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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

SENATE

Tuesday 15th, Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th December, 2020

(BUDGET DEBATE)

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Senate Budget 2021
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George
On 15th, 16th and 17th December, 2020.

Attendance

PRESENT

Mr. President
Senator the Honourable Chester Humphrey
in the Chair

Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell	Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Judd Cadet	Member
Senator the Honourable Norland Cox	Minister for Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts
Senator the Honourable Winston Garraway	Minister of State with responsibility for Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams	Parliamentary Secretary – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair	Member
Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis	Member
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie	Member
Senator the Honourable Tessa Alexander St Cyr	Member
Senator the Honourable Terry Noel	Member

Prayers
Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a New Senator

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

Sergeant-at-Arms: His Honour, the President.

Mr. President: Good morning, Honourable Members. Senator, the most Honourable Winston Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Members, let us pray.

(Senate Prayer was said)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Please join with me, in saying the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. President: Once again Honourable Members, good morning to you all. Pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. President: The business of this House now commences.

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

Mr. President: Senator the Honourable Roland Bhola.

(Senator the Honourable Roland Bhola proceeds to the Clerk's Table)

Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a New Senator

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: I, Roland Bhola, do swear that I would faithfully bear true allegiance to her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors, according to Law. So Help Me God.

(Senator Bhola signs the Senate Oath Book)

(The Clerk shakes Senator Bhola's hand and welcomes him to the Senate)

(Senator Bhola returns to his seat)

Mr. President: Honourable Members, it is indeed a privileged occasion for me, to welcome, on and in my own behalf, as the Presiding Officer, as well as on behalf of all the other Members of the House, Senator the Honourable Roland Bhola.

Happy am I to see Senator Bhola being elevated, as he is now a bonafidè Member of the Upper Chamber of our Houses of Parliament. Senator Bhola has had a very engaging sojourn in the politics of this country. He has served in the House of Representatives on several occasions, and he has broken the genealogical chain of most politicians in that he decided that he believed that it was time for him to move on and to become an active mentor for our younger Parliamentarians, and on the basis of his own devices, took the necessary steps so to do. In our Caribbean political culture, not many Politicians do that.

He is a gentleman that you would find that is very congenial. I cannot recall an occasion that I have witnessed or I have heard Senator Bhola having any contentious engages at the level of the House. What happens outside of the House is not a matter for me, but certainly, in the House and in the environs of the political exchange that the House affords, he has distinguished himself.

He has been for, I believe, might be two (2) terms, if I am not mistaken, Senator. When I invite you to give your own words, you can correct me. I believe for two (2) terms, he was Minister for Agriculture, I believe. He hails from the Parish of St. Andrew,

and I am fast beginning to believe that what we now have here is a St. Andrew Parish assembly, because so many Members of this House, and if I may count them, to my right, if I now include Senator Bhola, there are three (3) Members, who hail from the Parish of St. Andrew. And then if I go to my left, there are four (4) Members, who hail from the Parish of St. Andrew. So, that in a thirteen (13) Member Assembly, there are seven (7) persons from the Parish of St. Andrew, and I believe I am going to start to make some arguments in respect of the Parish of St. George, **(laughter)** because we are being overwhelmed.

But the truth is, Senators, that we have, in this Senate, quality material, and that's the most important thing, because this is a Chamber of Review, in which we review the decisions made by the elected Representatives and we scrutinise them and I believe the country is satisfied that by-and-large, generally speaking and sometimes on quite a number of specifics, the House of Senate does a remarkable and distinguished job, and I believe we should recognise ourselves for that. **(Applause)**

So, Senator Bhola, I am welcoming you. I expect that you will enliven the House activity and because of your knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure, but not only the Procedure, because representation in the Parliament combines both artistry and knowledge, and I believe that you are able to codify both.

I don't know whether or not you would be as poetic, in your presentations, as Senator Garraway, but I believe, nonetheless, the quality will be, at minimum, the same. But based on your experience and you and I engagement; and the truth is, you know, although for most of your political life, you and I were always on opposite sides, we have never had a contentious relationship, you know. I mean that is the truth. I mean, it's really amazing. It has always been a relationship of mutual respect, very jovial, very Grenadian, I must say in the sense that we are outside of the politics, outside of the arena of combat, and sorry I have to use military language, because this is what debate is, serious debate. It is an arena of combat, but we are not using weapons. The weapon of choice here is one's vocabulary, one's understanding of the Bills that are

before us and the tactical measures, which one may introduce an argument, to which I think Both Sides are well endowed.

We have a Doctoral student on one side; we have a Lawyer on the "Other Side." We have a practicing Agriculturalist both in terms of his administrative experience in Agriculture. We have a Trade Unionist of renowned on the "Other Side." So, I think that the Grenada population is well represented, well represented. And I think the farmers must be proud to have a former Minister for Agriculture, and I believe it's two (2) terms he did, and then we have a Senator, who has just come on, who, certainly, has a lot of energy and I expect by the time you finish your sojourn here, you won't have the same size to keep up the energy that you have.

So, Honourable Members, I just take this brief opportunity and the privilege, as the Presiding Officer to welcome Senator Bhola. You did indicate, when I heard on the radio that you were going to be brief, I hope not, but, of course, these matters are decided in other arenas. But, I know you will feel at home, in the Senate here, and so I take the opportunity, on behalf of all, to welcome you, and to give other Senators a brief opportunity to be able to express their own individual welcomes. They may either wish to do it now, or they may wish to do it, when they stand to make their contributions, at any time during the proceedings. It's purely a matter of choice.

So Senator, once again, a most hearty and warm and fraternal welcome to the House of Senate, and I look forward very much and especially as your maiden debut, the Budget, as you make your debut here, I will sit very intensely, to listen to your contributions.

Honourable Members, I do thank you. So, the floor is open for anyone who wishes to conjoin, or say anything, and as I say you can do it when you rise on another occasion. It's all a matter up to you. Senator Bhola.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Thank you, Mr. President. First, I would like to thank you for your kind words. They were very encouraging, Sir.

I would also like to, very early, use the opportunity to thank all of my colleagues, here, at this Chamber, on both sides of the isle. Many of those I know, some I have worked with before, just, maybe, one or two, are probably new acquaintances.

However, Mr. President, this is actually my second stint as a Senator. Very early, in 2003, before I became a Representative, I had a short stint in the Senate.

Mr. President: I recalled that.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Yes. Maybe it was that short, that brief, that quite a number of people do not remember. But I did, for a couple of months before we went to the Polls in 2003.

(Inaudible comment by the President)

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: That is quite possible. We are all getting there, probably sooner than we want to. But be that as it may, Mr. President, I'd like to express here, in this Honourable House, that my return to the House should not be viewed by anyone, as a means to create confrontation. But I see myself more in the vein as a Member, who has come to break some walls that have started to be established and to create bridges, to reach across the aisles, so that, together, we can enhance the debate that happens in the House, but at the same time ensure that the policies that need to be discussed and the programmes that the Government would like to put forward for the benefit of the people that I add some value to it, and that I may be seen and used as that individual, who can bring some greater sense of reasoning, not that there isn't in the House presently, but can add to what is already there.

I do believe, Mr. President, from what I have seen and heard overtime, that this Assembly has had some great debates, thus far. The people that sit here presently, that they do their best, and that in the discourse that takes place, the public, I believe, is better off, because they can learn, if they listen attentively, and I hope that my presence here will only add to that, Mr. President.

Also, Mr. President, from what you have said, I have served as a Parliamentary Representative on three (3) occasions. And yes, I have been in the Ministry of Agriculture, in my final term, as Minister for Agriculture, but once before, just immediately after Hurricane Ivan when, at the Cabinet level, the Prime Minister did ask for some assistance in Agriculture at that time. It was a period when, as we all know, Hurricane Ivan, probably destroyed 90% or so of our Agricultural Sector and I opted to join our now present Minister for Finance, the Honourable Gregory Bowen, who then, was the Minister for Agriculture, to augment that Ministry and try to bring back Agriculture, as best as we could then.

But, Mr. President, I just hope that this journey, for whatever length of time it may be, that at the end of it, I will be remembered as a Senator who came in, who did and performed his duty in a manner that brought significant progress, not just to this House, but to the people of Grenada, because at the end of the day, I believe that is what most of us aim to do. The fact that we are here, we would understand that we are here to serve and not to be served. And so, when the decision was taken by myself in conjunction of that with my family to step aside from the House and to not participate on the Governmental side of politics; and I want to make it quite clear, I am very much still a politician. I still dabble in the politics, and I will remain there for quite a while, at the Party level. At this level, I was not prepared to re-enter. But, having been asked and the situation being explained to me that someone is needed at this time, to fill the vacant position on 'This Side' of the House, I accepted, on the basis that I may be able to add value, and that is what I want to do. And you know, sometimes you don't, I oftentimes say it, that the best way in which you can win a war, at times, is never to fight it.

So, I am not here to fight any war, or to answer some of what people have been saying. We know Grenadians. We are experts at a lot of things, when it comes, especially, to the utilisation of cell phones and the Tablets and what have you, to put information out. And in the last couple of weeks, I have seen so many things that I did not know about myself and so. And, it's probably good that when given an opportunity

to expose yourself that you get to understand, really, what some people think they know, or what some people believe about you.

But I do hope, also, Mr. President, that I would get the opportunity to learn, because I do not believe, despite the fact that I have passed through both Houses before that I am the repository of all knowledge and information. I believe I still have a very steep learning curb. I believe that the new and modern educated people, who are in this House can still teach me, quite a few things, and I am prepared to learn from them, as well as, I am also absolutely prepared to share whatever knowledge, experience and what skills I have.

So, I look forward, Mr. President, to the time here. I look forward to the debates, as we will engage, I believe, in what should be fruitful debate, probably, even more then the Lower House, because, in the Lower House, we have more presentations than actual debate. But, that we will have rich and fruitful debate here that definitely would cause our people to be better off and to make a much more serious decision.

So, I do thank you, and I thank all of the other Members for welcoming me here, even your staff, Mr. President, they have already expressed, to me, a very cordial welcome, most of them I should say, and I am happy for that. And to just remind you, Mr. President, that it's not only seven (7) Members sitting here that are from St. Andrew, but also your Clerk is a St. Andrew man, in totality, and also a practicing farmer. So, the farmers of this country can feel very proud that there are several of us, within here, that are practicing.

I am a very small farmer, myself, practicing to do a few things that I hope the Senator with responsibility for Agriculture and Fisheries will, at least, look in my direction sometimes, to give me some assistance with what I do, and, together, we can all help the people, who need the assistance the most.

So again, I thank everyone. I don't want to be long. There will be an opportunity, later on, in this House, for me to engage into the debate, and to say a few more things. But, I think that is where I want to stay for now, and to once again, thank everyone here, but also to thank the Honourable Prime Minister and his team for giving me another

opportunity to be of value to this country and to this Parliament. Thank you very much, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, on behalf of the Members on "This Side", we would like to join you in welcoming Senator Bhola to this House. As he has outlined, as you outlined, in your presentation, he is no stranger, whether it is to the Senate, whether it is to that "Other Place", and no stranger to the matters of Government and the politics of this country.

I have had the privilege of working with Senator Bhola in the Ministry of Agriculture, when I first entered this vineyard, and I learnt a great deal, not just about the operations of that Ministry and from a technical perspective, but in terms of his own personal contributions, personal qualities that I believe lend themselves very well, to this House, and the comment about being a bridge builder and breaking down walls. We have an aisle that divides us. But, Mr. President, the discussions and the work of this House go beyond wordplay, wordsmithing and the academics, the intellectual piece on debating Bills.

It's also about furthering the causes, the matters that are brought before this House, whether it is Agriculture, Fisheries, whether it's from Labour, whether it is from business, from the Private Sector, whether it is Members on the "Other Side", who are adding their voice to the National Debate and National Development. We all, at the end of the day have this country's best interest at heart. And I certainly see the Member, as a lot more than just filling an empty seat.

The value that he would bring to this House, we will see demonstrated in the deliberations over the next three (3) days of this debate. And I certainly look forward to his contribution, as I do the contributions of all, as we journey along this path together. So, once again, Mr. President, I welcome Senator Bhola to this Honourable House. **(Applause)**

(The President took a while before he acknowledged Senator St. Cyr)

Mr. President: Sorry, Senator St. Cyr. I missed you. I was trying to pull up something on my computer. Yes, you have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I stand to welcome Senator Bhola. He said he has been here before, but I didn't know that either.

But, in my welcoming him, I particularly like the fact that Senator Bhola said he is here to break some walls that may have been emerging or starting up and to build some bridges, and I am particularly interested in that, and interested, also, in the DIY projects and constructions and renovations, to some extent. He may not necessarily be speaking directly to the physical construction of walls, but again, I am really interested in that and I am looking forward to engaging with him.

Given that we are from the same constituency, it would have been remiss of me not to stand here, this morning, to welcome him. I am at Pearls, I think you are just a little higher up, and so I am anticipating that his presence in the House would augur well for the constituency, and that we will definitely see some of the much needed developmental projects that we know that people are waiting for. So again, welcome Senator Bhola, from our Opposition team, to you. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Good morning, Mr. President, and good morning to our Members.

Mr. President: I have to lower the computer down, because, when I lean back it bars me from seeing.

Maiden Speech: Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Oh, sorry. Yes. So good morning, Mr. President, and good morning to our Members, and of course, I want to give a very hearty welcome to Senator Bhola.

Senator Bhola, to me, is no stranger, from a lot of different angles. In fact, I recalled on the Budget day, we actually pulled up side by side, in the Parking Lot, and so on. We sat close together, and of course, this morning, again, it's like we bought this Park, we parked side by side.

But, more so, right now, in my present residence, Mr. Bhola is just a few minutes away from me. I enjoy his cooking and so on with the boys, in the neighbourhood from time to time, and he boasts about his stews and so on, so we go back in that way. But, from an agriculture way is when I knew Senator Bhola at the Ministry, at the River Antoine Factory. As a farmer himself, we visited him, when I was in my former job at the Marketing Board, and I think, Mr. President, your statements regarding Senator Bhola is so true, in terms of engaging, assisting, being on the ground with the farmers.

In fact, I must say and I always say behind your back and in front your face here, praedial larceny here in Grenada was at a take-off in this country, when Senator Bhola was the Minister for Agriculture. I am not too sure, if this is what he is returning to fix, but I expect a lot and to see some new actions in that regard.

So, I really look forward to working along with you. I know we can meet, not only here, and we know that. We meet many places and I think our farmers will also be happy that we have more representation from the bread basket of this country, but also, in terms of the people who are involved and connected to agriculture. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning to everyone. On behalf of Labour, I rise to welcome Senator Bhola, and it's a bit strange and it's an honour, to be frank with you. I've listened to you over the years.

We, many times, may not share the same views, but I've always respected the way in which you have conducted yourself.

I think I may have picked up and probably it's just an engrained thing in me. On "This Side", when my dear sister Senator here, said that you are from the same constituency, I recognised the choice of words. I do not know what that may mean in the not distant future, but I look forward to the engagement. I look forward, on behalf of Labour to your contributions, and in particular, I know we are not there yet, in terms of the debate, but given where we are, in terms of our county's future and your background in agriculture, I look forward to your interventions. So once again, welcome and thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator Lewis. I think we can move on.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: 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 Tuesday 10th November, 2020, be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

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 Tuesday, 10th November, 2020, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 5 - Messages from the Governor General.
Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. President.

Mr. President: Honourable Members, as I am sure that you are aware, the principal and focal point of this Sitting would be the discussions on the Motion for the income and expenditure for the year, 2021, January 1 to December 31, and the arising Statutes and bits of Legislation, which would be necessary to give that effect. In common parlance and common Parliamentary language, this process is described, as the debate on the Budget.

I would wish to take you, very quickly, through the Standing Orders, so that we have a clear view of how the procedural matters are to unfold. And reading from S.O., which is my abbreviation for Standing Order, 38, it says: **"(1) On the presentation of and debate on the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure referenced, as the Budget, in the Senate, the following rules shall apply:**

(i) The Leader of Government's Business, in presenting the said estimates may speak for no longer than one and a half (1 ½) hours.

(ii) The Leader of the Opposition may speak for no longer than one and a half (1 ½) hours, equal time;

(iii) All other Members shall speak for no longer than one hour (1)."

And, section 2 of 38 says: **"In every case, the Presiding Officer may allow a Member an extended period of time, not exceeding fifteen (15) minutes in the discretion of the President."**

I have, since becoming the Presiding Officer, exercised, without discrimination and bias, I have exercised that discretion in favour of all Senators. So, for the purposes of this debate, all Senators would automatically get the fifteen (15) minutes. Five (5)

minutes, I think, Mr. Clerk, before you reach your one (1) hour, the bell will give a little toll, and at the point of one (1) hour, the bell announces the death of your contribution.

When that is done, you now have fifteen (15) minutes, which the President has said, will be given automatically, without discrimination. The bell will ring again, when you at ten (10) minutes into your fifteen (15) minutes, and therefore, you would have five (5) minutes to wrap up. And on the fifteenth minute, the bell would not ring, but it will toll and that indicates the death of your contribution.

Now, I wish Members to make my job of an equal opportunity Presiding Officer, not inflicted or infected with any virus of discrimination, to make my job easier by simply complying with the Rule, because I allow it for Tom, I must automatically allow it for Jane, and then that will signal the Presiding Officer presiding over ill-discipline and abscond of the Rules. So, I would urge all Members, as they make their contributions, to be minded of the Rules and to show some appreciation for the liberty that I have exercised from day one by extending and giving everybody the fifteen (15) minutes. So, I just thought that before we engage in the debate, that, that is done. So, thank you, Honourable Members. But, on taking my seat, I would like to have the Leader of Government's Business approach the Chair.

(Leader of Government's Business converses with the President)

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Ministerial Statements.
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 and Reports be laid on the Table:

i) Office of the Ombudsman, 2021, Budget and Plan;

ii) Office of the Integrity Commission, 2021, Budget;

iii) Government of Grenada Reports:

a. The Budget Framework Paper, 2021;

b. Medium term Debt Management Strategy, 2021 – 2023;

c. Fiscal Risks Statement November, 2020;

d. Medium term Fiscal Framework, 2021- 2023;

e. 2020 Economic Review and Medium Term Outlook;

iv) The Annual Debt Management Report, 2019;

v) The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2021;

vi) 2021 Budget Statement.

Mr. President: Honourable Members, I hereby order that the said Papers be laid on the Table.

***(Sound of G*avel)**

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 Motion standing in my name:

WHEREAS it is necessary to provide for the State of Grenada for the year 2021 by means of an Appropriation Act;

Motions: 2021 Budget Debate

BE IT RESOLVED that the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Fiscal Year, January 1st to December 31st, 2021 be approved.

Mr. President: One second, please. I am having a little difficulty here again. Clerk, I am having a little difficulty with this. Just give me a couple seconds. I don't know why I am having this problem.

Question proposed.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, as this is a Money Motion, I wish to signal to this Honourable House that the Motion has been endorsed, with the Speaker's Certificate, and that I have the necessary consent to proceed.

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

- The Medium Term Fiscal Framework 2021 – 2023, in accordance to section 9 of the Regulations of the Public Finance Management Act, No. 17 of 2015;
- The Budget Framework Paper, 2021, in accordance with section 13 of the Regulations of the Public Finance Management Act;
- The Medium Term Debt Management Strategy, 2021 – 2023, in accordance with the Public Debt Management Act, No. 28 of 2015, as amended;
- The Fiscal Risk Statement in accordance with section 12 of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, No. 29 of 2015; as amended;
- The 2020 Economic Review and Medium Term Outlook; and
- The 2019 Annual Debt Report.

Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating the new Minister for Finance and his team for the significant work and effort that went into the preparation of the 2021 Budget.

Motions: 2021 Budget Debate

Ordinarily, the compilation of a National Budget is an enormous undertaking and not one to be taken for granted, when placed in the hands of an inexperienced Minister for Finance, let alone a newly appointed one. What is remarkable about this year's Budget is the extraordinary circumstances and environment under which this Budget has been prepared.

Mr. President, it is these unprecedented COVID defined times that has set the context for not just this year, but also for the period ahead of us; a global crisis that is not unique to us here in Grenada nor any individual country or any one region, but the entire world. This pandemic is a real and present danger, not only for the health and safety of the global population, where we are all exposed to this deadly threat, but a crisis that has also, negatively, impacted the global economy.

The pandemic is expected to shrink global output by $8.5 trillion this year alone, and it has thrown tens of millions of people across the world into poverty and unemployment. It has brought some of the most developed, most wealthy countries, in the world, to their knees.

Never before, have we experienced a crisis of this magnitude, not since the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1920, or the Great Depression of 1929, as the global community experienced comparable challenges, as the ones we face today. This is why credit is due to the Minister and his team, not only for the thoroughness in the approach taken in the Budget preparation, but also in the quality of the programmes outlined, which address our developmental requirements in these challenging times, in a very direct and practical way.

This 2021 Budget speaks to the need to keep our Nation safe, to re-stimulate and accelerate economic activity, to get our people back to work, those without work and those newly entering the Workforce, and to continue to build resilience and to get back on track with our National Transformation Agenda. Through a significant Capital investment Budget, the largest in our history, where 46% of that Budget directly supports Government's Public Sector Investment Programme, the goals of economic recovery, job creation and economic transformation will be achieved. But in addition, to

increase support for the most vulnerable through Government's Social Safety Net Programmes.

Mr. President, when the 2020 Budget was prepared and presented to this House last year, COVID-19 was a distant threat, an isolated problem, far from our shores. Now, one year on, we see a very different story, a Global Health Pandemic that has, today, infected over seventy-two (72) million people, and killed over 1.6 million people, worldwide. Here at home, we are seeing our own spike in infections.

There is now hope, as vaccines are being developed and some, successfully, tested and trials, as the world prepares itself for the largest logistical challenge ever faced, as a Global Immunization Programme gets on the way. It is generally accepted that it may take another two (2) years before this Immunization Programme reaches the furthest corners of our Planet.

In the meantime, the path ahead of us will continue to be a difficult one, as we restructure and we rebuild our economy and society for this new normal and, at the same time do all we can to keep our people safe.

But, Mr. President, there is hope, as we present this 2021 Budget. There is hope in the knowledge that this New National Party Administration has the leadership and experience in successfully delivering in times of crisis, whether that was hurricanes Ivan and Emily, or the Global Financial crash. We delivered then, and we will deliver now, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. President, the Theme for this year's Budget is: ***"Towards Vision 2035: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience"***. It is an appropriate Theme reflective of where we are now and what we need to do, in this time of global crisis. Firstly, by addressing the immediate challenge of reversing the current economic downturn, then putting us back on the transformative and resilient path in line with our 2035 National Sustainable Development Plan.

Mr. President, turning to the Economic and Social context of the 2021 Budget.

Global and Regional Economic Outlook

Mr. President, as a result of the pandemic, according to the latest IMF World Economic Outlook Report, the World economy is projected to contract by an estimated

4.4% in 2020 compared to growth of 2.8% in 2019. Although the outlook for the Global Economy has improved, slightly, relative to its earlier forecast, the situation remains extremely grim.

The economic forecast for our main international tourism markets; the US, the UK and Canada, which are still struggling to manage the Pandemic, are as follows, the US economy is projected to contract by 4.3% in 2020, with a growth forecast of 3.1% in 2021. The UK economy will experience an estimated sharp contraction of 9.8% in 2020 with growth projected to rebound to 5.9% in 2021. Canada's growth is projected to contract from the 1.7% achieved in 2019 to -7.1% in 2020. In 2021, the growth is expected to return to 5.2%. In China, where lockdown measures were eased in the second quarter, growth returned and is projected at 1.9% this year. Strong growth of 8.2% in 2021 is projected.

However, the IMF warns that the path to growth ahead will be long, uneven and uncertain and is contingent on public health and economic factors that are difficult to predict. Therefore, the downside risks and uncertainty are significant.

Regional Outlook

With the exception of Guyana, the Caribbean Region has experienced economic declines, ranging from 4% to 20% this year. The impact on the Eastern Caribbean Union is especially great given their small economies, limited resources and high dependency on Tourism and the global economy.

The Impact of the Pandemic on the Local Economy

Mr. President, Grenada has recorded seven (7) consecutive years of positive growth, averaging 4.4% over the period 2013 to 2019, one of the fastest and most consistent growth rates within the Region.

However, due to the Global Crisis, data for the first half of 2020 indicates a major decline in all sectors of the economy, with the Tourism and Private Tertiary Education Sectors, most severely impacted.

Grenada's Tourism Industry and St. George's University jointly comprising in half of our total GDP, with a suspension of global travel, as countries, around the world shut their borders, and the departure of SGU's international students, it's clear to see why

the overall impact is so dramatic. As a result, an overall contraction of 12.2% is estimated for 2020, in contrast to the 3.2% positive growth projected, at the start of the year.

Fiscal Performance

Mr. President, Grenada's strong fiscal position, established before the Global Crisis, weakened considerably, in the first half of 2020, as revenues declined severely, and expenditure demands increased to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic, which have placed Government's finances under serious strain.

By the end of 2020, the following results, relative to the approved Budget are expected: current revenues of $654.2m, compared to a target of $786.2m, a shortfall of $132m; grants of $114.6m, compared to a target of $218.6m, a shortfall of $104m; combined current revenues and grants underperformed by $236m, as a direct consequence of the pandemic; current expenditure of $620.1m compared to a budget of $633.7m; capital spending of $122.1m compared to a budget of $196.4m; a Primary Surplus of $82.2m compared to a target of $246.2 m and an overall surplus of $26.6m compared to a target $170.6m.

The negative impact of the pandemic on Government'' fiscal performance is clear to see, when compared to the past period. The overall surplus of $26.6m or 0.9% of GDP is a fraction of the overall surpluses generated during the period 2014 to 2019, which averaged 3.8% of GDP.

In addition, the estimated Primary Surplus of $82.2m or 2.9% of GDP is significantly less than that recorded in the previous five (5) years, which averaged 5.3% of GDP.

Mr. President, Grenada's Debt to GDP Ratio at the end of last year, reduced from 108% in 2013 down to 58% below the ECCU target of 60% by 2030, and one of the lowest in the region. Mr. President, this was a significant achievement, receiving high praise from Regional and International Institutions.

However, in order to respond to the social and economic demands brought on by the Global Crisis, there was the need for additional borrowing, at highly concessional rates, from our development partners. As a result, there will be a corresponding

increase in our Debt to GDP Ratio estimated at 69% of GDP, a debt level that remains sustainable and that's important to note, Mr. President. With an economic recovery projected in the Medium Term, it is anticipated that the debt levels will return to a downward trend, moving forward.

Unemployment

Mr. President, when coming into Office in 2013, the unemployment rate stood in excess of 40%. Government's clear and deliberate strategy to re-stimulate the economy at that time, focused on providing greater job security for those already in work and the creation of new jobs for those either out of work or entering the Labour Market, especially for our youth. So, the unemployment rate plummeted to a record low of 15.1% in the fourth quarter of 2019, our lowest unemployment rate in history, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

However, as a direct consequence of the economic shock from the pandemic, these gains have reversed with an unemployment rate of 28.4% equating to a loss of fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs recorded in the second quarter of 2020.

Preliminary data to yearend indicate signs of economic recovery, as activities in key sectors including Construction, Agriculture, Wholesale and Retail continue to increase. Unemployment is therefore expected to start falling again, with an estimated unemployment rate of 20% in the final quarter projected.

Government's Response to COVID-19

This Government's effective management of the economy over the years, produced fiscal surpluses that were used to cushion the impacts of the pandemic. Measures were taken quickly, to strengthen our Healthcare System, measures, which included: new Public Health Regulations to govern the national response to the pandemic; the upgrading of health facilities; expanding medical isolation capabilities and increased spending allowing for more Environmental Health Officers, personal protective equipment and a public awareness campaign. Action was also taken to protect livelihoods and to save jobs through the roll out of Government's COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Package, at a value of $50m and with full oversight from a dedicated Secretariat, Government provided temporary payroll support to the Tourism

Sector including Hoteliers, Restaurants, Bars, and Small Travel Agents. In addition, income support to public Bus Operators, Taxi Drivers, Tourists Vendors and other Hospitality based businesses. Government increased funding to the small hoteliers facility and the Small Business Soft Lending Facility at the Grenada Development Bank, with moral acts, terms and conditions, enabling greater and faster access. There was also a temporary deferral of the monthly advanced payment on Corporate and Income Tax and the instalment payments of the Annual Stamp Tax. These measures were designed to help Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises keep their doors open and preserve jobs. Support was provided to our farmers, with income support for workers in the Agro-processing and Food Exporting Industry in providing key agricultural inputs including labour and financial assistance. Government has also provided price support to the GCNA and the GCA, which will help protect the livelihoods of our farmers. $1m in grant support has been provided.

To soften the pandemic's social impact, the 2% increase in National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contributions that had been introduced in January 2020 was temporarily suspended. Also, through the NIS, Government introduced a temporary Unemployment Benefit Programme during the period, April to September of this year, at an estimated cost of $10m.

During this period, a total of three thousand, three hundred and three (3,303) persons received unemployment benefits. This benefit period has been extended to January, 2021, and Government has started the process of developing a formal Contributory Unemployment Benefit Programme to be administered by the NIS.

Mr. President, in order to offset the revenue and grant shortfalls due to the pandemic, Government has mobilised $160.9m in highly concessional financial support from its developmental partners. These resources that have been used to cushion the pandemic economic impact have been made available, exclusively to Grenada, in some cases, based on Government's strong track record of prudent fiscal management, since coming into Office in 2013.

Major Achievements for 2020

Mr. President, notwithstanding the unprecedented challenges faced in 2020, much has still been achieved. Some of these highlights include in Health: the upgrading of existing Health Facilities including several Medical Stations and Health Stations; the construction of new Health Facilities including the COVID-19 Isolation Unit at the General Hospital, with the procurement of ventilators, portable X-ray machines and other essential specialists equipment to the Unit; the Climate Smarting of Health Facilities in Grenada and Carriacou; Laboratory upgrades to support local PCR testing; the general strengthening of the Healthcare System; the continued progress on the National Health Insurance Programme, which will provide a vehicle for sustainable funding for our Healthcare System, moving forward.

Mr. President, I'll speak to Education, in more detail, later, in one of my presentations, but just some highlights. The implementation of an e-Learning Platform and ecosystem, with high-speed Internet connectivity to schools; e-Learning devices to all Secondary School students and teachers and rich e-Book content bringing our Education System into the digital age; capacity building, providing financial support to facilitate advanced level training for our teachers and a significant upgrading of school infrastructure.

In Agriculture and Fisheries, under the Agricultural Feeder Roads Project, Phase 2, the award of Construction Contracts to the value of $46.8m, with preparatory work for the construction of several other Agricultural Feeder Roads under the SAEP Programme was completed.

Under the World Bank AGRICOM Project, twelve (12) Agricultural Projects at a value of $5m were approved. Through the Grenada Development Bank financing was provided to the value of $1.7m to Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises within the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector.

Financial resources for the Farm Labour Support Programme were increased by over 330%, benefitting four hundred and forty-two (442) farmers. **(Applause)** The development of an Agriculture Youth Entrepreneurship Project proposal valued at $4m, which will support Government's Youth in Agriculture agenda and Government's

continued support of the GCNA, through grant support, for price support for nutmeg farmers.

Our Youth

On the job training, scholarship opportunities were provided to over two thousand (2,000) young people throughout the course of the year. Three hundred and sixty (360) young men benefitted from training and entrepreneurial support, provided under the M-Power Project in helping them to start their own businesses, or find gainful employment. The continuation of the Community Youth Rehabilitation Programmes including FLY and ACE, the upgrading of Youth Development Centres and the strengthening and expansion of the Small Business Unit, YUTBIZ, which provides micro financing opportunities to young Grenadians. Mr. President, these are about a few of the many initiatives successfully executed in these very difficult times.

The Outlook for 2021

Mr. President, the outlook is a returned positive economic growth in 2021, driven by the Agriculture, Construction, Wholesale and Retail Sectors. Key Sectors, such as Tourism and Private Tertiary Education, talking specifically about St. George's University are projected to recover at a slower rate, which will continue to impact our recovery rate. But Government is working, closely, with St. George's University to determine the appropriate and safest time for the return of their students.

The growth rate projected for 2021 is 6%. Although some revenue areas are projected to show modest increases, overall growth in revenues are expected to remain flat with a decline in many major tax types including Corporate and Personal Income Tax, since they are based on this year's economic performance.

Mr. President, significant focus will be placed on containing discretionary but current expenditure, to enable greater spending on an expansive Capital Investment Programme. As stated earlier, the largest 'capital spend' in our history that will both boost economic recovery and job creation.

As such, a strategic approach will be taken in the execution of Government's Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), prioritising those projects that build resilience, stimulate growth and create jobs. Recognising the importance of delivering

on this aggressive agenda, measures have been put in place to build internal capacity to achieve the implementation rates that are required to succeed.

Fiscal Measures, Revenue Measures

Mr. President, this 2021 Budget introduces no new taxes. **(Applause)** Government will, however, continue to improve the administration and collection of revenues, with strong emphasis on the collection of tax arrears. In addition, Government will undertake a review of all its services and fees, with consideration given to their updating. On the Expenditure side, Government will be implementing recommendations from the recently completed Public Expenditure Review, which outlined measures for reducing wastage and improving spending efficiency. This will ensure expenditure is aligned with our developmental priorities. And with support from the World Bank, our Internal Audit Capacity and Expenditure Management Framework will also be strengthened.

Mr. President, Government will rationalise specific areas of spending where millions of dollars can be saved. These include: a freezing on hiring in truly vacant positions, which will bear approximately $11m of savings. These are positions, with no substantive holders appointed by the Public Service Commission and no Officers holding contracts, acting or serving probationary appointments against these positions; a 20% reduction in Utility Bills, which will save approximately $6m dollars, and a 75% reduction in overseas travel, saving approximately $700,000.00.

Mr. President, Government has also appealed to Public Sector Trade Unions for general restraint in making any demands for wage and salary increases, during this period, with a specific request for the deferral of the negotiated 4% salary increase for 2021 for Public Workers, a deferral to a time, when we see an uptake in the economy and Government's realistic ability to pay. The result of $13.4m, short-term saving, will go a long way in helping to preserve jobs in both the Public and Private Sectors in these uncertain times. Cooperation is required, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I now turn to the Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure and the specific interventions for 2021.

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2021

The 2021 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure provides for a total expenditure, including amortisation of $1,232,670,049.00. The overall Budget is summarized as follows: Recurrent Revenue: $653.5m; Total Grants: $263.6m; Current Expenditure: $629.6m; Capital Expenditure: $305.6m; Current Account Surplus: $23.9m; Principal Repayments/Amortisation: $297.4m; Primary Surplus after Grants: $45.5 m; that's 1.5% of GDP and an overall deficit, after grants, of $18.2m, that's 0.6% GDP.

This represents an easing of Government's fiscal restraints relative to the pre-COVID period. This expansionary Fiscal Policy position is necessary, at this time, to stimulate demand, accelerate economic recovery and support job creation.

To facilitate this, we have invoked the 'Escape Clause' under the Fiscal Responsibility Law. But once we are back on a firm path to recovery, Mr. President, which is anticipated in 2022, Government will return to the Fiscal Rules, as laid out in the FRL.

Budget Allocations

Outside of Statutory obligations, including Public Debt and Pensions, the ten (10) largest applications, by Vote, are:

- The Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Transport and Implementation - $133.7m, which represents 10.8% of total expenditure;
- The Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information - $124m, which represents 10.1% of the total Budget Expenditure;
- The Ministry of Finance, Economic and Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy - $119.9m, which is 9.7% of the total expenditure;
- The Ministry of Health and Social Security - $94.9m, 7.7% of total expenditure;
- The Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT, Disaster Management - $73.3m, 5.9% of total expenditure;

- Ministry of Housing, Social Services and Community Empowerment - $60.2m, or 4.9% of total expenditure;
- Police - $51.6m, 4.2% of total expenditure;
- The Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment - $19.3m, or 1.6%;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry - $18.6m; and
- The Ministry of Sports, Culture, the Arts, Fisheries and Cooperatives - $17.6m.

The Financing of the 2021 Capital Budget

As stated previously, a key element of Government's strategy for accelerated economic recovery and job creation is the implementation of the largest ever Capital Investment Programme. Grenada is not unique in this approach at this time. Many countries around the world are following a similar or the same policy. The difference is some are having to borrow significantly, to finance their Capital Programmes.

In Grenada's case, our Capital Budget will be financed largely, through grants from the National Transformation Fund (the NTF), to the value of $172m. $172m) will be secured from projected NTF grants for next year, as well as drawdown of NTF grants accumulated in previous years.

Mr. President, there will be an overall deficit, after grants of $18.2m, which would be financed from highly concessional budgetary support from the World Bank and from funds set aside to provide buffers for shops.

Strategic Interventions for 2021

Mr. President, the three (3) strategic focus areas of Government for 2021 are Economic Recovery, which covers Agriculture, Infrastructure Development (both Public and Private Sector) and Tourism. Second is Transformation, which includes education and training, Health, Youth Development, Digital Transformation, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy and the third area, Resilience, with other crosscutting areas.

Mr. President, within each of the strategic focus areas, I'll take the opportunity to just briefly highlight some of the key initiatives within the Ministries associated with each area. My colleague Senators on "This Side" will draw down further, in each of their respective Ministries. I will, however, cover in detail, under Economic Recovery, Tourism, Transformation, Education and Training and Climate Resilience and the Environment.

So, Strategic Focus Area 1: Economic Recovery. So, the areas covered are Agriculture, Infrastructure Development and Tourism; so just a few words on Agriculture.

Mr. President, the Agriculture Sector is already showing signs of a strong recovery, and an important sector that offers significant potential to accelerate our economic recovery, create employment and address our Food and Nutrition security needs. It's important to start by stating clearly, that although the Budget allocation for the Ministry of Agriculture is $18.6m, the overall allocation for this sector is significantly larger. When combined with Agricultural related projects assigned to other Ministries, such as Agricultural Feeder Roads and SAEP, the total budget in the Agricultural Sector, the total spent in the Agriculture exceeds $40m.

So, some of the key initiatives that Government will embark on next year are as follows: several projects will be implemented, as part of the $10.8m CDB funded SAEP Programme. Approximately one hundred and forty (140) persons will benefit from short-term employment opportunities under the project, which will also support business development in rural areas, through the provision of grant financing to approximately one hundred and fifty (150) young people.

We continue to rollout the OECS Regional Agricultural Competitiveness Programme, (AGRICOM), which aims to increase market access to small-scale farmers, fisher folk and agro-processors. $1.2m has been allocated to support grant matching to eligible agricultural businesses.

With grant support from the CDF, the Mirabeau Meat Harvesting and Processing Plant will be upgraded and training and the strengthening of operating procedures would directly benefit the Livestock Sector.

Government will continue to participate in the Caribbean Oceans Asset Sustainability Facility (COAST), and the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), which will help protect the livelihoods of our farmers, fisher folk and agro processors.

And finally, with regard to the cannabis question, Government will engage in public consultation to determine the feasibility and potential of the Industry. Options for a path forward will be based on science and will be developed.

Infrastructure Development

Mr. President, investing in resilient infrastructure during this challenging period will be crucial in driving the recovery, creating jobs and a springboard for future economic transformation.

Given Government's track record of low rates of project implementation, we also recognise the critical need to address the implementation deficit, and as such additional capacity has been and continues to be built in the division of implementation for the contracting of more Engineers, Planners and Programme Managers to continue this work. In addition, a private entity is scheduled to be engaged to provide additional Project Management support.

Mr. President, the Public Sector Investment Programme for 2021 will boost economic activity and generate in excess of four thousand, five hundred (4,500) direct jobs, with a Capital Budget for 2021 of $305.6m. This is the largest capital spend on record. Mr. President, I will outline some of the major projects later on in the presentation.

Support for Private Sector Expansion.

Mr. President, it is not the responsibility of Government alone, to create opportunities for our people and to build our Nation. Once Government is able to create the appropriate enabling environment, a vibrant and forward leaning Private Sector has an important role to play in driving economic activity, especially at this time.

Under the leadership of this New National Party Administration, investor confidence in Grenada even in this challenging COVID period remains high. The GIDC

continues to receive significant interest for new project opportunities with several new approved major projects in the pipeline.

As of November, 2020, forty-one (41) applications for investment incentives were received across various sectors, including Tourism, Agro-Processing, Manufacturing and Services. The proposed investment in these new projects will exceed $6b, with a potential to generate over five thousand (5,000) jobs. The investors behind many of the upcoming tourism-related projects see this is an opportune time to commence construction in the knowledge that their projects will come on stream with the predicted global tourism recovery.

Government has sought to address some of the business challenges faced by the Private Sector at this time, such as access to credit, concessions and business facilitation services.

In addition to support from the COVID Economic Stimulus Package, a $10m Credit Facility, through the Grenada Development Bank, is available to support recovery across a number of economic sectors. Also, approval is pending on a further Grenada Development Bank credit facility, through the European Investment Bank and the CDF, to the value of $10m, and $4m respectively, which will provide even greater access to Private Sector credit.

Tourism and Private Tertiary Education

Tourism and Private Tertiary Education are the final strategic focus areas under economic recovery, so just a few words on St. George's University. The economic impact of the departure of students has been significant, and the effects have been felt across other sectors, including the Real Estate Accommodation Sector and the Wholesale and Retail Sectors. Government is working closely with St. George's University, to determine when it would be safe and an appropriate time for the return of their international students to Granada and the resumption of face-to-face classes. Most of those students reside in COVID hotspots, such as the US, so there are safety considerations.

Mr. President, I will now expand on Tourism. Mr. President, the Tourism Industry continues to be an important pillar to the economic development of Grenada. Tourism's

contribution to GDP is approximately 25% and provides a total of ten thousand, four hundred (10,400) jobs, and those are both direct and indirect jobs. And this includes: accommodation; food and beverage; vendors; taxi operators; jumpers; airports; porters, among many, many others.

Mr. President, prior to the closure of our borders, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Grenada was on its way to another bumper tourism year. Grenada's performance for the last two (2) years saw back-to-back arrivals, recording five hundred thousand (500,000) visitor arrivals; Mr. President, again, an all-time high in terms of visitors to our shores.

The Impact of COVID

The Tourism and Travel Industry was one of the first Industries to feel the devastating effects of the pandemic. We saw the delay in the opening of new hotels, the closure of hotels, a halt in construction of those hotel projects that were underway, the layoff of workers. And we expect to see a very slow pickup of the Industry, going forward, as the world continues to bring the pandemic under control.

Grenada saw a decrease in Visitor Arrivals, between the same period in 2019 and 2020 of 52%, and as I said, we had seen continued growth up to that point.

The Impact on the Airport

We saw a significant decline in Aircraft movements. Passenger movements declined by 73.8%, freight movement by 35.5%, and mail movement by 56%. The fall in Visitor Arrivals equates directly to a fall in Government revenues, which has impacted our ability to do all the things we would ordinarily like to do.

The Ministry of Tourism, the Grenada Tourism Authority, the GHTA, the Airports Authority and other stakeholders, have worked diligently, in reopening our Tourism Sector, managing the risks, as best as possible and finding that balance between lives and livelihoods.

The Government's Response to the Pandemic specific to the Tourism Industry

I mentioned earlier, in my presentation, that Government provided substantial support to the Sector within the first three (3) months, following the closure of our

borders, and Tourism piece, in terms of total beneficiaries of that Stimulus Package was 40%. 40% of that Stimulus Package was to support the Tourism Sector, and that support...

Sergeant-at-Arms: Deputy President in the Chair.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. Deputy President, financial support was given to the following groups: Vendors; Taxi Drivers; Water Taxi Operators; Tour Operators; Jumpers; Food and Beverage Operators; the Accommodation Sector, very extensive, Mr. Deputy President.

And in collaboration with the Grenada Development Bank, there was a Small Loan Facility, targeted at the Tourism and Agri-Business Sector, which offers reduced interest rates and access requirements to make this facility more accessible to small businesses and $1.95m has been dispersed to small businesses to provide support during this time. There have also been significant training opportunities for staff within the Industry, and I'll speak to that later.

The Reopening of the Tourism Industry

I speak again, about the need to balance the risk between lives and livelihoods and the need to safely resume appropriate levels of economic activity in these challenging and threatening times. So, to prepare for the reopening of the Tourism Industry, the Ministry of Tourism, with the GHTA, the GTA and the Ministry of Health partnered with stakeholders in developing the necessary COVID Protocols and checklist, which were required for the safe opening of establishments. And as part of that was a Grenada Pure Travel Stamp, which was developed with stakeholders, based on best practices, in order to certify Tourism Facilities, and this was a protocol that was accepted and approved by the World Travel and Tourism Council. To date, over two hundred and sixty (260) Tourism businesses have received the Pure Safe Travel Stamp, making them eligible to operate, at this time. The current spike in COVID cases highlights the risks that are associated here.

The Maurice Bishop International Airport, in preparation for reopening, put mechanisms in place, such as retrofitting of the Terminal Building and other operational areas, at both MBIA and Lauriston, in Carriacou, extensive Protocol Training, and the Airport is continuously working with the Ministry of Health to update the protocols, as and when necessary.

In terms of stakeholder training, the Ministry, in collaboration with stakeholders, with other partners like the GTA, the GHTA, CHTA and the Ministry of Health, trained over two thousand (2,000) stakeholders, both virtually, and in person, in preparation for the reopening of the Tourism Sector, and an extensive Training Programme.

For Government sites and attractions, significant amount of work went into the preparation for the reopening of sites and again, working through the Ministry and the GTA, and some of the interventions included the placement of hand sanitisers, signage, outlining the protocols that are required, the designation and outfitting of Isolation Rooms for visitors, and sites were provided with thermometers and additional dispensers, bins, etcetera, all of those things that were necessary to maintain a safe environment.

The Yacht Arrival Protocol - Grenada and Carriacou Strategic and Operations Working Team

A team was established, together with the RGPF, Ports Authority, Immigration and Customs, MAYAG (Marine and Yachting Association), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs. And this was all to look at certainly, with the Hurricane season and the inflow of yachts to the region that needed to be holdout. Protocols were put in place, working with the Marinas to ensure that the threat for yachts, at that time of year, were addressed, in terms of facilitating their holdout during that period, and that holdout, bearing in mind that those yachts were coming from various destinations and how to ensure that those Protocols are in place, to ensure that, that was done in a very safe place.

The Ministry of Tourism and the GTA, with the Ministry of Health, collaborated to repatriate over three hundred (300) local crew members back to Grenada. So, these

were Grenadians working on Cruise Ships, when borders closed, how do we get them back home safely and as conveniently as possible. Significant effort went into that.

Enriching the Visitor Experience through Product Development Enhancement

Mr. Deputy President, Grenada has a wide range of products that our visitors can engage in while they stay here. Products range from Wellness Activities, Nature, Agrion, Eco-Tourism, amongst others.

However, this alone, just the natural beauty of the surroundings is not enough in these more sophisticated Tourism times, hence the need to marry the product with the experience. And the Ministry, together with the GTA, have embarked on a number of initiatives, in terms of developing that much richer experience for the Tourism Sector. And one area, and there's been a lot of talk of this over the years, is the development of Community Tourism. And work is currently taking place in developing a framework, which will support the development and the growth of Community Tourism, which will directly impact, positively impact the livelihoods of those in our rural areas.

And there is a Fort Frederick Enhancement. The Ministry has engaged in work at Fort Frederick, to improve the visitor experience there, with upgrades to foot paths, installation of benches, other new amenities, etcetera, and the same again, for Tricentennial Park, looking at how that experience can be enhanced. And then village by village, a Signage Programme with signs outlining the history and the specific characteristics of our villages, not just here in Grenada but also in Carriacou.

Now, moving on to the commercialisation of sites and the outsourcing of services. This is a Policy position, which is based on the fact that Government's ability to run these Tourism sites, which we have been doing since the dawn of time isn't the best model for Tourism development. Government is not best placed to take advantage of the potential that these sites have. So, Government has embarked on a programme of identifying sites and attractions where partnership with Private Sector individuals, where the management of the site, and there is mischief out there, Mr. Deputy President, as if we're selling off these sites. It is simply leasing a Management Agreement that will enable persons or entities to invest, to enhance, provide more

amenities to improve the experience, so that the commercial value of those sites can be optimised for both Grenadians and for visitors. And one such example is the Annandale Falls, where, during 2020 Government signed an Agreement with the new developer for the Falls and this facility is now in full operation. Everyone, who has visited that site, Mr. Deputy President, is amazed by how that site now looks and the quality of the experiences offered.

