their rank. It is a reflection of our society, the culture is a reflection of our society, and hopefully if any good comes out of COVID-19, and there will be good, coming out of COVID-19, is the realignment of our thought process in recognizing the important role that the different sections in our society plays, so that when we see a sanitation worker, we will not turn up our faces. It is something we in the Technical and Allied Workers Union have been preaching for years and we in the Labour Movement have been preaching for over fifty (50) years; that we are all workers and we belong to the same working class. But, I want to extend it now, we are all one people, because whether you are a Sanitation worker, you are a GRENLEC worker, or you are a Nurse, or you are a Doctor, or you are a Politician, or you are a Minister, COVID-19 is no respecter of people.

Let us, as a people, recognize the contribution that our workers have made and continue to make, and that is why we are saying it is unfair, that the first thing that an employer may want to do is to say, look, take your vacation. Even in the context of the workplaces, where, for instance, Mr. President, some of these businesses are still operating, even if not in full force, where some workers are working from at home; so the question of revenue will be reduced, we accept that, but we are certain that in a number of instances, it will not redound to a loss; in other words the Company will not go into the red. But, what seems to be guiding some of these considerations, Mr. President, is the factor of what is your profit margin; in other words, how much could I make in comparison to last year, in this period, when COVID-19 is here.

We are prepared to discuss with employers on a case-by-case basis, and we want to encourage everyone to do this. But, it should be in the context of the points that we have raised before; that where, for instance you have had many good years, it is just not right, it is just not humane enough to want the worker to make all of the sacrifices

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upfront. Mr. President, we are not saying 'no' to sacrifices; the question is procedure, timing and when; procedure, timing and when.

In ending, because I have identified, through you, Mr. President, with a number of the statements made, especially by Senator De Allie, to say that we have to continue the discussion on where do we go , and how do we go, because there will be a number of opportunities for us to realign the development pattern of our country, that of Agriculture, and I look forward to the contribution of Senator, Doctor Dunstan Campbell, that Agriculture must be placed back on the pedestal where it ought to have belonged.

Tourism is important, yes, but Tourism must be used in the period, when it is good to make as much as possible to develop Agriculture; and we must use Agriculture to do the different Sectorial links, because there are lots of possibilities there; that I know, Dr. Dunstan Campbell will address.

But in ending once again, through you, Mr. President, to indicate our deepest appreciation to all of the workers for the contributions that they have made and the sacrifices that they have made. Our Police Officers... and it was in this very building, during the Budget Debate, Mr. President, that I made that plea for the Police Officers. The condition that they operate under, could you imagine – and that's why they must also be singled out for praise – the conditions under which our Security Forces have operated, hats off and salutations to you. No proper place to sleep, the majority of them, no proper kitchen; you saw the photos, but yet still I do not think anyone would, for one moment, question the commitment of our Law Enforcement Officers. Coming out of COVID, if nothing else, just as how we have made the plea for the workers to be made permanent, our Security Forces must be given better accommodation, better facilities. I know it would cost, and I know we are not there yet, but we have to commit ourselves to that in a real way. And, you can hear the passion and the strong sense of resolve that people like Superintendent Vannie Curwen. This is not someone you can see at the Force is not doing this because that is what is required of them. You can see they are part and parcel and they believe in it; the Acting Commissioner, the same thing, the hierarchy of the Police Force. And through you, Mr. President, the Leader of Government's Business made an appeal to the Labour Movement to work, and we gave



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that commitment, but we must be involved in the Policy making and discussions. We cannot be left out and we ought not to be left out. We must not be hearing things by the way. Labour is too important. Labour is too important to be hearing things by the way and not sitting at the Table where the Policy positions are being discussed. When, as was quite rightly pointed out through you, Mr. President, I don't think anyone would believe that Labour is not directly involved. I don't think anyone in this House would believe that the Trade Union Movement is not involved in the Policy decisions and discussions, at a National level.

As our colleagues on 'That Side' had indicated, the role and function that Labour played during the Structural Adjustment Programme is a clear testimony of the commitment of Labour. And, if we have to get most of these things right, as much as is possible, as it relates to Labour and the country as a whole, Organized Labour must have representation at those levels. It is not enough. We cannot force ourselves in. If the Government values Organized Labour, demonstrate it, have Organized Labour as a voice of the Working Class, the voice of the Working Class. Organized Labour is the vanguard of the Labour Movement. The Labour Movement is broader than the Trade Union Movement, but the Trade Union Movement is the vanguard of the working class. It is the vanguard of the Labour Movement, and, therefore, Organized Labour, as the vanguard of the Labour Movement, if the Government values the vanguard of the Labour Movement, the Labour Movement ought to have representation, at the highest level, where these Policy matters are discussed, and not, as we had on Wednesday, we got a call from the Ministry of Finance, where I was invited to a hurried meeting, which I took.

