MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, MT. WHELDALE, ST. GEORGE'S ON FRIDAY 09TH SEPTEMBER, 2022 @ 10:00 A.M.

PRESENT

		St. David **Chairman**
Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP	-	Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Information, Disaster Management & Public Administration & Minister for Finance
		St. Patrick West
Honourable Joseph Andall, MP	-	Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development
		St. Andrew South-West
Honourable Lennox John Andrews, MP	-	Minister for Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative Economy, Agriculture & Lands, Fisheries & Cooperatives
		Carriacou & Petite Martinique
Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP	-	Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government
		St. Patrick East
Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP	-	Minister for Infrastructure and Physical Development, Public Utilities & Civil Aviation and Transportation
		St. John
Honourable Kerryne Z. James, MP	-	Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy

		St. George North-East
Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead, MP	-	Minister of State wrf Youth & Sports within the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture
		St. South St. George
Honourable Andy Williams, MP	-	Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation
		St. George North-West
Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP	-	Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition
		St. Mark
Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP	-	Member
		St. Andrew North-East
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP	-	Member
		St. Andrew North-West
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP	-	Member

ABSENT

		St. George South-East
Honourable Philip A. Telesford, MP	-	Minister for Social & Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs
		Town of St. George
Honourable Peter David, MP	-	Member (*Excused Tendered*)

		St. Andrew South-East
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP	-	Member of Parliament *(Excuse tendered)*

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Andrew Augustine	-	Clerk of Parliament
Mrs. Raquel Morgan	-	Recording Secretary (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Ms. Janelle Palmer	-	Recording Secretary (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Mr. Gayvon Mark	-	IT Officer (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Ms. Naphila John	-	IT Officer (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Mr. Mike Sylvester	-	Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Finance)
Mr. Justin Hazzard	-	Chief Budget Officer (Ag.) (Ministry of Finance)
Ms. Chaevanne Britton	-	Chief Policy Analyst

COMMENCEMENT

The Clerk of Parliament called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and introduced the resource members of staff of the Office of the Houses of Parliament in attendance.

The Chairman, Honourable Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell thanked the Clerk and introduced the Agenda items.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell indicated that the Item, Procedural Matters was omitted from the agenda which would normally come after the agenda item - Prayers.

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PRAYERS

An opening prayer was said by Honourable Joseph Andall, Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West.

WELCOME

The Chairman, welcomed all to the meeting.

EXCUSE

Excuses for absence was made on behalf of Honourable Emmalin Pierre and Honourable Peter David. The Chairman indicated that Honourable Philip Telesford advised that he would be late.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition commented on the absence of two Members of the Opposition which were due to an important previous engagement set before the scheduled date of the Standing Committee on Finance meeting. He stated that every Member of Parliament was considered equally important to the functioning of the State, and that a method of scheduling meetings convenient to all Members should be established, to enable efficiency and coherence while conducting the business and functions of Parliament.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition also indicated that he was informing the Chairman of the Finance Committee, after consultation with his Members that he was recommending the nomination for the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives would be Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition for his comments and recommendations, reiterating the challenges faced with making arrangements for the Opening of the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament, and the scheduling of the Finance Committee Meeting. He indicated that draft schedules would be prepared for the rest of the Session to alleviate problems going forward.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Chairman requested that the Agenda be adopted and the Committee accepted same.

CONSIDERATION OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES FOR THE YEAR 2022

The Chairman introduced the 2022 Supplementary Estimates Vote by Vote as set out hereunder for approval.

VOTE 01 - Governor-General - $168,000.00

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition commented on the proposed supplementary allocation for the Integrity Commission pointing out that due caution must be taken in granting approval of requests by Departments for additional funds outside of the annual budgetary allocation.

The Chairman acknowledged comments made by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Agreed.

VOTE 10 - OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER - $100,000.00

Agreed.

VOTE 12 - POLICE - $1,265,000.00

The Chairman introduced the following items under Vote 12:

I. The purchase of a fire tender for use at the Carriacou Fire Department - $883,000.00

Honourable Dr. Modeste questioned whether a fire tender for use in Petite Martinique was given consideration.

Honourable Dr. Modeste commented on discussions that were held regarding the need for fire tenders for St. Mark and St. David which could be included in the up-coming budgetary cycle.