In the area of outsourcing Lifeguard Services at Grand Anse and Bathway beaches, where it was a service, an emergency service that was managed through Government Authorities, and now a private individual has come in, provided additional resources for training, for equipment, defibrillators, more communications equipment, walkie-talkies, safety equipment, and recruited, I think, it's now sixteen (16) persons, Life Guards, have been recruited. And the level of services provided and service equates to providing a safer environment to two of our top beaches at Bathway and Grand Anse with professionally trained, professionally managed Lifeguard Service Providers.

Moving on to Maurice Bishop International Airport Upgrade, a concessional loan, from the Exim Bank, has been approved for the upgrade of Maurice Bishop International Airport. Some are asking why at this time? And, Mr. Deputy President, there could be no better time to invest in our critical Tourism infrastructure at this time. **(Applause)** And that investment speaks to upgrading of the runway. It is important that the facilities that are offered are kept to the highest international standards, resources are required, concessional, highly concessional resources have been accessed to be able to upgrade the runway, provide other safety enhancing features, which will improve, from a safety perspective. But, in terms of the efficiency of the operations of that Airport, we are offering an international destination. We require an International Airport of international standards, in order to service that, Mr. President. And this is in conjunction with a World Bank Funded Airport Project looking at navigational equipment, other electronic technologies that, again, speak to the safety and safe operations of the Airport. It has to be done at this time, Mr. President, and working with our development partners, we are moving forward with that.

The final area, Mr. Deputy President, is Airlift, and a lot of the arrangements with Airlines after the lockdown, when borders were closed, had to be renegotiated. New arrangements were made with various airlines to resume, or have a level of resumption of service. So, whether that is now American Airlines, five (5) days a week coming in, JetBlue once a week, the resumption of flights Virgin, British Airways, new Airlines, Regional Airlines, InterCaribbean and One Caribbean, and the resumption of the service with SVG Air to Carriacou. Airlift is our lifeblood, even in these difficult times, where global travel has been severely impacted, the need to get people in and out of the country safely, based on protocols, based on this new normal is of vital importance, and working with the Airlift Committee to try and resume a level of service that is in keeping with the demands.

I just want to close on the point of the role of Airlift, how Airlift and room stock go hand in hand, in terms of development of our Tourism product. And I will speak more about some of the Hotel Projects that have come on stream, about to come on stream and are about to commence construction. But we have a programme of Resort development, Mr. Deputy President, that is on an unprecedented level. The number of new rooms that are due to come into service, over the coming years, is extraordinary and speaks to the vision, speaks to the environment that this Government has created to attract investors. It's not Government that is building these hotels. These are Private investors, who see Grenada as an attractive destination both for investment and in terms of a high quality tourism destination and their willingness to invest and invest at a significant level that enhances our Tourism product, but also creates important job opportunities for our men and women.

So, Mr. Deputy President, moving now on to the second strategic focus area, transformation. Mr. Deputy President, this second focus area, transformation comprises of Education and Training, Health, Youth Development, Digital Transformation, Physical Development, Energy Development and Public Utilities.

I will focus my presentation on Education. My colleagues will address some of the other areas. But I just want to speak, once again, just quickly, to health and the reiteration of Government's commitment to prioritise in the health of our people, which is

demonstrated through the extraordinary efforts that it is making during these challenging times. And Government will continue to strengthen its Healthcare Infrastructure, Surveillance Laboratory Systems and Health Emergency Operations.

Under Youth, in 2021, the Youth Budget will see a 43% increase over the 2020 figure to $40.4m of which $17.9m is allocated to the New IMANI Programme. And what is significant, Mr. Deputy President, is the shift and the inclusion of a Transition Strategy Programme, which will complement New IMANI Programme, but will seek to address the fundamental challenge associated with transitioning from the IMANI Programme into sustainable jobs.

And under Energy Development, just to say that Grenada, as we all know, has one of the highest rates of energy in the region, around US0.41 cents, per kilowatt-hour. Mr. Deputy President, the Government will continue its efforts to diversify Grenada's energy mix into renewable sources and to reduce the cost of energy, and the restructuring and the liberalisation of the Energy Sector is a very important step along that path.

So, Mr. Deputy President, just focusing in a little more detail, on the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. Mr. Deputy President, I want to highlight the significant allocation of $124m to the Ministry of Education. This represents $10.2% of the National Budget, and this no doubt, Mr. Deputy President, is a very strong statement about this Government's commitment to its Education Sector, and the education and training of our young men and women, our boys and girls.

Mr. Deputy President, when the pandemic triggered the closure of our schools, in March of 2020, we had to figure out how teaching and learning could continue at all levels, with over twenty thousand (20,000) students, and over seventeen hundred (1,700) teachers at home, an overwhelming challenge, Mr. Deputy President. But decisive action was taken to prevent a total shutdown of the Education System and these actions included: the launch of the MStar Online Platform, which was used by many students to help prepare them for the 2020 CSEC Examinations; twenty-five thousand (25,000) credentials were issued to students, teachers and Administrators; recorded and distributed online tutorials were then supported from that MStar Platform,

and content for those CSEC Examinations were created, made available and uploaded for students to use over this time; a new App was launched and was made available at no cost to the students, again, preparing them for CSEC, with over twenty thousand (20,000) Practice Questions; over sixty (60) educational videos were created and aired on TV stations, on YouTube, on Social Media, Facebook etcetera, and these videos were later requested to be used in other countries. And as I build this picture, Grenada has established itself as a regional leader, in terms of e-Learning. A total of fifteen hundred (1,500) teachers were trained during this period, Mr. Deputy President, and video material recorded and aired, to help assist parents. How do parents transition to this new mode of education now in their homes? The approval and procurement process started for the purchase of over twenty thousand (20,000) devices and 18 e-Books, a mega undertaking. **(Applause)** Government and the Ministry partnered with DIGICEL and LIME, in terms of securing free data to support the work of teachers and students, who had, and provision of cell phones for those who had no communication devices during the lockdown. We partnered with DIGICEL and LIME to zero rate the service for this e-Learning Platform, again, for teachers and students at no cost to teachers or students; the distribution of cleaning and sanitising supplies to all public schools in the reopening of schools; the development of a National Timetable that catered for this hybrid system, when there were some students at home, some students in the classroom and how to facilitate that in the class hours of any given day. The development of protocols in schools, again, for the safety of our children, the safety of the teachers, principals, ancillary workers, etcetera, and the provision of psychosocial support to parents, teachers and students. This is a very strange time, Mr. Deputy President, a very strange time indeed, and the mental health of our students, of parents and teachers is of utmost importance, so psychosocial support has been provided.

And then this whole process, this whole evolution of our Education System, over this period, was done in direct consultation, close hand holding, with all stakeholders. And Mr. Deputy President, during this period all teachers, all principals, all ancillary staff were paid their full salaries, on time. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, schools remained closed for approximately six (6) months. Our marginalised students were hardest hit with no devices, no internet, etcetera, so provisions were made for that. And in these extraordinary times, Mr. Deputy President, despite all of these challenges, support was provided for the reopening of schools to facilitate the Form 5 sitting of their CSEC Exams.

Numerous statistics, in terms of resource provided, three hundred and seven (307) Cleaners for our schools, to make sure that they were sanitary and safe. One hundred and forty-three (143) Monitors, to ensure that what was supposed to be done was being done. And in terms of results of the CSEC Exams, Mr. Deputy President, a total of two thousand, three hundred and two (2,302) students sat the Regional CSEC Exams, with a 77.3% pass rate, an improvement compared to previous years. **(Applause)** So even in these difficult times, the introduction of new technologies, new teaching methods, the pass rate and the attainment rate increased.

I just want to speak, quickly, Mr. Deputy President, on Scholarships. For 2020, ninety-two (92) scholarships, to the value of $20m were awarded. To date, Mr. Deputy President, over sixteen hundred (1,600) scholarships, from 2013, to date, one thousand, six hundred (1,600) scholarships **(Applause)**, Mr. Deputy President, at Degree level and above, have been provided to our young men and women. And this does not include the thousand plus students, who received the 91% scholarship, directly through SGU, which is effectively a tax concession, provided by the Government to St. George's University, and the other financial support, stipends, etcetera, that are provided. Mr. Deputy President, sixteen hundred (1,600) incredible, incredible.

On the Information and Communications Technology's piece, Mr. Deputy President, the platform that's been created, which has transformed the way in which we teach our students is based on four (4) critical pillars. There's the Electronic Learning Devices, themselves; the training of teachers; the Provision of Appropriate Content and the Connectivity.

Mr. Deputy President, we hear, constantly, this call for where are the devices? Where are the devices? The politicking around where are the devices? We have always said, Mr. Deputy Present, this is not about a Laptop. This is not about a Tablet.

This is about the entire ecosystem. A Tablet on its own, a Laptop on its own, is of no use to a student, if they don't have the content, the connectivity, the training that is required in order to support this. And all of those areas have been extensively covered within the programme that has rolled out. And COVID has presented the Government of Grenada, the people of Grenada, our students, our teachers, our schools to quickly transition. And it's a revolution that has happened, Mr. Deputy President, in terms of bringing our Education System into the 21st Century, into the digital age. And Grenada is now seen, within the OECS, within CARICOM, as a leader, in terms of these technological advancements.

And, it also speaks to; there has been this vexing issue of schoolbooks, every year, about the renewal, the purchasing of more schoolbooks, schoolbooks that are lost, that are damaged, that aren't used and are sitting under a desk, some are sitting on a shelf, sitting under somebody's house. And the millions of dollars every year, that are spent on textbooks, and the amount of inefficiencies associated with this.

The e-Learning Platform, the e-Book approach that is now being taken, gives us an opportunity over the coming period, to address some of those vexing issues. And, at the moment, the two are working hand-in-hand. The physical textbooks are available, together with their electronic equivalence. But in time, Mr. President, we now have the ability to phase out the hard copy books.

Schools' Infrastructure

The Ministry of Education works very closely with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, with regards to the upgrading of our schools. As of October 2020, $2.5m has been expended, in terms of minor repairs, in terms of significant infrastructure upgrades to our schools $50m has been allocated for major repairs to our schools in the first quarter of next year and that includes St. Dominic's RC, a Sanitary Block; this is under the BNTF Project; the completion of two (2) new school facilities in Brizan/Happy Hill and Paradise, and that's valued at $2.5m; River Salle Preschool, work will continue there, under the Grenada Education Enhancement Program (GEEP); major expansions and rehabilitation of six (6) schools: Presentation Boys College, to a value of $4.6m; Grenada Seventh Day Adventist Comprehensive, a new Multi-Science Block and an

Administrative Wing, valued at $7.2m; Bishop's College in Carriacou, a two (2) story Multi-Science Block, and an Admin Wing, to be constructed, at a value of $10.8m, Mr. Deputy President. Designs have been completed for two (2) new facilities: the St. Andrew Anglican Primary and Grenada Christian Academy, tendering is on-going for that. The identification of a new site for St. David's Catholic Secondary, and the start of the design consultations, for that school, are underway.

Then, under the World Bank Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project, the tendering phase for forty-five (45) schools in batches, has commenced. So, on ending there, on Education, Mr. Deputy President, a lot, a lot, is taking place within our Education System, at this time, in these very, very difficult and challenging times. Could I just have a time check please?

Clerk: You have ten (10) minutes more before the first bell goes.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Okay. The third strategic focus area, Mr. Deputy President, is resilience, and I'll speak to resilience, in detail.

But, before I go under other cross cutting areas, just to speak under special Safety Nets. Mr. Deputy President, notwithstanding the tight fiscal situation, Government is still increasing its allocations in terms of its Social Safety Nets. So, in addition to the stimulation of the economy through its Capital Programmes, support for the most vulnerable is also provided and consideration given with increases in those Social Safety Net Programmes.

And then on the Housing front, housing is always a top priority, and with the support of the People's Republic of China, a total of six hundred and forty-seven (647) Low Income Housing Units, will be available for distribution throughout the course of next year, a major achievement there, Mr. Deputy President.

So, Mr. Deputy President, under Climate Resilience and the Environment, just to set a context, Grenada continues to play a leadership role at the global level, in driving the Global Climate Agenda, as Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions continue to reach record levels, with no signs of peaking.

The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events increase as sea levels continue to rise, threatening our coastal communities, our coral reefs are dying and we're seeing the threats to life and livelihoods due to climate change on our health, through increased droughts and floods, heat waves, Vector-Borne Diseases and risk to food and water security.

The latest science tells us clearly, that if we act now, we can reduce carbon emissions, within the next ten (10) years and contain the increase in the global average temperature to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and that is the magic number for us as Small Island Developing States, which is maintaining that temperature rise to that magic figure of 1.5 degrees. We will still be seeing many challenges with climate change, but we will arrest the expansion of those challenges.

Mr. Deputy President, within the Ministry of Climate Resilience and the Environment, this is the busiest time, the last quarter of any given year. And what was significant, or should have been significant about this year was COP26. This is the main Climate Change Negotiating Forum, and what was significant about this year is it was the 5th Anniversary of the famous Paris Agreement. And there were a number for commitments that were agreed to established issues that still needed to be resolved from the Paris Agreement, which would have come to a head, this year, in Glasgow, but because of the pandemic, that meeting has been postponed to November of next year.

But it gives the global community time to address some of the vexing issues that remain, in terms of actions that need to be taken, within a global community level, in order to address the challenges. And the political change that we have seen in Washington, should bare well, in terms of some of the difficult decisions that need to be taken at a global level that will directly impact, bearing in mind, we contribute very little to climate change, to global warming, but we are the ones who suffer the most.

So, Mr. Deputy President, there is a lot of work that takes place, not just within the Ministry, but there are lots of invisible people, who are working behind the scenes, in terms of promoting, not just Grenada's Climate Agenda, but the Climate Agenda for all Small Island Developing States. And I want to call out Doctor Spencer Thomas and Leon Charles, who are two (2) Grenadian Climate Negotiators, world-class negotiators,

Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)** I have had the privilege and honour of working closely with them, over the last couple of years. I have seen them operate on the international stage. I have seen the respect and the contribution that they are making at the highest levels.

And for a lot of us at home, we take a lot of that for granted, but it is significant, even though we don't see it, directly. But that helps to continue to establish Grenada on the international stage. Our Prime Minister is one of the first Prime Ministers called among Small Island Developing States, when it comes to putting his voice or his leadership to many of the issues, **(applause)** the key issues that are on the table right now.

And just this last weekend, to celebrate or recognise the 5th anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreement, Prime Minister Mitchell participated with other World Leaders, in terms of lending his voice, on behalf of the people of Grenada, but on behalf of all Small Island States, in terms of the need for greater ambition and the need for greater Climate Change action, as we move down the path to COP26, next year.

So all of that work that takes place has high value, where we do see the results. It manifests itself in projects, such as the Green Climate Fund G-CREWS Project. This is a project, $125m project, grant funding from the GCF, grant support from the German Government, and a contribution from the Government of Grenada. And this project addresses the vulnerabilities that exist for us in our Water Sector. So with climate change, whether it is severe drought and water shortages, and, Mr. Deputy President, you would know this well, with your involvement at NAWASA, but also the high intensity flooding, which can cause a great deal of damage and destruction to our infrastructure.

And the G-CREWS Project, which implementation has just started, and we will see a roll out of that in the years ahead of us; will provide significant investment in our Water Sector. But that project, to get it to a point where it is shovel ready, took the best part of four (4), four (4) years of lengthy discussions and the need for patience, the need for an appreciation of how much effort is required.

But it is our presence on the international stage, it is the advocacy of our Prime Minister of others, in terms of putting the plight of Small Island Developing States, that

raises our profile with the Funding Agencies that are behind this, and the support that comes.

And another example of that is a project, which is coming, in terms of the pre-feasibility stage, with New York University, with the Green Climate Fund, the Climate Smart Cities Programme, which is a programme of Works, which speaks to sea level rise and protection against sea level rise, at the Carenage, at Grand Anse, at Grenville, and at our Airport Runway. There are sections of the runway that are at sea level that are impacted by coastal erosion, and how to address that. Issues such as congestion, the generation of Greenhouse Gases, how can we alleviate the congestion that we are seeing in the South of the country?

Sewerage and the treatment of sewerage in the South; the building of capacity. Climate change is here to stay. How do we build our next national capacity with the experts, with the technicians, with the scientists, so that we can start making some of the decisions we need to make, build that capacity, in moving forward, and the Climate Smart Cities Programme speaks to all of that.

So, New York University is about to submit its Concept Papers on this, which will then be used, and again, it's part of that drawn-out process, and where patience is required, but two (2) Funding Agencies. We are talking to the IMF and to the World Bank. The IMF has Grenada as a pilot country, together with Dominica, for its Disaster Resilience Strategy, which is looking...

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Simon Stiell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President; which is looking at how to absorb…

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Leader of Government's Business, you have up to 11:35 to conclude.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: 11:35?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): That's fifteen (15) minutes more.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Fifteen (15) minutes. Okay. So, Mr. Deputy President, so working with the IMF, the Disaster Resilience Strategy, which is looking at the hundreds of millions of dollars that these programmes, resilient infrastructure, nature-based solutions cost and how that can be absorbed into our planning processes. One, identifying the sources of financing for these projects and having the absorptive capacity to actually turn these from great ideas into financed and implementable projects.

We are also working with the World Bank, who is providing assistance, in terms of developing the business cases, and again, identifying Funding Agencies. We were supposed to have, in the second half of this year, a Donor Conference that would have been organised by the IMF, that would have brought development partners from all over the world to Grenada, using Grenada as an example with its Climate Adaptation Climate Mitigation Programmes, and looking at how we can attract the necessary financing for those programmes. But, because of COVID, that has all been put on hold.

Another area that has required a lot of time in this last period and a life spent on Zoom, all of the Development Agencies, now, and Development Partners are talking about Greening Packages, seeing the opportunity to link COVID, the Pandemic and the vulnerabilities that that has exposed with vulnerabilities, in terms of physical threats, such as climate change, and the trillions of dollars that are being mobilised for the pandemic, for the recovery ahead, linking that with Carbon Neutral, with Green and Blue Programmes.

And there is a consensus now, a coming together within the international community, in terms of recognising just the level of vulnerability we face. As the discussions were taking place, with regards to support for COVID, we are also in the middle of what was one of the most active hurricane seasons, in history. We were spared, by the Grace of God. But the level of vulnerabilities that we face, be they

social, we are seeing from the pandemic, be they economic, we are seeing that, the 'Economic Fallout' of this, or physical, from threats, such as climate change.

Mr. Deputy President, I'll just move onto a couple other things. Our [1]NDC is just linking that to this. Grenada was one of the first countries in the world, to submit to the International Agency, the UNFCCC, its second National Determined Contribution.

This, again, sounds like a very academic thing. But coming out of the Paris Agreement, every country in the world has to develop their NDCs, which would demonstrate what practical measures will take place, country by country, region by region, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to enable us, on a global level, to get to that 1.5 degrees centigrade target. And Grenada was third, within the Caribbean, the first OECS Country and one of maybe, twenty (20) countries in the world, to submit theirs just a few weeks ago, and we got recognition, at the highest levels, within the International Community for that submission.

But what that submission highlights is the $1b that's required to implement this, and it just highlights the level of international resources that are required to address the challenges that we face. But within that, are also significant opportunities, is turning those resources, turning those activities into also addressing some of our National Development priorities. So, an opportunity is also presented there.

Mr. Deputy President, I just want to speak quickly, and move on to Perseverance, just an update on where we are. A significant amount of work is taking place in terms of controlling the fire that started in March of this year, at the Perseverance Dump. It is an unmanaged fifty (50) year old Dump. There are no engineered sanitary measures, in terms of managing the gases that are generated there. And it is those gases, through the co-mingled waste that is disposed there that is actually the source of the fire.

But over the course, from March through to now, 70% of the area that was on fire has been brought under control, with significant resources, significant support from the

[1] NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution

Fire Service and additional equipment. Quarter of a million dollars has been spent, thus far, in terms of a managing that fire.

Moving longer-term through the Integrated Solid Waste Management Project, with support from the Caribbean Development Bank, a project to the value of US$12m, we will see over the course of the beginning of next year, the capping of that old Dump Site and the creation of a Sanitary Engineered Waste Managed Site. And as part of that, the need for composting, the need for separation, for recycling, etcetera.

Mr. Deputy President, I will just very, very quickly run through. I want to end on going back to some of the major Public and Private Sector Projects That massive Capital Budget, that massive Public Sector Investment Programme, 46% of the Capital Budget that speaks to our PSIP. And whether it is the Water Project that is in the pipeline, the $125m G-CREWS Project; whether it is the upgrading of the Maurice Bishop International Airport; whether it is the construction of the Grenville Commercial Complex, $8m, the creation of over sixty (60) jobs; the St. John's River Flood Control Project, $27m, the creation of one hundred (100) jobs; St. Patrick's Road Rehabilitation Upgrade, $15m and the creation of one hundred and fifty (150) jobs.

Under the BNTF, $5.6m project under the Ninth Cycle, twenty (20) jobs created. Under the GEEP Project, Education, the School Infrastructure Project, $42m and the numerous schools that we went through; the Integrated Solid Waste Management Project, US$12m, which will address one of our environmental and developmental challenges; road upgrades, water supply upgrades, concrete and asphalt roads.; again, further, School Projects.

Mr. Deputy President, a Portfolio of Projects and Programmes that will create thousands of jobs, and the hundreds of millions of dollars invested within that programme that will help stimulate the economy. And as I said, it's not just on the Public Sector side, it is also on the Private Sector side, a pipeline of six billion projects, the creation and the potential of five thousand (5,000) jobs.

But, that's a pipeline that we are seeing delivered, in reality, whether it was the redevelopment of the Rex Grenada Tourism Complex, which is now the Royalton, that's $300m. We have seen that materialised. The Point at Calivigny, the construction of

multiple luxury apartments and villas and the upcoming second phase valued at $175m; Siesta Hotel Project, bringing much needed additional rooms; the Range Project, EC$300m project, in St. David, in La Sagesse, which again, is addressing this vexing issue for generations, in terms of rural development, and seeing Resort developments, now spreading. Whether it is the Range, in La Sagesse, whether it is the Grenada National Resort Project, up in Levera, the Mt. Hartman Project, a $2b project; Kawana Bay, coming to the end of its construction phase $150m invested, two hundred and forty (240) construction jobs, many permanent jobs after that.

And, then running through projects coming in 2021: the Beach House, a $54m luxury Boutique Resort; the Silver Sands Legacy and Mt. Cinnamon, $216m project, which would start in the first quarter of next year, and see the job creation of three hundred (300) construction jobs, the employment of over two hundred and fifty (250) persons during the operations.

And then student accommodation, notwithstanding the fact that St. George's University from a physical perspective is in suspension, their students are still operating. The University is still operating as Universities all over the world, but in a virtual form, with students now working online. But the amount of investment, the hundreds of millions of dollars that are being invested by many Grenadians, in the True Blue area, providing private accommodation for those students.

And the many, many projects: Virgin Beach; Zenia; Gafson; Waldorf Apartments; Crystal Sands Apartments, all multi, multi-million dollar projects, employing thousands of persons.

And then on the Agri-business side, the Manufacturing side: Renegade Rum, a hundred million dollar investment. It's making rum, but its core business is also Cane Production. So, a direct impact on our Agricultural Sector, a hundred million dollar investment employing over one hundred and fifty (150) persons at Renegade Rum Group, and then one hundred (100) plus on the CaneCo side of their business.

And then what is quite incredible is the poultry, two (2) new poultry operators, Excellent Farms and Grenada Chick Inn Farm Limited, again, multi-million dollar investments in our Poultry Sector, demonstrating that the Poultry Policy took a long time

to get out, and my good friend, Senator Bhola has his fingerprints all over, all over that Policy, and we are now seeing that come to fruition.

So we now have, I think there are three (3) private Poultry Operators that will reduce our Food Import bill for poultry, by up to 30%, when they come into operation. Again we're talking about the $350m Food Import bill of which poultry is a major component, from both an economic perspective, from a health perspective and we are making great strides, in terms of addressing that.

Egg Production

I heard, just the other day, we no longer import eggs. We are now at a national level, self-sufficient, in terms of our egg production.

Mr. Deputy President, we hear how the Agricultural Sector in such a fragile state. But, positive steps are being made. Concrete steps are being made, in terms of investment, not just at the Government level, but in terms of private individuals, as we have just seen, and they are having an important and positive impact.

So, Mr. Deputy President, before I lose my voice, just in wrapping up, these are challenging times. These are extraordinary times, requiring extraordinary leadership, requiring extraordinary thoughts, extraordinary levels of cooperation by all, in terms of dealing with, whether it is from the health threat, or as we speak into the Budget, the economic impacts and the economic fallout, Mr. Deputy President, of this pandemic.

And what we have before us is a Budget that addresses the issue of doing all that we can to keep our Nation safe; to re-stimulate and accelerate economic activity. It's about getting people back to work, and it is about continuing to build that resilience and that transformative agenda that is laid out in the National Sustainable Development Plan.

We have made significant progress, coming into this crisis. As difficult, as challenging, as things are, we are better placed, we are far more resilient going into this, than many of our neighbours. We are far more resilient going into this crisis than we have been, with all of the other crises that we have faced in our history. But that is due to the very deliberate and very focused actions of this New National Party

Administration, when it came into Office in 2013, dealing with a crisis there, getting us out of that, and in a crisis not of our making.

But, Mr. President, what we have before us is a Budget with programmes, with initiatives that speak to the challenges that we face, short, medium and long term. The financing for these initiatives are clearly stated. There are opportunities within the Budget that is presented notwithstanding the challenges that we face. And I believe that what we have before us, Mr. Deputy President, is a very clear path, in terms of how we are going to get Grenada back on to a road of recovery, as the external dangers subside in time. And, it's for those reasons, Mr. Deputy President, that I present this Motion. I commend this Motion to this House. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator St. Cyr.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. I was looking at my time, considering all things and realising that it's already minutes to twelve (12).

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): No. You will get your full time. After your presentation, we will adjourn for lunch.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you. Mr. Deputy President, in looking at the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as proposed, I had to take my time. I think it was already established that it's not an easy feat to read six hundred and thirty-five (635) pages, digitally, in one document, not given the opportunity to have a printed copy of that.

Nonetheless, nonetheless, I took to the task and I wish to start the debate, on my presentation, using a quote by Walter Anderson, and I quote: ***"It is only when we take chances, when our lives improve. The initial and the most difficult risk we need to take is to become honest."***

Mr. Deputy President, I read the document a couple of times, in short stints, and I have to be honest. The Theme says: ***"Towards Vision 2035: Recovery,***

Transformation and Resilience," and I have to be honest, when I saw the Theme, I was a bit heartened. But, Mr. Deputy President, as I delved into the document, starting with the Framework, the Budget Framework, I noted that there were national goals, national outcomes and alignments with sustainable development. And then I went into the meat of the matter, which spoke to the actual revenue and expenditure.

Mr. Deputy President, I wish to refer to page (6) of the Budget Framework Paper 2021, as presented. **"The Priorities to be addressed in the 2021 Budget are…"**, and I am reading verbatim: **"1. Health care; 2. Education; 3. Social protection, poverty and vulnerability reduction, inclusion and citizens' well-being; 4. Gender; 5. Economic recovery, employment and youth empowerment; 6. Agricultural production and value added, Food and Nutrition Security; 7. Micro Small and Medium Sized Development; 8. Governance, Public Sector efficiency and effectiveness; 9. Digitization; and 10. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience."**

The list is quite an interesting and encompassing list. The Framework, in my estimation, was a good one. But, Mr. Deputy President, when I went down and I started to look into what was presented as Public Debt and what were presented as the areas for revenue, I had to go back a couple of times.

The Annual Debt Report, 2019 says that the Government paid off its debt in full, in October, 2019, and has no outstanding guaranteed debt. I also read in the document, that external borrowing of $110.7m, three (3) new loans, $40.5m, World Bank loan for Digital Governance; and let me just pause here to speak to the issue of digital governance, what it means. Digital governance is a framework for establishing accountability, roles and decision making authority for an organisation, in this case, Government's digital presence, which means its websites, mobile sites, social media channels, and any other internet, or web-enabled products and services, digitisation, or digital governance, as we refer to it.

But, Mr. Deputy President, digitisation, or digital governance was not sufficiently addressed in the presentation of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. In fact, Mr. Deputy President, we would all agree in this Honourable House, that we all

encounter challenges, when we try to access Government pages, without a doubt. Yet, in a world where everything is happening digitally, we still have these challenges, and even though it was mentioned in the Framework, it's not addressed sufficiently, in the Estimates.

Mr. Deputy President, I went further into the documents, and I read the Medium Term Debt Strategy. And, it says, and I am quoting, page eight (8): ***"Given the impact of and Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis, the rules outlined in the FRL were suspended in April, 2020, for one (1) year, and was further extended to the end of 2021."***

So, compliance with the Fiscal Rules will resume in 2022. The Honourable mover of the Motion also highlighted that. What does that mean, though? Because this is what the regular Grenadian would want to know. What does that mean? What does the suspension of the [2]FRL mean? So, I took some time to think about it, and I found, in my research, that the Financial Responsibility Law, 2015, states that Public Debt to GDP Ratio must not exceed 55.5%.

The current Debt to GDP is 68.6%. Again, note that the FRL has been suspended until 2022. It will resume in 2022. So, what does that mean? What does that mean? The fiscal space that we were so often hearing about before, apparently is not governed now by these rules. There is a bit more liberty for Government to do certain things, because these rules were suspended. I am going to come to that again.

In my reading of the document, it also states that extending the ATM and ATR of the total Portfolio to eight (8) years or more, and ten (10) years or more, respectively, reduces the refinancing risks and avoids pressures on Government to secure new sources of financing. So, that's one of the strategies, as presented, that Government is going to use.

Now, let's just look at this in layman's terms. You take a loan, anybody takes out a loan, instead of paying off the loan now, in eight (8) years, or the given number of years, the Government can extend, or ask for an extension of the loans. So, it doesn't

[2] FRL – Fiscal Responsibility Law

put the Government under so much pressure to pay the amount that needs to be paid. But, it also means, it also means that there is the possibility that Government is going to be spending more down the road, because the extension of the loan means that the interest goes along with it.

The document further says: ***"Over the Medium Term, 2021 to 2023, it is anticipated that multilateral institutions will expand their concessional lending..."*** we heard the Honourable Member speak of that: ***"the concessionary lending window and bilateral Donors will commit to allocating a portion of their economic resources in aid of poorer countries."*** That's another strategy that the Government is going to use.

In this COVID time, Mr. Deputy President, all Nations, all Nations, no exemptions were made. The Honourable Member mentioned it this morning. He listed a number of Countries. All Nations are currently feeling the squeeze. So to use this, as a strategy, seems to me, a bit short-sighted, especially when we are talking about recovery, transformation and resilience, because, Mr. Deputy President, everything I read, I reverted back to the Theme that was presented.

"The funding from external sources is projected to be $177.9m, or 53.9% of financing requirements, and will include multilateral and bilateral loans in the form of Budget support and on-going support for the PSI," as reported this morning. So again, Mr. Deputy President, loans, not grants, loans. So it means that down the road, these will have to be repaid.

Then I went to the revenues, and quite frankly, Mr. Deputy President, there were only two (2) major Collecting Agencies, as it relates to revenues, the Inland Revenue Department, which speaks to our taxes, and I am going to go to that in a bit, and the Customs and Excise Department.

So basically, Mr. Deputy President, the revenue that is estimated, or that is proposed is going to come from tax revenue, non-tax revenue and grants. And we have the Estimates here. The Honourable Member read it out this morning. So, already we have been saying, if you have not gotten yours, I've gotten mine already, tax forms were sent out, and it was mentioned that Government is going to aggressively ensure that all

taxes will be paid and when we're talking about taxes here, we're talking about Personal Tax. We're looking at the Estimates here: $53.1m, Withholding Tax; Estimated revenue, $7.9m; Corporate Tax, $42.2m; Property Transfer Tax, $14.2m; Property Tax, $13.3m; VAT, $103.1m and then the Annual Stamp Tax, $15.1m.

And I did a double take, because in presenting the major revenue earners by Department, as identified in the document source, being the Ministry of Finance, considerations must be given. The Honourable Member just mentioned the level of unemployment and the need to get people back working. So I am looking at these estimations, and I am going to look into the indicators of employment in a bit. I am going to speak to that in a bit, because I have the breakdown. You know, we heard that fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs were lost, but what we do not have is the actual numbers, or what was not presented to us.

As it relates to the Customs and Excise Department: Import Duty, $72.8m; Petrol Tax, $58.2m; VAT, $116.8m; Excise Tax, $22.2m; Custom Service Charge, $52.7m; Environmental Levy, $11.2m.

Mr. Deputy President, I challenge you to buy something and have it come in and see the taxes. Only last week, I went to clear, and I noted the amount of tax that you pay. I haven't yet gone back to get into the meat of it, to see what the percentages are for the items. But, I will do so.

So, these are the major revenue earners, Mr. Deputy President, Inland Revenue Department, Customs and Excise Department, and then, hopefully, we will be able to get some grants to assist with budgetary support and some capital grants.

And then I went into looking at our expenditures. I took the document, Vote-by-Vote. So, I wish to speak specifically, to some of the Votes.

Vote No. 1, Governor-General, Rental of Asset, which means, the Governor-General's residence, $220,800.00, increased from last year and to be increased next year based on the Estimates, the Governor-General's residence. Now, Mr. Deputy President, the Governor-General has been renting, according to my information research, since 2004, the Governor-General has been renting. So it means then, that Government is paying somebody, some entity to house the Governor-General.

Couldn't Government, in its prudence, in speaking to recovery, and I am looking here at economic recovery, in its prudence, secure a loan and renovate the Governor-General's residence and use the monies that we are now paying for rent, on that mortgage? Again, Mr. Deputy President, it's not rocket science. A Budget is basically, revenue and expenditure. Growing up, I heard my mother saying it all the time, you need to balance your budget. You can't spend what you don't have, unless you know that you're getting it from somewhere.

Better yet, Mr. Deputy President, the Government was able to secure a grant to build a number of low income houses, six hundred and thirty-four (634) apartments, I believe, but cannot, or did not choose to secure one, or pursue one for the Governor-General's residence.

Mr. Deputy President, Vote 2, Parliament. It was interesting, Mr. Deputy President, to find that the Office of the Ombudsman, an independent office, an office that is supposed to have its own budget, Code 262 of the Prime Minister's Office, Vote 10 speaks to Grants and Contributions to Government Agencies. Code 262, under Vote 2, Parliament, speaks to Grants and Contributions to Government Agencies. There was a footnote there, Mr. Deputy President. The footnote says: ***"$200,000.00 of the Parliament's budget, $200,000.00 for the Office of the Ombudsman, of which that budget is $333,540.78."*** The Office of the Ombudsman, if you look carefully, is under the Parliament Vote.

I went further and I read. The Honourable Member presented this morning the Budget and Plan for the Office of the Ombudsman. And in reading the document, I noted, and I am going to read again, verbatim, Mr. Deputy President, with your permission: ***"In accordance to Act 24 of 2007…"*** and I went and read the Act actually, to make sure that I was, you know, getting the proper thing from the document; ***"which was amended in 2013, section 19, subsection (2), it outlines the procedure for the financing of the Office of the Ombudsman."***

However, that same document is saying***: "It has been the practice that the approved budget is embedded in the Vote of Parliament for disbursement, which***

is contrary to the section quoted above." So, that is contrary to what it should be***. "Although this anomaly has been raised on numerous occasions, the procedure continues unheeded, and without any explanation, causing unavoidable difficulties in the operations of the office"*** directly from the report on the Office of the Ombudsman, Budget and Plan.

Now, Mr. Deputy President, I paused when I read that, because if this is causing unavoidable difficulties in the operations of the Office of the Ombudsman, it means then, that the efficiency and the effectiveness of the office is negatively affected. And if it is negatively affected, then it means that productivity is being interfered with and we know that productivity translates, lower down the road, to some economic measure.

Mr. Deputy President, under Vote 2, Parliament, I noted with interest, well, not interest, but I smiled and shook my head that the Constituency Offices did not have a Vote. All other offices, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commission, the Electoral Parliamentary Offices, all other offices had a Vote, not the Constituency Offices. And I remember, Mr. Deputy President, we sat in this very Chamber, and a Motion was put forward by myself actually, that the Constituency Offices be returned to its rightful place, Mr. Deputy, President, its rightful place. The Motion did not pass, Mr. Deputy President, the Motion did not pass. We sat in this Honourable House and Members did not agree that the Constituency Offices should be returned under Parliament.

Mr. Deputy President, I don't know, if it comes back to your mind, but Members on the "Other Side", said that the discussion was happening in the "Other Place". And knowingly, I went back and I asked for a copy of the Hansard and I tried to figure out, well, when and where did this discussion happen for the Constituency Offices to be removed from under Parliament, with the Clerk being the Financial Administrator of the offices to under now, the Prime Minister's Ministry, and I am coming to that in a while.

And I want, with your permission, Mr. Deputy President, to take, just a few snippets of the Hansard of an extract of the Sitting of the House of Representatives held on Wednesday, 29th July, 2020. And I am going to read verbatim: ***"Thank you, Mr. Speaker,"*** that's the Honourable Gregory Bowen speaking. "***Mr. Speaker, I cannot say***

that I am surprised at the Motion, and having been apprised of a certain incident that happened on this compound, Mr. Speaker, I will take all of us, hold the same sentiments;" I am reading the unedited version, ***"that, of course, the Leader of the Opposition should be provided with his official office."*** That was in response to the Leader of the Opposition's office in this building.

He went further down, Mr. Deputy President.

(Senator Stiell rose)

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: On a Point-of-Order, Mr. Deputy President. Two (2) things, first of all, she is quoting from a document, the Hansard, from the "Other Place," if that can be circulated. But, is it the purpose of this House to be going through the record of a debate in the "Other Place?" We went through this when the Motion was brought to us at our last Sitting. I don't think this is appropriate, Mr. Deputy President. We're not here to rehash a debate from the "Other place," on a matter that was discussed here and dealt with and relevance, Mr. Deputy President, to the Budget.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you, Mr. Leader of Government's Business. Senator St. Cyr, I will just say to you get to the point quickly, and relate it quickly to the Budget Debate, so that we can move on.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy President. So indeed, it is appropriate, because it is related to the Budget. The Constituency Offices are, indeed, under the Prime Minister's Ministry, and there is a Budget item for that. I went back, it's not that we're opening a new debate, Mr. Deputy President. We are stating here the fact that the Honourable Member said that there was an Agreement. We are talking here about the Budget and where the allocations and the disbursements should be.

Now, the Honourable Members mentioned and I anticipated this, the Honourable Members mentioned that there was a decision in that "Other Place" to move it. And I

am saying here, there was no mention of that. So, the Honourable Members grossly misrepresented the truth. The discussion was happening in the "Other Place."

More so, Mr. Deputy President, I am making the point, we're discussing the Estimates…

(Senator Stiell rose)

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Sorry. This is imputing improper motives, talking about the truth of a Member in the "Other Place." I think we need to rein in on this discussion, Mr. Deputy President, and talking about who is speaking the truth, or not speaking the truth in the "Other Place," it's not appropriate for this House.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): As I said, Senator St. Cyr, move it along.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, that's what I am dealing with, an item in the Budget that speaks to Vote 10, Vote 10, under the Prime Minister's Ministry, an item in the Estimates, and I am using the document to establish, because we're talking about the Estimates here, Mr. Deputy President, and I believe it is within our rights to ask and to mention what is presented in the document.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, I don't want to interrupt you any more than normal, but you have to be careful in imputing improper motives, when we talk about other Representatives in the "Other Place." So, I am just saying, I think the point has been made on this issue, so I really insist that you move it along. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, so I will move it along, as advised. The Parliamentary Electoral Office has its

own Vote, Vote 8 and a detailed budget. No Vote for the Constituency Offices, no breakdown. All offices, understandably, should have the same allocated amount. And I do believe that like the other offices, the Constituency Offices should have a budget and should be open for the public's consumption.

Mr. Deputy President, let's talk Public Health, and I'll try to be very, very concise with Public Health, Health and Public Health. We're talking about COVID and we're talking about all of these things that are hinged on whether we get over COVID and how quickly we get over COVID. But, Mr. Deputy President, I would like to take the opportunity to just speak to Public Health, because I think sometimes, we get a bit confused between Medical Care and Public Health. We're talking about a Public Health situation, COVID.

Mr. Deputy President, Public Health is hinged on, really, three (3) pillars, three (3) core functions, as we call it in Public Health, assessment, so we hear all the time, of the contact tracing and all of that, assessment. Policy-making, so we have come up with some protocols. And then we talk of assurance, as part of the Public Health sphere. Assurance speaks to, really, the implementation and ensuring that the public's health is at its best.

Now, Mr. Deputy President, I know the Honourable Members on the "Other Side," may decide to stand again. But I wish to make the point that following through on the implementation of the COVID Policies speaks to assurance, and at no point should any leeway or any concessions be given to the protocols. What is good for Paul is also good for Peter, or as old people say, what is good for the geese is good for the gander. No exception should be made, Mr. Deputy President, because, in the event that exceptions are made, there will be negative impacts, and the negative impacts have economic impacts, as well as economic implications.

So, Mr. Deputy President, let's take, for instance, we had, you know, an infringement, let's call it that, an infringement of the protocols, and there were some, you know, quarantine action to be taken after that.

Mr. Deputy President, for every person that was quarantined, it means that, that person could not show up to work. It means that that person did not produce. It means

that revenue was lost. So, Mr. Deputy President, when we're speaking of Public Health, we need to be very, very careful. Again, the protocols that are in place, the policies that are in place ought to be implemented without any concessions being given to anybody, and I will not go into the incident that was dealt with in the media yesterday. We all know what it was.

Now, Mr. Deputy President, we also heard and I want to make these points, so we could understand why these things are happening, because when they happen, again, there is a financial cost to it. I said in this Honourable House before and I am saying it, again, we are focusing a lot, on the physical aspect of the disease, Mr. President, the manifestations, so we quarantine and we do all that we have to do. But we are not dealing with the social and behavioural aspects of the Public Health situation in which we now exist.

Mr. Deputy President, before COVID, people used to move how they wanted to move with very few restrictions. Now that there is COVID, a behaviour change has to happen. But behaviours do not change overnight, it takes time, and in order for the Government to get people to change their behaviour, it takes money.

Mr. Deputy President, now, I know there is a Budget item for the Ministry of Health. But I am speaking directly here now to the issue of health education and promotion. If we are talking about recovery, transformation and resilience, we must talk about health education and promotion, because we're coming out of a culture of functioning one way, into a culture functioning another way and that takes time and that takes money.

Mr. Deputy President, I know the Honourable Members on the "Other Side" may say that while the item may not appear x or y or z, that was intended, or that may be spoken to. I know there is the Health Promotion Unit at the Ministry of Health. And I know in my conversation with the Honourable Member on the "Other Side," he was anticipating that I raise this point. Health promotion and education cannot be overlooked and the Unit must be reenergised. It must be. Monies must be put in place for the Health Promotion Unit.

Mr. Deputy President, I looked at the Budget, down to 4:00 o'clock. I got up 4:00 o'clock this morning to go back into it, again. We need to focus on the Health System. We cannot deal with issues independently, in isolation, of each other, if we expect the Health System to function effectively.

Mr. Deputy President, Public Health is an integrated system. If I get into my profession of teaching Public Health, you'll be surprised, fire, public health; education, public health; prisons, public health; schools, public health; road safety, public health. All of those things fall under public health. But for some reason, we're currently dealing with the issue, and yes, the Budget is hinged on COVID, and so I need to speak to public health.

And I noted here that there was information put forward on upgrading of Health Facilities, so we are talking here about Public Health Infrastructure. But, Mr. Deputy President, we always make the mistake of confining infrastructure to buildings and roads. Mr. Deputy President, in Public Health that does not work. In Public Health, infrastructure speaks to physical, it speaks to human resources, it speaks to organisational resources, it speaks to information resources, and it speaks to a combination of things, not just infrastructure, as physical. And so, there is this focus on, you know, upgrading, and I am not saying that that's not good. Upgrading the Health facilities, upgrading of the Nurses' Hostel, the General Hospital elevator, work on the Emergency Ward, retrofitting of Health Facilities, draft Legislation for the National Health Insurance. Those were some of the things put forward. These are the things that our monies are going to go into.

So, Mr. Deputy President, I wish to point here…

Sergeant-at-Arms: Mr. President, in the Chair.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: So, Mr. President, I wish to point here the absence of Electronic Medical Records, as part of the Public Health Infrastructure. Why do we need to have Electronic Medical Records? You'll be surprised to know what it takes to just getting this the System working. There's a lot of data. There is a lot of

Public Health data available, but it's in folders and files and it has not been digitalised. It has not been put in an electronic format. The System needs to be improved and we have been speaking about that in Academic Public Health for a while.

Mr. President, imagine that I can go to the Grand Bras Medical Station, for a particular issue, and later, go to the General Hospital for an issue. These two (2) entities, with the ease of the Electronic Medical Records and a functioning system, will be able to speak to each other, ease of access to information. And I challenge the Members on the "Other Side" to look into the need, the necessity of spending monies on an Electronic Medical Record System, in fact, a Management Information System for Health. If we are talking serious recovery, transformation and resilience, transform the Public Health Infrastructure, Mr. President.

Let's talk about quality of services. I listened to the presentations in the "Other Place" and yes, some services are going to be offered and, you know, I listened, and it was mentioned that research. But, Mr. President, I did not see an item in the Budget, for Research.

If we are going to speak to recovery, transformation and resilience, research becomes an important aspect of that. Research! Ask the Grenadian public. Find out what are the services accessed? What is the average time to access services? The length of stay at the Hospital; what's the average length of stay for persons with a particular complication, the number of returns to facilities for the same issue. These are all important questions, when it comes to health, and we can only get the answers if we do research. And, we can only do research, if we have money, and the only how we can get money is if it is put into the Budget.

Mr. President, I wish to mention here as well, conversations that have been happening or taking place, as it relates to the relocation of the Fire Station. And again, Mr. President, I am still under the issue of health and public health, the relocation of the Fire Station.

Mr. President, I would have already mentioned that the Fire Department is part of the Public Health System. The Fire Department is usually considered a first responder. So, to have any consideration or present any justifications for relocating the Fire Station

from its current location, to somewhere else, to me, as a person in Academic Public Health is crazy, because in its current location, it has some ease of access or quick response to fires.

Mr. President, the current location takes into consideration the building density in the Town of St. George and the history of fires in the area. To relocate it to somewhere further means that we are going to be jeopardising the public's health. If the Government can find monies to create, or, you know, build another Fire Station elsewhere, is even better. But to relocate the one from where it is now, to elsewhere would not be advised, at all.

Mr. President, again, since this Budget has a lot to do with COVID, I wish to speak here directly to COVID, and in particular, to vaccination. We had some estimates for a two year/three year period and none of them mentioned vaccination. None of those estimates mentioned vaccination. Only yesterday, mention was made about vaccines, possibly being implemented, as early as March 2021, only yesterday. But there is no Budget item, there is no estimate, as far as my reading. I will be happy if the Honourable Members could point me to otherwise. But there is no mention, in those Estimates, for vaccination. And my view, Mr. President, I am not necessarily advocating for or against vaccines, but I am speaking directly to the documents.

Mr. President, in keeping with health, I wish to mention the Low Income Housing Projects that have been spoken about and presented. Now we are happy, Mr. President, that persons can get housing and can get housing at a cost that fits their pocket. But again, Mr. President, housing plays an important role in public health, the types of houses, the location of the houses. In fact, research has actually shown that persons residing in Low Income Facilities seldom emerge out of their situations. So, it means then, that extra safety nets need to be allocated to these Housing Projects. I did not see that in the Budget, Mr. President.

We talk about personal space. You know, when we were growing up, we always hear people saying, don't come in my personal space. Well, I have news for us. Personal space is actually a dimension within public health. That is why only so many people can fit into this place. That is why we have different doors. This is public health

in reality. You cannot have one door for an entrance and exit, you must have an escape route. The door must swing outward, not inward, because if there is an emergency, we should not pull the door to us, we must push the door out, public health, in reality, in actuality. We live public health, and so, Mr. President, I wish to mention that the Budget, the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure did not speak to giving some of these considerations to the Low Income Housing Projects that were proposed, or that are being given.

Mr. President, I am happy to hear the Honourable Member speak of Waste Management, because again, this is an important aspect of public health; the separation of garbage or waste, the proper management, a proper Treatment Facility, all of these things speak to public health.

Now, Mr. President, still on Public Health, I wish to speak to the issue of Mental Health. Mr. President, you would remember that when we had the very first Session, when I became a Senator, I mentioned the importance of psychosocial assistance and support. It continues to be my plea that more monies, more resources be put or focused on mental health.