Let me say this, regardless of the concerns that we have, the importance of what is happening now, we will put up our hands and roll. We got involved in a discussion only to recognize that we have only been involved in what they call, in the Ministry of Finance, the implementation stage. So, concerns that we had, or questions that we were asking, could not have been answered, because that is beyond us. So, the Labour Movement, Organized Labour had been relegated; maybe it was an oversight on the part of the Government. I am prepared to accept that, because the way we

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operated together, during the period of the Structural Adjustment Programme, must be testimony of the importance of Labour, Private Sector and Government, the tripartite arrangement, which has carried us through, and, therefore, we are prepared to believe that it was an oversight on the part of the Government and they would rectify that in going forward, almost immediately, so that the Labour Movement could be properly represented by the vanguard of the Labour Movement, which is Organized Labour.

I wish everyone to stay safe, to continue to take care. We call upon the country, as a whole, to give support to the Authorities, as we go forward. We know it is not an easy task, but we are confident, absolutely confident that we will rise out of this. We will not die. This country will not crash. I am absolutely confident about that. We are a resilient people. We will put our back to the task. We will work together, but let us do it with respect. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator Stiell, I know time is drawing nigh. Senator Cadet.

**Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet:** Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, we are all here today, because of the power of God. It didn't have to take this crisis for us to acknowledge and know that He exists, but in times like these, when it feels that there is no end at the tunnel, that our hope and our strength is renewed in Him. The Great Book says, Psalms chapter 147 verse 5: **"Great is our Lord and abundant in power, His understanding is beyond measure."**

Mr. President, the novel corona virus disease pandemic is deemed as one of the worse flu pandemic in modern times. This virus, affecting approximately two hundred and ten (210) Countries and Territories, causing a total of one hundred and thirty thousand (130,000) deaths and has decimated the global economy, Grenada not being spared. As a small Island and a dominant tertiary level economy, this pandemic has severely hurt our country and our people.

The significant loss of jobs due to the closure of hotels, limited to no activity in Construction and the instant departure of over three thousand (3,000) SGU students.

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And, it is important to note that the St. George's University represents about 20% of our Gross Domestic Product, affecting Rental Companies, Farmers, Restaurants and a number of small businesses, hence, resulting in the projection of an economic decline, the first decline in seven (7) years, since taking Office in 2013.

Mr. President, it must be known, it must be recorded that no country in the world was prepared for this, not even the Great United States of America, as it is shown that they are one of the hardest hit. The world was more prepared for a World War than for this virus. Understanding that fact, Mr. President, I am giving my unwavering support to this Stimulus Package. This additional fifty million dollars (\$50 m) will cushion the effect of the economic fallout due to this pandemic, especially for people and Companies that are hardest hit.

Mr. President, the ability of the Government to provide this economic stimulus must not go unmentioned. This didn't happen by wishful thinking, it happened because of a visionary approach to governance and our prudent management of our country's resources.

Mr. President, you would recall from our last debate, some careless and reckless statements were made, and I don't want to get into politics, but some careless and reckless statements, at the last Budget Debate, where a particular Senator would have asked, what's the rush in reducing our Debt to GDP Ratio? You would recall, Mr. President, when an informed and poorly researched question, asking of the validity of our Fiscal Responsibility Act. Mr. President, I trust now that their views would have changed, as it relates to our actions.

The Government's committed twenty million dollars (\$20 m) for payroll support would go a long way to help workers, who have been seriously affected, and who have been worrying in this time about their financial well-being. Clearly, Mr. President, this amount would not finance their entire salary for a given month, as it would have been said in another place, about 40%, it would cover about 40% of their monthly salary, but it would definitely help. And, I believe the Private Sector, because some of them would have done well before this pandemic, should chip in and help those workers.

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Some of these Companies, Mr. President, as I mentioned, it is really the moral thing to do at this point-in-time, to take care of your employees in these difficult times. You are not the only one feeling it. We are all in this together; the additional five million dollars (\$5 m) for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise business, soft lending facility at the Grenada Development Bank, Mr. President, I am encouraging the businesses that would have fallen in these categories to apply.