The Chairman stated that a response would have to be given at a later date with regards the allocation of a fire tender for Petite Martinique. He expressed his support for the provision of fire tenders for the parishes of St. Mark and St. David.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition reiterated his support to recommendations made.

Honourable Tevin Andrew endorsed the comments made by the Members with regards to the procurement of fire tenders for the areas discussed.

II.	Training of 75 new recruits (meals) – 75pers*@120dys;	-	$360,000.00
III.	Training of 75 new recruits (uniforms)	-	$ 22,000.00

Agreed.

VOTE 16 - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE & EXPORT DEVELOPMENT - $1,000,000.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 16, - Rationalization of all Diplomatic Appointments, Outstanding rents and salaries for Miami, China and New York Missions.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition requested detailed information on the expenditure for Vote 16 to be made available by the next Standing Committee on Finance and the subsequent Sitting of the House of Representatives.

Honourable Joseph Andall gave a brief breakdown in answer to the request made by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition enquiry on expenditure for the foreign Missions discussed. He indicated that the specifics of the information would be submitted through the Clerk.

Agreed.

VOTE 20 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE - $26,440,000.00

The Chairman introduced the following items under Vote 20:-

I.	Get Going Grenada Go Green (5G) Project	-	$ 400,000.00
II.	GDB Special Loan GOG Full Time Workers:	-	$10,000,000.00
III.	GDB For Student Loans & Low Cost Housin (New Project)	-	$15,000,000.00
IV.	Utilities	-	$ 540,000.00
V.	Refund of fuel subsidy (New project)	-	$ 500,000.00

The Chairman indicated that the projects were scheduled to be completed by the end of 2022, hence the inclusion of funding under the Supplementary Estimates.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition asked that the date of Cabinet approval for the projects be provided for the record.

The Chairman confirmed that the date of approval for the projects were set by Cabinet during the period of the New National Party (NNP) Administration.

Honourable Joseph Andall enquired about the installation of the security cameras under the Go Green Project and whether they were applied to the exterior of the facilities and or also to the interior of the facilities such as in classrooms.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition informed that the then Ministers for Education and Energy, who were responsible for the project would be better able to answer the question asked by Honourable Joseph Andall.

Discussions were held on the Go Green (5G) Project (installation of security cameras) and it was agreed that the issues raised would be given further review before going forward.

Honourable Joseph Andall asked whether the GDB Special Loans Project were unsecured loans.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition indicated that with the Banks involvement there would have had to be adherence to established conditions and regulations by the bank for approval for the loans.

It was agreed that the requested dates of Cabinet approval for the projects for 2022 under Vote 20 would have to be obtained..

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition recommended that allocated funds for the items, Students Loans and Low Cost Housing be separated.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition for the recommendation.

In the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition's comment on the item, Refund of Fuel Subsidy, (margin loses on fuel to service providers), he requested a more detailed breakdown on the costs incurred.

The Chairman agreed to provide the details of the costs incurred.

Agreed.

VOTE 21 - PENSIONS AND GRATUITIES - $60,000,000.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 21, payment of retroactive pension and gratuities to Public Officers as per the 29th March, High Court ruling, 2022 which declared the Pension Disqualification Act unconstitutional.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition requested a breakdown of the categories of persons to be paid and within what period of time determined for disbursement of funds to recipients.

The Chairman agreed to provide the information requested by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Agreed.

VOTE 27 - MINISTRY OF MOBILIZATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSFORMATION - $602,190.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 27 in their three categories:

(i) Personal emoluments	-	$496,562.00
(ii) Allowances and	-	$ 32,400.00
(iii) Contracts, Outsourcing and Other services	-	$ 73,228.00

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition requested a breakdown of the costs of all the categories under Vote 27.

The Chairman agreed to provide the details as requested by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Agreed.