Mr. President, we are living in challenging times. I have spoken about our culture and we had a cultural shift, from living one way to living inside, and so persons are a bit stressed. I went to a facility last week and I heard the ladies talking and they say the lady came in as if she came in to cuss us, and I said to the two (2) ladies, I said: ***"You have to remember that persons are stressed, persons are frustrated, fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs lost. We don't know where certain things are coming from, and so persons are living with a lot of stress, which manifests itself in different ways."*** We had a spate or small pockets of suicides, and you know, we talk about it after the fact. More resources need to be placed in mental health.

Mr. President, I wish to speak now to Education. If I heard the Honourable Member correctly, $124m allocated to Education. I must confess, I skipped over Education a bit, because when I started going through educational documents, I get stressed. I look at what is happening, I look at the documentation, and I get a bit

stressed. Twenty-four thousand, two hundred (24,200) e-Learning devices given out, seventy-seven (77) teachers trained; School Infrastructure Rehabilitation.

But, Mr. President, I wish to point out here that twenty-four, two hundred (24,200) e-Learning devices were given out, but some schools are in need of furniture, a basic requirement. In fact, when I inquired, I was told that a particular school was still on rotation, because of lack of furniture. If we are going to transform the buildings, we have to ensure that all the amenities are available.

Mr. President, I wish to mention here as well, for a fact, twenty-four thousand, two hundred (24,200) e-Learning devices given out, but there are some students who live in families, who live in households with no electricity, and that's a fact. And the document, the National Goals, the National Outcomes, and then that was aligned to the SDGs. There is one that speaks to poverty, zero poverty, no poverty, Sustainable Development Goal 1. So how is that child supposed to function? And I know a particular home where there are two (2) children in that household; so, already, they're starting from the back.

Mr. President, the STAR Project. I asked about it before, I got an answer. And so, I noted that $0.5m would be allocated for the STAR Programme. And I also noted, in asking my question in this Honourable House, that part of the answer was that more schools would be getting the STAR Programme. And one would expect that before such an intervention is opened up, because it was piloted at a particular school, that some economic analysis be done, cost benefit analysis, cost effectiveness analysis, cost utility analysis. Now that the STAR Programme, at the piloted place, would have ended, was there a review? Was there an analysis? So we know that before we spend monies put into this Budget, on offering that project to other schools, that we are indeed spending monies on worthwhile projects. Mr. President, I can speak on a number of issues as it relates to the STAR Project. I am sure I'll engage with the Honourable Member on the "Other Side" during lunch, on those issues.

Mr. President, in an era of Zoom and Skype and digital teaching and learning, I noted that no allocation was made for the review of the Education Act and no allocation for Curriculum Reform. In fact, as far as I know, the Speed II document, which should

have ended in 2015, may still be the one being used. I know that there should have been a review and an update. But I noted that no allocations were made on those fronts.

So, Mr. President, again, I am going back to the Theme. If we're talking recovery, if we're talking transformation and resilience, we must also talk to the Education Act, which governs the Education System and Curriculum Reform, because, understandably, how we teach has changed, how teaching and learning happens has changed. The needs of learners have changed, and so, this must be reflected in the allocations, going forward.

Mr. President, youth; grants for Youth in Agriculture, the new IMANI, Youth Parliament, Youth Ambassadors, M-Power, Youth Vibes, FLY. I have noted that those were some of the projects for Youth. I am going back, again, to the Theme, Mr. President, 'Recovery, Transformation and Resilience.' We repeatedly heard, we repeatedly heard, that things have changed, we cannot function, as we were functioning before. We have a new normal...

Mr. President: Just let me inform that Senator Noel has some pressing personal issues, which have just arisen, and he has advised that he would wish to leave, and will be here to do his presentation tomorrow. Yes. Okay. Senator Noel, all the best.

(Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel exited the Chamber)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. President. Now, Mr. President, I wish to point out that under Youth, the projects that I have just listed were projects that were happening in 2019. There was an increase in the Youth Budget, so it stands to reason, Mr. President, that either we're going to get more youth involved, or more of the interventions across the Nation, nothing new there, just more money being put into youth. I had a couple of questions that I had asked. I'm still waiting for some of the documents promised, as it relates to Youth Ambassadors.

Mr. President, I wish to mention here that, as it relates to the M-Power Programme, I did some research and M-Power is one of the programmes that, you know, is being funded, now, under the Prime Minister's Ministry, since the move. It is focused on marginalised young men. There are different things being offered, CVQ classes, Soft Skills, Apprenticeship. So, M-Power started in 2019, and that was M-Power 1.0. We're now in M-Power 2.0, and it is anticipated there would be an M-Power 3.0 next year.

So far, according to my research, eight hundred (800) persons would have gone through the programme. And when asked what was one of the main issues with the M-Power Programme, attrition; the young men come in and they drop out. Why were they dropping out? They were dropping out, because they were brought into the programme without basic Arithmetic skills, and because that was part of the programme, the frustrations led to them dropping out. Now again, Mr. President, if we are going to be spending more monies into these programmes, then proper reviews, proper evaluation, proper analyses need to be done before they can be continued, or before they are offered more broadly.

Mr. President, I wish now to speak to a pending issue. We would have brought it up in this Honourable House before, but since it is mentioned in the Estimates, I wish to speak to it.

The Grenville Commercial Complex

I welcome the Grenville Commercial Complex. It promises to be a good project. For one, a Library is promised, and I am really looking forward to the Library. So, according to what was presented, construction of a Commercial Complex, to house the District Revenue Office and Library and offer some spaces for rent. The project, to date, the design is completed and construction will commence in 2021.

Now, Mr. President, I wish to return to another issue; the issue of flooding in Grenville. The Commercial Project is going to be in the epicentre of the flooding in Grenville. We have a number of Senators in this Honourable House with ties to St. Andrew, and they can attest to the fact of the location of the flooding.

Now, when asked about flooding in Grenville, we got a response. It's going to take some time. A certain grant was awarded for Smart Cities and for Climate Resilience and all of that. We spoke to the flooding and the erosion at Telescope and how that is affecting the flooding in Grenville, and the answer to us was, it's going to take some time. But, we are going to construct, Mr. President, a Commercial Complex in the middle of Grenville, in the middle of a flood prone location. Something seems wrong there, Mr. President. It seems as if either the horse has gone, or the cart is now before the horse, because I do not understand why, in the Budget for next year, there are allocations for the construction of that building, high potential building, but no allocation to deal with the flooding, and in fact, the answer was that it's going to take some time to get fixed. So then, why construct the building when we have a flood prone situation? We know that there is poor drainage in Grenville. We know that when the tide rises, the sand comes into the drains, the drains get blocked and there is no outlet for the water. Now, Mr. President, I wish to ask the question, when the Hurricane Season starts next year, or the following year, based on when the construction is completed and the building is put into use, what is going to happen, when the rain falls and Grenville gets flooded?

Let's go back again, to productivity. Let's go back to the potential loss of goods and services. All of these translate back to money. Mr. President, this is something that needs to be addressed.

Now, Mr. President, I know I have not used up all my time, but I wish to now speak to the Constituency of St. Andrew North-East, and in particular, I wish to speak to the Pearl's area, because I looked at the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and I see a number of things that I need to address here today.

The Símon Cultural Centre, a welcomed project, we are welcoming that. But, Mr. President, there will be a swimming pool. The swimming pool will not be of Olympic size, but there is conversation going on or a presentation was made in the "Other Place" that a swimming pool will be constructed at the Stadium location. Why not at the Símon Cultural Centre, where construction has not yet begun? What is the reason? What is the rationale for not having that Olympic sized swimming pool at the Símon Cultural

Centre? We are talking rural transformation, decentralisation, everything you have to come down to St. George's.

Mr. President, the Pearl's Playing Field and Pasture, and I look at my Honourable friend on the "Other Side," and I smile, because I mentioned that before, and I know he anticipated that I would speak to it again, today. The Pearl's Playing Field or Pasture, as we call it, cricket goes on there, when Cricket Season is open, one of the main areas for cricket. No working washroom facility; no stands, when the rain falls it becomes flooded. Granted, I must mention that the soil is relatively good, so the water gets seeped out quite easily. But, I remember the Honourable Member mentioned that a drawing was already in hand, and I noticed that there were other places getting all other things, but the Pearl's Playing Field or Pasture remains neglected.

Mr. President, I wish to also mention the Pearl's Basketball Court, a vexing issue for me because, Mr. President, I could not understand why monies would be spent to re-fence the Pearl's Basketball Court, with corrugated fence, that is the fencing that was there was not removed, corrugated fence placed now in concrete. And I am challenging the… well I think our new Senator can speak to that. I open my door and I look at it every day. I passed one day and I had to stop, and I asked, what's going on? They were re-fencing the Court, but the fencing is corrugated and it's now put into concrete. So, it was not just put on back onto the poles, it was planted in concrete; transformation, rural transformation.

I was happy to see last week, finally, the backboards for the Court were put up. I was happy to see that. The instant the backboards for the Court went on, the number of young men that came out. There was one particular gentleman, every time he sees me, **"Miss, when you all getting the Court back. I want to get a little sweat;"** to the point of almost frustrating me. You should see the number of young men on the Court now, now that the backboard is up. That said, the markings on the Court need to be looked at, it's not proper, and I can speak to that. I can speak to that.

(Inaudible comments were made by a Member)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: I sound like an MP. I wonder if the Honourable Member is trying to get me to say something there.

Mr. President, I live in Pearl's, and I like to give accolades where accolades are due. I am very, very happy, very happy, as it relates to the transformation of the Police Barracks. Mr. President, I am very happy to see that Camp Raymond, situated at Pearl's, has finally gotten a facelift. Sometimes, I used to wonder what is going on there. Dilapidated, pieces of plywood blocking windows, SSU base, this was the SSU base. The renovations, they are now happening, and I am very happy to see that.

Mr. President, I wish to end. I know I have some more time. I wish to speak to the issue of community tourism. I wish to speak to the issue of community tourism, an intervention that, I think, has a lot of merit, especially when we're talking about decentralisation, especially when we're talking about rural transformation and development, and there is a 'but'. But, a couple years ago, monies were spent on Signage for the different sites. So, Mr. President, if you're coming to Grenville, if you're coming to the north of St. Andrew, heading towards Paradise, in fact, right after the Paradise Bridge, there is a sign that says: "Pearl's Amerindian Site" full stop. It points the direction. I live in Pearls. I've been living in Pearls for three (3) years now, and I do not know what exactly the tourists are going there to see. The sign says: "Pearls Amerindian Site." The expectation is that there is some site that somebody can go to, that there is a Guide, possibly, that can explain something to them. Nothing! Pearl's Tourists Sites, again, the fencing of the Plane. I will not say some of the things that come to my mind, when I speak locally, of the fencing of the Plane.

Mr. President, as part of the Community Tourism Project, the old Cuban Plane, the Plane that was used during, I think, when I researched they said that was one of the last remaining Cold War planes, at Pearl's. A contract was given out and the area was fenced, toilet facilities constructed. But, Mr. President, the Securities, male and female, have no booth, no place to sit, no place to sit, no place, there is no booth for the Security.

And so, in passing, it is not a surprise to see the Security sitting under the plane wheel, on a chair, or outside, on the other side of the road, by a local Bar. No booth for

the Security, but there is a Security there every day. And, at one point, I had to laughingly ask, what exactly is the Security securing?

Mr. President, the project took place after all the seats, there is nothing in the plane. There is nothing in the plane. So, when the Tourists come, all they're seeing is the exterior of the plane. And they go in there, they take pictures, or they might be on the wing and they take pictures, community tourism; and that site has the potential for a really, really good tourist attraction. But as the Honourable Member said, I started sounding as an MP, so maybe I should wait before sharing. Maybe I should wait before sharing the ideas for that, to see what may happen. I don't know if that is a challenge that was thrown out to me. ***(Laughter)*** But that particular site can be a very good tourist attraction, if developed properly. But at the moment, the Security comes to work, and mind you, the Security Guards are very vigilant. They're there all the time, all day; they end at 6:00, and tell yourself, they are waiting there until 6:00 o'clock.

(Inaudible comments were made by the President)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Mr. President, if I may respond to that, between 6:00 in the morning and 6:00 in the afternoon, Camp Raymond is right there. And although I was annoyed at the beginning, Camp Raymond has now initiated a roadblock. So they block off that portion of the road, there is a detour road, so nobody is allowed to pass Camp Raymond to get on to the Airport Strip. And we believe that because of the location of the Base, that persons are not really going in there. I cannot speak to what would have happened for the inside of the plane, where all the seats were gone and basically everything gone.

So, Mr. President, I said all of that, to say that in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue document that was presented, there is no allocation for, you know, that particular thing, something that I think is necessary. In fact, Mr. President, the washroom facilities at the site, they do not work, the washroom is closed. So if the tourists come there and they wish to use the washroom, there is no facility. So no facility at the Pearls' Playing Field washroom facility that's working, no facility at the

Pearls' Tourist sites. I do not want to suggest what some persons do, when they need to relieve themselves, my gate, just outside my gate, being one of the places being used for that.

So, Mr. President, in concluding, having looked at the Estimates as provided, I believe yes, the Government needs to be commended for some of the areas of focus. However, there are other areas that need to be seriously reviewed before moving forward.

Particular reference being made now to unemployment, because the Honourable Member mentioned, we need to get people back to work, so I wish to just speak to that.

Labour Force Survey Indicators

Our Labour Force, male/female, first quarter of 2020, total fifty thousand, one hundred and ninety-seven (50,197). The distribution is kind of even, twenty-five thousand, one hundred and eighty-four (25,184) male, twenty-five thousand, and thirteen (25,013) female

Employed Labour Force

Let me just mention the numbers again. Mr. President, Employed Labour Force, male/female, total employed again, first quarter of 2020, total: thirty-five thousand, nine hundred and sixty-one (35,961); male, eighteen thousand, six hundred and six (18,606), female seventeen, three hundred and fifty-five (17,355), and we can go on. I have the numbers for the Labour Force, unemployed. And I wish to speak to that, because, Mr. President, we heard that fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs were lost as a result of COVID. And we heard that the unemployment rate, prior to COVID, would have been brought down to, I think, it was 15% the Honourable Member mentioned, the lowest in quite a while, if not in the recent history, or parts of Grenada.

But, Mr. President, we need to understand the measures that are being used to make such pronouncements, unemployment…

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Unemployment, in our context, with our measures being used, may be higher, the actual unemployment, because here is what is done. If somebody is seeking a job, they're not considered unemployed, and that's a fact. In the Labour Force Survey that's used, if someone is seeking a job, they are not considered unemployed.

If someone is seasonally employed for let us say, six (6) months of the year, and the next six (6) months, they're not considered unemployed. If someone, let us say, a Hustler, works for one hour a week, washing a car, whatever, they're not considered unemployed. So, these are the measures that are being used.

Now, Mr. President, I wish to go back to the focus of getting the country moving again. There is a strong focus on construction. There is a strong focus on construction. An assumption made here is that, and it's not a proper assumption, because out of the COVID related unemployment issues, I think persons working in Tourism would have been the most affected. Hospitality, whether it's, you know, Hotels and so on. We cannot, necessarily, speak to private education, because, as the Honourable Member said, everything is functioning as normal at SGU. It's just that persons are not physically on site. So, we're speaking here, basically, to those who might have been working in the Hospitality Industry, for the most part.

So, if the persons, who would have lost their jobs were working in the Hospitality Industry, but our focus is mainly on construction, then there seems to be an issue here, because the assumption is that either everybody can get into the Construction Industry, and even if that were so, Mr. President, even if; let's say Tessa lost her job and construction was available to her, based on her skills, she would be getting maybe one of the lowest paid jobs, unskilled labour.

So yes, the Construction Industry will assist in getting people back to work, but there must be alternative measures for getting people back to work. Mr. President, we do not know how long COVID is going to be around for. We do not know. Some countries are going back into lockdown. We cannot continue this focus on Tourism. We know what is happening. We see what is happening, so we have to look for alternative measures, alternative means.

I know there is a kind of snob outlook for agriculture, but I'll leave that for the Honourable Senator, with responsibility for Agriculture, to speak to. But I wish to mention here, interestingly, we have not yet heard of a loan, or a grant that may be focused on agro-processing. Every single year, every year, we have….

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Five (5) minutes?

Mr. President: You have fifteen (15) minutes more.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Fifteen (15). Thank you, Mr. President.

(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: I am finishing up.

Mr. President: No. You have fifteen (15) minutes more.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: I know.

(Inaudible comments by Mr. President)

Mr. President: I am just suggesting that when you finish that presentation, we would break for lunch, that would take us up to 1:15, and, when we resume; Senator Stiell, are going to go beyond the 4:00 o'clock hour, or we're going to still maintain it at 4:00, or you want to finish before 5:00 on today's Session?

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: I think we can take two (2) more presentations after this.

Mr. President: Okay, because that means if we come back; the clock is not running against you, so just hold your trend of thought. If we come back at 1:00, it's now one minute after one, according to this. So, if we come back at, say, 2:15, and we do the other two (2), that will take us close to 5:00, because it's an hour and fifteen; two and two, four and fifteen, yeah.

So, we could be exiting somewhere in and between the 4:30, minutes to 5:00. I am assuming that Members consider this to be a reasonable schedule. Yes. For those of you who have to travel far into the country and so on, in the face of all that's happening. Okay. So, Senator, you can resume. I will give you back the time. My record shows that we took two (2) minutes to do so. So, at 13:17, you will conclude.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I was making the point that within the Estimates that were provided, there was no indication that agro-processing would be pursued, as there was no allocation for it. And I was making the point, Mr. President, that every year, every year, we have millions of pounds of fruits and vegetables, either going to waste, or we may find one of the persons who do trade between the countries whether it's Grenada/Trinidad, whether it's Grenada/St. Vincent, buying these fruits and vegetables, some of them, and sending them off to another country. And then, Mr. President, we buy them back, as a value added product. We buy them back, red mango, golden apples stew, plum this, that the next, plantain chips. So, we're exporting our fruits and vegetables, where we can use them, if we had the proper facilities and send them in the diaspora. So, Mr. President, that was something I needed to speak to, as well.

Mr. President, I am going to close on this point, the mismatch between education and employment. I heard the discussion. I know the discussion. I work in Education. I've been in education for more than two (2) decades, believe it or not, and we see the mismatch in our Education System. And I was very happy to hear the Member in the "Other Place," mentioned it, that our Education System keeps training our young people only in certain areas, the traditional areas. We have not yet diversified our education offering, so significantly, that we can address the gaps. And so, every year we come

and we hear our students go out and they're lacking these skills, and so they have to go back in and do another CVQ, or something to acquire these skills, or they have to learn soft skills.

I wish to mention, again, that our Education System has to be a bit more streamlined, Mr. President, and I am ending, and I left that point for last. I know I spoke on Education already, but I wanted to leave this point for last.

We have a System where a student spends five (5) years in a Secondary School, not free. We know it's free education. They're not really paying for the education, but there is a cost to that. They spend five (5) years in a Secondary School and then leaves Secondary School and goes into a Vocational Institution. We have to get this right. We have to get this right, Mr. President. And I am not saying here that academics are more important than the Vocational Skills, because we're seeing right now, that's not true. We're seeing that we need skilled employees. We're seeing that. We're seeing that there is a gap between what we need and what we can and what we are turning out. So again, Mr. President, I wish to put on record that we need to take a serious look.

Millions of dollars are being expended on education. And so, it goes back again, to the analyses that are supposed to be done, cost benefit, cost effective, cost utility. These are economic measures that make sense in education. We use it in Public Health. If we are spending 'x' millions of dollars on a particular project, we have to measure the outcomes, not just in monetary means, but also in the real means. Are we seeing the changes that we need to see or that we anticipate? And with this point, Mr. President, I would end my presentation on what was presented to us, as the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator St. Cyr. Lunch is ready. I would suggest that we will be back here. I don't like these odd times. And since we are doing multiples of fifteen (15), I would suggest that we would be back here at 2:15.

Clerk: That's forty-five (45) minutes?

Mr. President: No, no, no, let's have a full hour in accordance with the, I believe it is the Labour Code. So, this House now stands adjourned for lunch and will resume at 2:15.

(Sound of Gavel)

Senate adjourned for lunch at 1:07 p.m.

Senate resumed at 2:15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): The Senate now resumes. Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, I rise, in this Honourable House, to give my full support to the Presentation of the Estimates of Revenue that was delivered, just about two (2) weeks ago. And to signal to this Honourable House that the statement that was presented is a good response to the times and seasons that we are in.

As you know, COVID-19 has disrupted the entire world. But before I go into this, I want to take this opportunity to thank Almighty God for spared life, for another year, to be in this Honourable House, and to say that despite the fact that we have been pressed on all sides, He has been there, as a guiding light, keeping us through.

When I reflect on the portion of Scripture in Psalms 46 and verse 1, it says: ***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*** And, when the Psalmist penned this, it was because of the circumstances and the trials and testing that he and the people faced and just to remind the people at that time, that, look up to your Father, because He has the answer to the trials and testing that you're in. And what better time to have this sort of advice and counsel, because of what we're face with, at this point-in-time.

But I also want to look at a second portion of scripture in Isaiah 26 and verse 3. And Isaiah wrote: ***"Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusted in Thee."*** And again, when the children of Israel were faced with arduous times, God inspired Isaiah to encourage them, and to let them know that He is there to see them through. Despite the challenges, He would take them through. But keep your mind on Him, your mind, your heart, your life on Him and He'll see you through. We need Him more than ever at this point-in-time.

But before I delve further into my presentation, Mr. President, I just want to respond to a few of the information that, well, probably, in some cases, misinformation that was given earlier, and I just want to set the record straight, so the people who've been following, listening will not be confused.

Yes, the Budget Statement, or the document would have been over six hundred (600) pages long, and we all received it electronically, because graciously, Mr. Deputy President, the Parliament sought and thought it was necessary to provide the devices to us. All of us have Laptops. It was provided to us by the Parliament, to ensure that one, we will conform to the agreement that Grenada would have signed in reducing our carbon footprint and by the same time saving the environment, because, you know, every piece of paper is as a result of the destruction of trees. And if we have to save the environment, and we're talking about climate change at this point in time, we need to. So when we speak about public health and the importance, everything hinges on public health, saving the environment is part of it. So, we didn't get special privileges by having a big document, no, we all got it electronically, and by all means, we should follow this, and obey the information that is given.

Also, we heard about digital governance and the Budget did not capture enough. Mr. Deputy President, the Budget Statement covers a fiscal year. There is not everything that Minister for Finance could speak to on all the Votes. He cannot, that's the responsibility of the Line Minister. The Line Minister gives those details. So, next time around, we're going to get this right.

The suspension of the FRL, and that's a Clause that is written in almost every document, every Legislation, as it relates to responding in times of crisis. So, the Loan

Agreement that is being signed today, you have that Clause there to protect the State, because we are living in dangerous times.

Before COVID-19, as Small Island Developing States, we were very concerned about the impact of climate change and the frequency and intensity of storms, and we know how crippling that is to our economies. So that Clause was placed there, also, for medical emergencies, pandemics. You have to give this Government credit for thinking of this, when the FRL was passed. So, it was suspended at this point in time, so that we'll be able to get ourselves back on track.

Yet it speaks to Debt to GDP Ratio of 55%. By the suspension and with the loans that will be taken to finance the deficit in the Budget of $18m, it will increase our Debt to GDP Ratio by 13% to 69%, to be exact 68.8%. But let's look at what has happened over the last seven (7) years, Mr. Deputy President.

When we came into Government in 2013, the Debt to GDP Ratio was 108%, and in less than seven (7) years, we have reduced it to 56%, that's a commendable feat. **(Applause)** So, to bring it up by 13%, to respond to this Medical Emergency, pandemic, and by the way, you know the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, the ECCB Benchmark is 60% Debt to GDP for all its members of the ECCU. We're just up by 9%. But looking at our record, in the past few years, this is easy for us. As soon as the economy starts growing again, and there are signs of it, we will see the Debt to GDP Ratio declining, going further down.

But at the same time, I spoke of issues of natural hazards and disasters and so forth. In 2004, Mr. Deputy President, when hurricane Ivan passed, it devastated the country. We remember that, and who was hardest hit? The most vulnerable in our society, and what would have been the greatest need, at this time? Housing, for those vulnerable people. And the Government went out to find support from its partners, to give affordable housing to the people of this country.

I thought it was an attack on the vulnerable people in this country, the poor and marginalised, when I heard the Honourable Member, on the "Other Side", would say, we went to get housing for the vulnerable and not the Governor-General. I mean the priority is so different. Why is it that we always take time to attack the marginalised in

the community? Why is it, it's so easy to beat on them? Come on. They are the ones that need the most.

And today, Mr. Deputy President, this Government would have moved into ensuring that we are looking to eliminate and eradicate pit toilets and so forth. The same vulnerable people in our societies, we are looking to elevate them and to give them that status, for having, as they say, inside toilet and bathroom. But, the Member found it necessary to beat on them, because we went and we found grant aid to provide housing for them. It's unfortunate. The people out there are listening. They will deal with you in time to come.

Mr. Deputy President, it's not my intention to school the Member here this afternoon. But, it's important, it's important to guide her, and the Bible of the Senate is the Standing Orders. And you need to go back to school in the Standing Orders. You do research, go back and find your place in the Standing Orders.

I want to take us to Standing Order No. 36, page 26, and I want to look at Nos. (5) and (6). No. (5) says***: "No Senator shall impute improper motives to any Member of either House."*** You did the research and you found a Hansard to find out if discussions were held about a vote for Parliamentary Elections Offices and went as far as to call us liars. How could you degenerate to such a low level? It's important that you follow the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders are clear. Don't impute improper motives.

And secondly, No. (6). ***"Her Majesty's or the Governor-General's name shall not be used to influence the Senate."*** You are out of place. You cannot do such. Go back and get yourself schooled in the Standing Orders and you will know, you don't, by any means, bring the Governor-General into those debates.

I agree with you on the whole idea of Health Infrastructure. It's much more than buildings and so forth. It has a lot to do with softer sides, softer skills and all this stuff and so forth.

Mr. Deputy President, a specific reference was made to Electronic Medical Records. Why aren't we doing this? I just want to say to the Member, with all the research that you have done, you didn't do a proper research. Mr. Deputy President, I

just want leave to read five (5) lines, well, probably, three and a half (3½). **"Electronic Medical Record System has been implemented with the Community Health since 2016. There are also some other electronic systems for patient care. Electronic Immunization Registry, Immunization Programme; a Lab System, Laboratory; Patient Lab Results, that is there; X-ray System; System for Antenatal Programmes,"** all are there.

So, a simple research would have proven that we have Electronic Medical Records implemented in the country, since 2016. I do believe, probably the Member, in the research, didn't find those information. But I just want to correct the record, to let the people know it is there and we have been doing this since 2016.

It's also important, Mr. Deputy President, for us to know that Doctors within the community can now access patient lab and x-ray results through the EMR Project, the Electronic Medical Records Programme. No more travelling to St. George's to collect results. If I could make one little research and I could find it, how you didn't find it? You're selective in your researching, man. You have to do better than that. When we're educating our students, we have to make sure that we cover all the bases. We get all the information and give it to them, because we do not want to misinform them.

We talked about vaccination and vaccination is the going thing right now, Mr. Deputy President, because the world is concerned. And I have a bone to suck with COVID in a while, so I will give her, her place in a while. But, really and truly, the world has gone bonkers, because of COVID, and the move today is vaccination, vaccination, vaccination.

We have stated very clearly, that Grenada is not working on its own. We are working as part of a Global Network, within the OECS, within the sub-Region, and then into the wider Global Community, with specific partners. But just to state, I was a part of one meeting, with PAHO, the World Bank and so forth, as it relates to COVID and response, and vaccination obviously, came up. And what we are doing, as it stands now, to ensure that when we receive confirmation from WHO and PAHO, as to the efficacy of a vaccine, we are moving in this direction. As a matter of fact, the World Bank has come on board and provided support for Small States. Monies have been

pledged already. So we are seeing, in the second quarter of next year, we could be seeing a roll out of this.

But, we have other discussions with other partners, who are helping us at this point in time, as it relates to vaccination. And let me say to you, there is a plan, already, for distribution. The world is saying, the first to get it is our frontline workers and your most vulnerable or people with underlying conditions. We have a plan to ensure that this is done and done right.

There is this other one, and I just want to set the record straight for the people of St. Andrew, my people, as it relates to the reconstruction of the Revenue Office. It's not a building, it's a reconstruction, because on the current site there is a building that used to house the Revenue Office and so forth. That current site will be the site for the reconstruction of this Complex, which will house Revenue Office, Library and so forth. So it's not a new location going into a vulnerable area. The structure is presently existing on that spot. So, it didn't come over right. So, I want the people to know it's the same site the building will be erected.

And then this other one, Mr. Deputy President, the strategy to receive funding support from our multilateral partners, bilateral partners and countries are short-sighted, because all countries are currently dealing with the impact of COVID-19. Again, research, research. You could have simply come and ask me. You could have asked anybody else, if it is right to say that it's short-sighted, and you will not get support from your bilateral partners, because they had to deal with COVID. Well, let me just educate my dear sister, whom I love very much. I do. You know that. **(Laughter)** Two (2) weeks ago, two (2) weeks ago, practical example, two (2) weeks ago, we signed, with Japan, a US$1.8m support for the country. We also got over a million dollars from the People's Republic of China, as a response to the present pandemic. **(Applause)** And, they said to us, there is more where this came from.

South Korea has also just given us a grant of US$150,000.00, to deal with the present pandemic. So, from reaching out, we have reached out to our bilateral partners, we have received good words. So, when we say, this is a strategy, we are not speaking into thin air, you know, and just saying things as we feel, you know, it's

because we have it in the bag, eh, my brother, we have it. And, hear this, hear this, the Japanese $1.8m is coming in January, you know, in a few weeks' time. So, what you have failed to realise is that this Government's record, over the last seven (7) years, is unparalleled, by any Government that has governed this country, since 1974. This Government's record, in terms of fiscal management is unparalleled. No-one could come close to us. And when we speak, don't question it, don't. I'll give more, as we go along.

But, Mr. President, it's important for us to put the record straight, that it's no idle boast. This Government has succeeded in keeping this country together from 2013, when we came and we met a broken economy.

(The Member took a drink of water)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, as I've said before, the world is dealing with this Coronavirus Pandemic, an event unprecedented, in the living memory of most of us. It was officially recognised as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), and I want to spend some time now on the Ministry of Health.

The speed with which the pandemic spread across the Globe, triggered an international race to understand the virus itself, and find ways to combat it. Researchers have been doing quite a lot, and I always give credence to the science. And today we are seeing the rollout of vaccines, that, at one point in time, it was said, it was not possible. But, in such a quick time, we're seeing it is being distributed.

With such a great race in progress to understand the novel virus, the inevitable result was that the scientific consensus shifted, frequently, as new data emerged, and this undoubtedly presented challenges to Policymakers, who were trying to craft Public Health measures and provide clear and consistent guidance to its citizens.

The global nature of the pandemic has resulted in the issue becoming a highly politicised one, one requiring clear national and global positions. Citizens must continue

to depend on their Government to set parameters for what they can or should do, to validate information and to conform to social reality.

Our Government has responded. We have been quick to issue, sometimes, not perfect, but recommendations and institute regulations to guide the behaviour of our citizens in response to this virus. In our quest to ensure that we manage the Public Health crisis, we have sought to engage our stakeholders, in an effort to ensure that, collectively, we make the most appropriate public health interventions.

In short, Mr. Deputy President, we should not politicise health. This thing creates serious problems. Despite Government's effort, one of the areas of grave concerns, was people using politics, when we had to come together to combat the virus. The dangers of such acts have been flagged by Government and lead Organisations, the world over, including the WHO.

At home, Mr. President, we have consistently called for national unity to respond to COVID. We have called on all Political Parties, NGOs and other interest groups, to unite in the fight against the pandemic. This should have been our common enemy, nothing else.

The idea of quarantine, travel restrictions, physical distancing, transition to blended schooling for our children, trade restrictions and mandatory masking, have incited strong feelings from both sides of the political aisle. We must, however, be mindful of the dangers of politicisation of a disease that, by its very nature, does not have political leniency. When we politicise, we sow discord among our population. When persons fail to listen to, believe and obey the voices of authority, our efforts to combat the disease becomes significantly undermined. When our efforts are marginalized, our risks multiply.

When we politicise this issue, we are not united and the task of seeking aid becomes more arduous. In some instances, Mr. President, we lose critical aid while trying to get consensus on the way forward. When we politicise, we make it difficult to implement policies and we had an experience of this, and changes to Regulations, which sometimes put additional strain on our Law Enforcement Agencies, because as Governments, our aim is to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Currently, I am seeing a fight right now, in the United States, to get people to accept the vaccine, and it's a hard one, because leaders would have said they were not going to take it, because under whose watch it was implemented, or developed and so forth. Nonsense! When we trivialise this thing, to that level, how will we be able to get our people to obey us? That's the problem that we're faced with at this point in time. COVID is a present danger to the fabric of this Nation, and we must stand resolute as a team, and I want to call on all of us in here, let's work together, as a team, to fight COVID.

Mr. President, the allocation for Health in 2021 is $94.9 m, that's the highest ever. You will remember that on March 16th, 2020, Grenada recorded its first case of COVID-19, and the hardest decision, as a Government we had to make was to shut the country down, close our borders, a difficult one, but we had to do it.

March 23 at 11:59 p.m., to March 29, a 24-hour curfew; that brought back memories that I don't want to revisit, but that was the reality. COVID, a present danger, an enemy that we had little or no knowledge about, but we had to do it.

Mr. President, this is a very difficult road we all are called to travel. We all have our part to play to stop the spread. As of December 11, 2020, we had a total of forty-five (45) Laboratory confirmed COVID cases in the country. Forty-five (45) recovered, but in a matter of twenty-four (24) hours, this number moved from forty-five (45) to seventy-one (71).

This, of course, has jolted everybody. I heard one person said the Minister, when he was speaking on the TV, he was angry. I am not sure he was angry, but he was disappointed, because we did all that we could have done, and all we asked is for you to follow the protocols, follow the protocols. But this is what it is. This is our current reality.

What is important going forward is for us, as a People, to take no more chances. Let us not risk it any further. Let us follow the protocols. Let us wear our masks. Let us do the distancing, and let us sanitise, because it saves lives. And we have to join together, and I am asking this Honourable House, let us work together. Let us not see it, as "This Side" against the "Other Side." But let us see it as one team, working

together for the common good of all our workers and people of this country. We have to, and my dear sister, Public Health calls for that, we have to.

Mr. President, mindful of the potential impact of the virus and the ability it has to destabilise and to kill people, and also, as we have seen in the First World countries, overwhelmed the Health System, we had to react and react fast there.

Government took swift action to strengthen our Health System, by adopting new Public Health Regulations to govern the National response to the pandemic and by accelerating our pandemic preparedness capabilities, through upgrading Health facilities and equipping them with isolation capabilities; an increase in health expenditure to allow for more Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), as well as Public Awareness Campaign.

What was even more daunting for us, Mr. Deputy President, COVID-19 was not budgeted for. It came as a thief in the night, but we had to stand up to it, for the country's sake, for the people of this country's sake, we had to, and we had to find the resources, to mount an adequate response. And, up until the 11th, we did an extremely fantastic job, and I want to take this moment to commend the Ministers for Health, right now, and the team of First Responders, for keeping this country safe **(applause)** for over nine (9) months without any deaths. We have to be thankful.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Health embarked on a programme of upgrading existing health infrastructure. Several Medical Stations and Medical Centres were refurbished including, on this list, Woburn Medical Centre, Good Hope, Perdmontemps and Grand Anse. Also, the upgrading of the Nurses Hostel, at Princess Royal, in Carriacou, as well as the replacement of one of the elevators at the General Hospital.

On the issue of sustainable Health Financing, work advanced on the National Health Insurance Project, including the completion of the draft Legislation. We are moving towards ensuring that we have a facility, through NHI, to provide the best healthcare for the citizens of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Deputy Present, I am confident that despite the challenges, despite the hardships, despite what COVID-19 has done to us as a Nation, we will overcome. We

have done it before. We have showed resilience from Ivan and Emily. We have showed resilience throughout our history and we will beat COVID.

In direct response again, to ensuring that we build capacity within the Health Sector and to provide the necessary means to roll out the best healthcare, Government would have hired new staffing for the General Hospital. We added Nutritionists, Intensivists, Oncology Nurse Specialists, Ear, Nose and Throat Specialists, Ophthalmologists and OB-GYN Specialists, Registered Nurses and Staff Nurses.

The Ministry of Health deployed major equipment at District Medical Centres: six (6) Electro Cardiogram machines, ECG machines placed at all Health Centres; five (5) Automatic External Defibrillator; AED machines placed at all health centres in Grenada. We have Autoclaves and two (2) installations of Distillers at the St. George's Health Centre and L' Esterre Medical Station in Carriacou.

When we hear of ECG, it's always being seen as top-class medical inventory, and to not only have it in the General Hospital, where it's supposed to be, but to have them in health centres across the Nation, is an indication as to where we want to go. In support of what we've said all along, a healthy Nation is a wealthy Nation. And if it can diagnose very early, issues with the heart and so forth, there is a better chance of recovery, and that's the intention of the Government. So, by putting those machines in the Medical Stations, you're saying the most vulnerable in our population will have access to top-class medical responses, and this is a great moment, a proud moment for this Government.

Other areas of focus: enhanced delivery of patient care by improving diagnostic measures at the General Hospital; improved safety, infection prevention and control and security measures. Additionally, Mr. Deputy President, as a means of enhancing the delivery of healthcare in the State of Grenada, the Government appointed a second Minister within the Ministry of Health. And you would agree with me and with us that COVID-19 was so impactful and would have created so many problems that we needed a second hand, to ensure that primary healthcare is being given the focus.

So the second Minister has responsibility for Hospital Services and Community Outreach, and she brought a breath of fresh air within that Department, within that

Ministry, and the team started working right away. To date, the team has embarked on a project of enhancing the ambience within the Hospitals, through: ***"The Adopt a Ward Assistance, Beautification and Minor Repairs"*** by the Private Sector. So we reached out to the Private Sector. As a matter of fact, they came on board very early, and said: ***"We want to give support to this initiative"*** and they have been able to paint wards and so on.

And I know there was an issue in the public domain, in the media recently of some infestation of bugs at the Mt. Gay Mental Hospital. I am pleased to announce, Mr. Deputy President, that all the mattresses at the Mt. Gay institution, were changed. So, I want to believe we have been able to curb that problem.

In 2021, there will be the decentralisation of services at the level of the community. Gouyave and St. David Health Centres will provide 24-hour emergency service with a phased approach of additional services such as minor surgeries and Lab services for Princess Alice, in Mirabeau, and Princess Royal in Carriacou.

In response to the increase in non-communicable diseases, there will be more education campaigns on the prevention of such, and I want to take the opportunity to invite our Senators on the "Other Side" to join us in this education campaign, to get our people to accept and to support the buy local, eat local campaign and to move towards eradicating or reducing the incidents of non-communicable diseases within the society.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to move on to the National Disaster Management Agency. Our vulnerability to natural hazards and other exogenous shocks, compel us to cement resilience, at the very core of Government. And more importantly, embedded within the fabric of our communities, Government is already doing its part to ensure that resilience is a key principle, integrated into the design of policies and projects across Government.

[3]NaDMA, as the central coordinating body for disaster risks reduction continues to work assiduously, despite the many challenges and constraints that have plagued the Secretariat, for years.

[3] NaDMA – National Disaster Management Agency

Notable Strides in 2020

The Comprehensive Disaster Management Bill, which has been in draft for many years, the process has moved to having the drafting instructions done and submitted to the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Feedback has been received and the Agency looks forward, in 2021, for the final consultation and finalisation of the Bill. Several Plans and Protocols were reviewed: the National Hurricane Plan, Emergency Operations Centre Manual, and NaDMA's Notification Procedures. Assistance and support were also given in the development of the following: Customs Evacuation Plan; Coastal Master Plan; Marine Spatial Plan; the Nutrition in Emergency Disaster Management Plan and a Hurricane Plan for the Silver Sands. And just based on the last one, we, as an Agency, provide that sort of support to the Private Sector, in helping them to develop Emergency Plans.

Emergency Plans for schools were developed and distributed to the following schools in the St. George North-West District: the Uganda Martyrs Roman Catholic School; the Happy Hill Secondary School; the Mt. Moritz Anglican and the Westmorland Primary and Secondary schools in the Town of St George.

Construction of the Emergency Operation Centre; Disaster Relief Warehouses at Mt. Jaloux in St. George and Belair in Carriacou. Mr. Deputy President, both projects are funded by United States Southern Command and the Government of Grenada, to the tune of US$6.5m. These projects are currently on schedule and are expected to be completed by March, 2021.

Mr. Deputy President, I am pleased to announce also, that both facilities will be equipped with state-of-the-art communication equipment. The Emergency Operation Centres and Disaster Relief Warehouses will provide space for the administrative functions associated with an Emergency Operations Centre and logistic support associated with warehousing of disaster relief supplies, allowing the uninterrupted operations of the facility, missions, during and after natural events, resulting in the overall strengthening of our institutional capacity.

So looking ahead to 2021, the key actions: strengthening the Disaster Risk Reduction Legislative and Governance Framework, with the finalisation of the Disaster

Management Bill. We will seek technical assistance from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Operations Administration, to ensure that we get it right. As part of the process, the existing Committee structure within the Advisory Council, will be reviewed, to ensure relevance and fit within the proposed Legislative and Governance Framework.

Institutional Strengthening of NaDMA

The Agency will also examine its own structure for relevance and feat, as well as, to recruit personnel to boost its capacity to effectively manage disaster risks. ***(The Member took a drink of water)*** Dedicated focus will be given to strengthening our Volunteer Corp. We must recognise and appreciate our citizens who answer the call to serve their communities and country by volunteering. We have heard their concerns, and we will address them. Without our volunteers, our operations will be crippled.

Tsunami Ready Project - St. George's

Mr. President, during the month of November, the Agency was advised by the Tsunami Warning Centre, that St. George's has been approved for funding, to be certified Tsunami ready. This project will be supported by AUSAID, CDEMA, USAID and the local Private Sector, with in-kind contributions from UNESCO, IOC, Government of Grenada, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the SRC (Seismic Research Centre), among others.

This Tsunami Ready Programme serves as an important reminder to us, that hurricanes are not the only hazards that we must adequately prepare for. Our environment demands that we devise more robust systems to comprehensive disaster management, an observation that is reinforced by COVID-19.

In 2018, Mr. Deputy President, St. Patrick was designated tsunami ready, as the first Parish within the State of Grenada, and given their close proximity to Kick 'em Jenny, we thought it was the best decision that we could have made, as it relates to getting our communities ready, in the event of a tsunami.

In 2019, Carriacou and Petite Martinique were certified, and as I have said 2021 will be St. George. And I look forward to this, because it takes a community and the resilience of a community to be able to withstand the impact, or to mitigate against the impact of hazards. Getting tsunami ready is necessary, given that with the study that

was done by New York University, as to having St. George being the first Climate Smart City in the region, also identified that we are vulnerable to sea level rise. And that being a concern, it was necessary for us, at this point, to embark on this journey of having St. George Tsunami Ready Certified.

I look forward to the work, which will be done over a twenty (24) month period. It's a lot of work to get all the signs done and erected, to have the inundation marks prepared, and this has to be done with the potential threat from wave currents. In this case, mainly from the Western Corridor, the Caribbean Sea, yes, to the South, the exposure from the Atlantic side, the Eastern side, so quite a lot of work will be required. And, I want to take this opportunity to invite our Private Sector to continue to give support to the Agency, as they have done in the past, to ensure that we get this right and we will be able to provide the necessary support to protecting the Capital City, St. George.

Mr. Deputy President, the work will continue to ensure that we maintain our readiness destination. It is important also to note that the threat of natural hazards is not only hurricanes. I understand between June and November, the entire country is focused on the possible impact of a hurricane or storm. But, as I've said before, there are several hazards that we are exposed to. I know we have done study on the Western Corridor, because we had a boulder some time ago, sliding off the banks and, unfortunately, falling on one of the buses, and all the passengers perished. That's the danger that we're exposed to.

So there are lots hazards that we are exposed to, apart from hurricanes and I am extremely happy that the Caribbean Tsunami Centre has decided to support the request from Grenada, to have St. George's designated. And what is even sweeter, we are the only country next year that will be certified and that is even more special for us. **(Applause)** And this is a reflection of the work that we have been doing in this regard, over the years.

The Department of Public Administration

The Department of Public Administration remains committed to driving an ambitious agenda to modernise the operations of the Public Service. The DPA's vision

is: ***'To Build an Innovative, Adaptable and Resilient Public Service.'*** Key actions: promote digital transformation of the Public Service by leveraging technology; to work smarter and build resilience across all institutions. Transformation is critical, now, more than ever in the present circumstances and we have taken the necessary steps to ensure that we are not left behind.

The Digital Governance for Resilience Project (DG4R), which is a US$15m Project, and the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project, which is US$8m.

(Time Bell Rings)

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, you have fifteen (15) minutes left.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: So, I am on the bonus.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Okay. Thanks. I think I got it right here.

(Inaudible comments by Members)

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: I want to substitute extra time and remove bonus, so I am on extra time. Thanks. **(Laughter)** Key actions, as I said: to promote digital transformation of the Public Service by leveraging technology to work smarter and build resilience across all institutions. Amidst the disruption of the on-going pandemic, peak key procurement activities have been initiated.

In 2021, work will begin on the completion of the digitisation of the records and Lands and Deeds Registry and the digitisation of the records at the Probate Registry,

will be completed. Other major project activities would centre on e-payments, digital identity, tax administration. Overall, the DG4R Project will develop the cross-cutting enablers of digital Government. The Caribbean Digital Transformation Project activities are designed to support the expansion of the benefits of this digitisation to the general public and Private Sector through skills and technology adoption support.

It is without question, Mr. President, that technology is what is driving us in this period, and COVID-19 has taught us several lessons. But one important one is this, you have the tools, use it, use it. And that's the main focus of the Department of Public Administration, to ensure that we stay at the cutting edge of using the technology, but most importantly to bring the entire Public Service in this direction.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Government is cognisant that its greatest future assets are digital assets and that it must actively drive the development of the digital economy. A critical part of that infrastructure is a National Data Centre, which has been constructed with funding from the CARCIP Project. This facility will host critical systems and digital services. Work is almost complete and the Data Centre will be commissioned in early 2021, allowing for the migration of several desperate Government Agencies into a state-of-the-art Digital Hosting Facility. And just to say to you, the facility will be within the compound of the Emergency Operation Centre and Warehouse for NaDMA in Morne Jaloux. What a beautiful mix. We will be there, as NaDMA, to coordinate responses to whatever impact we may have from hazards. We will provide security, of course, for the Digital Data Centre. But let us look at how they will complement each other, and I look forward to both facilities being commissioned in early 2021.

But, Mr. Deputy President, it speaks also to the forward-thinking of this Government, in ensuring that we bring this country along with technology, because that's the way we need to go, and we have been talking ever so long, the Prime Minister being the Minister within the Region for Science and Technology. And one may ask, what do you have to show for it? What we're doing in the transformation of Government and the governance of this country, and having our Data Centre and all our data housed in a specific location, to ensure that you're able to respond, adequately, to the needs of

your people, that is forward thinking and that is progress, and that's what we have been saying, all along. We will do, as a Government.

Education is a core enabler of going digital, and so the Ministry of ICT procured Microsoft Office 365 licence for all students, teachers and the Ministry of Education officials to promote online collaboration and sharing of information, teamwork, remote learning that will greatly enhance the education of our Nation's students. This will also augment the tablets and e-books initiatives in schools. All the domain names have been developed and in the first quarter of 2021, beginning with Secondary Schools, all students and teachers would have their own unique email address. That is progress, Mr. Deputy President.

COVID-19 has taught us many things and has brought us to the fore that there is need for a Digital Platform to transform cash payments to citizens, who are beneficiaries under Government Social Programmes. The Ministry of ICT has collaborated with a private company, WePay to pilot a project that will implement a Digital Cash Transfer System that will allow citizens to access the social funds without physically visiting a Revenue Office. Great move, Mr. Deputy President, great move.

The security that is embedded in this, that our senior citizen will not have to walk with cash, but they walk with a piece of plastic, their card, and they can go into business places and purchase, utilising their resources from Government through this facility. Innovation, but also visionary, a very innovative move, and I want to commend the Ministry of ICT, for taking this proactive stance to assist our most vulnerable people.