Mr. Winston Churchill once said: "Never waste a good crisis..." And, I believe that philosophical view must be adopted by small business. Now is the time to look at your model, your strategy and see the opportunities that exist in this crisis. Mr. President, I have no doubt that we will emerge stronger.

Mr. President, the Government's contribution to subsidize 30% reduction in electricity to consumers for three (3) months, clearly, Mr. President, we know that the Government cannot bail out everyone, but this initiative is a clear signal of the Government's attempt to reach all Grenadians, especially our vulnerable citizens. Mr. President, we should not underestimate how serious this Pandemic has affected some people. And I am saying this, Mr. President, because during that period of the great lockdown, I have seen some people trivialized some things; people making fun of some people's situation. You heard people made statements of people standing in line to buy crux or cheese or a pound of flour. Mr. President, this hurt me to the core, because some people are really going through some hard times, and buying the pound, or buying the crux may have to last them for a long period of time. And, therefore, Mr. President, I believe this 30% reduction in electricity would put more money in the hands of the ordinary people and that would help them care for themselves and their family.

I heard a statement earlier that that won't help, and sometimes I ask myself, why this heavy defense for that particular Company? Why? It is just that every time something comes up, and, Mr. President, the history would show, and as the Senator rightly said, in the future we will have that discussion and history would be recorded that we have made the best decision, as it relates to the state of our electricity.

Mr. President, I want to also speak of the situation with our Banks, because at that particular time I understand the decision by the Banks to protect their workers and

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rightfully so, Mr. President. But, we have to understand that a lot of people were affected. Some people, who do not use the debit and credit cards, were unable to withdraw funds. I know of the situation of a young lady whose card would have expired and at the initial stages she was unable to buy food and had to borrow money to do so.

But, Mr. President, what I admire about this situation is the Government's response. Clearly, we didn't get everything right; we didn't get everything perfect at first, because we weren't prepared for it. But, they listened and they revised a plan, and that is why I am really proud and I'm really happy that when the Prime Minister would have met with the Bankers and they would have decided to open, I think, yesterday and today and providing the service to the public, Mr. President, I welcomed that and that must be commended, because, Mr. President, it shows that the Government is listening and people are having a direct say in what is happening, and we must commend this, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I want to also talk about the psychological support that is needed; and I read the extent of this and this is really important, the need for psychological support at this particular time. Mr. President, this is very important, because COVID didn't only affect the economy, but it caused psychological distress.

We have seen, Mr. President, in some places, like in Germany where a Finance Minister would have committed suicide. The same situation in a video I have seen recently where a lady would have jumped off a bridge. Mr. President, I am sure there are many people here who are deeply affected, psychologically, by this virus. Several Grenadians, in the Diaspora, have lost their lives due to this pandemic. Some of them are breadwinners; some of them provided much needed funds to the Homes here. And, so, Mr. President, I know it is a hard time for them, and they have to deal with the situation.

I have a friend, who would have lost her Mom, and I know that mother would have been helping that family and now I know that that family is now going through some real tough times; and I think we need to look at this, Mr. President, and put more resources into the Ministry of Social Development, not only financially, but also, Mr. President, we have to increase the manpower, to ensure that we have the productivity,

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to ensure that we could serve the people who are going through this tough and trying times.

It is said, Mr. President, long after COVID, people would have to deal with the psychological trauma. So, Mr. President, I believe this has taught us a number of lessons, and I just want to highlight three (3). This crisis has taught us a couple things, at least, in the initial stages. All small business operations, including our farmers, need to be registered and have proper records.

Mr. President, we have seen, when we announced the shutdown, farmers started saying that they need to the land, they need to go take care of their animals; and one of the requirements was that you have to be a registered Farmer, so you'll go to the nearest Police Station; a number of them was not registered.

Mr. President, after this, we would have to ensure that our farmers and with the help of the Senator, who is representing the farmers, that they register. It is important that they do. It is important that they do, Mr. President. And, also, Mr. President, we'll also need to provide the necessary training for them, in keeping proper records, because some of the incentives that they would have, as it is happening now, some of them need to access; they need to provide the necessary records, and some may be unable to do so. So, this will help in strengthening certain businesses and improving the capacity of these individuals.

Mr. President, improvement number two; from this, no doubt, our Healthcare System will emerge stronger. As a result of this, we have more ventilators and more PPEs. Our doctors and nurses are better able to respond, in the event that we do have another pandemic. But, this also calls, Mr. President, for us to document this. It is important that we document this, what we have learnt, the dos and the don'ts, what worked and what didn't. This will help future generations and leaders to understand how to deal with another flu pandemic, if or when another one arises.