VOTE 30 - MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC UTILITIES, CIVIL AVIATION & TRANSPORT - $88,575,553.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 30 which comprised of the following categories:

i.	Caribbean Regional Air Transport Connectivity Project (CATCOP)	-	$1,075,553.00
ii.	Construction, Refurbishment & Ext. Gov't Buildings	-	$6,000,000.00

iii.	Road Improvement & Maintenance Programme	-	$5,500,000.00
iv.	St. Patrick Road Network (Old)	-	$5,000,000,00
v.	Asphalt Work	-	$5,000,000.00
vi.	Concrete Work	-	$20,000,000.00
vii.	Agriculture Feeder Roads	-	$6,000,000.00
viii.	Renovation & Extension Programme – Schools	-	$8,000,000.00
ix.	Retrofitting of the Traffic Lights	-	$4,000,000.00
x.	St. John's Flood Control Project	-	$11,500,000.00
xi.	Mollinere Landslip Rehabilitation Project	-	$2,500,000,00
xii.	Project Design Services	-	$4,000,000.00
xiii.	Mt. Kumar Road Construction	-	$8,000,000.00
xiv.	Lighting of Playing Fields	-	$2,000,000.00

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition expressed that one major area of concern was the category that included the Fortnight Workers Programme on the Roads, and whether the stated allocation of $10 million for that category would be sufficient. He enquired if the allocated funds included payments for work already done, ongoing and for the rest of the year.

The Chairman acknowledged the comments made by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, indicating that the matter would be noted and re-examined going forward.

Honourable Kate Lewis enquired as to whether the $20 million allocated for Concrete Works was for works already tendered and approved for by the previous Administration and ongoing. Honourable Lewis requested an itemized list be provided of the works to be done throughout the constituencies for awareness purposes.

The Chairman agreed to provide the breakdown of works done and to be completed under the specified category.

Honourable Dennis Cornwall informed that the 280 contractual arrangements that fell under the Concrete Works category, was approved by the last Administration, and were projects in the pipeline which were being executed. He confirmed that there were no new projects for implementation under the Concrete Works category.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition asked whether there would be additional projects beside what was contracted during the previous Administration in the pipeline for the rest of the year. He indicated that additional projects would have to be supplementally budgeted for.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition for his remarks and suggestions.

Agreed.

VOTE 35 - MINISTRY OF SOCIAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & GENDER AFFAIR - $8,000,000.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 35 - To accommodate an increase in payment to SEED Beneficiaries of $150 per beneficiary for a period of 12 months, effective January 2022.

Agreed.

VOTE 36 - MINISTRY OF CARRIACOU & PETITE MARTINIQUE AFFAIRS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT - $1,335,000.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 36 by the following categories:

i. To accommodate an increase in payment to SEED Beneficiaries in Carriacou effective January 2022. - $1,100,000.00

ii. To pay subvention towards the staging of Carriacou Regatta Festival and Carriacou Parang Festival 2022. - $ 235,000.00

Agreed.

VOTE 40 – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS & CULTURE

- $4,717,248.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 40 - by the following categories:

i. Increase in subvention to TAMCC due to salary increases. - $2,217,248.00

The Chairman agreed to take the suggestion that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made earlier to include the date of Cabinet approval.

ii. To facilitate construction/refurbishment of Seamoon Cultural Centre. - $2,500,000.00

Honourable Kate Lewis stated that the project was very important for the community and Grenada as a whole, and was happy that the Government saw the need to continue to budget to have it completed, indicating that she fought long and hard to get it off the ground.

The Chairman noted the comment and thanked the Honourable Member.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition mentioned that the Minister for Works didn't have a choice to continue with the project since that was an obligation and if not honoured could end in lawsuits.

Agreed.

VOTE 50 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH, WELLNESS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS - $2,300,000.00

The Chairman introduced Vote 50 by the following categories:

i. Other Services (Grencase) - Salary allocation for sixty-five Nursing Assistants trained - $500,000.00

ii. General Hospital: Other Goods and Services: Contracts, Outsourcing and other Services - Service fees to individuals employed using mode of engagement; Transport and other service contracts - $500,000.00

iii. Princess Royal Hospital: Supplies and Materials - Procurement of Supplies and Materials- Food, fuel etc. for Princess Alice Hospital - $100,000.00

iv. Other Goods and Services -Payment of Service fees to individuals on contract and procurement of other services e.g. staff transportation and security - $100,000, 00

Honourable Delma Thomas indicated that work had started at Princess Alice Hospital as it related to small surgery and laboratory work, and therefore enquired of the status of those services for the people of St. Andrew and St. Patrick to utilize the Mirabeau Hospital instead of having to go to St. George's Hospital.