And think about it, at this point during the COVID lockdown, we had our officers having to visit the various homes and provide the service to our beneficiaries, right now, at their pace. And I remember some time ago, the criticism, because folks, they know when they will be paid. In the past, there was some competition in the Treasury, because those beneficiaries of SEED and other Government's recipients of whatever benefits met up at the Treasury. And we had long lines and people had to remain in the sun and all this stuff and so forth. There will be none of this anymore. You have a card, and at your own pace, you go into the Supermarket, wherever and able to access your funds.

This will revolutionise Government's Social Programme delivery, by increasing accessibility and reducing inefficiency in the Payment System. Additionally, WePay will also provide support to one thousand (1,000) small businesses seeking to do business online. The pilot will be implemented at zero cost to the Government of Grenada. What else do you want? The Government is at work, Government working for you, ensuring that you have the facility and WePay will be working with the one thousand (1,000) small businesses, so they will have the facility, so our beneficiaries can redeem the card or get the funds from the card.

Special Projects

In the area of Special Projects, Government was able to improve over fifty (50) minimal infrastructure projects within the various communities, to the tune of $7m and in so doing, created close to nine hundred (900) jobs, for both men and women, within the communities.

In the coming year, the focus will be on strengthening the means of implementation for sustainable development. Additionally, in its effort to reduce poverty, Government was able to assist over six thousand (6,000) vulnerable families and over twelve thousand, five hundred (12,500) students in receiving quality education, at a cost of $2.1m.

As a long-term priority, Government will keep in focus the reduction of poverty, through its wider Social Protection efforts. And, Mr. Deputy President, as we have said and we agreed to, and I know you agree to this philosophy, the surest path towards removing or taking your people out of poverty is through education, and the Government spares no effort through its Schoolbooks Programme, through its Uniform Assistance Programme, through its Transportation Allowance Programme, through its Tuition Programme, to ensure that our students, the beneficiaries of those programmes are given the opportunity to enhance themselves. And I am pleased to announce that some of our beneficiaries, not only succeeded at the Common Entrance level, at the Secondary level, but at the Tertiary level and also at the University level. They have succeeded, coming at the top of their classes. So, it has shown, Mr. Deputy President,

that if you provide the means, as giving them a hand-out, they will succeed, and that's what we are seeing through these Programmes.

The Ministry of National Security will continue to focus on strengthening the National Security Architecture. To this end, a Comprehensive Multi-Sectoral Strategy and Corresponding Policy will be developed, which would address moral, economic, environmental and social issues.

The Crime Statistics at the end of September, when compared to the same period in 2019, has shown a reduction in reported cases of all major categories of crime, except for property crimes, especially praedial larceny, housebreaking and stealing and stealing, in general.

In 2021, the RGPF will work closely with the Ministry of Social Development and other partners, such as Churches, with a view to preventing and detecting crimes and maintaining confidence in the Police, as a credible institution. Furthermore, the RGPF will find new and innovative ways to partner with the community to address this disturbing concern.

In the area of Home Affairs, Government will focus on strengthening the Legislative Framework for citizenship and permanent residents to address the weaknesses in the present Legislation. This will ultimately enhance the Border Control and Protection Mechanism for the State of Grenada.

To date, the Policy to inform the revision of this Legislation Framework was completed and approved by Cabinet. This will lay the foundation for the implementation of the Legislation in 2021.

Mr. Deputy President, we all know the value of the CBI and so, to the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. We all recognise the benefits of it and because of what we have been able to do, over the years, in terms of control, in terms of ensuring that we employ all the necessary strategies to protect this document, we have not ended up in any scandal, as we have seen elsewhere.

But, ever so often, we constantly refine what we do, and look at Legislation to ensure that we are on par with the changing times. So, what we are about to do at this point in time, is to ensure that the Legislation will continue to be relevant to the current

environment that we are in. And I am extremely pleased to state that we have been able to do a good job. And, despite the criticism and despite the attacks on the CBI Programme, we have been able to protect the face of this country, because our due diligence is second to none. It's very impeccable. We go out there, to ensure that whoever will get that piece of document, to say that they are a citizen of this country, they are deserving of it.

We will not, in anyway, trade the reputation of this country for $2.00, and there are times when, if something doesn't look right and the report says we have concern in an area, we don't go, as much as we may want the resources. But, I will set the guiding principle here. The reputation of this country is above everything else, and we have been able to do this and will continue to do it, because, at the end of the day, this is all that we have, this place we call Home, Pure Grenada, the Spice of the Caribbean. There's no other place as beautiful as this, our rock, and I must add, safe.

I have had a fair bit of travel around, and with all the places I've been, they may have more resources than us. But, the peace and tranquillity that one experiences in this country is second to none, and that's one of the reasons why so many want to come to enjoy this piece of Paradise. And I often boast when I travel, and in the past, when they ask, where are you from? I say from Grenada, and I say the only place you'll see in the world, that you can go to heaven without having to die. **(Laughter)** And they get this. They say: ***"Oh, it is a beautiful place."*** And, I say: ***"Yeah, of course, it is."*** And people want to be a part of it. We talk about how hospitable we are as a People, and that's why I started my presentation by asking for us to work together, in fighting COVID, because COVID has no friend. In the early days, they said, more the senior people are more susceptible to contracting the virus. Today, we are seeing children. So, the science, things have been changing, as we go along. But, what is important here, that, as a people, we mount a response and we mount a response together.

In closing, Mr. Deputy President, I want to say to us that we have an opportunity to get it right, in our fight against COVID.

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: And, let us do it together, as a team. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Good afternoon to you, Mr. Deputy President, and of course, our fellow Members. I want to say good afternoon also, to everyone that's listening, both locally and overseas. To our farmers, fisher folks, processors, I will say my constituents, good evening.

I stand here to make contribution towards this Budget Debate, and I want to start by asking, how did we get here? And of course, I want to give thanks to everyone, who would have contributed to the process. A lot of times folks think that, maybe, we just come and you discuss the Budget here, but there is a process of consultations, with the different Sectors. I myself, have participated in many of those, through the years, and of course, COVID, this year, would have made it a little bit more challenging for a lot of persons, in that the technology that would have been used, may not have been readily available to several persons, especially in my Sector of Agriculture, the real man on the ground, I think he was out of the mix.

Despite all of that though, we are here today, the folks at the different Ministries and Government Agencies, I think they work hard, you know, because everyone was looking for the Budget to happen earlier, but they were able to deliver. We didn't have to go into all next year, trying to figure that out. So, I think as a country, we have to applaud that, and we should be happy that we have a Budget. As our sister said this morning, we need to have a plan, and the fact that we have something to work with, to discuss, it gives us a good starting point. So, I want to start my statement in that regard.

I want to say further, in response to my good Brother, Senator Garraway, on the "Other Side," in terms of working together. And he raised some important issues, as it relates to being healthy and resilient and all of those things, because once you want to be able to fight this disease, they would have taught us from small, we need to be

eating our fruits and vegetables and those things. And so, as a Senator representing these very said constituents, we want to say we are happy that you would be highlighting that, because you can talk about it, but we are the ones that have to give you and the rest of the Nation. But to do it, we would need the means. Yes. We cannot just do it so, if we don't have lands, we don't have seeds, and we don't have fertiliser. So, we need to ensure that it is supported, because we can have all the campaigns and all of those exhibitions and we will stand here with open hands, with empty bags, waiting for the produce to come and it may never come.

The good news is that I think the United Nations, the General Assembly, only recently, they have recognised the significance of these fruits and vegetables, to the point that it is not only about supporting the livelihoods of our farmers, but also the whole issue of our health and wellness.

We, in Grenada, know that we have done well. It is not all that bad. We have done well. We have been able to get fruits and vegetables. In fact, whilst I am here, I actually got some fruits and vegetables, a while ago that I want to show us. I actually have some fruits and vegetables from our local farmers that I want to show us. **(Applause)** ***(Member displayed the Fruits and Vegetables)*** The ginger, which they say is good for the COVID. I have citrus, bananas, seasonings, avocadoes and so on. So, our farmers are producing…

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Do you have packages for everyone?

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, yes. Well, not one package for everyone, but you can have samples at the end of the day. Okay. So our farmers are producing, and I wanted to make that point here today. I didn't bring fish, because that is another discussion, in terms of keeping it on ice and we have ice machine issues, which we would talk about later on, but we have the fruits and vegetables. And, the fact that next year, 2021 is the Fruits and Vegetables Year, I wanted to bring them here, so it is good start for all of us. **(Applause)**

In 2022, which makes it even better, in a ten-year period, 2022 is going to be Year of Artisanal Fishing and Aquaculture, so we are on the right track. We are on the right track. So, I wanted to start off my presentation with these comments.

Mr. Deputy President, I was trying to figure out where to start, because there are so many points of starting. And I went back to the Budget Statement presented on the 2nd of December, 2020, and I love it. I love it, because it speaks the right language. And what is important is once the language is spoken, it gives all of us something to hold on to and to work towards and to hold each other accountable.

So, if I speak, just for thirty (30) seconds, it says: ***"Beyond the goal of food and nutrition security, a strong and vibrant Agriculture Sector…"*** these are nice words…, ***"will support economic growth, employment and foreign exchange."*** So, this is good. So, I am a young person or an elderly and I want to invest, these are good statements.

It says further: ***"We must therefore seize the opportunity to redouble our efforts."*** You know, sometimes people say: ***"If I am working harder, I need more pay."*** And then the people say: ***"Well no, but the Budget allocation is shrinking. So, how could I work harder, but I am not getting the rewards?"*** So, it says: ***"We must redouble our efforts to achieve a modern Agriculture Sector…"*** This is good. I spoke of this in my Maiden Speech, of the new Agriculture, so I interpret that is the meaning… ***"…that includes value-added production and youth involvement..,"*** that's good: ***"the application of relevant technology…"*** excellent, ***"…capacity building…"*** training, ***"…research and development...",*** which was mentioned today. And when I looked at the Budget for Agriculture and I saw $48,000.00 for Research and Development, I sort of shrunk. I know that figure is just placed there. I really didn't take it as the true figure, because there are so many things that are happening for us to research on in agriculture, to be able to advise our farmers, advise our fisher folks, our processors and so on. So, I know that was not really true, because other projects that might be taking place within the Government Sector, in Agriculture, would be doing some kind of research. So I thought that there might have been a note somewhere, explaining further.

And of course, adaption to climate change and this is very important and our dear Senator Garraway spoke in that context. It is a very serious issue. So, it is within all of those minds that I want to get rolling, Mr. Deputy President.

Then I reflected on the Theme of the Budget. You know, it is funny. I said like I am back to school, when I was in Form One and I had to write an Essay…

(Senator Bhola rose)

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator Bhola.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Mr. Deputy President, and my Brother, I am sorry to disturb, but just that others can follow I would advise that the Honourable Brother, when he is quoting, he tells us the page, or exactly what he is quoting from, so we can follow you.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. Well, I say you all are very familiar with this document, Senator. **(Laughter)** Page 17, Agriculture, that's where I am speaking from; page 17, section 9.1., 9.1.1. Okay. It is within that page there. But, it is a good point. It means that no-one is sleeping here this evening.

So, on the issue of the Theme for the Budget, it speaks about: ***"Towards 2035…,"*** and it is good, and I looked at the matrix and all of those things to see the application. But then, I went further, and it says: ***"Recovery...",*** and I said, okay, recovery is good, that's a very important point, because, as a Nation, we are trying to recover. We have been set back with COVID; we all have to agree with that. It speaks of Transformation, but I will come back to transformation, and then it speaks of Resilience. And I sort of understand resilience, it is how do you withstand and handle. But, the transformation part, I had some difficulty trying to understand the transformation. So I used technology and I said, let me go and see what Google had to

say on transformation. And it says that something must change to the point that you are not too sure what it really was before, but not only changing that you didn't know what it was before, meaning that you do not mash it up, but it must be better.

And so I started looking and I may not have been good as our Sister, in reading out all these numbers, but I saw for example, $3m for the traffic lights; $100,000.00 for agro-processing and testing in the Produce Chemistry Lab, and I said, but, I see a salary freeze for no technician. That was the place for my first job, in my life, as a Lab Technician. And to me, after twenty something years, the Lab still doesn't have a technician, but we still have monies for testing and so on. So that sort of worried me, and I said I think the Budget is still being debated, so there might be some discussion there.

Then, I saw the Propagation Stations, $200,000.00, but I am aware that we have a Greenhouse set up in Mirabeau, in particular, that needs some fan and some other electrical things that are worth much more than this money, and I wondered. Two (2) years now it is sitting there, what is the transformation? That is my concern.

Then I realised the farmers have to find some private approach to get their farms ploughed. Land preparation, any Extension Officer would tell you, it's very important to produce these products. And so I said, well, transform is to improve, but if you don't have it, what's the improvement, when the farmers have to pay more? I said, well, maybe, there is some subsidy the Government might partner with, offsetting some of its costs for the farmers to get their lands ploughed. I am not too sure.

And then I looked at the Land Bank situation, and that's where I sort of got sacred, because I remember in my research for my Maiden Speech, I read that during the Gairy era, "Lands for the Landless," cutting up lands, was part of the reason why they gave for the whole issue of agriculture declining. And when I did my little intelligencer, I learnt that Government has Crown Lands that they want to cut up. Please. There are many private persons, who have lands. And our dear Senator, I am so happy that you are here that we could discuss.

We have idle lands, taxes that we wanted to put, and I think maybe that was on hold, or maybe it is just silent. But the bottom-line is, that the Government in its own

wisdom, recognised that there are many other lands, besides Crown Lands, that are available, that the Government can go into different negotiations, put them in some sort of real Bank and persons can apply and get them, and some persons might be away, so they don't want to be handling all of those lands. They are old. So, that, to me, is transformation than taking up the lands and cutting them up, like some Real Estate operation that is taking place. And the list goes on, but if I spend time here, it would be just too long.

And then, we speak about the School Feeding Programme, an excellent opportunity. And I know our dear Senator, the Leader of Government's Business, you know we had lots of discussions on how we can improve the local supplies to the schools. The question is on that, you may say, why am I going there? I am going there, because what percentage of these $3m that we are allocating, will be buying our nice local, healthy fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry and so on? That is my concern, not the amount of money. It is where it's going to be spending, because if we come and we complain, oh, so much money is being spent overseas on imports, then we must act in such a manner, to show that we are going to buy local, we are going to eat local, we are going to grow more of what we eat, and we are going to eat more of what we grow. That is the sync of the language.

And of course, our Youth in Agriculture Project, I know the money that is there is not the real money. I know you have a project coming, so I know that was also a sort of understatement, and so I applaud that. But, we will speak more about that.

Community Tourism

Well, I learnt a while ago, it had a lot to do with signs and so on. But, I think we need to do more with that. And so I asked myself, and I am going to bring it up early, so I'll get it out of the way. Why is it we tend to have all Tourism Projects and construction taking place on the seaside, along the shores and putting so much pressures of pollution and so on, on our coastal lines, affecting our fisher folks, our Fisheries, our tourists, who may still want to still go and swim? Why? You mean, there is no more lands? Is there some Law saying that it is only around our Coastal Zones we have to put these Resorts?

So, if we are speaking about community tourism, I am not saying there are not communities along the shorelines, but there are lots of communities on the inside of our country that don't have to be big five hundred room hotels, but a lot of these nice, little boutique hotels and so on that we have been speaking about, where these tourists can really intermingle and really be part of this community that it is supposed to be, rather than them having to take a taxi and go to some place and say community tourism; so I think we can do better there.

Then, I took a look and I personally went and checked out those Fish Markets throughout the country. And, Minister Bain-Horsford and I had a nice meeting and we shared the views, and she actually expounded on those views in her presentation, so we have to do some work in Sauteurs in that Fish Market there. It is not right, and we agreed on that.

But I looked at the Budget of $180,000.00, and I hope that I am seeing right in the Budget. And last year, we spent just $6,380.00. But what is interesting, Mr. Deputy President, is that the sales from ice was over $300,000.00. Yet still, several of our ice machines are down. In fact, there are private persons, selling ice for the fisher folks. The Sauteurs fisher folks, it was very good for them to get some benefits from the MAREP Programme. So, there were some good things, and I don't want us to lose sight of that, and there are other good things that are happening, which I would speak about in a while.

So, we need to get the ice, because that would affect the fishing. Fishing is our number one export. If we are not too sure about that, it is over twenty something million dollars. And even within natural disasters, the hurricanes and so on, in Ivan, fishing still remained up, because of the Blue Economy. It is one of the richest. It is richer than the land that we are standing on today. So, I believe that we should really act on this, speedily.

And then I looked at praedial larceny, and I said, this morning, I am so happy, because the numbers in the praedial larceny moved from about thirty (30), and it is down to about seven (7), and this seven (7) most times, is doing other things. Yes, I see lots of newspapers saying that they hold some people and they hold some other

persons for stealing. But, as I would have said before, we need to have what I refer to, as Community Wardens, where these persons are within their communities, so they know who those thieves are, rather than they sitting in a Police Station and then they would be reassigned, because, of course, if the Police have some emerging matter, and we all would understand that, they are going to attend to that first, and then, on the other side, the real purpose. And so, at the end of the day, we will come and make noise about it. But, really and truly, if we do it in that sort of way, it would be helpful for everybody, safer and better.

We speak about export. I'm just going through your Budget information and I heard the Minister for Trade, he was very nice. He said, the Marketing Board, you need to do more; we know Marketing Board had their own challenges, but strike that. I think the Institution is there, and we have to support the Institution to be able to do what it is supposed to do. I think that is the spirit we have to work with.

But on the backend, I would have heard our Finance Minister said, oh, you know, for the country to really do good, it has to be export. We have to export, and this is good, so that we can provide more jobs, and that is how agriculture would really have some benefits. And I said, but hold on, but we are doing debushing, we are doing Farm Labour Support, these are providing lots of job, too. So, if we also export, we could provide more jobs.

But, I want to make a point, because I know our farmers and fisher folks might be saying, you need to address this matter. Almost the ten thousand (10,000) farmers, in this country, would have, at least, one or two persons working along with them, and our dear Senator knows that. And if I have heard the definition right, I am not a Labour Specialist, once you work for an hour a day, you are employed. So, if I work the ten thousand (10,000) Math and even, if you say, half of that, hire at least one or two persons, we could easily calculate the number of jobs with simple Math. So, what I am saying is that when we say those things, I am not seeing the transformation.

So, I then took another look and we speak about, we need more jobs and we need the construction, and we all agree with that, let's don't lose sight of that. And then I said well, if we are doing these jobs, this is good. But if we spend $3m to do these

traffic lights, what would happen to those Wardens who are all around Town, managing things. Won't we have to send them home? Or do we have places that there are no traffic lights that we are going to find, to put them? I even joked this morning with a friend and said, well, I know there is normally a free Warden, who is working on top Cemetery Hill that, maybe, he might be even need to get a work, too, because he is doing an excellent job, and there is no traffic light up there. **(Applause)**

I would say there is one traffic light that is working in Grenada. 90% of the time, it's the one on Paradise Bridge. I travel there, every day. When there is no traffic light, it creates a little challenge. Other than that, I wonder.

I drove through St. George's, and I even called the Head of Traffic in Town one day, and I said: **"You know, keep the ladies, as the Traffic Wardens please, because when they are on the traffic, the traffic moves through St. George's so smooth and nice, you won't understand."** I called him personally, Mr. Langdon. I think he is not too well now, but...

(Inaudible comment by a Member)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I don't know, that's another research. But, it is a fact; that is my experience. Okay.

And then, the last part, before I go into some other things, I said, okay, people are talking about the Airport and why we should spend money on the Airport and so on. I don't want to go into that debate. The debate I want to go into is, when it is said that; you know, if we have the Airport, and I understand some of those challenges, because, I mean, from my old job of exporting and so on, we have issues of cargo compliance, and we understand all of those challenges. We would have more facilities, cold storage facilities; we understand all of those things. And I think on behalf of the Exporters Association and other exporters, we would welcome that, because sometimes you have to ship, like if you have an early plane that is leaving, say, 6:00 o'clock in the morning flight, and as a passenger you have to reach three (3) hours before, so that is 3:00 o'clock, the cargo going through the same area, they have to come at least two (2)

hours, so almost five (5) hours. So, sometimes, 12:00 o'clock, in the night, 1:00 o'clock in the morning, exporters have to be on the Airport to get their stuff through and then clear enough for the passengers to pass. So, I understand all of those things.

My concern is, we would have more flights coming in, and the history I have seen is that the more flights come in, is the more I would have to provide these airlifts subsidy, have it there, just in case they don't meet their quota, and that is my concern. So, when everything comes back to normal, with more Airlines coming in, I am seeing us having to dig deeper into our pockets, to subsidise these unfilled flights, when they cannot make it.

The irony about this, Mr. Deputy President, is that save and except a dedicated Cargo Line and one other Airline, a lot of our exporters try to find themselves into New York, where our own people are there, our own Diaspora, and some of those flights that come in here with the passengers, they don't take any cargo to go back to the places like New York and so on, because of the different policies and so on. It is a discussion that I personally, have had, along with my sectors' colleagues, to see how we can address that. I know there are issues around that, in terms of their insurances and all of those things, but I think it is something that we need to work on, to be fairer to our people, because, if we go back to history, I am not too sure what Gairy would have said. But, Maurice Bishop would have said***: "When the Airport is established, planes would be leaving with our goods from Grenada."*** But the only how the planes would leave with goods from Grenada now, is that I have to make sure that I have a ticket and that is my Carryon and my other cargo that I would have to pay, as a passenger. I think, to use the words of Senator Garraway: ***"We have to do better than that."***

So, I would spend a few minutes and say what is good. There are lots of good things: the Climate Smart Agriculture, the Feeder Roads, and some of those, based on my personal involvement, I am involved in a lot of this, and so I am good with that.

The Crop Insurance, I know we are working on it. I know the Government is supporting this initiative. I think it might be an omission. It is not there this time, and I know the Government will still make this contribution. But the problem is that if we are going to follow all of these little rules, well, although Brother Garraway said, you have to

know that there are some Clauses that they don't always hold. We know that Government may still... But, when the stakeholders don't see those things there in black and white, they get worried. And a lot of times, those things get left out, because why? The implementation rate and the execution is so low that, you know, like it always goes down, like agriculture goes down, and as I was watching, I think, fisheries is down. And I also got worried, as I see tourism is just before agriculture, and I said: ***"Wow, like somebody is catching up with somebody."*** So, these are just some of my comments on that.

I want to…

(Senator St. Clair paused for a while)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Hmm. Ah! Sorry about that, I had a mental block, because I see the word 'freeze', and that's why. We say that we have lots of freezing of positions. I am very worried, particularly, in the two (2) Industries for which I speak, Fisheries and Agriculture. We would know, if you look around, and I cannot call their names here, but a lot of the senior positions. All the Fisheries Officers, they are gone the same thing in the Ministry of Agriculture. And I am so happy that Senator Bhola is back, because it is like another reinforcement. I am not too sure, where he would find himself eventually, but to provide that support within the Ministry of Agriculture. But if he ends up back in the Ministry of Agriculture by some chance, along with my good friend, Minister David; Generals may have ideas and sit in the backroom and they may put on their boots and they may go all out. But the real man, on the ground, who is fighting, day and night, is the real inventory men, and they are not there in the Ministry of Agriculture. 99% of them, I am sure, are retired.

In fact, I was in a Session only last week, to deal with some Climate Resilience, another nice project, again. It is lovely. Don't think I am against those things. And the Chairman of the Session said: ***"You know, it is a bitter-sweet moment, because we have been working on this thing for so long, and such and such, who was working is retired."*** I and all, even almost nearly cried about this thing, because, you

know, you put all your effort into something and they sit back and say: ***"Oh, Lord, I am not there to help implement it."***

So, it shows us that with all the good intentions… **(Inaudible comments)** …we are having those issues. Of course, I am hearing you, Brother Bhola, it is sixty (60), but there is something called planning, succession planning, and I know Brother Morain, the PS, since he came into Agriculture, you know, people may have different views on matters, he always speak about that. But you know, sometimes, if the boat springs a well, too early, it's helpless. Things are happening quicker and it reflects. And all of these individuals, it comes back to the whole issue, and I am going back to my Maiden Speech, just count forty (40) years for everything and you would see what has happened in this country, everything that has happened in that span. So all the persons who would have gone to Cuba, gone to wherever and study and came back, we never were replacing the stocks, because we felt that they were there forever. We never realised we would have had these types of hard times, where we had to have all these Attrition Policies.

But what have we done in the last, maybe, ten (10) years, fifteen (15) years, with due respect to everybody's Profession? Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers, Businesspersons, Economists, Psychologists, not Agriculture. So what really has changed, that all of a sudden, the maybe two, three hundred persons, who were studying Agriculture back then, like a new generation of persons, they don't know what it is.

So now, we say, well, we have to have Youth in Agriculture, so we are starting again, and it would take us, maybe, another four/five years. By that time, I gone sixty (60), all of us are gone at sixty (60), and what happens to our food security? We know, we are getting lapsed right now. We may pass the Budget, monies may spend, things may happen, but in the next eight (8) to ten (10) years, we might be sitting down and wonder, where is the food coming from? Who is there to prepare the food? So, sometimes they say: ***"How you make your bed, so you shall lie."*** And, I think we have a good chance to make a good bed before we lie down.

So I looked at it and I say to my dear Minister for Agriculture, I am worried for him. I was speaking to a farmer and he said: ***"You know, he is a good man. He came out and he met with us and everything, but, you know, like they set the pack and all that he ended up with is Jack."*** I said: ***"I don't understand."*** He said: ***"Well, if the man is on bear Jack, people don't play cards like that, you know. You have to knock again, for a reshuffle."*** **(Laughter)** Senator Bhola, I know you are not another Trump. So… **(Laughter)** I know you are not another Trump, you know, but; yeah, but it is like that, eh. It is like that. It is like that. It is like that. But, I think he brings a good spirit, and so I think all of these things are going good. So, in that context, I know, sometimes, we get the bell ten (10) minutes before, but I am not too sure, how many minutes I have again.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): You have time.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I have time? Okay. Good. So I want to go into some thoughts, suggestions and approaches, with what we have, it is how we do it. I am not even asking you to take more money and to find more money. You might realise you need less money.

Again, my good Minister spoke of organisation and planning, which is so good. He started in the right place. We need to kind of refresh and put everything in perspective, and I endorse that.

So, what do I propose? I came here today and I tried to figure out every time I speak, I must have a topic sentence. I must have a topic, a theme, with which to communicate. And so...

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: This is how much now?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator St. Clair, sorry. I need to adjourn for five (5) minutes, and then we will come back and you will continue in mid-flight.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. I thought it was time. I was wondering how time had flown. You know, in Movies, time fast-forwards.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): No, no, no, no, no, no.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No problem.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): The Chair needs a five (5) minute break.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. No problem, no problem, no problem.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): So, we adjourn for five (5) minutes.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay.

(Senate adjourns for five (5) minutes)

(Senate resumes)

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): The Senate now resumes. Senator St. Clair, you can continue.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. For my state of mind, I am just trying to do a remaining time check, just to programme myself.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): You have, at least, forty-five (45) minutes, I believe.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. No problem. Thank you. That's fine.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Half an hour to forty (40) minutes.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. So, forty-five (45) minutes, forty (40) minutes, thereabout. Okay. Alright. So, as I was saying before the break, I always like to have a topic sentence, or a theme within which I operate, so that I could also be better able to be understood. And, so in preparing for today's presentation, the theme of my contribution, in terms of suggestions, recommendations for consideration, it says: ***"Rethink Agriculture."*** So I am asking the Government, I am asking the powers, who have the purse and others, who would have taken on board, the different recommendations, to rethink it. And in this process, I want to also put forward, on behalf of my constituents from whom I would have also got inputs in this contribution.

One, the whole issue of organisation and governance is an issue that we need to look at, our farmers, our fisher folks; the whole group. There are several little clusters of groups and so on, trying to farm and so, but there are challenges, and it is not that they do not want to. As I mentioned before and I have had discussions with our good friends, the fisher folks up in Sauteurs, I only, recently, had some dialogue with our Fisher Folks in Calliste, but they need support. They are willing. They want to register. They may register, but the administration; and these are people, who are out, busy people, fishing. Some of them may not have the full capacity.

Further to that, I also had a dialogue with our good Minister Bain-Horsford and her PS, a very good discussion. I also highlighted and presented those thoughts, but I

also provided some suggestions for their consideration, some of which I would have also communicated to the same group. So for example, I suggested to them, that's the fisher folks/farmer folks, that they can get, maybe, TAMCC students, maybe, some of the SGU students, who can do some of this for their community service, for extra credits can do whatever, bookkeeping, administrative, coordinating meetings, so that they can have more involvement.

So when we speak about Youth in Agriculture and we speak about labour support, it is not only about going and dig the lands and cutting the grass, it is not about that. Agriculture is a broad-based activity. You may need a chainsaw repair person. You may need a Weed Eater repair person. You may need someone to do pruning. You may need someone to do the Books, because all that is agriculture and this is the misnomer. So then we say we need to make it 'sexy', and we think we are doing something different, but that is agriculture; whether we have to take a phone and go on WhatsApp and get information to see how they grow, all that is Agriculture. So we must not lose sight of what agriculture is.

As our good friend, Brother Garraway said earlier on, things changed. Definitions of things changed and we have to understand those definitions and understand the context. So I wanted to say this, and so, that is one approach we can look at.

We also have another approach, and that approach is where you create, what I call, a hub of technocrats, and they are technocrats, whether they are eight (8) years, ten (10) years, fifteen (15) years, and they know how to do administrative work and know how to make phone calls, to make connection to market and all of those things, because the farmers are out, doing things. So, they can have an office space in a Community Centre, in some common ground, and they can have a mentor, or two with them, maybe a Marketing person, a Bookkeeping person, and they now, would provide support, for say, maybe four (4) or five (5) Cooperatives or Farmer Groups in that area. In that way, we provide more value, we create more execution and you don't have a set of duplicity taking place, all over the place.

So, this place, for example, inside here, you can have a room and we are technocrats and we are servicing, we are providing service, and people do it. Accountants do it. Accountants, sometimes, do bookkeeping for twenty (20) different businesses and they get paid. So this money we have for Youth in Agriculture, that's why I asked, how are we spending this money and for what? And if we want to support the Cooperatives and support the Farmers' Organisation, we cannot be cussing and say: ***"Oh, farmers are not ready yet."*** We have to stop that. We have to stop it. The farmers are crying. I met a young fellah in Sauteurs and he just didn't go down in tears, the President of the Sauteurs Fisher Folks Organisation. He said: ***"Sir, we just cannot."*** And, when I told him about the TAMCC, he said. "***You know, that is a good idea. We will see if we could do it."***

I spoke to the Minister for Co-operatives, and I know it might have been too late to put it in the Work Plan, but you don't need no Work Plan for that, because the Youth in Agriculture Project and the money we have for Youth Empowerment and all of things, we could retune it, because what I don't want us to lose sight of, is that the very youth that we say we are targeting, to empower and do all of those things, these are youth, if there are real jobs, they could walk in the morning and go in a teaching job, in a Bank, anywhere, because they have all the different subjects and capabilities. In fact, they may not even tell you, some of them have Degrees and Masters. So, it is not people, who cannot handle themselves. It is just how we put them to work for this country, and that is the question. **(Applause)**

There is another part to the Cooperatives, and that was a very important concern that the Minister raised with me. And, the Minister, said***: "You know, St. Clair, it is about eleven (11) persons, I think, to form a Cooperative. But sometimes, you have four (4) persons, they are working nice together, and they want to form a Cooperative, but the Law is not set up for that."*** So, it is something that we have to work on, and I support her on that direction. If we can make some revisions, so that we can be able to better this, because, you know, sometimes they say, one extra cook spoils the broth. So, sometimes four (4) can work good, but because you have to get

eleven (11), the whole thing turns 'ole mas'. And I thought that was a very smart idea that we should really support her with and move forward.

In terms of a National Farmers' Organisation, this is a big topic, but it is not so big, we think it is big, because we have National Football Organisation, we have National Basketball, how do they operate? They have Clubs. They have competitions, and they are doing things. They may have their challenges, but it's along that similar model. I am proposing that we look at that.

I have already spoken to some of my colleagues in the region, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad, who have similar models, like the Barbados Agriculture Society, and I know my good Senator Bhola is fully aware of some of those things, and I think that we have a good opportunity to look at those models and really make a difference for our farmers, where they can be better organised.

For example, right now, CARICOM has some consultations going on, the Private Sector is sitting there and Agriculture is not at the Table. So they are making decisions, maybe, to import more and more goods from Europe or somewhere, and where are the farmers at the Table. They are always getting left.

So, part of my duty, part of my job, I am in contact with them, and we are going to champion and I am looking for the support of my other colleagues, so that we can have a representation. We speak about Food Import bill and all of those things; that is where we have to hold those discussions, because the policies of CARICOM would definitely impact what happens to us in Grenada, and then we are going and ask for all sorts of exemptions. Let us fix it, upfront.

The issue of welfare for our farmers and fisher folks is a personal responsibility I want to engage in, and of course, I seek the support of the Government and others involved in that.

For too long our farmers, I know, they don't want to pay NIS, and sometimes it is logistics, sometimes it is a lot of other things, and I am calling on the farmers, let us get registered. It is a good thing. It is good for your family. It is good for your children, and all of those benefits. Please. And of course, with the organisation forming, I think that will be able to sell better to them.

I think also, for the fisher folks in particular, the lost at sea, you know, sometimes the fisher folks have to put money together to get gas, to go and look, in addition to whatever the Government may do in looking, and that were some concerns that were raised.

And I said, well, you know maybe, we can speak to some of the Gas Companies. They spend a lot of money in all sorts of giveaways, $10,000.00 allocation for gas for search and rescue; I don't think is going to kill anybody. So that's a public call for that. We don't have loss at sea regular, but it is something, I think that we should be able to help with, and you have it. They don't accumulate it. If it is finished for the year and they only use $5,000.00, you just create a new one for the next year.

Also we need to look and see how the fishers, in particular, the issue of the Bends, is a big issue. Now, Grenada has made a lot of progress, because we have our Chamber and so on here. But, I think the issue of education seems to be a major issue, from the dialogue with them. Down in Calliste there, in particular, there are lots of Divers, and in speaking to one of them, he actually, was lost at sea for twenty-four (24) hours, just hanging on to his tank to survive. I was like, wow, I am sitting by you, because you are a hero.

And I say this to say that we eat the food and we eat lunch, and hopefully, we will each dinner and we don't think about those sacrifices and the efforts that these folks make; and then we want them to come back and run a Farmers' Organisation and to go and make a phone call, too. Where is the support? It is not much, because we already have some of the monies allocated for certain things already. It is the strategy and that is why I like Minister David's point of planning, organisation, but he did not come with the implementation, so I am sort of helping him with this part here right now.

I want to move forward quickly, before my time goes. I spoke a lot about the youth already, but we need to do something with this Mirabeau Farm School, and it needs to be more than farm. We need to go with farm and fishing. Fishing is our number one but we don't even have a Fishing School anymore. You know, so sometimes we rally on things and then, as I mentioned earlier on, sixty (60) years will come, and then we'll say: ***"Ah, where is it?"*** So, let us start putting things in place.

This, to me, when we start talking about 'resilience', that's why I said forget 'recovery'. All of us will like recovery and transformation. So, in twenty (20) years, we lost our Fishing School, and we never even tried to start back one, and we are happy. We are eating fish, and we don't even know how these guys are catching their tail outside there.

And so, there are lots of opportunities, which I don't want to go into, Beekeeping, Livestock and so on. There are lots of opportunities. But, one of which, though, I want to put on the table is that during the Summer time, I am not too sure if you know right now, maybe fifteen (15) years ago, almost every Summer, children were going and learn computers. I guess all of us know computers now that we are even teaching it from our homes, you know, "Each One, Teach One." And, it is interesting that people who used to be teaching Computer Science; that business may be almost closed now.

Could you imagine if the same thing happened with children going and learn about fishing, learning to plant a nutmeg tree, learning to milk a goat, learning to rear a rabbit in the summer time, if the same theory holds, that "Each One, Teach One," because you learn so much that you can teach among yourself? So, this is something I think we can take on board and all that is part of the monies for youth, so that we don't wait until they get their Masters and whatever Degree, and then they say, we are looking for a job. We don't have jobs, so let us put a programme.

You might be smart today and want to do that as the Government, but twenty (20) years from now a new generation would be here and they may not be so kind as you, and there might be more problems. So let us put a proper system, that can guarantee a more stable future, as, maybe, our fore parents would have done.

Scholarships

We speak a lot about that. But I want to see more scholarships, real scholarships. Let us send some more tertiary in Agriculture, and maybe tomorrow, when the Government side comes, you might be able to do a quick research and tell us how many persons over the last five (5) years, or four (4) years, have gone to do some Degrees in Agriculture, so we could say, okay, yes, food security, "Eat What You Grow," and farmers can know there are technical people to help them.

The issue of Greenhouse technology, all of those things, because you have that, Climate Smart. It is just how you tailor it, so I am good with you there, very good. But certification and I think that was mentioned, I am not too sure if this morning, is important. We have the NTA and we need to do that.

Right now, in the GCNA, we have a partnership that we are almost finalising, to train young Nutmeg Farmers in Level 2 production for nutmegs, and so this is something that we can repeat. And maybe again, whilst we are worrying about money in the first instance with this project, we can get some of the same youth money to do that for nutmeg, for cocoa, for beekeeping, and let us do the thing properly. So, twenty (20) years from now, if we are still alive, for those of us who remain, we could say, boy, yes, we did something good in truth, you know.

The Labour Support Programme

I had to do some investigation, and it is written, as: ***"Strengthening Rural Opportunities,"*** nice, fancy words. Lovely! But, basically, most of it is for Labour Support with the farmers. I know the farmers have their concerns about they are not getting proper work, and sometimes it is because the persons who are doing the work, they are not trained. And again, I am not speaking to the converted. I mean, I am speaking to the converted. We know the story.

So maybe, again, in our whole youth money, let us train persons, how to dig a drain, so when they leave there, they are certified Farm Labour Support, under some NVQ/CVQ, and if they have to go and work in another country, they can go and then we can say that we could export labour, and we know the remittances and so on could add back to the country. That, to me, is transformation. But, if they are just going to cut the bush, take the money and go home until another one comes, in two (2) days that money is done, and they are no better off. I don't think it is fair, to us and the farmers don't think it is fair. In some cases, some farmers send them back, and I don't want to call names here.

I want to say that the Debushing Programme, which I put as a Farm Labour Support Programme, because, as a young boy, we used to say: "I am going in the bush." They are not going by the side of the road in the bush. They were going in their

lands; that's what they really meant. And I want to put the Debushing Programme in particular, a little bit with the Farm Labour Support. We should really get the Solid Waste Authority more involved in this process, because this bush cut, sits by the road, sometimes, for days. I am driving on the road every day, and I always wonder where these bushes go, when they are cut. And then the place looks so nice when it's finished cut and I say, but this is like cutting a yard. It is like landscaping. So, I don't know why we even call it debushing in the first place. Maybe, it is just our colloquial name and there is a different name for calling it.

But, I think, if we take this and we put this under the Solid Waste Authority, and you build different composts and stuff throughout the country, all of this is part of a whole green climate, and you get the same persons involved and you package this thing and then you go back into a whole organic system, to me, that is transformation.

But, I think further, that, and I think they said Gairy did that once and they said Gairy was a madman, when he thought of that. I said, but we can then beautify our communities, plant nice flowers along the road. We can get our folks in the diaspora, even we ourselves, I am from La Digue, you're from St. James, wherever. I am going to fund $100.00 for two hundred (200) feet of road to put some nice flowers, and then the whole of Grenada can be beautified, in such a diverse way, that, that in itself, would contribute to just local sightseeing, it would enhance your whole community tourism and all of those sorts of stuff. That, to me, is transformative, because these persons can then continue maintaining and all of those things and they have that pride in the community. Then, you can start learning about people, who know about Biology and insects and flowers. I mean, I don't know if I was dreaming when I had these thoughts, but it is good to dream.

In Costa Rica, Mr. Deputy President, at the end of the day in the Market, they take all the waste and they put it into composts and they use this verbose thing with the worms and all those things. So, all of this could be part of this whole encompassing thing.

Well, who would hire the folks? I don't know if it would be the Solid Waste or if they would hire accordingly, but I want to suggest that, and it worries me. It worries me

and it comes back to the Ministry of Agriculture, that the Ministry of Agriculture, which normally would handle its labour support for the farmers, they did not handle that this year, and I wondered. I said, well, I know people are retiring, there is less labour, if there is a loss of confidence in the management capabilities within the Ministry of Agriculture, that they start moving out things from the Ministry of Agriculture. It worries me. Close down the machinery with the private people.

And the farm machinery thing, Mr. Deputy President, if we really want, and I don't know what the problem is, if the problem is maintenance, as the case may be. But this could have easily gone down to the Police Garage, where we have trained Mechanics, who have full capabilities, who are doing all Government vehicles, all kinds of stuff, I think we could have sent them down there. And, the Police, so, if fixing is a problem, they can do all the fixing and all these stuff like that. So, I don't think we should really close this thing. I think this thing should be relooked. I think the Minister mentioned that in his presentation the last time.

So, I am moving on quickly, to praedial larceny. I spent a lot of time on that, and all I want to say on this is that we are promoting the camera, which is good. But, you know, Mr. Deputy President, if I am a farmer and I want to go and buy this camera and it is $2,000.00, and you as a regular man in your home, want to buy the same camera, two (2) of us are paying the same thing, but our interests are different.

So, we are calling on the Government's side, to let us see how we can have some concessionary duties off, for our farmers, if we are pushing them, and we have been pushing them in that direction, which is good, and they have been holding people in that area.

I want to move quickly, to fisheries. As I mentioned earlier, it is one of our major areas of export. We had recently, a good Public/Private/Partnership with the Government and the Southern Fishermen Association and Spice Isle Fish House. But what it shows is that if the Government really supports you to get strong, when you are strong, what happens? So, we speak about our foreign partners are so strong, China, America, England. If they weren't strong, they would not have been able to help us. So, we build strong institutions, we build strong organisations, so they can help.

We have the Jetty, and that is a burning concern, in St. Mark. And, Senator Cox, please, see what could be done. We have three (3) Fish Markets, three (3) different Landing Sites, but they have to pull up their boats on stones and all kinds of things like that. See what could be done, please. That is a special plea for the people in St. Mark.

The ice machine, well, I spoke about that, and so I am confident that some action is going to take place there. But, we need to do some value-added in fishing. Salt Fish is a big import in this country. We used to be doing salt fish, smoked fish, training youth; well, I think the message is clear where you have to spend the money. We could export it, but we could also use it, locally.

I know there is a project right now, that is being contemplated, to do nice fillet and so, which is a value-added export, and we congratulate that, and we look for the full support of the Government, which I think they have been getting already, in this regard, because I looked at some figures. St. Vincent, for example, in 2019, I think exported about $18m worth of fish, and they plan to do some development in Bèquia, which is going to add twenty (20) to that. So, immediately, we would move from a twenty-five (25) to a twenty-two (22). We are overtaken by St. Vincent.

I want to go down to look at poultry. Poultry, to me, again, needs some transformation. The biggest challenge we have here, we all know. People say the challenge is Feed, but the challenge is not Feed. I didn't go to school for long. I didn't learn a lot of technical things, but sometimes the more you dig, the more you would find gold. And so the Poultry Policy, which I know my dear Senator Bhola is fully aware of; well, he might be aware of, I think, speaks about this Agreement, and I will call it "this Agreement" within the Caribbean Agro, and this is since in 1976/1977. We need to look at that, because the Policy spoke about looking at it and see how we can make it more conducive for our local poultry persons, and this is a dialogue that myself, the Poultry Association, and of course, the Minister for Agriculture have already started dialoguing on, and we have to see some movement there.

I visited one of the family farms only on the weekend, and what this young gentleman is doing is remarkable. We have to support him, and not only him alone, we have to support the whole Poultry Industry, because I learnt that in one (1) month, the

equivalent chicken, poultry that is imported into the country, what we consume works out to be about thirty-five thousand (35,000) birds; that's what we eat every month, that's the equivalent, based on the amount of persons in the country. So, we need to look and see how we can support the Poultry Industry.

He had some challenges, though. The issue of finance, that's a big issue. I went on page 5, but it's okay. Finance is a big issue, and I said, we cannot go to the banks anymore, because, when we invest in agriculture, it is investment. When we go to the banks, it is for a loan, so I understand why banks give problems, because they are not seeing the investment part of it.

So, I am calling on the GIDC that I think could do a better work. We have lots of friends and families in the diaspora, who have little monies that they may put in a bank here, and they put it, because they think it may help our own people. But really and truly, it is not helping them. So maybe, if they can channel it through some investment operation, through GIDC, so you invest in this business, you invest in that. Just as how you invest in stocks and bonds, they might get more value and contribute better to this country.

I believe, also, from the financing standpoint, the issue of the CBI, we need to have some more focus on agriculture. I know there might have been some that failed, some little initiatives, but I think it is cued a lot, to the Tourism Sector, and maybe that is not true, maybe it is my perception. But maybe, if we do a matrix to see industry per investment, we may be able to see the reality. So, I think we could do a lot of these things without these banks. Even GDB is a problem.

I spoke to a mother on Friday. I mean, she almost wanted to cry, and she did not want to let me off the phone. She said her son went to GDB, problems, for $40,000.00. He went to a local bank, they told him to bring your land paper, bring your salary slip and bring some Life Insurance, for $40,000.00. But, if he wants a car for $60,000.00, they said he would get that easily. Craziness! We have to support. We cannot wait on the banks, because the banks would do whatever they want, and at the end of the day, we don't have any food to eat, and all the nice things they want to see happen that are transformative are not transforming.

The issue of the Land Bank, well, I spoke about that already, but one thing I want to say on the Land Bank is the Land Policy part, which I hear is in Legal Affairs. But, I was speaking with an old gentleman a few weeks ago, an old Mentor, and he said***: "All we need to do is to just say seventy-five (75) to one hundred (100) feet back from the road, you can build, and then in the back…"***

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: "…you have your agriculture, so that would help in that way."

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator…

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: That's fifteen (15) more minutes?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Ten (10).

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Ten (10)? Okay. Great. No problem. Good. That's okay.

So, that takes me here. I dealt with the Airlift already. We need some inter-ministerial coordination. I think we need to be speaking more to each other, in terms of the Ministries. And, the other two (2) big areas I want to speak on is the issue of agro-processing. I will leave agro-processing for one second.

I spoke about Marketing Board. We need to integrate Marketing Board. I believe that Marketing Board needs to go back to the Ministry of Agriculture. It was doing much better, when it was there, to serve its real mandate and purpose, and so we can be able to connect and organise markets better for the farmers. Of course, the commodities, we know, its significance, but that would not minimise the overall contribution that, that is doing. I think that when Marketing Board is focusing on agriculture, it is better. It provides more support to the Ministry of Agriculture, because the Ministry of Agriculture

sometimes is functioning and you cannot connect farmers to market. But Marketing Board there is for the market.

Marketing Board also need to be connected to the School Feeding Programme. So, when I spoke about Education and the three point something million dollars earlier on, Marketing Board should be supplying the School Feeding Programme, our Hospitals and Institutions, because that we know, when they supply, it is local. If they are not supplying then, who else is supplying and what are they supplying?

The other two (2) key areas I would speak on is one to deal with the… Mr. Deputy President, that's my two (2) main points I would want to wrap up with. The issue of Greenhouse technology; I believe that we need to have a bank, like you do a five (5) acres, or three (3) acres of greenhouses, cut up in different quarters, and persons lease them, and they lease them to do their production. And so you may have a bank of, maybe, two (2) acres in Sauteurs, five (5) acres in Grand Anse, wherever it is. And that again, could be funded through CBI, through whatever, and if I want to produce cabbages, I go and I lease this for one (1) month, or one (1) year, just as how you lease an apartment, and you go and you make your production. When you are finished, you go your way, because if you do that, you also connect to market. So, that is my model I want us to look at, rather than giving a little farmer here a greenhouse. That is putting strain and even monitoring and managing these things.

Similarly, we could do a similar approach to deal with the Small Ruminants, because I see we tried to put more money in the Abattoir, when, yet still, we keep importing animals to go in the Abattoir. We need to have our own animals here, going into the Abattoir. So, this is my contribution there.

I want to also speak on the cocoa and the nutmeg. There is work happening there. We have been doing some value-added, both cocoa and nutmeg, but we have some issues; road access, and I know there is some work being done on that, so I wouldn't cry there, too much. But, the whole issue of doing more with agro-processing and value addition. We know we are cash strapped, and everybody knows that, but we are seeking partners, so that we can be able to create that evolution and transformation in those regards. So, that is what I would say.