Mr. President, one of the reasons the world was so ill-prepared in dealing with this pandemic is the fact that we have to look back one hundred (100) years ago, the Spanish Flu, and looking back, Mr. President, there is still no document on how we should respond. There is little understanding of the Spanish Flu. So, Mr. President, this

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virus, this pandemic will definitely help Science, it will help shape policies and plans to better be able to respond and deal with another pandemic. It is only the wise thing, Mr. President, that we learn from this situation.

Point three, get back on our plan to diversify the economy. We need to do that, Mr. President. We need to ensure our Agricultural Sector is fortified, our Tourism Sector is more resilient and we need to explore new frontiers for economic growth. This is important for Small Island State Economies. We have released, I know we have had the Blue Growth Plan, and I know that we are making strides in that direction, but we need to look at other economic pillars, definitely.

It is very rare that we usually get crises like this sort and more so hence the world is ill-prepared to respond to this, because as I mentioned the last one was one hundred years ago, and if the other one will take one hundred years from now, Mr. President, we should ensure that our generation is better prepared.

So, in closing, Mr. President, I just want to express gratitude to our people that are making enormous sacrifices for this country, our Healthcare workers, our Nurses, Doctors, Police Officers, Custom Officers, our Garbage Collectors, Shopkeepers, those that are packing the shelves at the Supermarkets, our Service Attendants at the Gas Stations, we thank you and we appreciate your service. You are showing the true meaning of commitment and service. You get up every morning, putting your families and your life at risk, and you are doing so, because you really want to help this country. You are not wearing capes, but you are definitely our heroes in this fight. We thank you very much.

The team at the Ministry of Finance, how can I forget them? One of the hardest tasks now, Mr. President, is to rebuild this Economy. I say thank you for your selfless service. The Economic Stimulus Package would not have been possible without your guidance.

Mr. President, I also thank the media personnel and all those, who are involved in ensuring and helping in disseminating the information, providing great yeoman service to this country, not all, but a vast majority. I want to speak, Mr. President, of one. I know of one Radio Station that have done exceptionally well. It's a rural Radio

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Station, REAL FM. They don't have as much sponsorship as a lot of Radio Stations would have, but, Mr. President, I can speak to them, because every morning, you will hear their dissemination of the information, ensuring that it reaches the people. And, Mr. President, I want to thank the team there. I know there are other Radio Stations, and I want to commend them, Wee FM and the others, all part of this in ensuring that they are disseminating the information to the public. We thank you for your service.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to thank the Prime Minister, the man, who is directing this show. Mr. President, if it is one thing I am thankful for is that he is at the helm, guiding us in these trying times. Many of us are sleeping good at nights, because he has been through crises before. We have done it. He has guided us through Hurricane Ivan, Hurricane Emily, brought us back after bad governance in 2008 to 2013, and, no doubt, that he and his team and the Grenadian populace, would definitely bring us back through this crisis.

Mr. President, leadership matters at this time, and I want to thank the Prime Minister, Mr. President. I know it is a very difficult time for him. We all are asking for more, but the question is, where more is coming from? Our Ports are shut, no revenue coming in, and we would have heard him earlier today, said that they have not collected more than five million dollars, so far. And, yes, I know we have to reach more people, but, Mr. President, it is very difficult times; and he rightly said that the word now would be 'sacrifice'. It would be sacrifice.

And, so, Mr. President, I believe this economic stimulus is a start, and it definitely is going to go a long way. It is going to touch a lot of people, maybe not as many as we would like, but we are all in this together. It is not only Government, the Private Sector needs to be involved, the NGOs need to be involved, the Labour Fraternity need to be involved, the Youth, we all need to be involved in this fight. And, Mr. President, I have no doubt that we will emerge and we will definitely emerge stronger. Thank you.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Cadet. Senator the Honourable Dr. Dunstan Campbell.



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**Sen. the Hon. Dr. Dunstan Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. President. I would not be very long. In fact, I have listened to all the presentations, and I have noted the points raised; and, in fact, up to what was said with regards to the other Sectors that were affected by COVID, I think that we are on target.

But, as I go through the documents, I notice that, again, Agriculture and Fisheries were not included. If it is there, then I have missed the point. But, what would I say to my constituents, when I get out there, those guys, who have lost, because they could not have exported, the borders were closed? What would I say to the farmers, who couldn't pay their workers, because they couldn't sell their produce? What would I say to the fishermen, who had fish, but couldn't export it?