The Chairman responded by indicating that his Government would certainly continue to support that initiative and would find avenues for expansion and improvement of those services. He pointed out that localised primary health care would be given more support and put greater focus on providing the necessary services to the citizens of Grenada which would reduce the number of persons going to the General Hospital emergency facilities.

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen applauded the policy by the Chairman and added that although the Gouyave Medical Facility had staffing and procurement challenges it should also be considered for expansion since that Centre could service the western corridor and would be an asset to provide timely medical assistance.

The Chairman thanked the Honourable Member and declared that he believed that both Minister's Andall and James would also be in agreement. He stated his desire to visit the premises in the near future.

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen also offered to give her support for the development of that facility.

The Chairman thanked the Member for her expression of support.

Agreed.

v. Rental Expense - Rental of Property. - $ 100,000.00

- The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition expressed that there was a growing tendency of government over the years to acquire rental properties which would have to be addressed. He articulated that additional ownership of Government buildings should be looked into and indicated that such an initiative would be supported by the Opposition.

- The Chairman thanked the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition for his comment and stated that the matter had been a concern to him also and commented on the sprawling rentals that existed with inadequate accommodations. He stated that policies would need to be developed to address those challenges. He also pointed out that digitization and the use of information technology would play a pivotal role going forward. He emphasized his appreciation and agreement with the suggestions made by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

vi. Other Goods and: Contracts Outsourcing and Other Services - Services fees for healthcare staff and other providers. - $1,000,000.00

Agreed.

Recurrent Expenditure - $2,300,000.00

vii. CDS Early Access Financing Grant - Public Awareness Programs related to the Covid-19 pandemic and to address vaccine hesitancy. - $200,000.00

Agreed.

Capital Expenditure - $ 200,000.00

Grand Total - $2,500,000.00

TOTAL SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION - $194,702,991.00

CAPITAL GRANT $59,600,000.00

CAPITAL LOCAL $56,883,000.00

CAPITAL LOANS $1,075,553.00

RECURRENT EXPENDITURE $77,144,438.00

GRAND TOTAL $194,702,991.00

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman thanked the Members as he concluded formal business. He mentioned that the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition had raised some procedural issues at the start.

Honourable Delma Thomas asked for clarity on the apparent omission of an allocation for the Constituency offices though it were reverted back to Parliament.

The Chairman explained that he would have the matter clarified with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition provided an explanation to the effect of the Vote for Parliamentary Constituency Offices being placed under the Prime Minister's Office, during his administratino. He expressed that there was absolutely no intention as far as the Government was concerned for the Prime Minister's Office to be responsible to make payments to Parliamentary Offices, however it was a decision made by all concerned and the Clerk at the time who had a difficulty in accepting responsibility to disburse payments which resulted in the late payment to staff, rental and utilities. Conveniently, it was placed in the Prime Minister's Office who had no staff to manage or implement that particular item, hence the reason why a vendor was sourced. He expressed that he had spoken to the present Clerk specifically about the issue who would have to undertake that responsibility, but would have to be provided with the necessary support.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition pointed out that the total Supplementary Appropriation was close to $200 million dollars with Recurrent Expenditure over $77 million which he considered to be a tremendously high sum that the international community and others would look into in terms of the management of the country's affairs.

He recognised that while some of these items were necessary, he advised to be extremely careful with recurrent expenditure because of the Fiscal Responsibility Rules. He further expressed that while it was passed because of the rationale given, it needed to be examined closely in order to modify expenditure because that could have negative effects later.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition said he was concerned that payments to the Parliamentary Offices were stopped even if it was budgeted for the year. He further elucidated on the terms and conditions of a contract and suggested that an enquiry be done to find out why payment to the Parliamentary Constituency Offices were stopped.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition for his comments which he said would be duly noted and would be given the appropriate attention. He further pointed out that issues such as staffing needs would be addressed through the House Committee as the Standing Orders made provisions for such.

ADJOURNMENT

A Motion for the adjournment of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance was moved by the Honourable Joseph Andall and seconded by the Honourable Delma Thomas.

There being no other business, the **Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.**

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Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP
CHAIRMAN