Crop Insurance

Again, I know this is a discussion that is happening. I think I mentioned that already.

Then, agro-processing and I think that is where everybody would want to know about agro-processing. **(The Member exhibited some products)** Mr. Deputy President, that's Nutmeg Hot Sauce. This is another Tambrand Sauce, Jouvay Chocolate, Herbal Teas, Cassava and Breadfruit flour, Honey. So, the point is, and I think that was said this morning. We must not leave here and the farmers must not feel daunted that things are not happening. Financers, Bankers, other investor, who are looking on, must not feel that nothing is happening. Things are happening, despite our pronouncements.

But, you see what is happening is routine, because you want to have, maybe this year, ending up in two (2) containers going to China or Japan, but this person cannot even going and get a loan for $10,000.00; in fact, he has to get a Life Certificate, or a Birth Certificate. So, what I am saying is, this $11m maybe, that we speak about that is frozen, and we will say, well it is frozen and accounting wise, it doesn't exist, it is just that it won't be a cost coming in. But, we are finding money for lots of other little things. And I believe with the agro-processing, if we invest, maybe less than $5m and build a Multi-Purpose Agro-Processing Centre, and this now, would be used in a shared manner. So, you cut it up. You have for baby sauces, for juices, for different types of processing mechanisms, and I can come and rent a space and make my production, pack up my bag and go; next week, I rent, Brother Lewis comes, he rents, and, if we do that, we use our monies more wisely and we create transformation, rather than I want to apply for a loan for $20,000.00, you apply for $40,000.00 and all of us fighting to do something, and then we have a big issue.

The issue of exports has to do with our Food Safety Standards, our HACCPs, our British Retail Consortium Standards (BRCS) and, my God, I mean, big Institutions, the GCNA, Cocoa, Marketing Board are catching their hell to even do those things. They don't even have money to do it in the proper way. How do we expect to survive in that way? I mean, Michelle's Confectionaries and so on, I mean, how do we expect that to

happen? And then we want to say, well, we want to transform. I mean, in agriculture, I have been around for a while, and what we are putting on the table, cannot transform.

However, what is the beauty about that? Again, I do not know how much money we have for the Youth, coming back to the Youth again, because they are capable. We build this thing, you put them to manage the stuff, so that the whole place is HACCP compliant, all the documents. So, when I come inside here to produce my product, all these young Technocrats would be doing all the Bookkeeping, all the quality jobs, because they are capable, and the product is leaving there with a proper stamp of approval and not wondering what Tom is doing at the back of his kitchen, or under his house, and where he got it, and so he cannot even make enough to even make an order.

This, to me, if it is the only thing that would take all the money and find a way to do, I think Grenada would be better off, not only for us, but for the farmers and their families. And then, we won't even have to worry about fighting and waiting about these projects jobs; about a project will start here and after some time, it is gone, because when the project is finished, you know what happens? Well, I live in the rural community, and I know about seven (7) of us from there.

When construction is down, what is up? Agriculture is up. They go in the lands, because they have time on their hands, and you could see that. So, in the COVID, what happened? No construction, a lot of people went to their lands, and so, after this thing, we saw a lot of goods. We were wondering where all these goods came out. So, this would make a big difference with all the products our Sister spoke about that are spoiling. They are not spoiling because we really want them to spoil, you know, it is spoiling, because we do not have the means, so we continue to be "Poor Me One."

So, Mr. Deputy President, I want to mention that we need to keep our focus on the flowers and all of these industries, because the cut flowers is a very important Industry; and again, the Youth.

Soursop, which is like number 2 in our exports, and if we are not careful and don't provide the sort of support to the Soursop Industry, especially, in terms of the defence, in terms of the Pests and the Diseases, the same effort that we are putting into

the COVID, because it is the same issue, you know, it is the same issue. The issue about it, Mr. Deputy President, is because things that affect the plants are not really killing us, so we are not bothering. With COVID, we are worried, because we know the heat in our hands, one of us is going to die. It is the same effort. It is the same effort we have to put into the defence for soursop. And, in fact...

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: …I would want us…; I have five (5) more minutes, or is that the end of me?

Mr. Deputy President: You have to wrap up now, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay. Good. Right. I am wrapping up now. And, it is the same effort, with golden apples, which we need to do some work on. I think I saw it went off the table. This was a $3m export, from Grenada. Many years ago, we had the Fruit Fly issue, and if we can get this back, we can do wonders again in this country.

So, with these few words, my colleagues, Mr. Deputy President, and of course, my constituents, I trust that you would consider. I saw you taking lots of notes. I know you are not Journalists and I expect you to come back tomorrow and give us some good answers. Thank you, so much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you, Senator, and I must indeed say, for your maiden voyage, in a Budget Debate, you had all of us awake and you kept us on the edge of our seats. I thought your ideas were extremely revolutionary, and I suppose that is testament to young brains and youth and their vigour and energy you bring to this particular topic, as you make your deliberations in the Senate.

I also want to say that I thought Senator St. Cyr, for her maiden voyage also, did well, **(applause)** because in any forum like this, where you are coming for the first time, to do a Budget Debate, it can be a daunting challenge, especially with all the documents that you have to deal with now. And I know the challenge with it, coming digitally as well.

So, Senators, we are going to end this Session today. We are going to adjourn to 9 o'clock, tomorrow morning promptly, for us to restart and hopefully complete our Session tomorrow. So, with that said, I formerly adjourn the Senate to 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Sound of Gavel)

Senate adjourns at 5:55 p.m. on 15th December, 2020 until Wednesday 16th December, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Resumption
Attendance

The Senate resumed at 9:00 a.m., on Wednesday 16th December, 2020

PRESENT

Deputy President
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie
in the Chair

Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell	Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Judd Cadet	Member
Senator the Honourable Norland Cox	Minister for Youth Development, Sports, Culture and the Arts
Senator the Honourable Winston Garraway	Minister of State with responsibility for Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams	Parliamentary Secretary – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Senator the Honourable Tessa Alexander St Cyr	Member
Senator the Honourable Terry Noel	Member
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie	Deputy President
Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis	Member
Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair	Member

Sergeant-at-Arms: His Honour, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President: Good morning, Members. We adjourned yesterday to continue this morning, so we will start off as we normally do. So, thank you very much, and please be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Deputy President: Oh, Prayers. Senator Garraway, please. Lead us on.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Let us pray.

(Senate Prayer was said)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Join with me, in saying the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Deputy President: Thank you again. And as I said, we are about to restart today's proceedings.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. President: Please be seated, Members. Members, yesterday, when we adjourned, I know that Senator St. Clair was the last Member on the floor, so we now start this morning on the Government Side. Senator Cox.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, I rise this morning to lend my full support to the Motion that is before

this Honourable House, as we seek to pass the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the fiscal year, 2021.

Mr. Deputy President, this morning I use the opportunity to present on my substantive Portfolio and also other Portfolios. As you know, the construct of the Senate requires us to carry other Ministries, to give a fair and clear presentation to the Nation, as to what is taking place with other Government Ministries and Portfolios. So, I will be looking at Agriculture and Transport, which is under my responsibility, Fisheries, Sports, Culture and the Arts. So, I will do my best, Mr. Deputy President, to represent those, as best as possible, during the allotted time that I have.

Mr. Deputy President, the Estimates before us have been presented under a Theme, which has been deliberated quite a bit in the House, since we commenced yesterday. And, I think there is some lack of understanding, as to what we are seeking to do, come 2021.

Now, the Vision for 2025, based around the Theme: ***"Recovery, Transformation and Resilience***," Mr. Deputy President, is a Theme that not only indicates what we seek to do but clearly what needs to happen, if this country is to recover. So, I can safely say, Mr. Deputy President, that this Government, through this Budget, we are going to use our stewardship, the performance of its fiscal policies, the commitment and sacrifice of our nation together, to rebuild this economy, that is what we are seeking to do with the Budget.

Mr. Deputy President, as most persons would have given contributions, thus far, the topic, which is frontal, in every aspect, every sphere of the world is the global pandemic, the Novel Coronavirus.

Mr. Deputy President, we must be mindful that this virus may be with us for the next twelve to twenty-four months, or even more. Hence the objective of this Budget is to respond appropriately, to this adverse situation before us. This is what we are trying to do. We are trying to implement a number of strategic approaches or strategic measures that will achieve recovery, through economic growth, and the creation of jobs, that's how we are going to recover; transformation through the creation of increased production in critical Sectors, that is the only how we can transform, and resilience

through prudent, fiscal measures, that is what has worked in the past, Mr. Deputy President. We have been in a similar situation before, but because of a different reason, but this situation is somewhat similar.

Mr. Deputy President, this is critical, if we were to recover and to get back to where we were, as recent as a year ago. So I thought it prudent to give that analysis around the Theme, our objectives, how we believe, how we know we can get this done, because we have done it before, and I'll expand more on it as we go forward, because I think that there is some lack of clarity, as it regards to how you get an economy to grow, as how do you raise money on the Capital side, that you can invest it on the Recurrent side, put it in the Recurrent side and not vice versa. So, I think there is an opportunity here for Members to clearly understand, and I'll go more into that as we get into the other Ministers, because I think there is a requirement for this, because some of the utterances, Mr. Deputy President, was that our focus in infrastructure, that investment in infrastructure seems limited, and may not be able to achieve what we're seeking to do, and that is what I think I gather from some of the feedback yesterday. But, I beg to differ. As I said, we have done this before and we have done it successfully.

So, Mr. Deputy President, I will just quickly go through some of the projects that we were able to achieve this year. As you know, we had limited work, because of the pandemic, but we were able to get quite a bit done, and one of the reasons for that is because we recognise the importance of the Construction and the Infrastructure Sector and the impact that it has, in terms of creating economic activity, driving economic activity, especially in the rural communities, hence the reason why this Ministry is of critical focus for 2021. That's the reason why 41.6% of the Capital Budget lies within this Ministry, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, under Roads Improvement and Maintenance, under Asphalt Works, we were able to successfully complete in excess of twenty (20) roads in various Parishes including Carriacou, St. George and St. Patrick. We continue to do those works. Our team has been doing an excellent job. We know that it has been difficult for our road users, because of the condition of the roads. But, we are moving towards having those remedied, as soon as possible.

Mr. Deputy President, we also continue to do concrete works, a number of roads and bridges. We continue to have those repaired and we were successful in doing that for 2020, as well.

The Reconstruction of the Gouyave Healthcare Centre

As you know, health has been a frontal topic, as well, because we are in a pandemic. We commenced work on that project in January, at a projected cost of $7m, Mr. Deputy President, and that destruction of that facility was since Ivan, and so we are now getting to have that repaired. We are getting support for this under the 11th European Development Fund for the renovation, or restoration of the health facility in Gouyave.

Mr. Deputy President, the Carriacou Police Station, I had an opportunity to tour that facility, as well. It is being renovated. An extra wing has been added, and there is going to be some reconfiguration to facilitate the operations of the Magistrate Court, as best as possible, so those works are on-going to the tune of EC$500,000.00.

The Mt. Horne Child Development Centre

This project is on-going. It is estimated to be $600,000.00, Mr. Deputy President. This project is supposed to be completed by now. I think this project was completed, and so it is a very important facility within the Mt. Horne Community. So, we want to congratulate the community for working with us to ensure that we bring such facilities to them, in this regard.

The St. George's Market Square; that has been a topic of great discussion and importance for a number of reasons. We do have construction on-going there currently, and we want to, at this time, empathise with the vendors who are displaced, because of the construction work. And also, because of adhering to the protocols, because some of them are also displaced because of that, and for their safety of course. And those who are over at the Athletic Stadium, we want to also thank them for cooperating with us and working with us, as we try to bring relief, in the best way possible, to help them.

Mr. Deputy President, we have been doing some work with the vendors there. We have worked with our corporate citizens, to help us to pay for a Shuttle every Friday and Saturday to bring people to and from the Market at the Athletic Stadium; that has

been a very good initiative and we want to thank our corporate citizens. I know your corporate Entity, also, would have sponsored, in that regard and we are very heartened by that, Mr. Deputy President.

Bishop's College, Mr. Deputy President, is a long standing project. That project is on-going currently, and we had to make some changes, as well. When we get on the ground, the Primary School, the first building, the initial building, the old Bishop's College building, the initial plan was to have it repaired, renovated. But after further investigation, it has been deemed that some parts of it were unsafe, and very bad, even down to the foundation part. We had a number of investigations. People from different institutions came and assessed and found it ok to repair. But, as work started, we realised that, that was not the case. And so, we have received support from CDB to vary that request, and so the entire structure will now come down and a new structure will go up. So, this is good news for Bishop's College and the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Deputy President.

The St. George's General Hospital, Phase 2 is a very important project. Mr. Deputy President, right now, that is where all our COVID testing is taking place, at that Facility, at the new Lab, at the Phase 2, General Hospital. While we still have some finishing touches going on there, our Lab is there.

Also, the new facility for persons, who have a challenge with renal conditions, Mr. Deputy President, we know the challenge that persons have in getting dialysis in this country, and so we are working with our private partner to have this facility up and running. This is going to be good for us. Government has continued to subsidise for the payment of those services. This is something that the Prime Minister himself, is very passionate about, and so I know that we are working hard to have this issue resolved. It's becoming a challenge. There are a number of issues with persons in our community with that renal failure and so dialysis is becoming a high demand, right now, and so that Dialysis Unit will be at that facility as well. So, this is very timely and very important for us, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, my colleague, Leader of Government's Business would have spoken about an affordable income project, that is grant funding by the People's

Republic of China, throughout a couple of our Parishes. St. Patrick has already opened their project. There was an official opening for the St. Patrick component. Carriacou is closely followed behind, and I believe St. David and Beausejour to come thereafter.

Mr. Deputy President, this is a significant project for Grenada. That is one of the things that we found that when we listen, the requests come, most of them come for housing, and in every strata, not only at the rural level, but also at the middle income level. Some of our Public Servants, they too, require housing too, as well. So, it's one of the biggest tasks of this Government, and we are working with our strategic partners, at best, to find a way to resolve this matter and to provide some comfort.

I know that there are some utterances regarding the housing and what takes place there and what can take place there. I just want this Honourable House to know, Mr. Deputy President, that house and housing are two (2) different things. And, Government, we are working with our partners to ensure that all the necessary infrastructures would be present, be it water, be it electricity, some place to recreate. All that is integrated within that facility, and as such, we want to make sure that the public knows that.

I think there was something about it. I can't exactly remember clearly, Mr. Deputy President, but when you look at those facilities, they look quite lovely and I don't think that there is anything derogatory about those and they work very well, Mr. Deputy President. So, we want to thank the People's Republic of China for their generous donations to the people of Grenada. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, our PSIP Projects for 2021; Mr. Deputy President this is significant. This is very significant, if our country is to recover. We must invest and I think I need to explain this here at this time. It is important that we invest on the Capital side, and that will generate revenues throughout all the sectors and when those revenues are raised, then Government will have to spend on the Recurrent side.

Mr. Deputy President, you may be able to have a clear understanding of this, because if you do it the other way around, you're going to end up in trouble. You are going to end up in trouble. You have to invest in the sectors that are going to be productive, that are going to generate. And my brother and colleague representing the

farmers indicated that jobs in construction are just limited. I beg to differ. When you invest in construction, you have products and services that are generated for materials coming in, wholesale selling, electrical stuff selling, the people who have their food and stuff selling out of their vans, they go on all different construction sites. So, that is the impact that construction has on the sector. It has a wider tentacle, in terms of impacting and creating local economic activity. That is the reason why we invest in the Infrastructure Sector. It affords for a quicker turnaround. It helps us to recover quicker than any of the other sectors. It doesn't mean that agriculture is not important. It doesn't mean that we are not investing in it, and as you would see going forward, I will show how much we are investing in agriculture and what we are doing. And some of the same things that my colleague, representing the farmers, alluded to, I will correct those, as we go forward, in my presentation, to show that we are basically investing in agriculture and we are investing in the right areas. So, we will discuss that, going forward.

Mr. Deputy President, my colleague would have mentioned a couple of those projects. I just want to mention a very important one and the largest one, which is the MBIA Upgrade Project. This is an important project. This is a significant project, and I think the genesis and the benefit of this project have been lost in another conversation, have been distorted, and I think we need to correct this. Persons have concerns, we welcome concerns, but at the same time, do not drag those concerns way out without having all the understanding and the facts how things operate and why we do things.

And so, I think that, in itself, lend itself to a number of misinformation, and so we want to clear the air on this, that there are two (2) significant investments that are taking place with this Upgrade Project. Sixty something million from the EXIM Bank and $17m from the World Bank. So, it is not just the EXIM Bank loan that is at stake. You have a $17m loan from the World Bank that is also attached to this Upgrade Project. So, we want persons to understand that if our partners; and China is part of the World Bank, as well. So, I think there is some misinformation.

While there is need for clarity, we welcome that. If persons are concerned, fair, that is fine. But we believe that at this time, this is a worthwhile investment. It is timely,

because we have a slow period now, because of the pandemic. It gives us an opportunity to work quickly, and to get up to mark, so that when things pick up, we are where we're supposed to be.

So, this Upgrade Project will treat with the runway infrastructure. Mr. Deputy President, I think this is something that we need to move quickly with, in terms of having the work done. Currently, work has started, the geotechnical work, doing all the investigation, doing all the designs to make sure that everything is where it supposed to be, and within the next six (6) months we should actually start to see infrastructure work on the ground, that is the timeline based on the implementation schedule that we have before us.

So, Mr. Deputy President, we are very excited about this, and we are even more excited about the World Bank component, because there is a significant investment for the Agriculture and the Import/Export Sector, with the construction of that Warehouse, that will help to facilitate or train. And we spoke so much yesterday about exportation and how important it is for us going forward, so I just want to speak a little bit on that project in that regard, but we welcome persons' suggestions. We are always open and hence the reason we have been doing that through our Town Hall Meetings, affording an opportunity for persons to interact and to give feedback and those engagements have been very beneficial for us throughout the past couple weeks, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, the Grenville Commercial Complex, and I am happy that my colleague and brother Senator Garraway did give some explanations yesterday and some clarity. I want to say that this project is significant for the Parish of St. Andrew, and I am happy that the contents or how the structure will be utilised is welcomed by our dear colleague Senator on the "Other Side," Senator St. Cyr.

However, I wish to inform this Honourable House that we have, within the last week, issued a Tender. Five (5) companies have expressed interest for a Flood Mitigation Study that will include the town of Grenville, the Town of St. George's, particularly the Tanteen area and the Grand Anse area. We are hoping to have that Study done within one year's time, and that will allow us for all three (3) sites. So, we

know that we have infrastructure to go down in St. Andrew, so priority is going to be given to that site. So, we will have feedback, as to what are the challenges, where the bottlenecks are, what is causing this flooding, and that will inform how we go forward, in terms of addressing the flooding in the Town of Grenville. **(Applause)**

So, we are working. We have received a US$1m grant to treat with that Flooding Mitigation Study. So, I just wanted to raise that and to indicate, to show that we are definitely aware of what are the key issues. As I said, we are going to see how we can quickly address this problem going forward.

Mr. Deputy President, as you see I am standing here so quietly, but based on everything, it seems like the task lies squarely on my Ministry, and so, if when we come back here, sometime later on in the year and you see I have several more grey hairs, you would know what is the reason for that. But nonetheless, I understand that there are some wonderful dyes around, so maybe I can even get a haircut, like Leader of Government's Business and I should be fine. So, Mr. Deputy President, I thank you, in advance, for your empathy. So, we are moving on, Mr. Deputy President.

St. John's River Flood Mitigation Project

This is a significant project for the River Road area. That has been a chronic problem. We are moving with this project and the intention is not to stop. We had several starts and stops in the past, and we are trying to resolve it now. We have had some challenges over the past couple of months, which delayed the delivery of the design and that had to do with Rainfall Data. The engineers working on the Design, they were trying to get as much as thirty (30) years' Rainfall Data, so to help inform what is taking place. And so we are trying to get some from CMHI in Barbados. We are also reaching out to St. Vincent, who is in close proximity with us. Trinidad, who is also in close proximity with us, and we are working with the Met Office here to capture as much data as we can to help inform the appropriate Design. This is a $10m project, Mr. Deputy President.

The St. Patrick Road Rehabilitation Upgrade Project

It's on-going, right now. I think they'll be completed within the next eighty (80) days or so. There is some remedial work. What is happening here, Mr. Deputy President, is significant. We are working closely with the Utility, in this case, NAWASA.

So, what is happening, while we are doing the roads, NAWASA basically, are uprooting all their old pipes at one time. So, we are not double working. We are working in synergy with NAWASA. NAWASA is laying new pipes that may last another five to ten decades, which you and I, probably, would not be around. But, they are actually doing that now, putting in new infrastructure, so that we do not have a problem. And after you lay a new road, a pipe may burst, and then you have to go and dig up and lay at a higher cost. So that is happening now, and we just want to thank both parties for the work. The CCC is doing that St. Patrick road, and we hope to continue with Phase 2 in 2021, Mr. Deputy President.

The Gouyave Extreme Rainfall Project, Mr. Deputy President, is a significant project as well. It deals with a number of bridges in Gouyave, that we believe that we can have done, once we get the community working with us. We have gone and looked at it, because every project that we do, the social side is critical. We realise that persons will have inconveniences, but we need to work with them, closely, to ensure that whatever project we implement, that it does not create any problems for the community. So this is a significant project for the Gouyave area. This project will be to a tune of EC$1.1m.

The BNTF Ninth Cycle

Mr. Deputy President, you know BNTF is a Revolving Development Project that attacks the rural communities to ensure that it creates sustainability for communities that need critical services, be it Community Centres, be it schools, be it washroom facilities, so BNTF will continue do their work.

The GEEP Project (Grenada Education Enhancement Project)

We are looking to the tune of $40m. It's a project where a number of schools have been renovated under this project, and there is a number of schools listed for next

year. I think it is about seventy-five (75) or so schools, for 2021, to be renovated under this project.

The Western Main Road Corridor Upgrade Project

Mr. Deputy President, I want to say that because of the magnitude of work that we have, what we have promised, especially for our colleagues on the "Other Side," whenever we meet, we will make every opportunity to keep the House updated on the progress on those projects, as a way of being accountable to say what we are going to do that we do it, Mr. Deputy President.

The Western Main Road Corridor

We know what is happening there, in the Moliniere area, which is very, very, very bad, Mr. Deputy President. I had a meeting with the High Commissioner for the UK Resident here, and they are significant contributors to that project. So, we have been having some discussions and we are keeping them abreast where we are with this project.

Currently, a company has the contract and they are actually doing the geotechnical work. They are on the ground doing what is necessary to come up with a final design to tell us how much it's going to cost; whether or not we can go back on that same Western route; whether or not we have to do an alternative route, that is what is happening.

Mr. Deputy President, this development has significantly impacted transportation from the North of the Island into Central or even to the South. The Mt. Moritz road is taking a serious beating. We have to repair that road, as well. We may have to do it during the night. We started looking and we have to start planning to see how we are going to do it. Jones Road, as well is significantly battered. We are looking to see how we can have that done and now, because of that we are looking at the Mt. Kumar Road. By having that done quickly, as much as possible, we can get that done, then we will have to do work now on the Mt. Moritz area, after we have the Mt. Kumar Road done

So, it's a lot of manoeuvring while we wait this Western Main Road, because it requires a lot of study for us to know, basically, what is taking place there. I mean, I had a first-hand view. It's really devastating to see those significant investments,

somebody's lifesavings go into their house and just look at it wash down the hill. Fortunately, no one lost their life, or no injury, and I think that is what is most important. We can replace structures, but life is something that we cannot replace, Mr. Deputy President. So, I just want to indicate to this Honourable House that we have started and we are going to get this done. This is a very important project for all involved.

So, the Mt. Kumar Road, we are looking to spend $5m next year, on the Mt. Kumar Road, to have it done. That road culminates in Grenville Vale and so that will help us with the traffic. I think it starts going up the Beaulieu area and going over into Grenville Vale, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, also, the Grenada Water Supply Expansion Project; NAWASA is going through a number of upgrades and this is one of the projects. It's a $34.8 m Project, a grant from the [4]UKCIF. This is very significant and the goal of the project is to contribute to strengthening the Water Sector in Grenada, to reduce Water Sector risk. You know that we have a lot of leakages now and it takes some time. It's a significant infrastructure that NAWASA has, in terms of the Pipe Network, and it's going to take some time and money to have those old pipes repaired and replaced, and so this project is due to start in the Third Quarter of 2021.

Moving on to Government buildings; this is a Priority Project for us, in terms of repairing Government buildings. There are a number of Government buildings throughout the country, and some persons do not even know that some of these buildings belong to Government. And so we have a number of dilapidated buildings and we are renting somewhere else. So, Cabinet has given a directive to have all those buildings repaired, so that Government would not have to be renting and paying all this rent for offices all around the place, but to have those buildings repaired. So, there is an allocation of $9m, to have those buildings renovated as quickly as possible.

We were looking to see how we could have squeezed it in before the end of the year to start do some work, but we had some other pressing matters, so we couldn't get

[4] UKCIF - United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund

it done, Mr. Deputy President. We are going to continue with our Concrete and Asphalt Works in 2021, with a budget of $14m to address that, Mr. Deputy President.

We had some discussions on the Símon Cultural Centre. Mr. Deputy President, we have done significant work, in terms of where we are now. We have done a geotechnical study for the area. We have done a survey for the area, we have fenced, we have demolished. We have done a concept design, and now we have drawings ready to go out to tender, so work can start in 2021.

I know that there is a discussion regarding mention of the swimming pool. The swimming pool is a concept that was inserted not to be done right away, but going forward, because it is an additional cost that is not directly incorporated with the cultural facility, but it is something that we are putting, because of the need. While being in Sports, the need for a lot of persons in the St. Andrew area to get an opportunity to participate in swimming and so there was a plan to put in a twenty-five (25) meter pool. That is acceptable. It is not beyond or below; we have a twenty-five (25) meter pool putting down. What we have at Good Hope, I think, it is probably fifty (50) feet or something like that, so that we are trying to correct.

Now, the St. George's Project through [5]GASA is that they have received grant support from [6]FINA for a twenty-five (25) meter pool, as well. But what they are seeking to do is to raise extra funds to move that from twenty-five (25) to fifty (50) meters. So, I think if that is done, Grenada would probably be one or two or three, or maybe the first country in the OECS to have a fifty (50) meter Pool. I think St. Lucia is twenty-five (25) meters, St. Vincent, I know, is twenty-five (25) meter, as well.

Pools are very expensive, Mr. Deputy President, very, very expensive. Just the infrastructure alone, just the pool, without any amenities is somewhere about US$2m, so it is not cheap.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: And, the chlorine is very expensive.

[5] GASA - Grenada Amateur Swimming Association
[6] FINA - Fédération Internationale de Natation

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: And, the maintenance is expensive. Government would have given commitment to GASA to assist with the maintenance, to the tune of $15,000.00 every year, going forward. So, I just wanted to raise that. So it's not about moving one pool to another area, but it is to have a pool in both areas, so that our kids can benefit as much as possible, and we have been doing excellent in that area, outstanding, for a number of years. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, the Agriculture Feeder Roads, and as the name indicate, it's an investment in our Agriculture Sector. The whole cry for access, not to get access to their farms, the roads are not good, this is a significant investment of $46.8m, and in Carriacou we have the Cherry Hill Road, with about EC$3.1m that will be used to implement that Feeder Road in Carriacou. This is significant. A number of bridges, a number of significant work throughout. Almost every Parish would be touched through this project, so I think this is something that we welcome and we look forward to having the Agriculture Feeder Roads implemented, so that our farmers can get to and from their farms, safely and conveniently, without any issue or so. This is significant, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, it seems like this has been the next major work. The retrofitting of our traffic lights has gotten a lot of attention. I know that traffic lights are colourful. But, I realised that there has been a lot of talk around the traffic lights. You know, sometimes, it amazes me how one day there can be a cry for the need for a bottle, and then the other day it doesn't seem like we need it, and then when something goes wrong again, then there is a cry for it.

But, Mr. Deputy President, this is significant, and our Traffic Wardens are in no way going to be diminished if we have functioning traffic lights. Mr. Deputy President, you go all over the world and there are Traffic Wardens. The major work that our Traffic Wardens do on a daily basis, is to ensure that our road users use the roadway properly; that they park where they're supposed to, or not park where they're not supposed to, especially our Bus Operators, because, you know, that they are a very active and they can be very vigilant on the road, and they may find themselves picking up passengers where they're not supposed to. That is what our Traffic Wardens do on most occasions.

We saw, when we had traffic lights, oftentimes in peak traffic, we used to just shut them off for an hour or two, and we have our Policemen facilitate, and they would put them back on, when things get normal. But, we believe that the traffic lights are very significant, in terms of helping managing our traffic.

Then and now, we probably have twice the amount of vehicles on the road, and with the frequency in the arrival of the Car Boat, it tells you that in the next five (5) years it can become an issue. And so, we are invested in this. It is going to be more upgraded. There will be cameras that will aid in persons breaking the traffic. The cameras will also help, so like it you have to get into a lane and you have to turn, the System will recognise that there is a vehicle there, and it will allow for somebody to turn off. And, think about it.

Look for example, down at Pandy. We do not have a Traffic Warden there, we don't have anybody directing traffic there, and sometimes it's chaotic, when you get at that point. Even down at Grand Anse, down at Food Fair, it is chaotic down there, at times. We need traffic lights. This is the right thing to do. This is the way to go. This is how it is done. When you have the traffic of this magnitude, there are infrastructures to deal with it, and that is what we are doing. What we are doing is not different, and we are not reinventing the wheel. So, I just say this to say that we are not going to diminish. As a matter of fact, we have plans to hire more Traffic Wardens, going forward, Mr. Deputy President, in 2021, and so you would hear more about that.

Although some Traffic Wardens called, concerned, that they were going to lose their job, because of some action taken. But, we would have some further discussion on that, at another time, Mr. Deputy President, so this is not the time for that.

Going forward, Mr. Deputy President, we know that we have Special Projects, where our communities are impacted on the local level. We intend to invest more going forward in the Special Projects, and we have a $7m allocated for 2021.

Senator Stiell, Mr. Deputy President, would have spoken about the DG4R Project (Digital Governance Project). This project is very, very important for us, going forward. They have a number of things that would have happened during the pandemic, in terms of bringing a lot of Inland Revenue services, online, and probably if wasn't for COVID, it

probably would not have happened in the timeframe that it happened, so those were expedited.

So, to my colleague, yes, there are a number of services that are coming on. The question is, are they coming on fast enough? Probably not, but we are bringing them online, as we build the infrastructure. If you notice what is happening, through CARCIP, that we have that fibre cable that was laid recently, throughout all the Islands, all the way up to St. Vincent, St. Lucia and to Grenada. That infrastructure was necessary to provide the capacity for us to develop. Even if we built in the infrastructure, it wouldn't work, as how we wanted it to, because that fibre cable had to be laid. So, there are a number of things that has to take place in tandem, for us to get where we are, in terms of our technology and doing things from a digital standpoint. So, that is a very significant project for us, and you will hear more about it.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to move onto Transport. I notice my time is moving quickly, because I need to touch on Agriculture, some critical things in Agriculture. Transport, you know, we recently passed an Act, established a new Act for a Transport Commission here, in Grenada, and this is to improve how we do things. We recognise there is a need for it, and we will have more discussions on this, as we go forward, as we make more amendments to the Act to improve. The Board, I believe, on or before the end of this week, may have the first meeting of the Board, if not this week, but next week. But, it is endeavoured that they have a meeting before the end of the year, Mr. Deputy President.

So, there are a number of things that we are looking at, to work with our stakeholders to help them to improve in training, in terms of Customer Service. We know that we do have a significant population here, who are elderly. I was riding with a friend of mine, who was considered Senior, and he said: ***"You know, Minister, the music. Sometimes I can't take it, you know, and they have the big speaker under the back seat and you can't shove your legs. You're cramped up."*** So, it was a plethora of issues. So, while a young person may have no issue with that, but remember you have persons of varying age moving in the public.

And I do also hear the concern from the Busmen as well, in particular, the issue of the Zoning and how we deal with that. But, we will have more discussions on that, going forward.

But something most important, Mr. Deputy President, we are working to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to have that Stakeholder Engagement Committee, who will be frontal to deal with all the issues that will be scaled up to the Board for redress, going forward. So, I just wanted to raise that, as we move forward.

But, I must also speak about the Immobility Project that we have just launched recently, that will be looking at how we can incorporate electric technology, sustainable technology and low emission technology in our Transport Sector, going forward. That is a project that you would hear more about, going forward.

I must just really and truly recognise the RGPF in this process. I mean, they have been stalwarts in the Transport Sector, working with us. **(Applause)** We consult them almost on everything that we have, issues with the vendors, and they work with us, and they guide us. They are like silent giants, if I might add, and I just want to thank them.

With the National Bus Association, we want to thank them too, as well, and the Taxi and Port Authority also. As I mentioned the Port Authority, we are also working to address the Grenville Bus Terminus. We have that in our sight, to have that resolved in 2021, and to handover, because I know the Members from St. Andrew, they are concerned about the incomplete work there. We are going to have those remedied. They are not difficult to do, and we believe that we can have that sorted out, Mr. Deputy President, in soon time.

Under Implementation, Mr. Deputy President, that has been a subject of our rate of implementation, not only from the Ministry's standpoint, but from a whole of Government. From our Ministry, what we have been doing, because we are tasked with a greater significance of the work to be done, we are hiring more Project Managers, more Civil Engineers, Architects, Monitoring Specialists and Roads Engineer Specialists.

We are doing that on two (2) fronts. We are hiring about twelve (12) of our persons, who have just come back from University, locally. So, we are giving them an opportunity to engage them. We are doing that, and through the Canadian-Caribbean Resilience Facility, we are getting a grant support of US$200,000.00, to hire a further eleven (11) consultants to help us with some of those significant projects. So, that is one of the things that we are working on, in terms of trying to see how we can improve.

We are also having training done with the World Bank (CDB), to have more persons get the expert training, in terms of the procurement. How we procure from the European Union and how we procure from the CDB is somewhat different, and you have to know what you are doing, if you want to move these projects along. So, that is one of the areas we recognise that need some extra work. So, we are moving in that direction on the implementation side, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, just for a time check, I would love to know where I am. I want to speak a little on Agriculture now.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, based on my time check, and the Clerk could correct me, but I think you have just about twenty-five (25) minutes left.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Twenty-five (25) minutes.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Plus, or minus a few minutes.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much.

(Clerk conversed privately with the Deputy President)

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Mr. Deputy President, I know...

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Twenty-nine (29) to be exact.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: As the Presiding Officer, I don't know what leeway that you may have, but if there are any savings in time projected for those that have left any behind, if there is some way that it can be applied to me, I would be very much happy. You have the Chair, you know, so I urge you to look to see if that is within your powers.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Well, I would suggest that you have about half an hour left, so use it as best as you can, and we would see how that can work.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy President, Agriculture. We are a country of farming. There is not a household, who doesn't have something planted in their backyard, or front yard, or on their porch. We are a country of farming. So, this is something that we love to do. This is something that we live by. When you go out, sometimes you're driving down the roadway, you see somebody selling two (2) or three (3) things, sometimes you have in your fridge, you know, and you still stop and buy. So, we understand the importance of agriculture to Grenada, to who we are. And there have been a lot of distortions and for one reason or the other persons may think that there might be some opportunity to level some debate around agriculture, political or otherwise, and that is fair, and we don't have any qualms about that.

But, the fact still remains that we need to get the work done, and sometimes talking around things, or using it, it doesn't go well for the stakeholders. So, we have been doing our part, and there are some challenges. And, the new Minister for Agriculture, he is very motivated, he is very passionate and while he may be deemed a Jacker, **(Laughter)** I believe that he has a number of strategic approaches and he does have support from the Cabinet, including myself, who has a significant wealth of

background in Agriculture. I did Agriculture Extension, both Livestock and Crop for fifteen (15) years, so I understand. And it's an area that can, at times you can feel as if you're left behind, or you're not looked after. But, I believe that what we are doing and what we have planned going forward, we can see a better agriculture future in Grenada. But, there are some chronic behavioural issues that we must address, and we cannot do it alone, as Government. But, there must be a meeting of the minds, on both sides, for us to pass those hurdles, and we will speak about those, as we go forward.

But, I think, Mr. Deputy President, the greatest debate is between agriculture and tourism. And I cannot understand why there is a debate between agriculture and tourism, when there is a clear indication that they both need each other. I cannot understand. They both rely, heavily, and even equally, on each other for survival.

The people who come to our shores, they need to eat and rightly so, and it's organic food they want you know. They want the best, and we have it here. And of course, when farmers produce, they need an avenue to sell their produce, and so by the Private Sector, with the support of Government, investing more in the Tourism Sector, expanding the Tourism Sector is only creating more demand, that is what is happening. It is creating more demand, more market opportunities, and I am certain that the persons, who have contracts with those hotels to supply on a weekly basis, now those hotels are down, now you do not have a steady revenue stream.

And, Mr. Deputy President, this is a strategic approach that can leverage the financial institution by saying: "Look, I have a contract with this Hotel Facility, who has guaranteed me to buy 'x' amount of produce per week at 'x' amount of money that will be generated, so you can show some certainty in your revenue. And, that is what the challenge is, you know.

Persons working in agriculture, in the Sector, cannot show certainty, in terms of revenue generating to convince the Financial Institutions that they can pay every month, meet their instalments. And so by having that strategic partnership with the Sector, brings that level of determination, brings that level of certainty. So, if anything, Tourism and Agriculture need to have more conversation. They need to have more contracts, more MOUs, they need to have more discussion, plenty more. So, I think that debate

about one giving priority to the other, I don't think that there is a clear understanding what is happening. By creating and expanding that Sector, instead of having to export fruits to tourists outside, we are actually bringing them here, which will cost us cheaper to get it to the consumers. We don't have to pay shipping. You just drive to the hotel and you deliver. So, I think there is a whole misconception on this approach, and I think no one should be demonising either or the other, but there is a clear opportunity that this is a long lost family, who should come together and reconciliate and to see how they can benefit from each other, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, in terms of major focus going forward for 2021, and I really want to touch on some things, investment in agriculture. We speak about the Feeder Roads already and I wouldn't go back on that.

Praedial Larceny

Mr. Deputy President, the amendment that we made to the Praedial Larceny Act is significant. It's significant, in terms of fine-tuning how persons treat with produce, in particular, soursop. I think this is significant. And from what I understand that the Ministry is looking to see how they can extend that to seamoss. Right now the cultivation of seamoss is growing and the United States has the biggest demand for it. So, there are significant opportunities there. So, we are looking to see how, now, we can bring in seamoss into the Praedial Larceny Act, to also protect it under there. So, that is a measure that is being discussed right now, Mr. Deputy President. So, I just want to mention that.

In terms of the Marketing Board, we understand that the Marketing Board has significant challenges. But, Mr. Deputy President, it's not only the Marking Board, our Commodity Boards, GCA and GCNA, historically, have had challenges, as well. But, we will talk about that more, going forward, Mr. Deputy President, as we look at the whole issue of transformation.

So, in terms of transformation, MNIB must be refocused. They must change how they are going forward, and the Minister for Agriculture has signalled that that is the intention. The discussion of all stakeholders including the farmers and Farmers' Association, we are going to find a way for Marketing Board to refocus on what it was

initially intended for, to provide that conduit for farmers to get their produce to a reliable market source.

Mr. Deputy President, training, and yesterday my colleague, representing Agriculture spoke about Training and CVQ. But, Mr. President, the National Training Agency, together with SAEP trained twelve (12) persons, at CVQ level in Agro-Processing, Mr. Deputy President, that was done. So, I want my colleague to know, that happened.

A further thirty-six (36) persons were trained in Sweet Potato Flour production, using Solar Technology, Mr. Deputy President. So, I just want to correct some of the response that my colleague made yesterday, in terms of the CVQ, to let him know that we're doing that.

Training was also done, for the Agro-Processing, what type of equipment to use, Production, the Quality Control, Design, Facility Layout, so all that was done.

Mr. Deputy President, also, research and development are taking place in Root Crops and Breadfruit Flour production. Those researches are taking place currently, Mr. Deputy President. I just wanted to highlight that, as well.

In terms of the issue of our Import Bill, it is somewhere within the range of $300m. We believe that the investment that is taking place, both on the private side and on Government side, we can get it down. We can get it down.

And you see, Mr. Deputy President, this thing is strategic. You have to be strategic. I hear my colleague Member for famers on the "Other Side" indicate a number of suggestions. But, Mr. Deputy President, this goes further than suggestions. You need to have a plan. You need to have a plan. You need to know what is it that you are targeting, why we are doing this, what we expect to get, when we do it that way. If you don't do that, you will be shooting birds in the sky, trust me. Trust me, when I tell you that, Mr. Deputy President. I've done this before. I know. You have to be specific. You have to know what you're targeting. You have to look at everything. Look at the market, and you have to get your farmers inline. They have to understand what it is that we are trying to achieve, as well.

So, we believe that we can get this done. Significant work is being done by the Livestock Division to see how we can resuscitate. We have the Abattoir. There is a significant upgrade, a grant support of US$220,000.00 for the upgrade of the Abattoir in Mirabeau. Unfortunately we couldn't have done it this year, because of COVID, but we're seeking to have that done in 2021, Mr. Deputy President.

Poultry

The two (2) new Chick Farms that are coming on stream, and yesterday, when I heard the Member spoke about thirty-five thousand (35,000.00) birds consumed monthly, I was like, oh, that's not a lot. From what I know, you go by a farmer and he has about five (5) or six (6) Tunnel Ventilation pens and each pen has one hundred thousand (100,000) birds, and you have two (2) or three (3) guys managing that.

Mr. Deputy President, it can be done. It can be done. We have persons, who are investing on the Private Sector side, and we will give them our necessary support to make sure that we get it done. You have a tunnel ventilation, fully automated pen, you alone doing that. Water comes on, the blinds go up. If the temperature gets too hot, you have your Feed Silo that automatically runs the Feed. I mean, it is easy. Now, you can probably even operate it from your computer in your office. There are cameras inside, everything. So, Mr. Deputy President, we are moving in the right direction.

These two (2) Facilities, if they come on stream successfully, they can account for a further 20% in Poultry Meat Production in Grenada. Currently, all other Poultry Production accounts for 10%, so we're looking at a 30% cut in Poultry Production, well, taking out that in terms of imports, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, the Tractor Service, and I really want to touch on this, because this seems to be a challenging issue for our farmers. The Minister for Agriculture has recognised this as a significant issue. What happened is that Government has been having some significant challenges, in terms of providing a reliable service. A number of it stemmed from overworked machinery, poor handling of the equipment at times, unreliable service, and in some cases, pilfering, pilfering of the maintenance parts, selling them off to other persons. It happens, Mr. Deputy President.

Those are some of the challenges that Government has to deal with. So, Government took a decision and said: **"Look, let's take that service away from us and commercialise it, give farmers an opportunity. We give them concessions, let them bring in tractors and provide the service, among themselves."**

For some reason, Mr. Deputy President, there seem to be some challenges for other famers. I think the issue surrounds the cost of the service. So, this affords us an opportunity to relook this, and it is something that we are very, very concerned about, because if farmers cannot afford to do the primary tillage, then, obviously, it will impede on their cultivation. So, we need to look at that, and so we recognise that, and we give a commitment to address the issue of the Tractor Service. So, Mr. Deputy President, I want to thank the Ministry for that.

Youth in Agriculture

Mr. Deputy President, we spoke, a lot about that, and the Youth in Agriculture Project, we are looking to get some support from the CARICOM Development Fund, to the tune of $4.3m, to move this project forward.

This project will provide support and training for persons, in terms of marketing, and also, in terms of financial support for persons to understand how to manage business, prepare businesses, things like that, Mr. Deputy President, a number of support, towards the development of agriculture in Grenada, through the eyes of young people, because while we may do things in a particular way, our young folks, they see things differently, and they can find strategic ways of doing things differently. So, whatever intervention that is going to be done through this, it's going to be through the eyes of our youth, based on where we are, Mr. Deputy President.

Government has allocated $300,000.00 next year to commence work on this Youth in Agriculture Initiative. As I continue to say, this is not a Government alone initiative. We expect the Farmers' Association to also make interventions, indicate to us where they see opportunities, where they see challenges. We expect those interventions, and we look forward to those feedbacks, Mr. Deputy President. So, this is not a Government alone initiative, so I just want to mention that.

There was a discussion about succession planning, Mr. Deputy President, and I want to touch on that too, because the Ministry has been planning and has been working on that. Currently, in training, with the support from FAO, twenty (20) new Extension Officers are currently in training, doing their Associate Degrees, through TAMCC. Mr. Deputy President, that will be completed in 2021. So, I just wanted to correct my colleague to let him know that we are working in this area.

Also the NTA, to conduct a Customer Service Training with the farmers, to meet the farmers' needs to conduct that training for farmers in Customer Service.

The Farm Labour Programme

Mr. Deputy President, we have not outsourced the programme. I just wanted to correct that. The programme has not been outsourced. What had happened is that, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, the Government engaged a former Extension Officer, they gave him a contract to coordinate the programme, but the programme has not been outsourced. So, I just wanted to correct that, so that my colleague could understand. The person, who was contracted Coordinator, he worked closely with the Ministry, in terms of ensuring that the Farm Labour Programme was implemented successfully. And this saw in excess of four hundred and forty-two (442) farmers received service through this.

And, Mr. Deputy President, I just want to make a clear note. And, we know there is this talk about not investing in agriculture, and it seems like there is a diminishing interest. Now, this particular programme, Mr. Deputy President, in 2019, we spent $300,000.00. In 2020, we spent $1.3m, increased from $300,000.00 to $1.3m in 2020. And in 2021, we have budgeted $1.5m, Mr. Deputy President. So, you see we are investing more in our farmers. I just wanted to make note of that. I think that is significant to revert that miscommunication in that regard. **(Applause)** Mr. Deputy President, so much to say in so little time.

We are doing some work in bananas, as well. We have nine thousand (9,000) bananas propagated. We are trying to see how we can resuscitate that sector, and we look forward to that project going forward, in the New Year.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to speak a little bit, just on the whole issue of… cannabis has been a frontal topic, as well, and Government has given its position on that.

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: How many more minutes?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): You have ten (10) more minutes, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Ten (10) more minutes. Thank you very much. Government has been frontal on that issue, and so I want to just say that we continue to work and instructions have been given to Legal Affairs to consult with various countries and to come up with a draft to see how we, as Grenadians, can work with this. There will be a number of consultations, going forward. There is going to be a lot of programmes and discussions on this, going forward. But we just want to signal to the public that those discussions are coming, and we are tending towards having this done, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to move to Fisheries, because it's important. It's very important that I touch on these things, Mr. Deputy President, because my colleague representing the farmers and the fishermen, they need to be hear what is taking place. And, Mr. Deputy President, we know that fishing is our most successful Export Commodity, our Fish Product. I know that very well. I too, Mr. Deputy President, when I have spare time, I do go play around with the fishes, as well. So, I just want to signal that I enjoy fishing. I do. It's one of the good things.

Mr. Deputy President, we have an Insurance Facility Course where we are looking to provide support for that sector, if there were to be some natural disaster that persons in the Fishing Sector can get benefit through an Insurance Facility. The Government of Grenada has paid their premium, and of course, you can say we are

covered from an insurance standpoint for 2020 - 2022. What happens thereafter, those discussions will continue. But for the next two (2) years, we do have that facility to access if any of our fishing vessels fleet got damaged, through a natural disaster or so, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, we have, through the Japan International Corporation, and I really want to touch on this, because my friend spoke about the issue of the ice and ice is an issue, and the Japan International Corporation we have, Mr. Deputy President, a project to the tune of $3.8m, to be implemented early, in 2021, and I will like to speak to the scope of this project. And the first scope of this project is an Ice-Making Machine for ice production to be installed in eight (8) Fish Markets throughout Grenada and Carriacou. So, we have eight (8) Fish Markets that would be impacted with new ice machines. **(Applause)** And, they will also be getting some other stuff like pressure washers, refrigeration trucks, platform scales and light towers. The lighting towers, Mr. Deputy President, that lighting will be placed strategically in those Fish Markets, because you know when the boats pull up there, there is pilfering with the engine and people's gas and their fishing equipment and stuff are stolen. So, we believe that if you have light, it will act as a deterrent, so that persons wouldn't come and steal the fishermen's gear, so that is part of that project. Also, [7]VHF radios and other equipment will form part of that project, Mr. Deputy President.