Mr. President, as I said I would be very brief and I would take what my colleague, Senator Christopher De Allie mentioned, in terms of increasing the amounts; that's all I am going to ask here, because, as it is right now, I really cannot support it. I cannot support a Motion that has nothing for a Sector in Grenada that contributes so much to the social and economic development.

So, Mr. President, as is, I'll say that, yes, for the Sectors that are represented here, it's fine. But, for Agriculture and Fisheries, I do not see the support that is needed. There are Farmers, who would be bankrupt. There are Farmers, who would take years to go back, because in Agriculture, we have got quite a number of persons or farmers, who are living from 'hand to mouth', as it were, and when you have a Poultry farmer with one hundred (100) birds, couldn't sell the birds and had to dump them or throw them or get rid of them by some other means, not by sale, this little farmer would not be able to get back into Poultry rearing for a long period of time; and we are saying that if economic support is not given to people like I have just described, then you will find that the livelihood, and I come back to that word 'livelihood and life', it's always going to be part of my presentations; the livelihood, the means of living is gone. Therefore, life is at risk, and we have to address it.

In that Stimulus Package, as I see here, there isn't the means of addressing these people; so, as is, I cannot support this, on the basis of what I regard as left out of the most important Sector. And, we say it is the most important Sector, because we

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contribute food for Food Security and for the health of our population. So, as is, Mr. President, I am looking for more, and this is why I would go towards the proposal by Senator De Allie, to increase it, from fifty to one hundred million, and in so doing, you can include support to the farmers and fishermen, for the loss incurred, as a result of COVID-19. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Dunstan Campbell. Senator the Honourable Glynis Roberts.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would not take too long. However, I have a few suggestions, going forward, although I do not have a particular Sector, so I would talk, well, quite a bit on different aspects, and I will start off with Agriculture, like Senator Campbell was speaking about, in terms of the Stimulus Package.

But, I think this period is calling for us to readjust and reorganize. For example, with the Fishing, what I have noticed, in Woodlands, Woodlands is the new City, Spice Isle Fish House sent out a WhatsApp and said they are selling fish, it's a drive through and the backup of the traffic is all down to Grand Anse Valley to get fish. So, probably, the suggestion is that you can probably partner with this gentleman to get the other fishermen, who are not so established to get their fish out, if they are now able to go to sea.

We can also go back to the times of the Revolution, where we used to do dried fish, so that we can make saltfish. In terms of Agriculture, we can look at harvesting water. Those are things I mentioned in the Budget Debate a few months ago. I even spoke about Mt. Hartman. So, now that we are begging to go back to Agriculture, I would like to ask to be given Mt. Hartman to do agriculture, so I can work in the South to do Agriculture, as a Community Project.

In terms of GRENLEC, I want us to also realize that people's personal consumption, at home, domestic consumption has gone up quite a bit, because we

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have a lot of schooling at home now and working at home now; so that is something we need to look at.

In terms of technology and banking and all of that, someone made the point before that not everyone has a credit card or debit card, so we have to think about those people, as well. Going forward, as we think of post COVID, which I think we should do cautiously, we must, as a country, recognize all the things we signed on to, like 50/50 equality, equity. What I find happens sometimes, when you set up these Committees, we set them up always heavily men, leaving out the women; that's the way I see it, 50/50; and we also need to add simple people, people, who would remember simple things, not always high economics and academics, because that would make life easier for a lot of people. And, I am going right back to the point I made earlier, in terms of the people, who fall through the cracks. We need to find a way to get communities to work again, so that people can adopt three (3) houses. So, if in my community I adopt three (3) houses, this other person adopts three (3) houses, then we would know exactly what's happening, and we would not be getting calls, because a lot of people got caught off-guard, not being able to help themselves and they are hungry.

So, we need to help steer the ship, so I want to say, when we are setting up these communities... and utilize the Senators that we have in here, because they represent other places. I heard Senator Lewis speaking about the Labour Movement should be there too, just as business, just as agriculture. Somebody should be there to lend their voice, so we wouldn't be coming here to say we would not take all these hours; and I notice the Parliament did not even offer some tea, and inside here is rather cold. Nevertheless, we could have gotten some Lemon Grass tea, we could have gotten Moringa, I am not saying we wanted Lipton. Nevertheless, I am happy to have seen all of you again, and thankful that we are safe.