The second component of the project, Mr. Deputy President, will deal with the sargassum. Sargassum is a major issue for the St. Andrew area, and a number of equipment will be supplied through that project, an excavator tractor, special boats, trawl nets for collecting the sargassum, beach cleaner, machinery for harvesting the sargassum on the sea surface and dump trucks. So, this is a significant project to treat with the sargassum and my colleague in the Ministry of the Environment, must take some credit for the work that they are doing to secure this support, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

[7] VHF – Very High Frequency

Mr. Deputy President, we are even going further. There is a clear opportunity for processing the sargassum for sale in New Zealand. New Zealand has a high demand for sargassum seaweed, and so we plan to work with the Coastal Community, to see how, through the [8]CRFM Institution, to see how we can get this project off, so that Grenada can start exporting sargassum seaweed, process sargassum seaweed to New Zealand, as a revenue generation and also eliminating a problem that we have here, Mr. President.

The Nature Conservancy, Mr. Deputy President, they are working with the Soubise Community to establish Locker-Room Facility for the fishermen there; equipment, storage and a small jetty for that community. They would welcome that very much. You see them selling their fish along the roadway to the tune of EC$900,000.00. That project will treat to that.

I spoke about the seamoss, already, Mr. Deputy President. So those are some of the things that I wanted to touch on, quickly. I believe I may have about seven (7) more minutes, Mr. Deputy President, so I am moving on.

Mr. Deputy President, I wanted to touch a little on Sports, and just to say that we have been doing some significant work and refurbishing some our playing fields, the Willis Playing Field, the Limes Playing Field, just to make sure that we have those ready. We are looking to also do some lighting going forward, in 2021, Mr. Deputy President, you will hear more about that.

Mr. Deputy President, in Progress Park, we constructed a net there, as well, Playing Nets at Progress Park, Mr. Deputy President. The Cricket Association in St. Andrew has really welcomed that facility there, and they have asked, a long time ago, for that Cricket Practicing Net, there, and we know St. Andrew have cricketers on the West Indies Team, right now, and so that will be good for them for practicing, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to touch a little on just a couple feedback from my colleague Senator St. Cyr, and I think it will be good to help update the House, in terms

[8] CRFM - Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism

of clarity and for a better understanding. I think that is what we are here for, and I think it is important that I do that.

And in terms of the residence for the Head of State, this is a priority project for the Government of Grenada. This project is going to be done through a BOLT initiative. Currently, the designs for the restoration of the residence are on underway. Just recently, as a couple days ago, we had discussions with the prospective BOLT providers, in terms of having that facility done as quickly as possible. So, that is on-going, as well as, the Halls of Justice. Discussions are going on. The drawings are under consultations with stakeholders now to look to see that we have the right number of Courts and things like that, and where the Courts are placed, so that is taking place, as well.

There is a discussion around the Fire Station, Mr. Deputy President. I am very happy for those feedbacks, because I recall when I was in a Town Hall Meeting in the South, I did speak about the Fire Station, but I spoke basically to what was coming in the South and didn't give a full disclosure on the entire project. The project involves a new Police Headquarters and a Fire Station, because the Police Headquarters is going where the Fire Station site is currently, so we have to relocate the Fire Station. But, a Fire sub Station will be retained in St. George's. A minimum of two (2) fire engines will be at the Police Headquarters to service the Town. So, there will be no vacuum of fire response in the Town. As a matter of fact, we are currently, right now, working to have a Fire sub Station at the St. David Police Station. There is a building that we have down for renovation for the Fire sub Station, and a new Fire Truck for St. David is on its way. **(Applause)** So, we are not minimising the objective. What we are trying to do is to ensure that we have Fire Response in every Parish. That is what is going on, Mr. Deputy President. So, I take responsibility for not giving the full disclosure, because the reason for that is that the discussion regarding the Police Headquarters are still on-going, as to what the final configuration will be like, whether it will be a three or four story building, or whatever the case might be. So, there are some discussions going on there. But, we will hear more about that, as we move forward, Mr. Deputy President. So, I just want to speak to those developments, just for clarity.

Mr. Deputy President, I think…

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: I may have exhausted my time. That bell sounds like a final bell, that's how it sounds, Mr. Deputy President. So I just want to thank this Honourable House for the opportunity to present on my Ministry, on these Portfolios, Mr. Deputy President.

My only regret is that I could probably do with another twenty (20) minutes, just in the interest of the Nation and the House for more clarity, because I would have liked an opportunity to speak on some Labour matters, as well and to highlight the work that workers are doing in this pandemic, as well. Maybe a little later on, I will get an opportunity to speak on that. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you, Senator, and before I invite the next Senator to speak, I just wanted to say to the Members that the President apologises for his absence, because he is caught up in some other work issues that certainly demands his time. So, hence my ascending to the Chair for this morning's session. But, he is expected to be here sometime this morning to take over his rightful place.

Also, to remind Members that when you're doing your debate, if there are certain parts of your Ministry that you haven't covered, you can always ask another Senator to cover for you, if you run out of time. So, you get the opportunity to say what you have to say and to educate and inform the public therein, as to the areas that are of concern. So, I just wanted to remind Members of that, and also to let them know that the time that was allotted by the President continues as is and everybody will have their full share of time. Thank you. Senator Noel.

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. I rise to respond to the 2021 Estimates of Revenue. But, before I move along, I just want to take the time

out to thank the President yesterday for extending some courtesies towards me to have to leave with an emergency and so on.

So, Mr. Deputy President, I just want to begin. I am guided by the Holy Scriptures, Proverbs Chapter 11, Verse 14, which read: ***"For lack of guidance, a nation falls. But victory is won through many advisors."*** And as we know that's from Solomon's house. I think it was Solomon who wrote the Proverbs, and he himself was, despite we tend to think about this people, as religious people and so on, and we have to remember in ancient times these people were Rulers, Kings, and so on. So, he himself would have understood politics, as well as, Religion.

Mr. President, let me start by saying that, in terms of we from the Opposition side of things, talking about the documents and the way it was sent, I know the Opposition Leader made reference to it and so on. I too, electronically it was sent; that's how the documents were sent to me, and you know with glasses and all that kinds of thing it's a problem. We would have preferred having a written document, which would have been, possibly, one of those where we could actually read and make highlights, have notes and so on, and that type of thing. I would have preferred that, and I would have been able to peruse and so on, able to go through the document, you know, make my little highlights and so on. And based on all the research that was done from our side, nowhere in the Caribbean, we found out that the Budget Document was sent electronically. Most of them were printed documents, in all the countries we looked at. Also, the actual Budget Speech, we ended up getting the Speech, probably about a day or two after the actual Presentation; at least I got mine a day or two after.

Let me just refer also to the Governor-General's Throne Speech. But, before I do that, while I am on the Governor-General, some things were mentioned on the "Other Side" yesterday, as though, you know, people were attacking the Governor-General. This is not the case. Since this is a Money Motion, we were just discussing the budgetary aspect, as it relates to the Office, not the Governor-General, personally. So, let me make that abundantly clear. We were just discussing the budgetary issues, financial issues, which concern the nation's budget, as it relates to the residence, and not the Office of the Governor-General.

Motions: 2021 Budget Debate

Mr. Deputy President, I remember being here when the Throne Speech was presented. And we sat on "This Side," the Senate, the Members from the Lower House was on the "Other side," the Opposition Leader was on the "Other Side" there with Members of the House. I remember moving a Motion and all that and so on during the Throne Speech and all that stuff.

But, when I went home, and I looked back at the audio and so on, or what was presented on the media, I thought it was a bit of a gross disrespect, in terms of the Opposition, well from the media side. Because the reason why I am saying that, Mr. Deputy President, over the last seven (7) years, I think, we haven't had an Official Opposition in this country, which is something of significance, and an Opposition is part and parcel of the process. An Opposition is key in terms of the efficiencies in Government, and is part of the Governmental. He is Her Majesty's Opposition.

As I listened, not one instant did the media people spoke about the fact that there is an Opposition, and there is an Opposition Leader, and there are Opposition Senators and so on, not once. Imagine, seven (7) years without an official Opposition, and not once. They spent the entire Ceremony, Mr. Deputy President, glorifying the "Other Side" and talking about things on the "Other Side" and so on, and so on and so on. And, I thought that that this should be mentioned, and it is important, because Opposition is key in a democracy. And it is part of, which I already mentioned at some time already, saying that it's part and parcel of checks and balances in Government, to bring efficiency in Government, scrutiny, scrutinising, preventing things of corruption and abuse of power and so on, it is relevant.

And while I am at that, I am reminded of a great Philosopher that I like very much, his name is Heraclitus, one of my favourite Philosophers, and one of his Doctrines is that everything is in a state of flux.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, I don't want to disturb your flight, this morning. But, I just want to remind Members that the debate is on a Budget, and I would like us to focus more on the Budget. I will give you a little room, but I wanted to bring your attention to the Budget and the documents that

were presented on the Budget and debate that. So, I just want to guide that we get focused on that and not stray. Yes, I'll give you a little latitude, but I just want to remind you to stay on focus. Right. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. I was just finishing up there, and then move on to the next one. So, I was just mentioning Heraclitus, who mentioned things about everything is forever changing. One of his doctrines mentioned, which is mingling of opposites and opposites are what really matter, and therefore, strife and conflict and so on, is important, which bring some level of harmony, at some point in time. So, hence the reason I'll like to mention Heraclitus here, as we look at opposites, as key to everything. If we have weaknesses on one side, that is like a stabiliser; things are not stabilised.

So, let me go into the substantive point, in regards to the Budget, Mr. Deputy President. I have noticed that the 2021 Budget is larger than the estimated Budget of 2020, Mr. Deputy President. The estimated Budget for 2020 was $1,146,010,705.00. The 2021 Budget is on $1,232,670,049, an increase of 7.6% in total revenue. If revenue is falling, Mr. Deputy President, then why are we finding more money to spend? That is the problem.

Moreover, total revenue and grants in 2021, is $917m. In 2020, it was estimated to collect over $1b. So, in other words, Mr. Deputy President, there is an 8.7% decline in revenue and grants, but we are spending more than we are collecting. And I just wanted to put that on notice that we have to be careful, very careful with this kind of behaviour.

We need to be more prudent in our spending, especially at a time where monies are very hard and difficult to come by. We have to be prudent and be very careful with our spending. We should be more prudent in our spending to prevent us from returning to the days, when we were spending more than we were collecting, because I am putting on notice that it had happened before and we need not go back to those sad days.

We need to be reminded that before 2013, the economy, fiscally, was overspending, which pushed the country into what we call a Structural Adjustment Programme. Remember back then, under George Ignatius Brizan, we were under Structural Adjustment Programme when Members of the "Other Side" at that time, it would not have been the exact same people, but the same Political Party then, were chastising the Government then, for the Structural Adjustment, and here we are today, this very same Government have to bring in the very same Structural Adjustment Programme to stabilise things.

We do not want the Government to use the COVID experience, or lose its focus on the importance of fiscal sustainability, and the importance of the remaining fiscal prudence, because, if we continue like this, Mr. President, we will end up in the same boat, which will mean all the years of sacrifices that we have had will be reduced to naught. And we are always hearing about sacrifices and sacrifices and sacrifices, and every time it's the poor, ordinary individual, the poor man, the ordinary man, who has to feel the brunt of the pain, where the sacrifices are concerned. The man with the big salary and so on and the people on the higher echelons, it doessn't necessarily affect them much, it's the ordinary, poor individuals that feel the pinch and knows the pain, as people are hurting today in this COVID situation.

I understand that there is a need to relax, or suspend certain provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Law. I understand that well, because of the situation that we are in. But, we ought not to be reckless during this period in going out and look for loans, which will be added to our National Debt. We have to be very careful about that.

However, Mr. Deputy President, we must not use this COVID period to incur debts that will not add value and overspend in areas where there is a high level of inefficiency. In other words, I am talking about wasting funds. This is not a time to be wasting funds and monies around, where monies are difficult to come by. We have to be careful with that. People are struggling and people are hurting. We need to spend money where it needs to be spent, as well as putting money in people's pockets, so that they could live.

We do not want the sacrifices made during the Structural Adjustment Programme to be reduced to naught, and we want Members on the "Other Side" to realise that, because if we are not careful, this Government can go on a spending spree and we're hearing some Members on the "Other Side" talking about this is not an Election Budget and so on and the people are saying it's an Election Budget. We don't know. But, things are happening and the possibility exists. We can't tell when there would be an election or not. The Prime Minister has the power to call Election whenever he chooses. And, at the same time, you know when Elections come around Government and Politicians tend to go on a spending spree, and the spending spree is to try to create extra jobs, in order to get votes from people for their Political Party. So, we have to be mindful and be very careful of that, Mr. Deputy President.

I know that, traditionally, Politicians will spend excessively to win votes, and the Fiscal Responsibility Act was passed to prevent that from happening. So, we have to be mindful of it. In other words, Grenada is supposed to be fiscally prudent, because Grenadians have made sacrifices.

Mr. President, during our history, during the last ten (10) years, we have never spent more than $230m in implementing Capital Programmes. Even during Hurricane Ivan, Mr. Deputy President, we haven't spent that much. Now, the Government is proposing to spend $305m in Capital Projects, and we have never spent more than $230m, even when things are good. So, we have to be careful, Mr. Deputy President, in going forward, of how we utilise these finances and so on, putting the "Other Side" on guard that they need to be mindful of that and the public need to be mindful of that also.

And as far as I remember, Mr. Deputy President, in 2005, we spent $163m. In 2006, we spent $271m. Those two (2) years and understandably so, those two (2) years were to build back our building stock, because the infrastructural damage and so on was significant, after Hurricane Ivan.

And an important point here is that during that time, we had the assistance and so on, where the remittances were coming from the United States and other countries, Canada and England and so on. Remittances play a major role in the Grenada

economy. And every time it seem as though the remittances and the Grenadians in the diaspora continue to bail us out and assist and play a significant role in this economy.

This time around, with COVID; COVID affected the world, globally. The fact that COVID affected the world globally; Grenadians in the diaspora are also affected. But yet still, we are seeing people by Western Union and so on and Money Gram, still being supported by family, whatever the little that they could do to support people in less fortunate in Grenada and so on, or just families in general.

However, in 2020, we had no Ivan, but we are looking now to find $350m to finance Capital Projects. That's a stretch in my view. Do we have the ability to implement such a project, Mr. Deputy President, or are we trying to break a record in 2021? And if we want to break a record, are we prepared to break such record when we know our implementation rate has been below expectation and when our implementation rate has been unsatisfactory? It will be impossible for Grenada to implement $305m worth in Capital Projects, in my view, Mr. Deputy President.

Let me just look to the side of revenue. And I would say, any economy that is fiscally challenges, Government is expected to be creative, proactive and flexible in devising revenue measures. But on page 13 of the Budget Speech, the Minister for Finance said, and I quote: **"There will be a strong drive to collect tax arrears."** During this period when businesses are losing income, Mr. Deputy President, how are we going to collect these taxes? Businesses are struggling right now. People are losing jobs and in my view, I understand how difficult it is. It would be a difficult thing to collect taxes. Is it the intention to bully the Private Sector to pay back taxes and the individuals? Where will the money come from to pay those taxes, Mr. Deputy President? During this period where cash is minimal and business activity is low, the Government is prepared to knock on doors of the Private Sector, individuals and firms to find monies to pay taxes? Is this a case where our back taxes are huge? And if our back taxes are huge, what were the Tax Agencies doing all these years?

I know we passed a Bill, I remember, in Parliament, which is the Tax Bill. Is that what that is intended to do? It reminds me of the days of the Roman Empire, when the Tax Collectors were using the big stick and beating people to pay the Roman

Government taxes. Actually, the Roman Empire most of its wealth came from this exploitation, exploiting the other areas in the world to get rich. Is the Government prepared to garnish the accounts of individuals and firms to seize the properties of individual and Firms? Are we talking about totalitarianism, or maybe back to the days of the Revolution where a man can't pay, you just seize his property and lock up a man, you know, these types of things? What will be the strong drive to collect tax arrears, Mr. Deputy President?

I was expecting to hear that the Minister for Finance talk about reduction in taxes, rates, for both individuals and Firms, which is necessary to stimulate the economy, because people will be given what you call, talking about a high disposable income. We often hear that all over the world where when you have problems, the economy is shrinking, we usually hear about Stimulus Packages and so on. The more money you put into people's pockets, the more it generates. It's actually an injection into the economy, which would bring the economy back to some level of expediency.

I'll look a bit on Wages. Mr. Deputy President, and I am asking the Government to pay the Public Workers their 4% increase that is legally due to them. **(Applause)** Mr. Deputy President, we are aware that the morals and the motivation level of our Public officers are low, which means we are talking about low productivity, as it stands now. We have to change that.

The docking of pay two (2) years ago, continues to affect the Education System. Workers in key Ministries were asked to withhold or postpone the 4% that is due to these workers will create a greater worry within the Public Service. How will they take out this frustration? They will work to rule. They would go slow, and they would frustrate the Public Sector. So, we need to look into that. I think that is important.

Let me look into Infrastructural Development, Mr. Deputy President, and Infrastructure Development was number one on the list, in terms of the allocation of the estimated Budget, which is $133m, 10% of total expenditure.

Number one and I am appealing to the Government that they need to fix the roads. I haven't seen any major projects, in terms of the infrastructure, where roads are concerned, since this Government has been installed. In the Grand Etang area, looking

from Grenville to St. George's, nothing has been done. Not even the widening of one corner of the road was done, just patching here and there, patching here and there; not even the widening of a corner over Grand Etang. And, again, on the Western side, imagine since before I left Barbados to return to Grenada, this thing happened with the diversion of the traffic going up inside (I can't remember the name of the village up inside …

***(A* Member said Florida)**

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Florida. Imagine that. That's madness. They haven't fixed anything. You understand, and we're talking about major roads right around the country, major roads still undone. So, where infrastructure is concerned, Mr. Deputy President, these things need to be done, because the truth is, we have more vehicles in this country. And the truth of the matter is… which means, if we have more vehicles, then more taxes are being paid, the fact that people are bringing in vehicles and so on, then they're paying their tax revenue, more revenue, Driver's Licence, they're paying their Licence and Vehicle Inspection fees and so on, all these things are considered. So, the Government is making enough money to fix these infrastructures.

Again, the truckers; when you talk about petrol, we have one of the highest petrol taxes in the Caribbean. So, the mere fact that we have one of the highest petrol taxes, it means therefore, the Government is collecting a handsome revenue in terms of taxes, where petrol is concerned, with more vehicles being on the road.

And again, I have to talk about the Busmen, where the Busmen are concerned, because this came up lately. The Busmen are contributing significantly, to the development of this country, significantly to the development of this country. And you will find a Busman every day, or probably twice a day, collecting petrol at the Gas Station, so the tax that he pays to the State in petrol is significant. And, the Bill that we have just passed with the Commission and so on, imagine that we omitted the Busmen to having a Representative on the Commission, when we changed from the Board to

the Commission. They should be considered, because they pay a significant contribution to the development of this country, Mr. Deputy President.

I would look at ICT, as well, Mr. Deputy President. It was about number five, in terms of allocation of funds here. And then again, this ICT is shared among other areas, which means they wouldn't get the full amount, because you have the National Security, Public Administration, and so on, Youth Development, Disaster Management, they all have to share from the same thing.

I would also like to encourage the Government to identify the initiatives and to modernise the Public Sector. We know we can't stay in the backward state. We need to modernise and become computerised and so on. At least, I would like to congratulate the Government and the Minister for Finance for his proactive action there, where he is ensuring Grenadians that they can pay their fees through online, which is a good thing, paying fees online. And this is also good in the situation that we find ourselves in now, where COVID is concerned and the long lines and so on, and we're talking about we just had a spike. It is better to pay online than to get yourself infected by going in these long lines and people have to try to avoid crowds and so on. So, this is a good initiative here.

Also, where gender is concerned, I just want to say that there is a social issue there in my view, what we could call probably gender equality. We have to be careful about that here, because we are looking to generate much of our income through the Construction Sector, and I could say Infrastructural Development and so on. So, we have to be mindful that the majority of Construction Workers and so on are usually men. I would say 90% of construction workers are men, which will be involved in the Construction Industry. So, we have to be careful and ensure that we have a proper plan, in terms of vulnerable females and so on. We have to look into that, that should be considered.

In the area of Sports, well, Sports is number ten, which is right at the bottom. And Sports, sometimes we take it lightly, and I know at this time, which is COVID, we tend not to focus too much on it. But, Sports is important, in terms of mental health, it is important for people to release their stress and so on. So, we need to get back, and we

need to commit ourselves and get Sports going. It depends on the type of Sports too, you know, that's another thing, cricket, and so on.

But I remember, years gone by, I think I was overseas when that happened, listening to the INTERCOL Games, when a former Minister for Sports from Trinidad was here commentating. He came to Grenada. I think his name was Anil Roberts. He was a former Minister for Sports in Trinidad, but now Opposition Senator, and he was talking about, if Grenada invest in the talent that we have, that if we happen to have one Olympic Champion that the benefits that he would bring to Grenada, because he was talking about the fact that we stressed on tourism, the free advertisement that we will get and the free publicity would be significant for this country.

And I happened to look into some research, around the time of Kirani James, and I was about to write a little article on it, which I found out that the amount of people, actually watching the Games, and Grenada's name being mentioned and the flag and so on, it was significant for our publicity and advertisement. And then we are talking about the Network, which is MSNBC, ESPN and the others, and even more than that where people tend to share these things around, on WhatsApp and on Social Media and so on, the significance behind it. And that's why sometimes I say, we missed the boat to a certain extent, because of the fact we had Kirani James there. He gave us another medal, the Olympics after. And I say, why the Government didn't invest, seriously, in some other Athletes, even if they have to pay them, to ensure that we will have a 400 x 400 Olympic Team, because Kirani James being the Superstar, at the time by himself, imagine Trinidad and so on and all these other countries had 400 x 400 teams, and we didn't have a 400 x 400 team. I think the Ministry of Sports should have seriously looked into it, to ensure that we would have had a 400 x 400 team. So, that is it for Sports. But, in terms of economics, let's not miss out the economic aspect. I think we should get back together. All the stakeholders involved should put all things aside and get back to the drawing board, because Sports is important. And, there is also an economic impact towards Sports, as well, because you have vendors and so on. In terms of the village sports, people will be able to sell and so on and make their monies.

Some people, that's how they live their daily lives. Their livelihood is based upon these things, so we have to consider that seriously.

Let me look at Agriculture, Mr. Deputy President. Agriculture is number nine, almost right at the bottom of the Table. In terms of the allocation of expenditure, it is $18m, which is just 1.5% of the total expenditure, which in my view, is just a drop in the bucket for an important industry, as the Agricultural Industry. I noticed on the News, I have seen the Trinidad Government is talking about $1.1b to agriculture and on top of that, $500m given, on top of that. And then, one of the Economists in Trinidad and Tobago is saying that is still not enough, Mr. Deputy President, for agriculture.

When I heard about the reshuffle, and I heard the Honourable Peter David was put into the Ministry, people told me, oh, that was a demotion. I was saying, no, I didn't believe in that foolishness, because I thought that Honourable Peter David was a go-getter. So, I said he would be a man to able to drive this economy and so on. But when we see $18m I mean, how much you could work with that, to really revamp the Agriculture Industry? It's like we are spinning top in mud. **(Laughter)**

(Inaudible comment by a Member)

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Well, we're at the bottom. So, the Government has defended, at some point in time, that they put monies there and it was spent in other Ministries, and so on. And in my view again, is it a disguise, because we're seeing other monies are allocated to other areas. It is like they're hiding it all about the place, and then saying that it would actually go into agriculture, and it is still an Agriculture Project. But, let's put everything in one. Let's identify all the agricultural areas that need development, and put all the monies in the Agriculture Sector, and give one Budget for the Agricultural Sector, rather than putting it all over the place.

Mr. Deputy President, I remember in my Maiden Speech, I spoke at length, about the importance of the Agriculture Sector. And in my view, I believe it should be one of

the main pillars in going forward. All the exports that I am reading up on during the COVID and after COVID and now are talking about for the Caribbean, in terms of development; agriculture should be the main pillar, going forward.

I have been on the television and radio talking, significantly, about agriculture. I, myself, am a farmer involved in nutmeg, cocoa, cabbage and tomato, and on, so I know where I am coming from. The truth about it, Mr. Deputy President, the farmer is an economically independent individual. In my view, he feeds the Nation. He creates his own job and then creates employment, so he employs other people. He produces a commodity and sells it for a price. So, in one sense, he's an entrepreneur. And, in my view, that type of venture is even better than the businessman in Grenville, or George's in a store because the farmer is producing a commodity from scratch and sells it. He produces, whereas the businessman in the shop is engaged in buying and selling, so this is important.

And, that brings me back to where I saw Senator Cox, you know, talking the other day about the International Airport and so on. It is good to see that they are going in that direction. Talking about storeroom and so on for produce coming in and going out, and so on, and apparently it seems as though the "Other Side" is starting to get the message on the importance of agriculture going forward, because I did say, in one of my speeches here, that sometimes we miss the point. Sometimes people tend to think that the International Airport was only designed for tourism. And I made the point and I like to read it, and sometimes I usually quote the former Prime Minister here on it, because the Airport was not just designed just fort, but both for agriculture, tourism, among other things. That is why I said… let me just quote again, the former Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, which was one of the biggest projects undertaken by the Revolutionary Government at that time. And, he said: "**This International Airport is an ancient dream of the people of our country. This International Airport Project, as we see it, is the gateway to our future. As we see it, it's what alone can give us the potential for economic take-off. As we see it, can help us to develop the Tourist Industry more, can help us to develop our Agro Industries more, and can help us to export our fresh fruits and vegetables better." (Applause)**

And I made the point in my Maiden Speech, the importance of the Airport, and some people tend to be gone on a trajectory only focusing on tourism. And I heard a Member on the "Other Side" made the point about, like if we trying to make the point to say that we shouldn't have a Tourism Industry. I am not talking about destroying the Tourist Industry. We are talking about the more the merrier. The more industries we have, the more pillars we have in building the economy. It's better for the country, more revenues coming in, Mr. Deputy President.

And I hold the point that the fact is in agriculture, we are talking about food security, especially in this time. The Food Import bill, as just mentioned, is over $400m.

***(A Member said* $353m)**

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: $353m. Okay. **(Laughter)** $353m, which is going to cut down on costs for the Government, significantly, and these monies, could be used elsewhere, and people would be benefiting from projects, and so on.

I also made the point, and I am hearing a lot about it now, making the point that agriculture is linked to the other sectors. I am hearing my Members on the "Other Side" talking significantly, about that, too. It is linked to health. The mere fact that you produce your own food, eat what you grow, grow what you eat, remember those things, we will have a healthier population. The fact that we will have a healthier population means therefore, that we will have a higher productivity. We would boost production, Mr. Deputy President. And less burden, less burden on the Health System, in my view. So, the excess money that has to be spent in health, the people always visiting the Health Facilities and so on, would be reduced, significantly.

Tourism and as I just said, I am not talking about destroying the Tourist Industry. Tourism is needed. Almost every country has a Tourism Sector. But, we cannot have Tourism, Mr. Deputy President, without having an Agriculture Industry. Where are the tourists going to get their food, from the United States where they come from? It makes no sense that they're visiting us.

The Agriculture Sector and the farmer also is linked to business, because, in a sense, he is a businessman, because he sells his produce to the supermarket and so on, to the vendors and so on and to the Marketing Board. Well, we know the Marketing Board, as just mentioned, has issues there, which need to be fixed, significantly, because they cannot be buying over to just sell and compete. They should be actually taking care of the farmers, pay proper prices in terms of the produce that the farmers sell to them. As well, as I am advocating too, that the Marketing Board should set up a Depot or one of their areas in the area of Grenville, the fact that Grenville is the Agricultural belt. In the days of the Revolution, I remember, I think we used to call it the PFU and so on. I think they should set up an area there where the farmers could sell their produce in Grenville, rather than have to travel all the way to St. George's to sell their produce, and then have to go to the office in the middle of the Town to collect their monies. Something should be done pertaining to that, and so on.

Importantly, again, manufacture, this is the big one here, because I thought more money should be allocated and we haven't seen anything much at all, to be allocated in terms of manufacturing because this is the way to go. We cannot continue to be selling our raw materials like in the old time days. This is the modern age, and we have to significantly invest in manufacturing and agro-processing, and we did it before. We did it before. So, I am appealing to the "Other Side" to seriously invest in manufacturing, where we could produce a final product rather than selling raw materials, and getting little or no monies in return, which we are talking about, value-added.

Also, Mr. Deputy President, I'll like to talk a little bit about the Cannabis Industry. And I think the Government should see into that, and now they jump on board now talking about it. Let me give the Honourable Leader of the Opposition credit for that, because he'd been talking a lot, even when he was on the "Other Side" about the Cannabis Industry. **(Applause)** I remember him talking and nobody listening to him on the "Other Side." And, I remember the Prime Minister then, talking about: "Over his dead body." **(Laughter)** And I was saying, what kind of progressive thinkers are they? You know, and I was seeing it myself. Now look, we are the last. Almost all the other countries in the Caribbean moved in the direction of the Cannabis Industry. We are

talking about Trinidad, decriminalisation and legalisation of marijuana. Antigua, Barbados and St. Vincent are going in that direction. It is a lucrative industry, Mr. Deputy President.

The Cannabis Industry can hit $130b, based on my research, in the United States, by 2020. Based on my research, the amount of money could be made, well, in the United States. The total economic impact of legal cannabis sale increased from $38b to $46b in 2019 to $106b to $130b by 2024. And I just mentioned the fact that the Opposition Leader had significantly spoken on these issues before.

Just imagine, I am seeing in the Budget just $10,000.00, in terms of research for the Cannabis Industry. That is only salary for two (2) people, $10,000.00, in terms of cannabis research, and we are talking about a billion dollar industry, monies to be made from this significant thing.

And again, I must make the point for the Rastafarians and so on, who are part and parcel of the fabric of our civilization and this country. I think it's an injustice to them. I remember, Prince Nana, or Ras Nang, appealing to the Government, not even have the audacity to even allow them to use the marijuana in their rituals and in their service and so on. Not even that we had passed any Law to give them the authority to move in that direction, nothing of the sort. I haven't heard much about him lately, and I am not certain if he is sick. But I remember him speaking a lot about it and appealing to the Government for those things.

Again the Poultry Industry, we said we had $20m or maybe more and so on, which will help to decrease again, the Food Import Bill, which would cut back on spending and spend in meaningful ways in other Ministries, Mr. Deputy President.

Let me just speak also, and move on to Tourism and Transport. I am seeing it is number eight here, and $19.3m, 1.6% of total expenditure allocated to the industry. Again, let me say that this industry is a highly competitive industry. All this talk about tourism from a Grenadian standpoint, Grenada is far behind where tourism is concerned. You know, I lived in Barbados for maybe about eleven (11) years and sometimes you see about eight (8) to nine (9) Jumbo Jets on the ground, at the same time. So, where tourism is concerned, we are way behind. And the place is so

designed for tourists. You're in Grenada, and you have a pedestrian crossing hardly painted, speed bumps, no paint, and so you're just supposed to know that there is a hump there and you have to stop. The place is not really designed for tourists.

Again, when you travel, you're talking about the pricing. In certain countries, you'll see the US price, the Barbados price and EU price and so on. Most times in Grenada, sometimes you don't even see the price much less for the EC price. All these things should be considered in our Tourist Industry and trying to move in that direction, Mr. Deputy President.

I am also making the point that there are other countries that are far ahead in this industry than we are which we are talking about Antigua, Barbados, St. Lucia, to a certain extent. So, when we are all talking about tourism, like if we are number one in the Caribbean; and Jamaica, I didn't mention, Jamaica.

I also want to make the point, Mr. Deputy President, that it is important that I think, the fact that it is a highly competitive industry, I think it is good that we tend to create something that is different from the other territories. And one of the things that I think about is the connection with our history, which has to do with our Revolutionary history, like similar to Jamaica is doing to Bob Marley and so on, and that type of thing. I am thinking that we should have something like, what we call a War Museum.

I know most of the Governments, I don't know what is the problem that they tend to hide, not liking to have anything to do with the Revolution and so on. It's part and parcel of our history, it's already gone. We have to embrace it. So, I am appealing to the Government that going in the direction of having a War Museum, where people could look back and see some of the things that we would have had here, to remind us of the Revolution. And not just remind us, but most countries that had Revolutions would have a War Museum. I am talking about North Korea, United States, all over the world, there are War Museums, and it could be connected to the Tourist Industry.

Remodelling, or rebuilding even our Army Camps. I wrote an article, sometime, back where I was talking about rebuilding, or remodelling the former Revolutionary Leader's residence, and bring it back in the state how it once used to be, even the

room, or the bed where he was under house arrest and so on; all these things, where tourists could visit and all those types of things.

In Jamaica, I remember the Jamaican Government remodelling the Bob Marley Land Rover. They went as far as Ethiopia to get parts to remodel, put it in a nice little show case and have it there, so tourists, when they visit Jamaica, they could look at the Bob Marley Land Rover. Also, there is a Bob Marley Museum in Jamaica, where people tend to always visit on those sites. This is important. We could look into those things and they also remodelled the house, the old house where the Philosopher, Marcus Garvey once lived. They remodelled the old house where he used to live. Again, talking about that, even in Barbados, the house where Rihanna used to live is considered to be a kind of historical thing in Barbados, as well too, and Rihanna is still a young person. So, that is just to show how important tourism is, and how these links could be made, in terms of tourism.

Again, we need to look at the TAMCC and look into the Curriculum seriously, in terms of training youths geared for the tourist market. I remember the Hotel Tycoon, speaking at a TAMCC Graduation Ceremony, talking about that TAMCC should move in that direction, to train people for the market, because what is happening in the tourist market in Grenada, we are not benefiting significantly, because most of the high-end jobs, he was saying are going to expatriates, people that are coming from overseas. And we in Grenada, the citizens are getting the lower-end jobs, Mr. Deputy President, in terms of the tourist market.

But, Mr. Deputy President, I must say that, in terms of the loan to upgrade the Airport where tourism is concerned, I am one that believe in modernisation and development. Let me make that abundantly clear. I make that abundantly clear. I believe in modernisation and development and so on. I love that. But, I am saying, Mr. President, the timing, I believe the timing isn't right for this loan, right now. Given the circumstances, we should put the monies somewhere else, in some other development, where people could benefit, because I can't see tourism bouncing back in the distant future, maybe between the next two (2) to three (3) years. We should probably heavily

invest in manufacturing, heavily invest in manufacturing and other sectors, put these monies into something else.

Let me go into rural development, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And in terms of rural development, what I am noticing, yes, there are some developments in certain parts of the rural area. I am seeing a little bit of it. I am not satisfied, though, in terms of money spent in the rural areas, because Grenada happens to be a highly centralised country where almost everything is in the City areas and we need to decentralise the development, because the country cannot reach its full potential in terms of economic potential, if we continue to be too decentralised. What is wrong with different Towns and so on competing with each other for economic space? Nothing is wrong with that.

So, I have a problem, and one of the problems is, it almost seems as though to me, that there has been a total neglect and abandonment, in terms of St. Andrew. It appears as though, there is a clandestine approach to pauperise the whole of St. Andrew, because what I am seeing, when you take a good look around, Mr. Deputy President, when I look in St. David, I am seeing some projects there, a massive Housing Project, about two (2) multimillion dollar hotel development talked about there and other developments.

There is another development on the other side and so on and some road development. And when we look at St. Patrick again, I am seeing some here. We had the Breakwater Project, a million dollar project being done there. Two (2) multi-million dollar hotel projects, the Levera Hotel Project coming on stream, they're talking about. I think about two (2) or three (3) Housing Projects, the multi-million dollar Road Project, I think from somewhere from Tivoli into St. Patrick. I think that monies were received from since in the other Government's period.

And again, in St. Patrick, Mr. Deputy President, I am seeing about four or five playing fields, talking about playing fields that are properly lit, lighting facilities and so on, in St. Patrick. I am happy for that, because they are our sister Parish. But, Mr. Deputy President, in St. Andrew, imagine that, the big Parish, with four (4) Ministers, four (4) Ministers of Government, four (4) constituencies, with a population of so much, only one proper lighting facility. Somebody just mentioned Progress Park, not too long

ago; not even Progress Park has a light, and Progress Park, at one point in time, when we had… the INTERCOL Games were held in Progress Park, and not even the Progress Park was lit.

Well, let me say that there are certain things I see there that's happening, which is good; I applaud, because in my area I am seeing an upgrade, some work to be done on the Mirabeau Abattoir there. I am happy for that. But then again, that's minimal jobs that will be created there, because it's a small project. Mirabeau Water Supply, I've seen some projects there for that too, a small thing. And then again, seeing the Grenville Commercial Complex Project should be on stream. I'll appreciate and hope that they're moving in that direction with it, because like I just said, there is nothing happening in Grenville, over, maybe the last ten (10) years or so, in terms of development.

But then, the point is, we raised some questions here in the Senate sometime back about the flooding in Grenville. So, are we going to build before we fix the flooding problem? We need to know the situation, because you are going to go and build, and then we still have a flooding problem. So, how are you going to deal with that? And then I am hoping that the Government really keep to its word on this Grenville Commercial Complex Project, because in the past this very same Government, who had plans to develop the Market and so on, and the Bus Terminus and all that, putting up a billboard in Grenville and it almost rotted before the Government did anything. Well another Government came into office and spent just about four (4) years and was able to build these infrastructures. Despite they made changes and so on to it. They made little changes and so on to it, maybe, wrong or right, but it was done. So, that is just to show the gross disrespect, and I hope the people of Grenville are listening.

I also want to speak about the Mirabeau Hospital. The Mirabeau Hospital to me again, is a concern, because when I looked in the estimated Budget to spend what was approved for the Princess Alice Hospital is about $3m, as compared to the General Hospital, which is $43m. And I understand the General Hospital would swallow up a big portion, because it is the General Hospital. But, look at the difference, $3m against $43m. Even Mt. Gay, Mr. Deputy President, more monies are allocated to it. $7m to

the Mt. Gay Hospital and you are talking about a meagre $3,000.00 to the Princess Alice Hospital in St. Andrew.

In my view, I consider the Princess Alice Hospital a trans-shipment point, because people just go there, they maybe get checked, and once something is serious, they have to be sent to the General Hospital and so on. And the important point is that the Princess Alice Hospital supports the population, a large population, which is to do with the Grenville population, St. Andrew, in general, St. Patrick, some parts of St David, and certain parts of St. John. So people in Clozier and so on, depending on how the time things happen, the timing, they will just come through the mountain area there, which is Windsor and so on, just come through Windsor and come to the Princess Alice Hospital. So, this hospital is catering for a significant amount of people.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy President, a single Ward in the General Hospital, imagine that, a single Ward in the General Hospital is better equipped, better structured and managed. A single Ward in the General Hospital has its own Registrar, imagine that, and just one Registrar in the entire Princess Alice Hospital. Three (3) Consultant Specialists and so on, three (3) House Officers and three (3) Interns, that is a Ward I am talking about in the General Hospital, you know, one Ward and the entire Princess Alice Hospital is lacking that human resource. No Intern, no Consultant, only six (6) House Officers. Imagine, not even a Hostel. The Hostel was damaged during Hurricane Ivan, which was in 2004, Mr. Deputy President, and up to this day, and part of the Doctors' house as well, but up to this day nothing has been done, in terms of rebuilding the Nurses Hostel. Nurses coming from far away and so on, having to travel on bus, and we know the bus situation in that area.

No Labs. Well now, we have an X-ray Unit that sometimes the Government tend to take credit for. We have an X-ray Department up there, which was really donated by the Benjamin Foundation and so on, and some work was done through PAHO.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy President, I am making a call to all likeminded Grenadians, patriotic University Grads and ordinary people, all intelligent people, that the Government need all bright minded people to come on board, all conscious hearts

to take this country forward into the future and to stand strong to bring this country to a better position that it is in today. Much obliged, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you, Senator Noel. I would want to suggest to Members and to the Leader of Government's Business that we take one more presentation and then that would take us, probably, close to ten to one, then we can break for lunch. Senator Cadet.

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, I rise, in this Honourable House, to support the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year, 2021.

But before I dive into the substantial issues of the Budget Presentation, made by our Honourable Minister for Finance, and made in this Honourable House, by our Leader of Government's Business, Mr. Deputy President, 2020 can be deemed a lost year. We have faced so many challenges this year, and I think it is only fitting, Mr. Deputy President, that I commence my presentation, expressing gratitude, one, for making it through so far, and to the people, Mr. Deputy President, that contributed to us being safe and secure, this year, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, I want to start, by first expressing my sincere gratitude to our Frontline Workers. Mr. Deputy President, they are the real warriors, the real heroes, Mr. Deputy President, and Mr. Deputy President, they have gone through so much. Despite the risks, they have provided us with so much. They have risked their lives. They provided the lifesaving support and they have ensured that they protected this country.

Some of them, Mr. Deputy President, in the earlies, could not have seen their families, their children, because of where they worked at the time. And, Mr. Deputy President, we are safe today, because of them. And, Mr. Deputy President, I want them to know that if I could stand here today to give them a million thank yous, I would do so, because they truly deserve it. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, I also want to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to our Prime Minister and his team, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, they have ensured that they kept this country safe, secure, progressive and stable. Mr. Deputy President, I cannot speak of what life would have been under a different leadership. But, under this leadership, Mr. Deputy President, I must say that I am extremely proud of how they have managed this situation.

When you look across the world, when you look of how different countries have dealt with this virus, Grenada has done extremely well. We look at the US, we look at Jamaica, we look at the UK, Mr. Deputy President, before the last couple days, we were ranked, I think number two in the Caribbean, second to Anguilla, and 41st in the world. This is because, Mr. Deputy President, the leadership is doing an extremely great job, by providing the resources, putting the right team together, and ensuring that they put all that is necessary to ensure that we have a very safe country. And, so, Mr. Deputy President, I want them to know that I am and many young people are extremely grateful for what they have done in the management of this crisis. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, despite the challenges, we are here to debate another Budget, and this also is possible, because of the hardworking Public Servants, and the team at the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Deputy President, I also want to express my gratitude to them, because even during the time of the pandemic, Mr. Deputy President, they worked hard, salaries were paid on time. Mr. Deputy President, the Stimulus Package, they put that together, ensured that most of our vulnerable individuals, who were most affected, got their Stimulus. Mr. Deputy President, I want to thank them, and I want to let them know as well, Mr. Deputy President, we appreciate their efforts.

I also want to congratulate, as well, at this point in time, the Minister for Finance, for a well-executed Maiden Budget Presentation. Mr. Deputy President, I wish him and his team the best in 2021.

Mr. Deputy President, before I go further, as well, as I am standing here, I also want to welcome my brother, Honourable Roland Bain **(laughter)**, Roland Bhola sorry. Sorry, I just want to welcome him, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, he can be noted as one of the most successful Minister for Agriculture that we have

(applause), also one of the most successful General Secretary in the Caribbean and by virtue, the Western Hemisphere **(applause)**, and I want to thank him, Mr. Deputy President, for taking the opportunity to come in, to enter into this Honourable House and represent the people once more, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, the young people, again, Mr. Deputy President, I want to express my appreciation to them. Mr. Deputy President, young people has been through a lot this year. Prior to 2013, I know there was this common phrase, ***"Been to Hell and Back."*** Mr. Deputy President, we have been to hell and back in 2020. We have gone through a lot and yes, Mr. Deputy President, while COVID has affected all sectors of all group of the society, the youth demographic, Mr. Deputy President, has been disproportionately affected. And, Mr. Deputy President, yes you may say that, based on the science that young people are less at risk to the severe consequences of the COVID virus. However, Mr. Deputy President, this pandemic has severe social implication, and young people have suffered a lot. Mr. Deputy President, the pandemic did not only affect our jobs or the prospects of our employment, but it affected our education, training and our mental wellbeing, Mr. Deputy President. In fact, Mr. Deputy President, it is actually noted that we are the lockdown generation. We are actually called the lockdown generation, because we are one of the first generations to experience a lockdown of this magnitude, and yes, Mr. lockdown President, we have been totally affected. Mr. Deputy President, when you look at some of the stuff that we have went through this year, when you look at the sectors that are being affected, the tourism sector, Mr. Deputy President, these sectors have employed significant amount of young people. The Construction Sector, significant amount of young people, Mr. Deputy President, and it no surprise, Mr. President, that our economy has contracted by 12.2%, because this pandemic had serious impact on the key sectors that was driving economic activity. So, Mr. Deputy President, we feel the weight of this pandemic, but what I believe has happened, and why I'm so proud of our young people is because, Mr. Deputy President, they did not give up. Our young people are very resilient, and while yes, we were affected, we remained, we stand strong and we remained to fight another day, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, the young people, we believe, Mr. Deputy President, that the Government has managed this crisis very, very well. Mr. Deputy President, despite this challenges that we have faced, what we have noticed, Mr. Deputy President, that the Government did not cut any of its opportunities or allocation that they have made for young people in 2020, none of it was cut. Mr. Deputy President, when you look, the IMANI Programme continued, programmes continued, scholarships continued, tuition assistance continued. Mr. Deputy President, we are extremely grateful for this. Had it been another period… I could remember, Mr. Deputy President, we normally have that discussion about the performance of the economy in 2008 to 2013 and post 2013. And, Mr. Deputy President, while having the conversation, while having the conversation, you will hear people say that in 2000, between that period 2008-2013, that the reason why we have done so poorly, is because of the financial economic crisis. And while, Mr. Deputy President, you may say well, prior to 2008 we had Hurricane Ivan and Emily, you will hear the rebuttal comes that, we got millions of international grants, so that doesn't really counts. But in 2008 it was the worst financial crisis that they have ever faced; no time in Grenada history we have faced such crisis. And they use that for the reason why, salaries could not have been paid, why young people have to be sent home from the IMANI programme. They used that as the excuse why we had negative growth, Mr. President, for the four and a half years. But Mr. Deputy President, I think the discussion is more level now, because now in 2020, we are faced with the crisis. It's not that we want to have a level discussion when we have the crisis, just for the sake of having a level discussion, but to show the difference in management of a crisis, and what leadership does, Mr. Deputy President, when it comes to crisis. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, under this leadership, in 2020 salaries were paid on time. Salaries were paid on time in the time of the worst economic crisis you have faced in history. The last time we can ever remember facing a pandemic was in 1918. None of us was born, Mr. Deputy President, a pandemic of this magnitude, 1918. And yes, Mr. Deputy President, some experts say that this is far more severe, than what was faced in 1918. Mr. Deputy President, while we face the most severe economic crises, when our reduction in revenue has been down by $132m, $132 m, we have a shortfall. If you look

at our taxes, personal income tax compared to 2019, in 2019 we collected $70.8m, 2020, we expected to collect $63.6m. All our taxes or our main revenue earners are down. Inland Revenue 18.4%, we're down by that, and Customs 15.6%. And yet still, Mr. Deputy President, we managed, yet still, Mr. Deputy President, we're able to meet our basic commitment, to our workers, to our youths and, Mr. President, we ensure that we keep this county safe and secure. And, Mr. Deputy President, this is highly commendable, because as I said, Mr. President, this was no easy feat. When we look at some other Caribbean Countries, it is very difficult for them to manage, some of them could not even provide stimulus package. And this was because, Mr. Deputy President, not just because of the management in terms of the person who is there now, but the policies that they implemented, the policies that they implemented. I remember the last debate that we had, there was mention about, why are we rushing to get that Debt to GDP ratio under 60, because we were 10 years ahead. And we always made the point that we don't know what the future may hold, and look now, Mr. Deputy President, we are faced with the crisis. And yes, the debt to GDP has increased. When you look at the increase, Mr. Deputy President, it is manageable. It is just 9 points over the 60% and I'm very certain, Mr. Deputy President, once we get this pandemic under control, and we get back into fiscal management of this country very well, it will be down in no time. So, Mr. Deputy President, we think that the management in terms of 2020, yes, Mr. President, while it has been very difficult for us young people, we believe, Mr. Deputy President, that the Government has done extremely well. And we, and I commend the Government, we commend the Government for a job well done. **(Applause)**

Now, Mr. Deputy President, facing this situation in 2020, we're now looking forward to 2021. Now, the Honourable Minister of Finance made his budget presentation on the theme: **Towards *Vision 2035: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience***. Mr. Deputy President, I love this theme. I love it because it is quite simple and very easy to remember. I've looked at the themes over the years. I looked at the theme in 2020 again: ***Towards Vision 2035: Empowering our Youth, Communities, Growing our Economy, Protecting our Environment, Strengthening our***

Institution. This is well as well, but the 2021 theme is very concise, very easy to remember. But, Mr. Deputy President, this theme needs to be taken into context, into context of what we want to achieve in 2021, and where we want to go. Towards Vision 2035, what does that mean? Mr. Deputy President, the National Sustainable Development Plan that we have laid on the table last year, clearly outlines the vision for Grenada to 2035. It says, Mr. Deputy President, **"Grenada a resilient and prosperous nation with a conscious and caring citizenry, promoting human dignity and realising its full potential, through sustainable economic social and environmental progress for all."** Mr. President, this is the vision for Grenada, by 2035, this is what Grenada should look like. The vision the Government or we have for Grenada for 2035. So, Mr. Deputy President, what you're noticing with the budget, it is not just a response, but it's also preparing or it's in planning, it is in sync with its long-term vision, which is Grenada, a resilient and prosperous nation by 2035.

And, Mr. Deputy President, the young people believe that this vision is quite fitting. We were part of the consultation, and we believe that this vision represents us very well. Recovery… Mr. Deputy President, that's why I said the budget needs to be taken into context, because here recovery is referring to, Mr. Deputy President, of the crisis we have faced. We first need to recover, and, Mr. President, there was a number of areas that was recognised for recovery, which I would speak to later.

Transformation… Mr. Deputy President, while recovering or in the process of recovering, we have to transform the economy. The pandemic has revealed so much, and we have to transform this economy. And yes, Mr. Deputy President, we have to ensure that our economy is resilient. We need to be able to bounce back, and be prepared to face further shocks. It is because of this thinking, Mr. Deputy President, we're able to deal with this pandemic very well. So, Mr. Deputy President, when looking at this theme, we feel extremely hopeful. This budget, Mr. Deputy President, we believe is one that give us hope, and Mr. President, when we talk about hope, I know normally people like to use this phrase, **"this hope you referring to, the Hope before or after Marquis, because it depends on the direction you coming from."** But this hope we're referring to, Mr. President, is hope that things will get better, hope that the

economy will recover, hope that we will transform this economy and provide more opportunities for our young people, the hope, Mr. President, that this economy will be resilient to further shocks. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Deputy President, again, what makes us very hopeful, because you could have these plans, you could have these ideas on table, and that's it, but what makes us even more hopeful, is the fact of the team that is spearheading this process. That's what is important, **(applause)** the team that is spearheading this process. So, Mr. Deputy President, this team is an experienced team as I mentioned earlier. We went through Ivan; we've rebuilt an economy, post 2013. I remember, Mr. Deputy President, post 2013, Mr. Deputy President, the Debt to GDP was 108%. This team, Mr. Deputy President, brought it down last year to 56.7%. Post 2013 the unemployment rate was over 40%, this team, Mr. Deputy President, brought it down to 15%. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Deputy President, we are very hopeful, we are very hopeful that we will recover and we will transform and this economy will be extremely resilient.

Mr. President, I now turn to the strategic areas which I've just mentioned, but I will spend some time on recovery. Mr. Deputy President, the Minister for Finance, noted a couple sectors that will be looked at for recovery; areas such as Agriculture, Infrastructure Development, Private Sector Development, Tourism and Tertiary Education. Mr. Deputy President, we believe that these areas, looking into 2021 are valid, or have well thought through, and they definitely are the sectors for recovery. Mr. Deputy President, when you look at Agriculture for example, and first, Mr. Deputy President, I want to take this time as well to congratulate the new Minister for Agriculture, Honourable Peter David. Mr. Deputy President, from the side of the young people, Mr. Deputy President, we're extremely hopeful, and we've extremely hopeful that he will do an extremely good job, noting from his experience in Foreign Affairs and his track record in getting things done.

So, Mr. Deputy President, agriculture, we hear so much about agriculture, our Agriculture Senator spoke at length yesterday at areas which we can better improve the sector, and my friend, my good Senator Mr. Noel also spoke about agriculture, he states himself as being a farmer. Mr. Deputy President, the $40m that is allocated for

agriculture this year, we believe as young people, Mr. Deputy President, when looking in the context of the budget is well acknowledged. Mr. Deputy President, young people believe in agriculture and this pandemic has taught us a lot, it has taught us that we need to produce our own food, it has taught us that we need to reduce our Food Import bill. Mr. Deputy President, but it's not about the allocation and I heard my dear friend speak about, it's not enough, but it's not about the allocation, because you can do more with less, although it's not less budgeted. **(Laughter)** But in context, in context of you wanting more, you can do more with less. And, Mr. Deputy President, what we think about agriculture is simply this, is that while agriculture is an extremely valuable sector, as a youth, Mr. President, looking into the sector, we believe that it is lacking cooperation, and that is significantly affecting the sector. And I heard you yesterday spoke about the fact that, the struggles that they have in terms of forming a cooperative, they need eleven persons, when sometimes they have four good individuals, and maybe, Mr. Deputy President, we can look at that more, going into 2021. But I believe cooperation needs to be sought when looking at agriculture. Mr. Deputy President, not just from the perspective of, you will have a better coordinated system in the production, but also in the ability to access more finances from international agencies. In fact, I was scrolling through social media the other day and I saw that, I think it's the North East Farmer's Association, and they got some funding to do some project in terms of bees. And, Mr. Deputy President, this is what more farmers should seek to do in the Farming Sector. If we can have this sort of cooperative that exist, it can solve a lot of the challenges that they face, and Government does not have to get directly involved because a lot of those international agencies do have funding to address some of those problems. And we are actually getting some at this point in time, because I also heard Honourable Senator St. Cyr spoke about no grants for agriculture, but, Mr. President, the budget speaks to a lot of grants for agriculture. We spoke about the AGRICOM, we spoke about the SAEP project, the AGRICOM $10m and the SAEP project providing grant support for young people. Mr. Deputy President, we believe that in 2021, as more young people is moving into the field of agriculture, this is very much important.

So I'm hoping, Mr. President, that the farmers in 2021, with your help Senator, that they will form themselves into cooperatives, and help with the production. Mr. Deputy President, the Minister for Agriculture also stated that in 2021, it will be the year of production and cooperation. So definitely, Mr. President, once this is the initiative in ensuring that we have some level of cooperation in the sector, I'm very certain, Mr. President, we could at least, maybe not next year, but by 2022, we will see a significant reduction, maybe in our Food Import bill.

Mr. President, the Youth in Agriculture Project; again, Mr. President, this I believe is an excellent project. Mr. President, young people involving in agriculture is important, not only because of our energy, but also, because of our knowledge, may I say our updated knowledge, our savvy nature with the technology, and our entrepreneurship drive. We believe, Mr. President, coupled with these things, Mr. President, with existing knowledge, we will make a difference in agriculture. But yes we have our own challenges, we face significant challenges in terms of the draw box, in terms of getting access to land, in terms of finances, in terms of sometimes cooperation, trust maybe. Because you know sometimes, Mr. President, some of the senior farmers don't trust you, that's a serious thing sometimes that exist in the farming situation. I had my own experience, so I can speak from it, you would try to help and it doesn't work sometimes. And I know you spoke about getting young people involved in helping out, but some of them don't want it. I've tried, I've had my own experience, Mr. President, where I went in to help and it turns out to be great disaster. Yes, you start helping, it start going smooth at first but as soon as money start flowing in, nobody knows you again. And so, Mr. President, we have to ensure that there is some support. But, Mr. President, the Government is ensuring that young people in farming is a reality. It's a known fact that the average age in agriculture is about sixty, it's about that, we have a situation where you have more senior farmers than young people involved. So what you're really seeing here, Mr. President, in time to come if we don't take drastic actions, that you may have no farmers at all. And so, Mr. President, the Youth in Agriculture project, we welcome that. I heard you also spoke about, Government shouldn't go to the cutting up of the land, because you think that will be in one of the failed policies of Sir Eric

Matthew Gairy. Mr. President, but under the Youth in Agriculture project, I know that we're looking at the estates, and I think that is something that the existing estates like the Grand Bras Estate, Laura, Grand Bacolet, Poyntzfield, Mr. President, these are some of the estates that I believe, Mr. President, if put in the hands of young people, can improve the production and so, Mr. President, I think this is important.

I also want to stress, Mr. President, on the strengthening of our 4-H Club. When we're talking about Youth in Agriculture, it's not just **(applause)**, it's not just the youth between the 20's, the 30's, but we have to look the other demographic of youth, which you call the adolescence youth. And we need to look at strengthening the 4-H Club. Mr. President, in the 2021 budget, it clearly states that the 4-H club will be a priority in 2021, and when we're looking at the 4-H club, Mr. President, I want us to look at Agriculture as Minister Cox said, from the eyes of the youth. You don't just go teaching them the… yes we love the traditional stuff, but there are new ways now. The technology is there, you have the smart phones, you have the drone technology. You could teach them about artificial intelligence, programming and how it syncs with agriculture. How can a software engineer find opportunity in the Agriculture Sector? How can a graphics guy see agriculture as an opportunity? Mr. President, because a lot of these things now is marketing and presentation. Our farmers don't have the time to sit down and learn canvas and learn Photoshop and these kinds of thing. This is something from our young people. So therefore, Mr. President, I believe, Mr. Deputy President, when we're looking at youth in agriculture, these are the things that we need to look at. And the fact that Government has noted, that 4-H Club will be a priority in 2021, Mr. President, I'm very hopeful that we will get some of these things done. Mr. President, when also talking about agriculture, I want us to also look at hydroponics. I haven't heard that yesterday through, but yeah, I think I heard aquaponics.

(Inaudible Comments)

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Yeah, but hydroponics is very important, and again, this would excite the young people's involvement in the sector. And I know, Mr.

President, we are building a modern greenhouse, I know we're doing that in La Sagesse, and I commend the Government again. But, Mr. President, as our population continue to grow, whether it's naturally through birth, artificially through immigration, I believe, Mr. President, what we're going to have happening is, we may have a reduction in the productivity of your land, because you need the same land space, for housing, for development, for roads, etc. Mr. President, that's a known fact, whether that may not be the case in 2021 obviously, but it may be the case by 2030, by 2040. So, Mr. President, we have to think outside of it, and I think the Government is already doing that. So what I'm proposing, Mr. President, is the fact that we need to see hydroponics as a way in which we deal with food security, in producing organic food, good quality food, infusing the technology again with agriculture. And this can be done easily through one of our fiscal policy, through one of our CBI projects, where an investor can get in and invest in the hydroponics sector. And, Mr. President, I'm very certain you will see significant, significant interest among young people, in the Agriculture Sector, and, Mr. President, a simple example is to look at the Netherlands. Netherlands, just the size of Connecticut, is the second largest producer of food in the world, and that is simply because of the hydroponics technology, the greenhouse technology, and I think, Mr. President, this is the route, I believe, Mr. President, this is the route that we need to go.

Mr. President, I want to turn to fishing. When we speak about agriculture, Mr. President, usually it encompasses fishing. In fact, when you look at the statistics throughout the region, I think fishing comprise about a quarter or just about 33%, just over a quarter, 33% of Agriculture production, cause it's usually combined. I think, Mr. President, when you look at the budget, Government's focus is to, not just sustain the Fishing Sector, but also to boost our fish production. I'm happy to notice, Mr. President, that we'll be financing the Marine Protected Areas, it's the first time I'm seeing it in the budget, $80,000 and this will go a long way. Mr. President, Marine Protected Areas are very, very important, Mr. President, to maintain our fishing stock. And not only for the fishing sector, but even as a revenue generator, it is very important. So what does this mean for young people? Young people are also keen about the environment, we are

also keen of the fact that, in years to come, with the rise in sea level, climate change, overexploitation of our fishing resources, that many of us would not benefit from these things. And here, Mr. President, in the 2021 budget, Government, understanding that this cannot be business as usual, investing a sum of $80,000. And, Mr. President, while $80,000 some may say is a small amount, in terms of the management of the Marine Protected Area, but, Mr. President, a lot of this funding can come from grant support, because there are a lot of organisations that are willing to fund Marine Protected Areas and protection. When we look at Marine Protected Areas throughout the region, or throughout the world, about 80% is in… 80% of the Marine Protected Areas is ineffective, it is called Paper Parks. It is ineffective, and I believe, Mr. President, what we have noticed, because we have how many established Marine Protected Areas? We have Grand Anse, we have Moliniere, we have Woburn, we have the Oyster Bed, Sandy Island in Carriacou, we have established Levera, we are about to establish Levera and Gouyave.

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Right, so we have a couple Marine Protected Areas launched and to be launched. So basically, almost our entire Island will be covered with Marine Protected Areas, very similar to Bonaire, where they are generating significant resources through the Marine Protected Areas. And, Mr. President, I consider that foresight, and this is really keeping with theme of ***"Towards Vision 2035, ensuring that we are sustainable, economic, social and environmental progress for all,"*** and I commend the Government for this.

Mr. President, the Blue Sector is important, and this is the Fishing Sector, it is very important. And when we talk about the Blue economy sometimes, fishermen sometimes feel that they' out of the discussion, because they sometimes feel it's mainly about tourism, but it's also about incorporating them in the discussion. And I want to commend the Government again, Mr. President, for ensuring that they deal with the sargassum situation. Mr. President, I remember, I think it was sometime last year, no

actually this year, I was in one of the shops in Grenville and one of the young fishermen said to me, Judd… one of the fishermen said to me, Judd, you guys neglect us in Soubise, because this thing is killing us. But, Mr. President, you know what the Government has done? We have established the Beach Wardens, that is now, when the sargassum comes on the shore, it's being cleaned. And, Mr. President, I must commend the Beach Wardens, because they're doing a fabulous job. **(Applause)** They are maintaining and ensuring that our beaches remain clean and safe. And, Mr. President, you know that sargassum seaweed, while it has significant value, but if left, if not done properly, if left in the water, can have serious ecological and health issues. And so, Mr. President, I also see this as a step in the right direction, because Government have to find additional resources to deal with these things. These saw monies that can go into more training, health care, but these are not man made stuff, these are natural stuff, well it's cause by climate change with are anthropogenic, but it is having significant effect on economies like Grenada. But we have to do it, because it is for the betterment of our country. So, Mr. President, that is my perspective on agriculture, I believe it is a Sector that will see a rebound in 2021. I believe that the Government's focus on it as a recovery pillar is right, and I believe with the view of the Ministry of Agriculture, the fact that, Mr. President, that we see it as a year of production and corporation, will yield significant benefit for our young people.

Mr. President, infrastructure and Development. Mr. President, this budget can be termed a capital budget. We see that $305m is allocated to capital expenditure, but, Mr. President, when we're looking at the budget you'll notice that, it is not loan that is financing the budget so much, it is grants, mainly grants that is financing our capital budget. If you look at the total sum of the grants 59.7% of the grants is coming from the National Transformation Fund. Mr. President, I must give Government credit for that, because you know sometimes we get a lot of lash, about Citizenship by Investment. Some term it selling passports, selling our birth rights, but, Mr. President, if you look now, what is bailing us out now, is the funds that is in our National Transformation Fund, the funds that is coming in, or coming from CBI. And I think we need to start having the discussion seriously, on Citizenship by Investment. A lot of countries struggling now,

some of them don't have CBI and even those who have CBI still struggling because, Mr. President, of how they use the funds, for recurrent expenditure, paying salaries. What we're using the CBI funds for, is for capital expenditure, investing in the economy, providing more opportunities for our people and uplifting their social standards. Mr. President, this I believe, Mr. President, is great foresight by the leadership, because they could have used this money to do so many different things. Mr. President, I remember a time we have passed… (sorry for calling you, Mr. President, so much times, because I'm so accustomed by saying, Mr. President).

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: But I know it's Deputy President, I have to say. Mr. Deputy President, the investment in our capital expenditure, the investment in the capital projects will generate significant amount of jobs for our young people. Mr. President, when you look at the budget about fifty-one projects was listed, with the expectation to create four thousand, five hundred jobs. Mr. President, let's take again, let's look at it again, the context. You have a situation that the pandemic has caused a lot of young people, or a lot of people in general to be out of jobs, our construction industry went down, our tourism industry went down and, Mr. President, the question is, how soon will it restart? Well it's looking like there will be a resurgence soon, because we are now having conversation about the vaccine. But Government has an obligation to the people, to provide opportunities for the people, to provide hope to the people, and, Mr. President, with the investment, the large sum of allocation that will be pumped in our capital projects, would generate significant opportunities.

And, Mr. President, I just want to speak of two projects and really, I'm sort of being biased here because I'm from St. Andrews, the Grenville Commercial Complex and the Símon Cultural Centre. I heard my dear friend Noel, spoke about no investment for St. Andrew's, but Mr. President, we have listed. And I think the Commercial Complex, Mr. President, we welcome that, we believe that this will have significant benefits for the people of St. Andrew's. I understand this Commercial Complex will

house many Government buildings and so too, Mr. President, it means that it will have, it will bring some level of efficiency in its operation and save many of us the time, Mr. President, that if we need certain things we have to come all the way to St. George. So I think, Mr. President, this is extremely welcomed. The Símon Cultural Centre, Mr. President, I will expound on that when I reach Sports and Culture, but again, Mr. President, this has, this would generate significant opportunities for the people in the rural parish and the rural communities, like Símon, Pearls, Paradise and even neighbouring communities, it would generate some interest. And you have great excitement, we'll have a lot of shows return there, hopefully, maybe we can remove Soca Monarch from St. George and bring it back, bring it up in St. Andrew's, which will generate significant economic activities for our people as well. So the return of the Simon Cultural Centre is extremely welcomed and, Mr. President, as someone from St. Andrew's, Mr. President, I applaud the Government for taking the initiative to bring it back. And I know Honourable Bhola will extremely be happy for that, because I know he started the process of that, in terms of ensuring that the Símon Cultural Centre returns to the village. So, Mr. President, again, this I believe is significant for many of our young people, because when you look at this, it's showing that there are a lot of opportunities to come and a lot of opportunities for our young people.

Mr. President, I just also want to touch on the Private Sector Investment. Mr. President, when you look at the Private Sector Investment, Deputy President, when you look at the Private Sector Investment in 2019, compared to it in 2020, you notice an increase of $3.7 billion. In the time of a pandemic you're seeing an increase in Private Sector Projects. So in 2019, the total sum of Private Sector Projects was about $2.3 billion, and in 2020, moving into 2021 the total sum of Private Sector Projects is $6 billion. Mr. President, it shows, Mr. President, that people are seeing the progress that we are making in Grenada, ensuring that our economy is stable, yes it has contracted, but when compared to others, Mr. President, we still are doing well. Ensuring that we keep this country progressive and stable, it's very peaceful. People are looking at that, and we have a very sound Government. **(Applause)** Mr. President, you don't find that, you don't find those combinations very easily. Yes you might find peace, but the

Government sometimes not so sound. There was a point in period in our history where we had those things. And very clearly I could remember, especially the period between 2008 to 2013. And yes, obviously we didn't have much crime but the Government was not good at that time. So, Mr. President, what this means, Mr. President, although most of it, when you look at it, is tourism related, but it also would generate hope to our farmers, and Minister Cox spoke of it very well, of marrying tourism with agriculture.

So let's look at the project in St. Patrick's, I think the value of that is about what 2 point something billion, $2.1 billion, so, Mr. President, the project is built. That would generate significant resources first to the community; you have to employ people there. In the construction phase, Mr. President, from what I'm understanding they've already started hiring locals, and much more to be employed, because the project have a long way to go. When the project is completed, you need to provide, and even in the process of building, because you still have some of the workers that came from abroad who still have to eat, and obviously the local shops, the farmers, the community would benefit. But when the project is built, you will need to have food for your guests. I think again, Mr. President, seeing those opportunities to come, I think agriculture, the Agriculture Sector needs to get themselves prepared, and that's why I spoke earlier, Mr. President, about cooperation, because there are so much opportunities to come, especially I would say post COVID, or maybe starting from next year, that we have to ensure that we have the structures in place, so that we don't lose the opportunity.

In fact I was having a discussion with one of my friend, who is heavily involved in the Tourism Sector, and he said their concern, they're basically particular about two things, consistency and price. But, Mr. President, I think price is the second option. If we can have consistency in providing these hotels with the supplies of the food, I'm very certain, Mr. President, that we can hold those markets. And I think we need to strive towards that, having consistency in our production, that when they want tomatoes now, they can get it. That they don't get tomatoes today and two weeks after they can't get tomatoes, or they don't get cucumbers today and a month after no cucumbers. It is important, Mr. President, that we see this as significant opportunities. And I know, Mr. President, we have normally had that conversation, but if we work together, if we work

together, our farmers will significantly benefit. And, Mr. President, again this is hope for our young people, that there are significant opportunities to come in the private sector. So yes we have Government spending $305m to be expended in the capital side, but we have $6 billion to come in the Private Sector side. So, Mr. President, so much to come; so much opportunities to come for our young people.

Mr. President, I would just touch briefly on the Tourism Sector, because, Mr. President, while I believe this pandemic, you know tourism has been one of the sectors that have been greatly affected by this pandemic. But, Mr. President, I believe now is the right time to start making preparation for when that boom start, because, Mr. President, usually after a crisis you will have that low period, then you will have that surge, and everyone will start looking for that hotspot. And it's important that we have the infrastructure in place to ensure that we do that. In fact as I said, you already started seeing on the stock market, that a lot of the tourism related businesses, their stock prices starting to improve. Because now we have the vaccine coming out and people are starting to have some confidence again in the economy, starting to have some confidence again. Hopefully they would start travelling again and, Mr. President, we need to be prepared for when that time come. And so, Mr. President, we believe, Mr. President, and when I say we, I'm talking about the young people. We believe that the airport expansion is quite needed, especially now is the right time we believe, at this time to do so. You don't have to deal with the huge amount of traffic coming in right now. You could go through the process of ensuring that you have a state of the art airport at the end, by the end of this time the crisis over. Which is going to cause more airlift into this country, create more opportunities for our taxi drivers, cause our hoteliers to employ more young people, our farmers, Mr. President, and I know my dear friend spoke about when Maurice Bishop, the idea of the airport was not only for tourism, but also for agriculture. But the construction of this or the airport expansion will now house a cargo facility, which will now benefit you, the farmer, so that you can export your goods to the external market. So, Mr. President, we believe it is time and we have to look as well, Mr. President, throughout the region we have St. Vincent that have just recently opened their airport. The competition is getting there, Dominica is now thinking

about building their own airport, and if we don't look sharp, if we don't upgrade our airport, we might start losing businesses, losing flights to these other Islands that is coming. And because they're building now, or they have built now, recently, because we've built 1984 we opened, yes we have made some upgrade here and there, but because they have built now, what you notice that some of them have advanced stuff. Their construct is more modern, they have more, some of the modern top notch technology. So, Mr. President, we have to upgrade, it is only fitting that we upgrade and so, Mr. President, I believe it is only important to do so, and as well young people believe that this would generate significant opportunities to them.

Mr. President, under tourism I want to also talk about the commercialisation of the tourism sites. Mr. President, the young, Mr. President, the reason I raise this, because this will also benefit our young people. When you look at the two sites, two sites I've noticed that are commercialised and are run by young people are doing very well. Look at Annandale, doing extremely well. We heard, Mr. President, the news weren't great, but everybody saying about we sell Annandale Falls to the Chinese, and when we learnt that it was a local person, we start trying to…

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Honourable Judd Cadet: …sorry, leased to a local person, we start trying to change the context of the conversation. But, Mr. President, what you notice is that everyone want to go there now, everyone wants to go up to Annandale Falls. Why? Because, Mr. President, they have done an exceptionally great job **(applause)** in reshaping, reconstructing the entire site. Mr. President, I could say the same for Mt. Gazo. The same can be said, another young person doing an exceptional job there. So, Mr. President, I want to say that, when we're thinking about opportunities next year for our youth, from these two experiences, I would say, give more sites to the young people to run, so that they can provide for themselves, one, and contribute to national development, and help us achieve Vision 2035.

Mr. President, I now move to the second strategic focus area, transformation. Under transformation we notice we focus a lot there on the social capital, we focus a lot on development of the human capital, Mr. President, we focus on education and training, we focus on youth development, digitisation, and other areas, Mr. President. Mr. President, transformation is key, because this pandemic has taught us that it can't be business as usual, and that is normal in life. You build, in time of a crisis, you learn new things, you reshape and you move on. This is the same thing that needs to happen. We're in the process of recovering, we need to transform. And we see transformation in 2021 will come from the human side. It will come from training our people and therefore, Mr. President, you'll notice that education has gotten an increased allocation of $11m. So in other words 11 more million dollars invested in education, and in 2019 they had $112m, I think being spent in 2020 and now you have a situation in 2021 you will have $123m budgeted for education. Mr. President, let me speak to the e-book.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, I am told that you have to conclude at 12:30.

(Clerk converse with the Deputy President)

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): So 12:45 with your 15 minutes added.

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Ok, sure.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Right.

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Thank you, Mr. President. So, Mr. Deputy President, the e-book programme and the e-testing, digital learning, Mr. President, this is very important. And I must commend the Government for their swift action because,

you know I remember in 2013 and, Mr. President, I must put this in context, because sometimes when we talk about things people tend to take it for granted. And when you, sometimes when we get accustomed to things it becomes so normalised that you forget what the past was. It's like salaries, Mr. President. Remember, before 2013, while I agree people should be paid by the way. I agree, once you do your work, you must be paid, but before 2013 people weren't getting paid on time. But now you're getting paid on time, even in the time of a crisis, you're getting paid on time. **(Applause)** It becomes so normal that my dear brother is demanding an increase when we can't do it at this point in time. I understand, because I think it's the trust and faith he has in the Government. I know he may not want to admit it, but he know the Government is doing an extremely good job, so he think it could probably do. But, Mr. President, I think at this point in time, Mr. President, we are doing an exceptionally good job in terms of our education. We promised the students the tablet in 2013.

Mr. President, I remember scrolling through Facebook when we say tablet, I see, so funny, was some African children they have, I don't know who did the meme, but they had some African children with no shirt, with just a pants and they had the meme, **"we're going in Gittens to get our tablet."** That was the meme, because they said we're not going to fulfil on our promise. But we have always said that it's a process in doing things. You don't rush towards it. We have to ensure that we learn the best practices, what work, what didn't work and implement it. And, Mr. President, in the 2020 budget, we spoke about the tablets and again the Senator, they're not here now, Mr. President, they laughed at it. They said that would not come through and, Mr. President, in the time of a crisis, again, we're able to distribute the tablet to our students. **(Applause)** And that's why we are hopeful when we look at the budget. That's why we're hopeful, because it's a Government that works. It's not a Government that just talk, talk, talk, it's not like we come with a 1 billion budget and has a significant financing gap, that we don't know how to finance it and I'm sure many people remember those times. But it's about the delivery of many of the things that we have promised, yes some of them have come slower than expected, but it came, Mr. President. We have delivered on it. And so the e-book programme, it's one that we welcome,

because, Mr. President, if you have the tablet, you need to have the software on the tablet. And that will help a lot of our students remain up to date with the information and to avoid cost of having to do with the physical book situation every single year.

You know we had the school book programme and you know almost every year, Government have to spend money to replace damaged ones. Now with this electronic version, Mr. President, the only thing that would damage, which I hope not would be the tablet but not the book. So it's a reduction in the cost that we'll be spending, in terms of the book programme, Mr. President. So I think this is important. And don't forget the health benefit that will come with it, because students no long have to carry these heavy bags with their books, which is causing a lot of spinal injuries. I remember going to school and almost every time we have students carrying this big bag and especially, especially when you attend secondary school and the Form 1's. First day of school they have the biggest bags, and I used to, we used to always make fun of that, because first day of school, you know normally, the first day you don't do anything in school, but they have the biggest bags. But over the years, Mr. President, what you notice that many of them came down with spinal conditions. So that will not only have the cost of reducing in terms of, the amount we send yearly on books, but also the amount on healthcare.

Mr. President, the National Skills Development Programme, I believe this is also important. Mr. President, yesterday I heard the Honourable Senator spoke about skill programmes, she mentioned that we're not training people in the skills for this time. Mr. President, last year we spoke about the establishment of the Skills Assessment Programme, where we will do an assessment of the skills that we need and do a programme for that. Mr. President, in 2021 we will see the launching of the National Skills Assessment Programme and that will provide significant, again, opportunities for our young people to be trained in areas that this country needs. Mr. President, I hope you remember the World Bank Report that spoke about the mismatch in skills. And now, Mr. President, with the launching of this National Skills Programme, with the fact that the assessment is done and will now be ready to launch, will address a lot of those issues, and so many opportunities will come from that for our young people, because

you will train them, you will train them for the jobs that the market needs. And so, Mr. President, our young people have that to look forward to.

Mr. President, Scholarship and Tuition Assistance, Government has continued that, and will continue to do so in 2021. Mr. President, the transition strategy, the IMANI, I need to touch on this, Mr. President, because I think this is important. Mr. President, the IMANI Programme is an excellent programme, and I always think of it that way. The context in which the IMANI was created, the context that we had a situation in 2013 when our economy was doing so badly, 2008-2013, unemployment among youth was at record levels and we came in and we realised that we had to do something for our young people. Where are these opportunities going to come from? Mr. President, we had to create this training programme, create this training programme that we train our young people for the job market and in the process of training, they got a stipend. And the idea at the time was that the programme would last two years. Yes, many have spent more than two years, but, Mr. President, I don't want us to deliberate on this too much because sometime I think what we look at is the 40%, the 40% of the people that still remains, because the transition rate has been high. In fact 60%, 60% of the young people that was enrolled in the IMANI Programme have transitioned. They have transitioned, they have gotten permanent jobs, some of them have gotten permanent jobs. Some of them got scholarships, they went on to study, some of them come back and they got jobs. And that's the reality. What we have to do with the transition strategy is the 40% that is remaining and Government has indicated their interest in solving this issue. But the issue is not to just send them home. And that's where the heart came in.

Mr. President, I think sometimes we have the wrong symbol you know, in terms of the political context, because, Mr. President, I believe when we look at it, we are always the one who get involved in the situation, because we empathise. We're seeing the situation with our young people, send them home has been the call, we decided we're not sending them home, and we decided that we will have a transition strategy that will be effective, that will get them into the workplace, that will give them more money, so that they can do many other things. So that they can own their home, so that

they can buy their car, so that they can uplift themselves and many have already started doing it, through the IMANI Programme.

The question I have to ask, outside of the IMANI Programme, what's the alternative? In terms of, if you're not going to have young people trained, if you're not going to have young people involved in the programme, what are you proposing? And all what you hearing, Mr. President, is it is not effective, send home, but what's the proposal. It's like my dear friend, on the "Other Side," Senator Noel, he came and say give more, give more, collect less, collect less but, Mr. President, how we're going to do it? **(Applause)** And that's the thing about it. When you sit on the "Other Side," it's very easy, it's very easy to just criticise, it's very easy to sit in the chair there or stand and say give more, do less, give more, give less. But, Mr. President, when you sit on "This Side" you have to be responsible. And that's the thing with this Government. It's a Government that is responsible **(applause)**, it's a Government that ensure that when things are done, it's done in the best interest of Grenadians, not just for political expediency. And sometimes, we have to make tough decision. Sometimes we lose votes for it, sometimes we make enemies for it, but that's the stake, that's what responsible governance is all about. And sometimes when I hear the narrative about give more, so you want us to do more roads, put more in agriculture, put more in rural development, put more in sports, but then you want us to collect less taxes, collect less revenues, and, Mr. President, how it's going to be done? I heard one person talk about roast corn economics; probably that is what it is. **(Laughter)** Probably it is the roast corn economics, I don't know. I mean, I'm really thinking about it.

Mr. President, the M-Power Programme, again, Mr. President, the context needs to be taken. The context that, many of our young men, even in the IMANI, you notice that many of them, when you look at the IMANI ratio, more females than males. And largely because, maybe of the construct of the programme, but the IMANI has a specific purpose. Now the M-Power Programme is targeting young men, basically those at risk, and try to give them the training and the opportunities for them to develop and advance themselves. Mr. President, we have been very successful with this programme, in fact I don't hear much criticism about the programme at all. In fact, we have learnt from the

situation with the IMANI as well, and so, Mr. President, it has allowed us to, at the end of the programme, they, some of them leave with having savings, they will go on to start their own businesses, they form cooperatives and they move on. The Government is pledging, Mr. President, that in 2021 that it will continue the M-Power Programme and Mr. President, you're seeing that the allocation has increased from 4 million to 6 million. So therefore, Mr. President, it is our commitment to our young men, to our young people that we're going to continue investing in you **(applause)**, regardless of what the naysayers may say.

Mr. President, YUTBIZ, another programme under the Ministry of Youth. Mr. President, this is also an important programme, because YUTBIZ is again targeting the youth with the entrepreneurial mind-set, those that are interested in starting their own businesses but, Mr. President, it's not about just having the idea and getting the financing. We're walking them through the process. We're providing the training for them, we're saying you need to get the training, we're going to train you in doing the business plan, the market research, marketing, accounting, whatever is needed for that business to be successful, we're going to help you with that. And at the end, we're going to help support you with the financing and, Mr. President, that has been the initiative with the YUTBIZ, it has been a very successful programme. Again, in 2021 this programme will continue, more opportunities for our young people that are interested in starting their own businesses. Some of them, Mr. President, who probably would have lost their jobs, maybe in the Construction Sector, maybe the retail and wholesale, maybe in the Tourism Sector, they now have the opportunity now, Mr. President, to access the training, support and the financing in the YUTBIZ Programme. And so, Mr. President, I commend this Government for those initiatives.

Mr. President, so these are the training programmes that we have done so far for our young people, and we'll continue in 2021. But we have also engaged youth to be part of the conversation of national development; hence we have the National Youth Ambassadors Programme and the National Youth Parliamentarian Programme. Two important programmes that involve youth at a different level, at the parish level and at

the national level. And, Mr. President, these programmes again, Government is pledging to continue these programmes in 2021.

Mr. President, we cannot talk youth development without talking sports, and so, Mr. President, I want to say on this matter, that we have seen a slight increase in sports. In 2021, Mr. President, we're going to continue the upgrading of the facilities and this is very important. It is very important, Mr President, because especially now we need to upgrade the facilities, and as my friend Noel spoke about that, sports is not only about the competition but it's the health benefits you're going to get with it, which is also going to help boost productivity and help with the economy. It is also going to contribute to the behaviour change. I've heard yesterday you spoke about, when you were talking about public health, you didn't talk about changes in behaviour. Similarly, Mr. President, we understand that, we understand that the lockdown has created so much pressure on our young people, that carnival time, many of them had to take to the streets. Now, we didn't condone it, it was something that was wrong but, Mr. President, because of those pressure, and I heard the Prime Minister said that even if he was young, he wasn't sure what he would have done. Because the truth is, Mr. President, when dealing with young people, the behaviour is very different to how you will think now. And, Mr. President, I think the investment in sports will ensure that our young people engage, and I'm hoping, Mr. President, with my Trade Union friend, I'm hoping that when this is all over, then we'll sit down and we'll have, we agree and return of... **(inaudible comments)** …well yeah, we'll have a drink and we'll talk about how we can work together to ensure that Intercol is returned. Mr. President, this is very, very important for our young people. Many of them, young people are starting schools, that's about what, 2, 3 years now and some of them have not experienced Intercol. Mr. President, I don't think this is fair to our young people. I really don't think it is fair to them, and we need to do something about that. Post pandemic, I'm hoping to see the return of the Intercol games, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I also want, before I go, because I know the time is, I want to talk about the culture and the arts, another area for young people. Mr. President, this is very important to young people, and again we see a slight increase in culture and the

arts. Mr. President, we notice that we're going to be focusing on, in the budget we spoke about focusing on a lot of training in the Arts Sector, particularly training in the audio engineering areas. Mr. President, this is important. Mr. President especially in time now, I think there are so many opportunities that can come from the audio engineering training.

Mr. President, let's just look at examples, with the technology, if you merge it with the technology, so much can happen. And I think we need to look at it from that perspective. Not just the training of them, but showing them how they can use the technology to benefit from it. So, for example, the use of TikToc, I mean, when you look at some of these young people that is using the TikToc, some of them are highly paid, making millions of dollars, some of them making beats and as the beats get famous, you see that, or it get recognised, you see that some star start singing a song on the beat and they start making money out of it. I think we have to be thinking in that direction, and I think it's foresight that, when we talk about audio engineering training, we're looking at how we can empower our young people so that they can do well for themselves.

Mr. President, finally, I want to touch on our Minister for Youth. Mr. President, I've heard so much, but I just want to say this, because I've heard in the Honourable House, an Honourable Member made a statement. Mr. President, you remember the famous chain, the famous chain was mentioned in the honourable **(laughter)**, was brought in the Honourable House. Mr. President, I want to say something. I think, Mr. President, the move by our Prime Minister to take the Ministry of Youth is highly commendable. **(Applause)** Mr. President, this is not the first time that a Prime Minister has taken the Ministry of Youth, probably you might look at it, when you look at it in the region, Holness had it at one point in time, Chastanet has had it at one point in time, but it shows the caring nature, again the heart in our Prime Minister.

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: (Laughter) The heart; that he is willing to be part of the process in helping shape minds, as well as being part of the development process and helping guide our young people. Mr. President, he understands youth, in fact he is one of the most youthful Minister in Grenada. No doubt about it, I'm very sure that many persons cannot put down a dance as the Prime Minister.

(Time Bell Rings)

Well, Mr. President, I'm just in closing, Mr. President. I want to thank him for the opportunity that he has provided for young people. And I know that he will continue to do so. I'm very certain, Mr. President, that with his leadership youth will only continue to progress in this country. **(Applause)** Young people will only continue to do well under his leadership. It is not just about "a bag of talk", but it's a bag of action that comes with it. It's a bag of action, as you look in the history and the history will tell you. And so, Mr. President, as a youth, I gave my presentation on the budget, who spoke on behalf of the thousands of young people in this country, we approve this budget and we look forward to 2021. Thank you, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you Senator. As agreed and discussed earlier, we're going to break for lunch now. I'm suggesting we come back at 2 o'clock and resume our proceedings. The "Other Side" I believe it is now Senator André Lewis, you will start off proceedings when we get back at 2 o'clock. **(Inaudible comments)** Yeah. **(Laughter)** So Members this House now stands adjourned until 2 o'clock.

(Sound of gavel)

Senate adjourned for lunch at 12:46 p.m.
Senate resumes at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Good afternoon Members, as we get ready to start the afternoon session, we start off with Senator Lewis followed by somebody on the Government Side and hopefully if the President doesn't return we will wrap up for today and come back tomorrow please the Lord to continue our proceedings. So that is the plan for this afternoon. Senator Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy President and thanks for the opportunity to give Labour Movement's perspective on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure as presented by the Leader of Government's Business in this House. First of all, Mr. Deputy President, I want to congratulate or join in the congratulations and thanks to all workers; the frontline workers especially in this COVID period. Whatever the differences that we may have as it relates to the interpretation of issues or as to the way forward, I think one thing that we will all agree on is that these workers needs to be congratulated. **(Applause)** In the same context, I think we will all agree that the leadership of the country, the Government and the other officials needs to be complimented despite the challenges that we have had and I say so in specific reference up to a few days ago. But I think it is noteworthy to establish once again our recognition of the challenges, these unknown challenges that COVID brought on and the leadership role played by the Administration and the other leaders within the different respected areas.

In particular I want to join Senator Cox in identifying and pull out the Royal Grenada Police Force **(applause)** because I know we have always zeroed in on the nurses, doctors which I will address later, the sanitation workers etc., but it is in the same context. As we praise the frontline workers my mind go back to almost a year ago or just over a year ago when I made presentation on behalf of labour and I identified some of the challenges that the Police had and I remember quite specifically speaking about their working conditions and only today as I speak the conditions in Grenville and I'm just going to use one example, conditions in the Grenville Police Station has not improved, it has gotten worst. Over a year after in terms of their living conditions, in terms of their conditions in the kitchen, where they have to sleep and I had distributed

some photos last year. So if you think those photos were bad, think about what it is now over a year after. What we must do through you, Mr. Deputy President, is to try to match our words with actions. I am making a special plea for the intervention of the State in addressing the living conditions of the Royal Grenada Police Force personnel and I just used Grenville as that test piece.

Mr. President, my fellow Senators, everyone in this Chambers and everyone listening wherever it may be, please permit me to empathise with the workers of Sandals and all those who were impacted and may be impacted by the recent COVID cluster spread in Sandals and just as how we applaud the Government for the leadership role that it has shown over the past 9 or 10 months, I think it is absolutely important that when there are grave issues as that which are confronting us now, just as how we are prepared to take the praise, we must be prepared to take the responsibility. And we do not believe that anyone deliberately did anything but leadership requires that when we make decisions even with the best of intentions and things go not the way that we want, we must put up our hands and that to me is sadly lacking.

I have listened to the pronouncements of our leaders, the same people that we have praised and we must continue to praise because in leadership roles we do make mistakes because it is about managing a risk, so the same leadership that we praise and I'll continue to praise, when I listened to them passing the blame on the workers, passing the blame on the population for not wearing mask, saying that we need to follow and implying that this may have come about because people didn't follow the proper protocol. We are asking… and yes I am speaking specifically of the programme that I heard two nights ago, when for instance, it has been said that calls were made to the Ministry of Health to come to do some checks, when for instance we were saying that we normally do spot checks. I am saying the message needs to be consistent, we will understand, I am sure that the population of Grenada all of us will understand that with fighting COVID and managing the economics and the health and we cannot remain lockdown forever, let me say, we cannot remain locked down forever but there are certain procedures that we need to follow and we need to insist. And especially when

we know that we have people coming in from certain areas, it therefore means that the aspect of monitoring must be more intense.

So it behoves us to take responsibility and to come clean and point out what we intend to do about mitigating that because as we speak not just myself. We have spoken colleagues, through you, Mr. Deputy President, of the fact that in this room there are eight of us, 7 Senators and the Clerk from St. Andrew. We are concerned about the whole of Grenada but I'm specifically addressing that. We have relatives in Holy Innocent Anglican School where some of us went. We have relatives in Post Royal and normally we do not identify the locations but I found it strange and interesting that the million others have gone unidentified, unfocused and brought attention to the Holy Innocent School, the kids that are going there and to Post Royal, the people that lives there. And to compound it and I'm relating it to the budget and I will tell you why because you see what is important is the aspect of buying, the aspect of understanding that in this period that the budget is designed to address the challenges of COVID, the psychological impact that dear Senator Tessa was speaking to yesterday, all these are related. So for instance when our locals return to Grenada and break the protocols by leaving the quarantine stations whether it is through misunderstanding or not, our health officials and our Minister goes after them but when it is pointed out that other individuals who may have a different status in our society deliberately breaks the protocol by visiting other restaurants etc., there is an airy silence, we have to get out of this. And therefore I want to once again extend our empathy to the workers of Sandals and all who have been impacted and we give our commitment to work along with all who are involved to see what we can do to mitigate any problems that may arise and to use the same opportunity to call upon all of us to continue observing the protocol and wherever there are loopholes that the State and the authorities must take responsibility and put better systems in place.

Mr. Deputy President, before I go into specifically looking at the budget because I respect my colleague on the "Other Side" so much and is a Senator and a youth that I have tremendous respect for, I want to congratulate Senator Judd Cadet on his presentation. I do not have to agree **(applause)** with everything that he has said. I

want to make the point that I do not agree with everything that he has said but that's ok, **(laughter)** that's not for me to do but I want to compliment you and because of that respect I have for you, before I go fulltime headlong into the Budget, I must answer your request that you made of me. You requested of me to ensure that children are allowed to see Intercol and get teachers to do the Intercol, you made that request and I want to answer. Teachers have never prevented Intercol and they will never prevent Intercol and the teachers and workers are always interested as they have always done over all the years at the forefront of Intercol and it is very simple. So through you, Mr. Deputy President, in answering my colleague I would like to ask you to give him the message for me that once the docked salaries are returned to teachers, they will go and continue the extra mile that they have always done, that they are doing right now. But as it relates to the other aspect, that will be done. So I answered you my colleague because I respect you.

Going in full time into the budget, I must be brutally frank and indicate that in our review and my review of the budget, I did not get the sense that it was a budget with a difference. I form the view that it was similar to the other budgets and through you, Mr. Deputy President, here I want to agree with Senator Cox but to conclude differently, you have hit the nail on the head, what is required is visionary and focused leadership, the challenges that we are faced with. I am sure that we can get our people to understand the sacrifices that are required as we have always done but the leadership that is required cannot be like yesterday, there's an emergency, there's an urgency. It must also be noted that for the very first time in quite a while the TUC was not involved in budget consultations. Yes we were involved in the broader discussions but the tradition of where we were engaged, where we had a 2 hour, 3 hour, 4 hour session, where we can go into as we say, the nitty-gritty with the Ministry of Finance that was denied of us although it was planned and my investigation have shown that a number of other groups may have suffered the same fate and the question would arise, why? I do not have the answer but I leave that outside there, yes. We found it very strange that in a period now of where you need more consultation, there were less consultation with the labour movement.

Mr. Deputy President, while listening to the presentation and discussions in that "Other Place" and while listening to the discussions from Ministers on other different forums, I genuinely wondered whether or not there was a change in Government. And the reason I wondered it, is because and I realise now probably it has to do with the reshuffling. The way I heard Ministers correctly identify the problems that were existing and they intend to fix, I'm like, but isn't there a collective Cabinet and the knocking of the tables by colleagues in agreement with the observations made about the existing problems and what needs to be done, I wondered if there was a change in Administration and as though people were not aware.

And therefore it is within the same context when I heard the pronouncement on the Marketing and National Importing Board, very, very important institution in our country and I will spend some time on. I want to congratulate my colleague friend and brother, we grow up together for his contributions from Agriculture in relation to MNIB. The comment which says that Marketing Board has lost its ways, the comment which says that Marketing Board has drifted away from the dreams of the founding fathers and let me tell you the founding fathers are not 200 years ago. I am not afraid to say that the founding fathers of the Grenada Revolution, I am not afraid to say that the founding fathers are Corporal Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard and others. When our citizens and our young ones listen to the terminology of founding fathers and Marketing Board, it may sound as though this is something that happened 200 years. But the vision and aspirations and dreams were only about 40 years ago, this also played into the hand the question that crossed my mind and because we have a role and function and duty in this Place to address issues that will allow us to look at them objectively because we sit on different sides, I ask myself the question, where were you all these years? **(Applause)** And we know the problems that existed in Marketing Board before and still exist. We do not want to see Marketing Board fail, Marketing Board have that role to take agriculture, not the traditional agriculture on the way forward in terms of getting prices, market, fixed market etc. And I can discuss at some other time some of the ways and means that we can get our people to eat local and buy local by going through Marketing Board.

Coming now to address some of the issues in the budget, under the Ministry of Labour, the TUC wants to see significant increases in its resources in relation to the Human Resource. If we agree and I know we all agree that some of the challenges that is as a direct result of the economic challenges brought on by COVID is with the aspect of industrial relations and therefore there will be a higher demand on the resources of the Ministry of Labour. So for instance at the moment there is no Deputy Labour Commissioner, at the moment they need other officers and I know I am seeing a provision there that says for 9 months but I have seen that happen before. I have seen pronouncements and indications to staff the Ministry of Labour but that is not happening so I'm making an urgent appeal… the TUC is making that urgent appeal because it will help in managing industrial relations issues that will arise. And more so for the un-unionised workplaces, we are confident that had the Sandals workers not been intimidated and I speak with absolute authority on this, from joining unions that we would have had a better role to place in trying…we may not have been able to prevent it but that is not the point that I'm making, the question that has arisen is whether or not enough efforts were made and I'm saying with a Union present as we have seen in the other workplaces that we are aware of, how we were able to intervene to help manage the aspect of COVID, Sandals workers would have been able to enjoy this.

In the Ministry of Labour, we want to see the aspect of the Wages Advisory Board, we know a decision has been made to put that on hold because of the problems that we have now with Finance but there are other aspects that can be addressed. Because in the existing Minimum Wage Order, you have wages based on geography so if I'm a baker and you're a baker or I am a Clerk and you are a Clerk but I'm working in St. George and you're working in St. Patrick, the wage in St. Patrick is lower than St. George, that can't make much sense. We were all part of those decisions before, understanding how the tripartite arrangement works but even in this period while the aspect of wages are creating some discussions there are other issues that can be addressed and therefore this needs to be done. If we go to the Budget Statement, page 6, 2.2.4 under Unemployment and Social Dislocation, an observation is that under quarter 4 in 2019, unemployment stood at 15.1. I'm using the official data that is given,

I'm not saying if I believe it was 15%, it is now in quarter two in 2020, 28.4%, I'm not saying I accept that, it can be much more but I'm using the official data. After 6 months it has almost doubled and we understand that it is because of COVID, bearing in mind that the implications or the impact of COVID came about end of February, March, so you're talking about unemployment doubling within probably a 3 month period. We all know that that has significantly been driven by the Tourism Industry and that must tell us about the fickle nature of tourism. I am not about tourism but resilience requires us to address the areas that can be able to withstand external and internal shock because we know what the internal shocks are but we can have internal shocks; hurricanes, fire. And as we say fire, I am glad to hear Senator Cox indicate that the fire service, at least there would be the maintenance of the presence of the fire trucks and other services in the Town of St. George. For a moment I was wondering whether or not the much spoke about relocation to the South had to do with the potential for figuratively speaking fire in the south and if my brother has the control of the fire engine, he can control the fire. My brother, I wish you all the best. **(Laughter)** I understand that.