I also want to lend my voice to all the services out there, the Caregivers, who go out to ensure that the people who are on the Programme are looked after. There are lots of unsound heroes. Yesterday afternoon two young people came to my house to drop off food for somebody, who was not there, and I want to commend them, and lots of other people, who would have contributed to vouchers to go into places to give

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people food. There are lots of good people in this country, and I know we would ride this one out, but I want us to be cautious, as we go forward, that we have to think about the points I made before, in terms of women, children and understanding the psychological effects; even babies. I have grandchildren, and now they are behaving so strange, in that they are not accustomed seeing their parents 24/7; so they are used to see Mommy only in the morning, because she is a Chef, they are seeing Daddy in the afternoon, now they are seeing Mommy 24/7, Daddy 24/7; so at a certain time like they are getting crazy; and this is affecting babies, as well, this COVID. So, we have to tread cautiously, see things, relax. I think this is the most critical thing for us to do, is to relax.

I want to commend the Government and all those who are on the COVID Team. They have been responsive. I have been asking questions and they are answering, but I want to also add to all of us, let us exercise patience, relax and reflect. There are lots of things you can do with your time. A lot of us have cupboards, rooms, things that we are not using; and what this has brought us to is that all that we try to accomplish in our lifetime really don't matter now, because with all the clothes we have, we cannot go anywhere. So, I want to suggest to persons, dress up every day. I heard Chris said his wife dresses and goes to work, when he is just relaxed; wear your clothes nicely, make yourself happy and do things; talk to your family. This is what COVID is telling us. We were not talking, we were just running through, talk to your children, talk to your friend, talk to your family, share moments, and we will all pass this by. Thank you very much.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Roberts. Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Thank you, Mr. President. I will wrap up. I wasn't sure, Mr. President, if Senator Roberts was saying that Senator De Allie wears his wife's dress to work. I wasn't sure if my ears were blocked.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** No, no, no let me correct. No, no, let me correct it for the Hansard too. Senator De Allie was saying to us...

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**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** I was just teasing.

**Sen. the Hon. Glynis Roberts:** Okay. No problem.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** I was just teasing. *(Laughter)* Mr. President, I am going to be very brief in wrapping up.

**Mr. President:** We still have another Bill.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** We still have another Bill, but there are some important... this call for more, that the fifty million dollars is not enough. Remember there are other things as part of this package; the next Bill speaks to tax relief, which is supportive of the Stimulus Package. There are other areas that will come.

But, Mr. President, Senator De Allie put forward a number of good suggestions, as to what could come next. I think we have signaled, Mr. President, that this is just the start. This is a Stimulus Package, for a three-month period, which is focused on some very, very specific, vulnerable groups, that's the intention of this. There is recognition that this isn't covering everybody, at this time.

But, I was disturbed by Senator Redhead's comments, again, about more, more, more, with no suggestions, as to what that more could be used for, and more importantly, where is it going to come from? Where is it coming from? And, Mr. President, again, we've signalled that we are speaking to our development partners and the International Community, the World Bank, the IMF, the European Union and various UN Organizations and there are significant resources that we should be able to access, we are seeking to access, and Grenada is able to access these additional resources, and those announcements will follow in due course, because of our fiscal prudence and our history of strong fiscal management, a creation of fiscal space, the following of fiscal rules, the significant reductions in debt.

Again, I heard Senator Redhead speak about debt restructuring; we went through that. A significant period where we cut our debt significantly, halved our debt

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burden over a six year period; reduced our Debt to GDP Ratio, from 108% to 57%, significant reductions, creating fiscal space, that is enabling us to use local resources in order to fund this initial package of fifty million dollars (\$50 m) that is being presented. Again, in terms of where is it coming from, there has to be an appreciation of where we are.

The Minister for Finance spoke earlier today about revenue inflows, whether it is through Customs, Inland Revenue Department, which are significantly down on where it should be, because of the lack of economic activity. We recognize that. So, the calls for more, more, more, we also have to be realistic, as to where that more will come from.

The package is focused on specifically vulnerable groups, and they are most severely impacted by the crisis, whether it is our hotel workers, vendors, small business owners, indigenous hotel owners, bus operators, small contractors, debushers, fishers and farmers are included, Senator Campbell, in that five million dollar package; the Farm Labour Support Programme. Work is ongoing, in terms of the Fisheries Sector in identifying those most vulnerable within that Sector, who requires support. Work is going on with the Division of Fisheries and the Ministry of Finance with regard to defining an appropriate package to support them.

Mr. President, there is also, the Minister for Finance spoke to this, about the establishment of an Economic Task Force, cross party, multi-stakeholder, to, again, look at the future. This is a long road ahead of us, a long, difficult road ahead, with significant uncertainties. So, the approach right now is addressing the immediate, the most vulnerable.

Work would take place, in terms of monitoring how those resources are spent, how effective that support is, the impact that it's having on those particular Sectors and what more needs to be done; and this Economic Task Force would be part of that National initiative, in terms of pooling our combined national human resources, in terms of determining how we move forward.

So, Mr. President, in closing the package put forward is significant. The calls for more are heard, and in due course, there will be other programmes in order to get us

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through these very difficult times; and it is for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for a second reading.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the third reading of this Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

**Mr. President:** Just a reminder that this is a Money Bill, so there was no need for us to go into Committee to take it Part by Part. Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to introduce for first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020.

**Ag. Clerk:** An Act to suspend the specified tax obligation imposed by other Acts of Parliament, to alleviate adverse financial effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, shortly entitled, COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020.

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the Senate be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

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**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the second reading of this Bill. Mr. President, as this is a Money Bill, I wish to signal that we have the Speaker's Certificate attached authorizing us to proceed.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, the COVID-19 Tax Relief Bill, 2020, seeks to suspend specific tax obligations imposed by other Acts of Parliament to alleviate adverse financial effects of the corona disease pandemic, namely the Annual Stamp Tax Act and the Income Tax Act.

Mr. President, Clause 3 of the Act seeks to suspend the tax liability under the Annual Stamp Tax Act for the period the 1<sup>st</sup> of April to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020, and for the sum to be payable between the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2020 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2021.

The Stamp Tax charged under the Act, in respect to any particular year shall be due and payable in nine (9) equal monthly installments between the months of April and December of the year in which the tax is payable; therefore, what we have here, Mr. President, is a deferral of those taxes, those tax payments that would be made in the first three-month period and the third for a period, which would free up resources for those businesses and provide some relief during that period.

Clause 4 seeks to suspend the Corporate Income Tax, tax liability under the Income Tax Act for the period, 1<sup>st</sup> of April, to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020, and for the sum to be payable between the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2020 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2021, again, Mr. President, providing relief to taxpayers, in terms of their tax obligation, for that period; virtually for that period.

So, Mr. President, this is a measure that would provide assistance in this difficult period, to businesses here in Grenada; and it is for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for its second reading.



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**Question proposed.**

**Mr. President:** Senator De Allie.

**Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie:** Thank you, Mr. President. I am going to be short, as well, because I know the evening is drawing long.

Mr. President, we, in the Private Sector, rise to support this Bill, because we were an architect of this, as well. We came to Government and we requested a couple things, postponement, a deferral, as the Leader of Government said, because we understood this was a cash flow situation for us in the Private Sector and any change, or any proposal where we would help with the cash flow of our businesses, to keep us more viable in this difficult time was welcomed; and we went to Government and we made these proposals and we got Government to agree that they would make a deferral to assist with the cash flow of the business that would have had difficulty in this time, going forward. And, as an indirect consequence of this, I suppose my colleague friend in Labour would come back to the issue of whether or not some of these could be applied to keeping staff occupied and paid for as long as possible.

But, I want to raise a point under this that my colleague Senator for Labour raised, on the issue of vacation; and I believe the issue of vacation is not only looked at from the point-of-view of we are forcing staff to take vacation. But, it is also looked at from the point-of-view that if you have earned Vacation Leave that is due in 2020, and we could have you take your vacation in May or June, if this crisis prolongs, then we are certifying or ensuring that members, our employees are paid, because you have to be paid for your vacation, so that is ensuring that you have cash in your hands, as well. So, it is not only from the point-of-view, as the Senator expressed himself, that we are trying to penalize, as how it came across, but we are also are looking to try and help; and that is not the only thing that the Private Sector put forward to assist in these difficult times; that is one mechanism that we are asking to be applied, because we understand, legally, we have to pay people for their vacation. So, it gives employees an extra month, or extra six (6) weeks, based on their vacation that they can have monies

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in their hands and keep them going on, if this prolongs. And, if we have to get to the point where we have to consider rotation of staff or layoffs; so I think it has to be taken in that context, as well, and I didn't hear him raise that, but I just wanted to put that on the Table.

Mr. President, we also, it is not part of this Bill, but it is indirectly there. We got an extension of filing our taxes. The Government agreed that some of us will go to the end of April, and we welcome that extension without any penalties, and that is significant for us, as well, in the Private Sector and all of us, who have to file tax returns.

I want to raise a question on the VAT, and I want to beg consideration on the Government side that under the Act, the Comptroller has the discretion to waive the penalties that could incur for people submitting their VAT returns late; and I know a member of the Ministry of Finance is here, and I hope he can take this forward to his colleagues, that consideration should be given for waiving the penalties under the Act for submissions that may be made late. The 20<sup>th</sup> of April we are supposed to submit and I know a request went out that people should file on time and pay, but, again we have had the challenge in the Private Sector of some of us who don't do our VAT returns ourselves, our Accountants and people who help us couldn't move in the lockdown, so files and access to information to get these prepared would be delayed. So, we are asking the Comptroller to use his discretion under the Act, which gives him the power, with the prodding from the Ministry of Finance. So, we hope and from our Colleagues on the 'Other Side' that at least the penalties would not apply if we file late and some of us advised that we will be late.

The last point I want to make quickly, Mr. President, through you is that when the Leader of Government's Business talks about deferral, that is one thing to help cash flow. But, I think it is also fair enough to announce that Stamp Tax and Corporation Tax is highly predicated on business activities. So, when Stamp Tax is charged on revenues and we have no revenues, there would be no Stamp Tax. And, when Corporation Tax is charged on profit, which comes from revenues and costs that are occurring, there will be no Corporation Tax, there will be Corporation losses, and I want to make this point to my friend in Labour. Profit is not cash flow, and this is a cash flow

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situation in a profit situation. A lot of us, because of the downturn and I heard him talk about we have had good years and profits and so on, but fixed costs for us continues in our businesses, whether we open or not. So, if I have no revenues my costs continue, so I am making losses and that affects my cash flow, because I am burning cash to pay in order, when I have no revenues coming in, so that is the issue for us in the Private Sector, and past performance, the profits have very little to do with cash flow, going forward. Some of us may have the cash, we may have invested, we probably cannot turn the cash over now based on the investments that we made, and that is another consideration. So, I hear him, when he talks about case-by-case, and I think that is important, that we must take it on a case-by-case basis to understand the issue for that particular business. But, from on the Government side if we have reduced business in the next six (6) months and going forward, there is no revenue on the Stamp Tax side and very little on the Corporation side. So, I hear, and I know I have asked for more and I did quote the sources from where I think this more could come from, in fairness to my colleagues on the 'Other Side'. I wasn't crazy when I did it, and I know you wouldn't get it from taxes, and I know Customs is down, everything is down, and that is understandable. But, I did explore the other avenues where I think the more could come from. So, with that, Mr. President, I rest. Thank you.

**Mr. President:** Senator De Allie, I think what is being proposed is a certainty of source. The other source to which you may refer is one in which you may go fishing. And, as the goodly Doctor would tell you, not every day is catching day for fishermen. So, I think it is something, just a little humour to interject there. Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** In closing, Mr. President, again, this is an important component in that Stimulus Package in which it provides real value, as we have heard from Senator De Allie, to the Private Sector, in terms of helping with cash flow, notwithstanding the longer term implications, in terms of revenues.

But, the point that you made with pulling in Labour into the discussion, it's clear that it takes two (2) hands to clap and it is a situation where employer and employee

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with the assistance of Government needs to work closely together, as we navigate these very difficult waters that we have ahead. And there needs to be a full appreciation, when there are calls for more, where that more comes from, whether it's on the Labour side, whether it's Private Sector, whether it is from Government, whether it is from the taxpayer, where that more comes from in these difficult times.

So, Mr. President, in concluding, the discussions will continue with the road ahead, as I said earlier, it is going to be a long and difficult one, and we need to continue to monitor, we need to continue to work together, in terms of coming up with measures that are in the best interest of all, and it is for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for its second reading.

**Mr. President:** Thank you, Senator Stiell.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

**Mr. President:** Again, Honourable Members, this is a Money Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

**Ag. Clerk Assistant:** Item 16 - Public Business.

Item 17 - Adjournment.

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**Mr. President:** Senator Stiell.

**Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell:** Mr. President, I move the adjournment **sine die**.

**Question proposed.**

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Mr. President:** Just to announce, Senators, that there is take away dinner, consistent with the Protocols, that you can have dinner taken away is available, and I want to take the opportunity to wish all of you a very good evening and safe return to your homes.

**Senate adjourned sine die @ 8:31 p.m.**

**PREPARED BY**

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