If we go to page 13, 7:1 Revenue Measures, Collection of Tax arrears, we want to know what type of taxes has the greatest percentage of arrears. If it turns out that VAT is significant among them, we would like to know why were entities allowed to hold onto the money because we know of a recent, not too long ago with one of our leading supermarket chains. I am aware that one of the great legacies of the VAT has to do with the restructuring of the IRD and the Customs Department but yet still given the important role of the IRD Department, we have lost over 4 comptrollers between the period 2012-2016, this is not good for stability. And make it worse, in the Ministry of Finance we have had a high turnover rate of Permanent Secretaries given the important role that this Ministry plays. And that is what I am saying, we need to address those matters with a sense of urgency because this is not business as usual. Therefore we want to commend the workers in the IRD and Customs Department. The TUC is also looking forward to the revision of some of the services and fees to the inclusion of abolishing some of those fees. I think that there is something for instance as a latrine tax or latrine fee that may be on the books and I know that they have been… and I'm

using this as an example, we have been speaking for the longest while of cleaning up these things. It is felt that the administrative cost on these are much more than what you would collect, so it is in this context we speak. **(Inaudible comments)** Ok. I know you had a purpose for coming back here you know. **(Laughter)** On the current expenditure side, the intention is to spend almost the same amount as approved in 2020 and this is a period of unprecedented challenges. As it relates to the freezing of position, we will like to know what these positions are that has to be frozen. I looked through, the budget may not necessarily always explain what positions are to be frozen.

Under Revenue, since 2014 our current revenues have been between 21% and 24% of GDP. Current account surplus have been trending in the right direction and if we look under, the document is there, Expenditure to GDP Ratio current account surplus, we will see this. Data is indicating that fiscally the picture is not that dull even as we deal with COVID, I am using this data here. The leadership, I have already congratulated the workers and the leadership at the IRD Department.

Public Workers Wages page 14 of the Budget Speech and permit me to quote, to read verbatim, I hope I wrote it down right. **"Government has made an appeal to the public sector"** and that is the Minister for Finance speaking here… "**Government has made an appeal to public sector unions regarding a referral of negotiated salary increases for 2021 estimated to add $13.4 million to the wage bill."** I will like to answer with a quote, **"the law of sowing and reaping clearly indicates that the Government cannot expect to plant the seeds of contempt and vindictiveness and reap the fruits of cooperation and goodwill,"** Comrade Marvin Andall, President General, Grenada Union of Teachers, November 30, 2020. **(Inaudible comments)** Sure, sure.

However, assuming that Government did not Budget to pay the $13.4m, they will project a current account surplus of $45.5m. So if you take away $13.4 million dollars from the $45.6m, there is still $32.1m and that is under the current account surplus. Although I am assuming that they did not budget for the $13.4m, although a closer examination on page 160 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure that is under Vote 14, a sample has shown that there is a movement in some estimated projected

salaries by something close to 4%. I'm not saying in all cases but even if they didn't and we will expect them to budget for this because that is the prudent thing to do. You have a signed Collective Agreement, this is not the MOU that we had signed and some people argued and say an MOU is not as strong as a Collective Agreement which is a different discussion. But there is a legal obligation for the 4% and therefore even if you are in discussion to try to get some consideration; prudent financial management will have you make allocations for it.

Nonetheless, I challenge the Government to prove that $13.4m to prove it since there may be a number of positions within the sector that may not be filled and you still make allocations for it, so we challenge that, we will like to see this. But more than that, even from an economic and I am not an economist. I have been trying to learn from some of the pronouncements made by my colleagues especially on the "Other Side." If we agree that an increase in the ability to spend or consume is important for economic activities, it must mean that putting the $13.4m in the hands and teachers and other public officers is the best thing for the economy at the moment. **(Applause)** Because we are not into saving, the vast majority of us, so these monies… but what would be important and that is where agriculture comes in, we need to ensure that we have more local stuff to consume because as my colleague Senator Cox mentioned this morning. As he spoke about construction and the economic activities by the importation of materials, what he may not have recognised at the same time is that, that will lead to higher leakages because even if we are spending more, because we are importing more money is going out and that is the context in which we speak about the importance of agriculture now over tourism and over construction. We are not saying to give up on any and that is where Marketing Board comes in. So this is the point here, we say the economy need consumers to spend and therefore with 4% more in the public officers pocket they will be able to spend more especially in the context where in some households other people in the Private Sector may have lost their jobs. So as we have said we look forward to the docked salaries that were taken. Labour is also requesting a breakdown of the salaries and wages composition of the entire public

service to help us in some of our discussions. It's a requirement that we have made in the past and we have made in other forums, we will like to see that breakdown.

There is another issue I want to address frontally, the issue of productivity and across the board increases and performance. Just as how an investor is proud to announce that they are looking to make profits on investments and there isn't anything wrong with that. We must not be ashamed or afraid to put our hands up and say, yes we go to work to get pay, the employer invest to get a profit, we go to work together pay and in achieving both that's where the issue of productivity and other things come into play and that's where the discussion ought to be on. And we are prepared… I look forward to a discussion on the question of productivity. Across the board increases, we have no apologies for the following; our objective is to ensure that we can maintain and improve the living standard of our people. Now if an entity cannot afford to pay, that's a different discussion and we have demonstrated that. In the Public Sector, we have taken 0% increases a number of times, in the Private Sector we have done likewise. So we look forward to these discussions, we also would like to know of the surpluses experienced over the last 3 years, the surpluses experienced, what have they been used for? The reason I am asking that, because if it was used for debt repayment or if the answer is for debt repayment we thought that debt repayment were budgeted for. So if you budget for debt repayment and you end up with surpluses, it would mean that you have met some of that payment. So without having the answer we are asking for some of those things.

If we go to Budget Statement page 16: Allocation, Mr. Deputy President, when we look at the allocations, we say up front that these millions look really good. But we will like to know what percentage is for administrative costs, because to understand the input or the significance for the different allocations it would be important. So for example under the Ministry of Infrastructure number one of the top 10, Government expect to spend $133.7m, we will like to know what percentage is administrative cost. Under the Ministry of Education number two of the top 10, the same question applies etc. If we go to page 34 and I'm speaking here of the Budget Statement yes, under Health…

Before I go into some of these, last year when I stood here I raised a number of concerns about Ministry of Health and in particular the Hospital. We still have a number of those concerns but I want to place on record the following because just as how I accepted and I know the information that I had last year was correct, I want to address the following and I want to read it as I wrote it. Mr. Deputy President, during last year's budget debate I zeroed in on the Ministry of Health relative to the hospital. Today I take this opportunity to praise the newly appointed Minister for Hospital Services, Honourable Delma Thomas. **(Applause)** I have gotten reports from highly credible sources that she has already started to make a difference. Key among the approach is that she is on the ground, she is listening and through you, Mr. Deputy President, Senator Judd, she has a good heart. She has a good heart and I want to personally wish her all the best and at the same time to call upon her to use her good offices to get the scores of workers who have been working for 10, 15 and more years without a permanent appointment to get them appointed, I use that opportunity to call upon her.

Under that same… on page 276 now on the Revenue and Expenditure Estimates, we have seen that hospital stay is projected to move from 5 days in 2019, there is no information for 2020 to 6 days in 2021, we will like to know what was the reason for that. We are also concerned about the freezing of positions because given the important role that health has to play in this period and given the fact that we are looking to spend as much as or more than last year, it is important to have the necessary human resources taking into account that implementation has been one of the challenges that we have had in the past.

I want to put on the table and make a specific request and the Labour Movement would also take the lead in that because we have specific interest and through you, Mr. Deputy President, the Private Sector and the Government. And it is something that Health could take the lead, the aspect for vaccination for COVID-19. It's right on our doorstep now, more than three, four months ago when there was debate as to whether or not it would come in one or two years. We need a national conversation on the vaccine, and I can tell you that as I speak, on Friday, UWI will be conducting a debate, a discussion on the vaccine and I think it is necessary for us to do this because there will

be all kind of different challenges. What if someone does not want to take it? So we need to address those issues. How would workers be impacted, how would workers respond who themselves are individuals? We need that national conversation early o' clock so that we can have an understanding.

At the same time under Youth Development, I heard from on the "Other Side" speaking about the IMANI Programme. It's something that the Labour Movement has always spoken about and asked for it to be revamped. I am happy now that the New Minister… the recent Minister for Youth at the highest level, at the level of the Prime Minister have identified that there is need for an organised exit strategy. The question that would arise and we must ask that question. Because it was one of the flagship programmes that started before 2008, I think it was the NNP that started it, what has been happening over the years when we have been speaking about it? It must not take the youth to just rebel to cause a significant input by trying to wrestle with the programme now. Because the question would arise, the fact that it is admitted that there needs to be an exit strategy must be an acceptance that there was a fundamental problem **(applause)** and we have spoken about that many times. Please colleagues, when we stay in this House, when we make different interventions do not take it as just being anti the Government or anti the Administration or anti progress. It is about us, it is about Grenada. I do not know what this says for the previous Ministers for Youth and others, that the Prime Minister has to make that intervention but that is a matter for them to address. I wish the youth all the best because that is where the future lies and if you permit me on this matter I would just want to… because I agree the TUC agrees that the youth have an extremely important role to play and I want to borrow from a presentation made by one, a leading national out of Grenada who did a presentation to the Communal Credit Union that I think many of us should try to listen to, sometime I think in June, July, August there about. I want to refer to one page here and I'm giving credit to Dr. Earl Brathwaite. In that discussion and we can look at that through TAMCC, the aspect of TAMCC, recognising that TAMCC, 1% of our population is being matriculated each year and that is the work of Dr. Brathwaite; it is not me, it is about us. **"There is no better way to impact the workforce and develop intellectual capital than by**

investing in TAMCC," I want to call on the Government, let us focus on this where we can upgrade TAMCC as a premier institution in the region, where we can develop on our nursing facilities through TAMCC and SGU. And the aspect of scholarships to ensure that we target scholarships for software, India; agriculture, Israel are some examples and that will lead us back and that is the end of what I am using here. That will lead us back to the discussion on scholarships that we boast correctly so of giving out hundreds of scholarships but are they targeted. And what we want to see coming out in this period… COVID has not brought anything new to us you know. COVID has just exposed the problems that we have and it has given us an opportunity to make changes so that when we are giving scholarships, and if we agree and I'm saying we, if Government, us, Grenada, agrees that we need to invest in agriculture, in agro industries for instance or tourism, I disagree that this should not be the main focus, it should be a focus but it shouldn't be the main focus at this period. But if that's where the Government is going and you identify that you want to go into diving for instance, identify credible institutions and go into an arrangement with ten, fifteen people, give them scholarships to do diving and then they can come back and contribute to the society, that's the point that we are making. So whatever area, Mr. Deputy President, that we agree on and it is not our ultimate decision, the Government is there to make certain decisions but ultimately Cabinet would decide and I respect that, I can disagree and that's ok. But anything we in the Labour Movement can do with any decision that you make, once it is in the interest of the country we will give our support, we will criticise where there is need to criticise because that is important but we will do nothing to try to make sure that you fail, no it is about us.

Under Digital Transformation that's page 35 Youth and Digital is on page 35 of the Budget Statement. Here I want to compliment the Government for the investments made to move to online payments such as for driver's license, CXC, inspection, property tax etc. And I want to still encourage the Government to do more and once again compliment the Inland Revenue Department workers and the leadership.

Under page 4 Pension Reform, we will like to know how many new workers, retirees have been paid using the 70% benefit formula, that is those joining the service

after 1985. The issue of the Public Library, restoration and modernisation, in previous budgets, it was mentioned, however I am not seeing any mention in the 2021 Budget, I don't know if I missed it but it was just an observation. It has already been mentioned a number of times but the aspect of how much of the capital expenditure we have been able to implement for a 10 year period, we have not been able to implement more than $230m, I think that was in 2014, that was the best spent we have. We are supporting whatever can be done to be able to implement more but that's where the issue of implementation comes in and that is where staffing comes in and that is why we have concern for the aspect of freezing of positions. And just as how Government has made use of the escape clause in terms of the fiscal stance relative to the COVID period, that should also allow you to just repeat to pay the public servants, the public officers their 4%.

As I said a look of the Budget will show that there are a lot of nice things that have been said, nice words. I like resilience, words that have been used such as what the IMF use, the World Bank use, I understand that. But we contend that once we appreciate what economic resilience mean, that there would have been probably $100m to $150m dollars earmarked for Agriculture rather than $40m and mind you I am not referring to $18m. Because I am taking the general provisions in the other departments for Agriculture, so I'm not here speaking about $18m, I am addressing the $40m. And we are saying, given the importance that we need to pay to resilience, recovery, transformation and resilience, that agriculture needed to get between $100m and $150m so they can do the necessary investments. Because economic resilience means that we must be able to weather the effects of severe economic shocks.

Our land and our people are less likely to be affected by external shocks. So when we closed down the country which we supported, it was draconian, but I want to praise the firm decision of the decision makers because I know that is not easy. It is not easy to tell your population I am shutting down but I know we are better off today in understanding certain challenges. So the question of lockdown or so, it has not come into play as early as all the circumstances that may have given rise to that in March or April. And I want to thank once again the colleagues who gave it their best shot in

making those decisions. I know it would be tough but once we… you see here we are speaking about serious agriculture, we are not speaking about the traditional Agriculture, you go with a cutlass and a fork. Mr. Deputy President, the youth wouldn't want to be involved in that and why do we know that because most of us that came from agricultural background didn't stay in agriculture because our parents didn't want us to… they saw us getting up and going in the mountain… that's how we used to say it, we're going in the bush. We're going in the bush, we're going in the mountain and they invested their time and we are carrying the bananas on our head and if you fall, make sure that you burst your behind but the fig doesn't get damaged and they did that so that we would move on. But we have recognised today the error in this, they meant well. So what we have to bring is technology, let us bring technology and make it interesting so that Apps can be created. Through you, Mr. Deputy President, Judd, I have always respected you for your interest in technology, why can't we get Apps and other things created that can plot, seedlings can plot when plants reach certain stages and what can be done. I have a colleague that is based in the US, a very good brethren of mine and when he comes to Grenada, he can go on his phone and he is growing those things using water in his basement. And we as a country, that is where we need to go and that is where leadership comes in. I am absolutely confident that given the youth that we have, if the leaders go on the ground and speak about agriculture, speak about agriculture or whatever it is we believe in, people would get involved. The amount of community service that took place during the revolution, what is different is the leadership. The leadership was that you could have felt the commitment of the leaders and they led from the front. It was not about getting rich… I am not saying that anyone is doing this. It was not about getting rich, it was about service to country and sometimes in brief moments because I do not like to stay in this nostalgia for too long because we need to live in the present and go into the future. I say boy today with all the technology that we have, how life would have been today with the quality of leadership or the mind-set of the revolutionary leaders. And I come down, and if you recognise, we cannot run away from speaking about it because when the Prime Minister said the founding fathers in relation to MNIB, the revolution. When you speak about

Maurice Bishop International Airport, the revolution **(applause)** and although we are yet to get an apology from the company that may have done it, for calling our Airport the St. George Airport… it might appear to be small… I have never spoken about it before but you know why, because sometimes names are important and messages are important **(applause)** and therefore leadership is important.

The MNIB has a critical role to play in finding and providing guarantee markets and prices to farmers. Because agriculture, if done in the right way has a higher retention than most of the other areas, certainly tourism because even… and I am happy to hear the continued speaking about the linkages; the linkages between agriculture and tourism, yes the linkages between agriculture and technology, these are important. We need to see more intersectorial linkages and that is why today in this budget debate, the TUC and we are concerned about these linkages because at the end of the day, what we are speaking about here is looking for the creation of employment and not just short term employment. We are looking for sustainable employment because in this discussion and yes to construction, yes to all the other aspects because none is independent of each other and there is no country that will survive on agriculture alone, there is no country that will survive on tourism alone. Of deep concern to us is the fact that one of the hardest hit industry is that of the Tourism Industry and we will all agree that the predominant workforce in the Tourism Industry were made up of women. And we will all agree that even if unemployment is 28.4% or even if it is 35% or even if it is 20%, as national unemployment, the rate is higher among women. And therefore at 28.4% unemployment rate, that amongst women and youth will be high and as we speak about construction, we must bear in mind that construction is not traditionally dominated by, or significantly have women in it, so that's part of the urgency that needs to be addressed. So apart from addressing unemployment in its general sense, we also need to drill down and say ok, what are we doing for women especially where quite a large percentage of our household is led by single parents by women. At the same time, we know that some of these are based on COVID and COVID didn't bring this on. I want to make a plea, let us condemn sexual

violence, let us condemn child abuse, let us work towards… because all these are related, the psychological impact, the need for counselling, these are important.

Another area of focus should be in the creative industries because as the country lock down and as you cannot go out, but through the electronic means, our artiste can create and export. If my memory serves me right, I cannot remember the article number but under the agreement that we have with the European Union, the (EPA) European Partnership Agreement, I think that there are provisions there for music etc. And these are some of the areas that we can look into.

I have often heard the argument which says that the investments, the FDI's, the Foreign Direct Investments that we have, these are the people who are willing to come. But I want us to have that entrepreneurial spirit, not for Government to own but to go out and source investors to come and invest in agriculture, come and invest in fisheries, come and invest in agro-processing, come and invest in helping us develop the means that we can partner with SGU to assist in creating medical services as a means of export; export services. So we have to set our policies and go out and actively pursue it.

The question of, we must see farm roads and feeder roads as contributing to the multiplier effect, we must see that. And I keep coming back to MNIB because I think it has a crucial role to play. I'll tell you something, Mr. Deputy President, my colleague here Senator St. Clair and I and a number of us on the blocks in La Digue, when he was in the Marketing and National Importing Board, I remember those heated debate and discussions on the block and we argued. So this is not a new argument about the role of MNIB and how it has moved away from what it… MNIB can act as a price controlling agent. If you have the items, if you purchase from the farmers at a fixed price even if there are some elements of subsidies. As I say there are other suggestions that I can give but I don't think it is necessary for this forum here, to make sure that people buy and use local. Then and once you market and advertise yourself properly because consumers are going to make decisions based on the information that they have. I mean there are some people that would walk through the Town of St. George and go in all the different stores before they buy one item, the majority of people may not do that.

So if you are able to have those items and you can control the price where you make something on it obviously but it is less than your competitors, once you market yourself people would buy and it will also force the others to bring down their price and that is where aggressive leadership come in.

We also need to ensure and I know it is a much talked about issue, to ensure that when we do our farm roads and feeder roads, it is not used to advance real estate. Because a number of these areas, once you see a piece of road go down, the next thing you see the land cut up and then houses go down and our arable lands goes. If we look at what happened globally because even during this period of the pandemic, we have seen a high demand for hi-tech, hi-level programming increased. As a matter of fact, in this period of COVID more millionaires and multi-millionaires have been created, I want to repeat. In this period of COVID more millionaires and multi-millionaires have been created and if we are able as a country; Private Sector, Government, Labour Movement, other interest group, with the correct leadership because that is why we elect Governments for, to help steer the development of the country. If we are able to help identify the areas in some of these multi-billion dollars industry, if you get a .2% of that, that's significant, extremely significant and that is why I speak about the entrepreneurial spirit because in this period as people become more and more reluctant to go out. And we are seeing that now because with the recent development in Sandals, you can feel the anxiety and therefore the provision of culture that can reach people's home is an opportunity for the creative industry even locally. So our calypsonians and yes we need to pull our act together and that is why we have a Ministry of Culture, a Ministry of Culture that can help start the conversation. You do not have to do it yourself. I am not calling on Government to do every single thing, no. Government cannot do every single thing but I'm absolutely certain that Government can set the tone. There is reluctance by the Private Sector to do certain investments because the issue of confidence in the economy and how things would bounce back is present. And that is why it is important to maintain jobs especially in the Public Sector because I will tell you right now, in our view and it is more than a view, had it not been for the Public Sector and keeping jobs, the economy would have been in a worst shape.

I genuinely believe that, the evidence is there, if you do a quick checking around, because I'm sure that the Banks, the Credit Unions etc., where a number of people have loans, had they lost jobs in the Public Sector because the Public Sector have held on to jobs and the Government must be complimented for that, it is a duty. It must be and we need to recognise that, yes, then more people, there would have been more challenges for people to pay and service their loans. Because when the larger countries sneeze we catch the flu; well unfortunately it has gone beyond the flu, it has gone to COVID-19 because all of our cases have been imported. What we can do as a nation is to examine and see where these countries have been able to make progress, what are the industries that they have been able to make progress in and therefore we can see what industries are doing well in times of this crisis and look to invest in those areas.

I know that I said there are 7 Senators from St. Andrew inside here and to be quite frank I'm proudly from St. Andrews because that is where I was borne, I am Grenadian, I am a nationalist, a regionalist, I see myself as an internationalist. And it is not just enough for us to feel proud or to stand here and boast that we are from St. Andrew. We will like to see all the parishes including St. Andrew develop. The Technical and Allied Workers Union years ago had one of its branches in St. Andrew. So much was the demand in relation to people working in St. Andrew and the surrounding areas. Years now this branch is no longer in existence, why, because the rural economy has taken a serious hit and therefore it is on all of us to ensure that we make the call for development to be spread. We know that everything cannot be done at the same time and that is why if the investors that are coming in terms of tourism want to build on the beaches and we can tell them where to build and where not to build. I'm absolutely certain about that. Just as how we made the hard decision to lock down the country, just as how we have made the decisions to impose penalties which I support on people who violate the COVID or the protocol, we support that and remember we supported the increase of the penalties, while at the same time we called for the authorities to accept responsibility when the problems come about because of failure on their part to have the proper protocols in place? Likewise we ought to be firm

enough to know when we need to tell an investor that look, even if this is what you want to do but this is not your time now. It is important to do this. How much minutes do I have again?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): 10 more minutes Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Ok, good. Our workers are always prepared to make sacrifice, our workers have always made sacrifices; the people of Grenada have made sacrifices. If we allow COVID to come and go and it may take a very long time and it may even stay with us forever without addressing the fundamentals, the fundamentals of job security, I want to keep at it and I know a number of people… and it is all related to the Budget, it's all related to confidence, it's all… through you, Mr. Deputy President, the "Other Side" as we have always done, have always been praising the workers and that's a fact but you cannot take praises or thanks and go to a supermarket. **(Applause)** I want to repeat, you cannot take praises or thanks and go to a supermarket and many times the issue is not just about money you know. Through you, Mr. Deputy President, as an employer, as a manager, you are aware of this, the aspect of motivation, money is not the only motivator and sometimes money is not even the motivating issue.

I heard the Minister for Hospital Services, the Minister that I praised, I want her to continue, indicate that she has been… my words now, bombarded, she did not say bombard, my words but she has been approached by countless workers in the Hospital about the fact that they are not permanent. I don't know how you would be able to motivate people more, we want them motivated, they are working hard, they are coming every day. They want to be able to have has a trophy, as a certificate in their hand an instrument of appointment, a letter from the relevant authority which says that **"Dear Mr. Lewis, this is to confirm that you are permanent with the Government of Grenada effective 2003 from the date of your employment or 2005"** because we cannot undo that which is already done. So it will have to have retrospective implications. The

Minister said that she heard the complaints, colleagues we are not making this because we want to just talk. We know that there are concerns about productivity but we argue that productivity is a managerial function but 80% of productivity and performance lies at the doorstep of management.

Colleagues, I worked in the Private Sector before I went full time into the Union you know. I left the Private Sector and went in the union, I didn't lose my job and I worked in a company that was one of the better performing companies and you know what was the unfortunate thing for me when I reflect on it, it was led by foreign people. But we can do this because this is our people. They invested in training, customer service training, there is a budget for training, they provided the tools and you were supervised and our locals who got most of the work done had the authority to be able to make certain decisions and they were given that freedom, they knew their latitude. They were not micro-managed, I saw it happen and we have a very good performance but we need to invest in training. We need to use COVID, I'm making that request to all of us as individuals, workers, employer and the Government as the single and largest employer, this is a time for retooling, for retraining. Let us ask our managers in the Public Sector and I will zero in on the Public Sector to come up with work plans, identify training needs.

The Trade Union Council and the Trade Union Movement has done more training now than we have done in a long time. The virtual platform has given us so many opportunities whereas in the past the institutions that were involved in training would invite two people and because of the cost of travelling etc., had to be limited to two. Now they're giving you five, ten. The Caribbean Congress of Labour through the Cipriani College of Labour and Corporative Studies, there are close to 60 Trade Unionists being trained right now, being exposed to training with the college in Trinidad virtually. And as we speak there are other local Trade Unionists who are involved in different training. I am absolutely certain it can be done in the Public Sector, I'm absolutely certain that it can be done in the Private Sector and we need to do it. We need to do sit in the different entities just as the Labour Movement because we have to make those changes too, that is where succession planning comes in. Succession

Planning is not only about planning for leadership, but it is about identifying trends, it is about identifying where you want to go, identifying the tools that are required.

Speaking industrial relations is not just about matching the street and we are good at it but we are also very much interested in training. Because we want to have a workforce that can hold its own, we want to have a country that can find itself and maintain itself in this phase. So I'm using this forum through you, Mr. Deputy President, and I'm sure you will understand given the Private Sector and the company that you work in and given your background, will understand the need for plans, the need for management and the need for investing in our people.

To our colleagues again in Sandals because it is something that really, really reached me and reached a lot of us and I'm sure the Government too because we are human beings. I'm absolutely sure despite the faces that you would see that appear on television and seem to be shying away and passing the blame, I am confident that it reached all of us. What is important many times and I'm going to end the way that I start on them because it is important… when I start giving thought to the Budget, obviously they were not in my mind but being aware that there are other work places that are impacted. We represent work places that are impacted right now, we represent work places that have workers at home. This is not a call against the Government but this is a call that if we do not do what is necessary as leaders, I am not the one that is making decisions whether or not I could tweak the protocol you know. I am not the one that are making decision as to… as a matter of fact, the Caribbean Congress of Labour wrote CARICOM in May/June, remember when they were talking about opening up in June and we said that we are not yet ready to open. As a matter of fact, the Grenada Government must be given credit, the Prime Minister said quite clearly that we were not yet ready to open and he must be given credit for that and I know we cannot remain locked down forever but in keeping with these we have said that whatever you do, ensure that you identify the challenges. So for instance one of the considerations that I know was discussed in the region and one of the problems is that the region is not all in this together. We fight to see who could get more of the tourist and get more and because our borders are porous, I know these are some of the challenges that we have.

So Barbados might be doing something different, Antigua doing something different, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and that is why we have to be extremely careful. One of the thought process is that if you go into a Sandals arrangement that is all inclusive so that people know that you are coming there, everything is there, you don't have to go out, then you ought to make provisions for the workers who will know that when you reach there you're at least here for two weeks. You provide meals, accommodation everything and there is a procedure before you go out, in terms of the testing, quarantine. Are you following me? So the balance could be sought and met between health and well-being and economics, somehow probably the ball was dropped. So we want to reach out to them, we want to call on our Grenadian population, do not make fun of anyone who may be impacted, do not discriminate. I had that experience within our Union at a particular workplace where a worker who returned to work, because our union dealt with that… **(time bell ring)** …that's the end? Our union dealt with that and that's ok and we were able…

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator, I'll give you a couple minutes to wrap up.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much. That is important, we were able… and you know what was good? And that is what we crave of Government as an employer. In that particular place in the Private Sector, the management accepted, boy we could have done this different so that when the workers went back to work, the workers was not called and prepared and look because everyone knew that the person came from an area that was infected. So we were able to work that out, we were able to bring in the medical practitioners, yes Dr. Francis to meet with the workers, to meet with management and say look, the necessary protocols have been followed, you are not at risk. So people felt confident.

So whatever we do as Government and I'm saying Government because at the end of the day you lead this. I am asking of you to show the leadership, show the mettle by accepting when you may have done something wrong, yes, and not appearing

because that is how we feel. Even if that is not what you meant, almost everyone that I have spoken to and I've been around the Island; I have been in La Digue, I have been in Willis, I've been in Grenville and I speak to people who represent workers. The interpretation of some of the Press Conferences and I want to be brutally frank and blunt here because we need to do it. I have seen a tone down in the message but by the Minister of Health and some of the pronouncements are not going across good and people feel as though we are blamed. If that is not your intention, have a relook at your messaging and we give the commitment to work along with the Government and all the stakeholders and to call upon the population to let us continue what we have been doing to follow the protocols and at the same time to call upon the state that wherever there needs to be a amendments to the protocols do it and please let us know and therefore that is the end of my contribution. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): I want to ask for the indulgence of Senators to take a 5-minute break because this Chair has no opportunity to get a break because this Chair has nobody to substitute. So we'll take a 5-minute break now and we'll come back and start at 25 minutes past based on the clock. So we will come back at 3:30.

(Sound of Gavel)

Senate adjourns.
Senate resumes.

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): The Senate now resumes. The Honourable Roland Bhola.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Thank you much, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, I rise at this time to give my full and unwavering support to the Motion that is presented before this Honourable House commonly called the Budget. Mr. President, also I will like to join many of the other colleagues who went before me to express thanks to the Minister for Finance and of course his hard working staff in that Ministry for the preparation of a document, I believe, Mr. Deputy President, one that is unparalleled to what we've seen before and a document that is definitely suited and will be an answer and a positive guide for our present economic situation. Mr. Deputy President, I will also like to say thank you and congratulations to our own Leader of Government's Business in this Chamber, Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell for his presentation and what he has done and the contribution made towards this document thus far.

Mr. Deputy President, it is evident from the measures, the policies and the programmes that will be rolled out or implemented from this Budget, there's no doubt in my mind as I've said, that the New National Party Government is definitely people-centred. **(Applause)** It is the type of governance that engages its people or the citizens of this state, listen to them, Mr. Deputy President, discuss with them, accept questions, discuss with the relevant officials or officers within the Public Service and put an implementation framework in place. One, that they would evaluate and check its effectiveness and responses, Mr. Deputy President to the demands of the people. Mr. Deputy President, lest we forget, I would like to remind us all, not just those of us who are in this Chamber, but everyone in our Island that we are operating or better said we are living in unprecedented times, Mr. Deputy President. COVID-19 is continuing to create uncertainty, real panic the world over. COVID-19 is real, it is present and it is persistent, it is a danger, Mr. Deputy President, not only to our lives but also to our livelihoods and of course is affecting the way we do many things; the way we do business, the way we once learned, the way we meet and greet, the way in which we conduct life in a general way.

Mr. Deputy President, over 70 million people worldwide have already contracted this virus and approximately 1.6 million unfortunately based on the records have died as

a result. Let me join the others before me and more recently, our Senator with responsibility for Labour on the "Other Side" in thanking and commending, congratulating all of our frontline workers in whatever division or department they work. Whether it's medical, Police Officers as we've said before, Immigration and Customs, those who protect our borders, those who work with them at the borderlines, those who so freely on a daily basis put themselves and their families at risk by continuing to do their jobs irrespective of the fact that they know the risk that it entails. I want to join with those before me and say thank you, I know that it's been said that thank you cannot go to the supermarket but it might help lift the morals. And we genuinely mean it when we say thank you because thus far, irrespective of our recent spike and cluster, they have done a tremendously good job, **(applause)**, Mr. Deputy President, and they have kept us safe. What we boast about today of Grenada being among the best, second in the OECS and the sub region and about 41st or 44th in the world in terms of the way we handle, it was not only because of the foresight of Government, it was not only because there was a good COVID Committee in place, but is was twinned with the commitment of all of those people who decided come hell or high water we'll take the risk and we'll go forward and do what is expected of us. So we need to commend them and thank them, Mr. Deputy President.

I will also like to join to sympathise with management and staff of the Sandals Resort. It's a troubling time for all of us. Whatever it is they're going through, it is something that we all need to be concerned about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy President, and sorry… I'm so used to Speaker, I've spent more time in the Lower House, Mr. Deputy President, than I have in this House.

(Inaudible comments by Mr. Deputy President)

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Ok, great it may well be so you better start practicing and accept it from now. Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. Analysts have forecasted that the world's economy would contract by at least 4.4% by the end of 2020 and that economic growth for 2021 may average just about 2.8%. In our own country,

right here in Grenada, Mr. Deputy President, we will be short in revenue collection based on the reports that come to us by $132m and we will record a 12% decline in economic growth by the end of 2020. Mr. Deputy President, despite the unprecedented challenges, we are faced with as a Government and as a people, I know that this Administration is determined to deliver and to assist the people of this beloved country to overcome the problems and challenges that we are faced with at this time. Mr. Deputy President, I believe that the Budget, the Motion that we are debating, yes our Budget that was presented to this House will definitely stimulate some aspects of the economy and will create much needed jobs for many of our citizens. One may ask, Mr. Deputy President, where would these jobs come from? We've heard a lot before, we have heard some people believe, some don't and, Mr. Deputy President, with your concurrence I crave the indulgence that those of us who want to follow that. Look at page 12 of the Budget Speech, right there at the bottom, Outlook for 2021 and it says here **"Mr. Speaker, we are projecting a return to positive economic growth in 2021."** I'll talk about agriculture, but here is what, **"the Agriculture…"** which is number one here that was listed, **"Construction, Wholesale and Retail Sectors will drive the recovery. Other key sectors including Tourism, Private and Tertiary Education are projected to recover much slower and will affect the speed of the recovery."**

Mr. Deputy President, a lot has been said about agriculture and many of us in this Honourable House here in this Chamber in one way or the other is associated with agriculture whether we are practicing farmers like myself trying to do something… trying at least to ensure that there is food security, not just for my family but at least within my community. I don't want to say all that I do, I see the Clerk is laughing, he is a friend of mines and he understands and knows some of the things that I do but that is for another place and another time. Mr. Senator for Fisheries and Agriculture, when we're doing our normal little cook up, we'll talk about these things, not for the Honourable House.

But I want to, Mr. Deputy President, just zero in on a few of the things that was said about agriculture. Number one among them, not enough is not being budgeted for the sector and it is not the first time or the first Budget Debate we have heard that statement. And I wrestled with the thought at times and I ask myself, is it really not

enough being budgeted or is it a situation where as a people, as a country, as a sector, we do not maximise the total potential of what is in that sector and what is budgeted for us? And I want to sight a few examples, Mr. Deputy President. Maybe I will have to go back into history a little bit and forgive me for not having a document to refer to but I am speaking from memory now. We oftentimes talk about we need to see more for agriculture and I do agree, I honestly do agree, Mr. Deputy President, that maybe with more money as some people would like to see, a bit more can be done. But with the present amount being budgeted, if you are to do a search, go five (5) years back and look at what has been budgeted for the Ministry of Agriculture and tell me one year in which all of the money budgeted for Capital Projects has been spent and there was a desire or a request for more. I rather doubt that we can find a budget that will prove that to us. So I know the challenge there will be as we said implementation, the rate is low and I do agree but what causes that? Is it simply because, Mr. Deputy President, we do not have sufficient people in place and I rather doubt that also. I will give you an example as to why I say that and there are a few more things that I would say about the issue.

As we speak, the Ministry of Agriculture is attempting to do a Backyard Gardening Project, the former Minister before the Cabinet shift did announce it, started the process. They intend to engage some 500 families, again we talk about the need to ensure that there is food security and through that program there's hope that people will be able to grow more and be able to feed themselves and depend more on what is growing in their backyard. Grant money is being provided, there is a need to purchase at this present time, 500 water tanks which will be given to these 500 families so that they can ensure there is always a supply of water for whatever little they will be doing as backyard gardening. The monies are available, the Board, the team that is looking at that has already agreed. There have been people sorting prices, where and who can provide us with these equipment for the best possible price. And because of one particular individual within the Ministry having to sign off, that process have not yet been completed, simply because the gentleman in question doesn't feel that there is a need for 500 tanks. Is it implementation that is the problem, Mr. Deputy President? Or is it

because some of us just want to prove that we have power or maybe some of us feel if certain projects are being fulfilled, a particular Minister, a Government or a department may get some praise that that will constitute into votes? I am not sure but I am prepared to debate and to argue that the real issue with agriculture is not the lack or total lack of funding or insufficient funding, Mr. Deputy President.

Mr. Deputy President, my good friend I ain't hitting under the belt, my Senator for Agriculture, we love each other. I know he can take it, he could take it a little above the belt but I don't think he can take so much under the belt. But I must thank you, your debate was very spirited and as was mentioned I think was by the President before, you're very energetic and we have known you for quite a long time, a St. Andrew's man but he also lives in the neck of my wood. He lives in the North-East and I would not say the rest and the purpose why you are there. No, no, no, I'm not like that, family secret must stay family secret. **(Applause)**

But you did commend the farmers for producing, well done. They continue to even in challenging times and some more than others have greater difficulties but they are persistent, they are continuous and you wanted to see transformation but you know you are best placed now as Senator to do a lot of work and I don't envy you. If you really want to see the transformation of that sector, you have to put your shoulders to the wheel. They are pretty large and you have to push, because I'll tell you something, when you mentioned about the lack of funding under financial institutions, are very reluctant to do business with our farmers, it is a fact. But you know what is also a fact, not very long ago a study was done as it relates to the compliance rate of farmers paying back, remembering where they borrowed from and our fore parents, most of us who grow up with grandparents always heard the word **"when you borrow you must pay"** that is not something much of the farmers in Grenada have learnt. 80% non-compliance rate among the farming community and we need to find out why. Is it because they are not making money or is it because we are not business minded enough to do better?

I recalled and we will go back a little bit, sometime after Hurricane Ivan… (You will have to keep your eyes on the clock and give me a little thing every now and again,

I does get carried away). **(Speaking to another Senator)** There were two programmes that were implemented by the Government but I'll rather talk about the second one which was called the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme, that is when the Government and you may well know about that, decided that with 90% of the Agricultural Sector down, Mr. Deputy President, Government came in and decided that they must provide some assistance in the way of funding and I will never forget the discourse at the Cabinet level when they were constituting that body that will determine who gets loans and how it will be disbursed. And the Prime Minister at the time who is still the Prime Minister today said clearly that he did not want any Minister of Government to be part of that team. So who was selected? One person from the Ministry of Agriculture, I think it was then, one person from the Ministry of Finance and three outstanding farmers which they asked the farming community to name. They weren't selected by Cabinet Members; it came from the farming community. But the way in which the programme had to be instituted, $40,000.00 was the maximum amount that any one farmer can get. But the intent was not for any one farmer to get $40,000.00 in one tranche, the programme was set up, the extension division had to be heavily involved. An example will be if I was the farmer and I decided everything that I had in my land was down, what I wanted to grow, what I wanted to get involved in, will do a proposal, the extension officer for the area will come in, they will determine what quantum of that do I need to really do what I'm doing. Would it be 40,000, would it be 30,000, would it be 20,000, 40 was the maximum. It doesn't mean that every farmer had to get 40 and then determine what portion of that do I need for land preparation, clearing and ploughing and that sort of thing. What do I need for seed and fertiliser and chemicals and to keep the crop growing and what do I need for maintenance, so at least three (3) tranches. The result, very unfortunate for us, this was meant to be a revolving fund for us, over $12m dollars invested in that, into farming, into agriculture for our farmers. Unfortunately there were many farmers that got $40,000.00 upfront in one tranche. What happened? 2% probably, if that much turned back and looked at the Ministry and made a payment.

I got a story from a gentleman who is a famer and he is somewhere from Senator Lewis' area and he said to me, and that was very recent you know because he is expecting to get some assistance again from the SAEP Project. He said, you know I got some money from that and I went in one day and inquired where do I have to go and pay, he went into the Ministry and whoever he spoke to then asked him, were you called by anyone? And they farmer said no I wasn't, did they tell you that you have to come and pay, he said no, but I took a loan and I signed that I would pay so much. The Officer then said to him, but we don't know anything about that here, and the farmer said so to me. I mean I'm saying second hand story but that is what the farmer said. So I am just trying to build and show a picture here, what is really our issue as it relates to agriculture? Is it insufficient funding like we are hearing, more budgetary allocation or the need for us all Government, Private Sector, farmers and everyone else that is involved, marketers, to come together and say let's put all the differences, all other things in a bag and put it aside because what is important here is for us to push this sector forward for our own survival and ensure that some people's basket would always have bread in it so that they can feed themselves and their families. And I can give numerous stories, Mr. Deputy President, but I will take it one at a time.

Mr. Deputy President, just to conclude on Agriculture and our dear Senator, a lot of suggestions, many, many suggestions, but I often time wonder why does it have to be Government to always take the lead. So for example the suggestion that agro-processing, maybe Government can set up a properly well-equipped agro-processing plant and the small ones, those in the cottage industry can go in. Why does it have to be Government, you have been in marketing for quite a long time and I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy President, through you our dear Senator has been in marketing for quite a long time and he is in a very fortunate position now as the Manager and I ain't want people know your business too much but I have to say it, of the Nutmeg Association who has an excellent building and of course is one of those down to benefit from the AGRICOM Project which is putting out millions of dollars, grant money **(applause)** where is the thinking? Why can't they come forward? But we also have, Mr. Deputy President, the Cocoa Association, we hear the talk about value added all the time who have been in

the production of chocolate for quite some years now. But I wonder, Mr. Deputy President, all this value added and money, what increase has the farmers received since then on the price of cocoa? Mr. Senator for Agriculture, maybe you have to do some investigations you know. As a matter of fact, rather than the cocoa farmers getting an increase, the Cocoa Association was prepared to drop the price of cocoa on the farmers and it was the same Government who we are saying are not budgeting sufficiently for agriculture that stepped in and said ok, you can't do that and so we will give you some money for price cutting. **(Applause)** Value-added, more money coming in, when last did we get a Report, do we know?

In fact, presently, Mr. Deputy President, something that I want you to take note, yesterday I was writing and you were saying I was a journalist, I want you to be one today. Write that down. **(Applause)** The workers at the factory in Diamond refused to work yesterday, and you know why? It is normal that around the Christmas season, they will get a little bonus for three weeks; it was not given to them. However the upper management received their two months bonus, find out why. **(Applause)** And we wonder why we have problems. **(Inaudible comments)** I will always talk for the farmers but that one does lead to confrontation, let's not go down that road but I am happy for your support there. Please assist the Honourable Senator in making sure that the farming community and those who are involved in it can benefit. It is a fact that these workers are not treated… let me tell you one more thing and let me move on, time is running out.

The workers are being provided at that factory with uniform, the management gave them only one T-shirt and let them know they have to wash it and let it get dry if they want to come with it the following day. **(Inaudible comments)** Mr. Deputy President, please do. I do agree that we need to work assiduously on our land back issue, our land policy, these are things that we would have spoken about many at times and I am happy when I heard dear Senator Lewis said, when we make suggestions in this Honourable House, it's not always because we are anti or we are against. I do believe that. I believe sometimes the comments are very genuine and we need to take stock, this Government is not perfect, not at all, but when we say that things are not

happening and we talk about agro-processing and more needs to be done, nothing in the budget for manufacturing. This is not really and truly a Governmental issue. We do have, for those of us that do not know, this Honourable House is where a Bill was passed. In fact, I think it was in 2015 sometime in November called the Incentive Act that is being administered by the GIDC where it is clearly detailed, all of the incentives that you can get for doing different things. And sometimes we complain so much about foreign investors but what are we doing? We say that the banks are very liquid, they have so much money, why aren't we together putting, why haven't… and you know interestingly Honourable Senator, you did say yesterday that maybe cocoa and nutmeg can't do much more because they are cash strapped. I agree with you for that admission, so good. But if they are and the Government has put together and put forward a proposal that says listen, 80% of your famers that grow cocoa also grow nutmeg, they grow side by side in the same field, that when you fertilise cocoa you fertilise nutmeg, you clean cocoa land, you clean nutmeg. Why can't we come together, amalgamate, cut cost, cut overheads and make sure that there is greater benefit for the farmers? Why are we resisting that and making it sound as though it is a political move for Government to take over. We want to see more and I believe we genuinely want to see that the Agricultural Sector do better. Let us use our position and our voices to educate the farmers of this country better and make them know that this is going to be a way of assisting them to get more benefit, one of the ways. **(Applause)**

The reforecasting of Marketing Board, much was said on that. I do believe and I remember, Mr. Deputy President, it was during the 2008 period when I had the good fortune and I call it a good fortune serving in the Lower House on the Opposition Side then. I did make mention then that should the New National Party return to Government, we need to take a look then and the Hansard will prove that, at the Marketing, National and Importing Board and really find out what the founding fathers, as we have said and I have used those exact words, meant and what was the core purpose of setting up the Marketing Board and return to it. In those days, Mr. Deputy President, I sold some of my produce to Marketing Board and I recalled going there one day and some of the workers, they almost gang up on me and said yes, so when NNP

win, you want to come and fire us, you want to come and make us redundant. I said, I never said so. What you mean by reforecasting and I had to explain to them. It was something in the making and we do understand and the dear Senator and myself worked pretty close together during the era after that when I was placed as Minister of Agriculture. While Marketing Board did not fall directly under our watch, but there was certain collaborative efforts that we had, that we worked closely with the Marketing and National Importing Board and we attempted to do many things and I must say thank you and congratulations to you all. The way you all help, we had pushed the whole issue of soursop production, we had got the Marketing Board then to identify for us fields because they were one of the exporters, fields that had nice trees, good size, prolific bearers and they paid for the fruits and asked the farmers not to touch it. They picked it, we got the seeds when we were able to at the Mirebeau and of course Ashenden and some of the other Nurseries, 17 and 18 thousand plants per year. Yes, they have beein doing, they have done some good work but as said by someone in the "Other Place", as it's been commonly called, they may have lost their way.

Mr. Deputy President, much to do about the fact that we are not investing in sustainable areas. An admittance was given by our dear Senator for Labour that Government must be thanked and praised for not shedding jobs, that the Public Sector has maintained, well thank you for that admission and we do not disagree far. We accept the fact that there is a signed agreement for wage increase and no one in Government, I don't believe have said that it should not be paid. What the Government has presently asked for is for a deferral to a later date. **(Applause)** The Government is appealing to the good conscience of the workers and the Unions and one admit that sacrifices are being made, sacrifices has been made over the years but more would have to be made by all of us, not just the workers. I had asked for a copy of this statement that you read, maybe it was from the Teachers Union, because there is an aspect of it that I don't necessarily agree with; can't sow the seeds of… I can't quote you directly, you could help me, Mr. Deputy President? Is it ok for him to help me?

(Inaudible comments by Mr. Deputy President)

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Go ahead, you have been given the ok because you still didn't give me the copy, so I can't read it. So you can't sow the seeds of… I can't remember **(chatter amongst members)** I write down half of what you said, you was going too fast for me and I don't want to misquote you, that's why I asked for a copy. I want to make sure because you are much more technical than my friend on your left. **(Inaudible comments)** It was something about the law of reaping and sowing, but whatever it is you said there, the issue of docked salaries is something that has been discussed widely, in the public domain, between the Unions and the Government and there have not been a conclusion. The matter as far as I understand it and correct me if I'm wrong, has been taken to the Courts where there is hope that sooner than later there would be some kind of conclusion, there will be some judgement on it which I hope, whichever way it goes that there will be agreement on what the Courts have decided.

As we have said before and I think every single Member in this Honourable House has agreed that we are living in unprecedented times. COVID-19 is something that we never prepared for, that we didn't know was coming, we accept that there can be disasters from time to time but the magnitude of this one and how it is affecting. And the fact that it is changing all the time, you get new information and you have to keep changing and doing different things, is not something I think any country world over has been prepared for. As a matter of fact, for those of us who look at the news would know that countries with economies far more robust than Grenada's economy, far better off in a far stronger economic position, today, are on their knees, some of them probably flat on their posterior as a result of COVID. So it is as a result of this situation because when the agreement was signed, the projection was not that we would have had COVID, the projection was not that in 2020 there would be a deficit of 12% in the economic situation in Grenada. In fact, there was a projection that there would continue to be growth because it is true that over the last 5-7 years there have been consistent growth in the economy and that there have been surpluses. So I don't believe and I don't see why we have to match the two together. I think there are two separate situations, yes they both deal with workers, maybe the same workers but not along the

same line, they are not parallel with each other. We are waiting on a day in Court, on a decision from the Court to deal with the first issue and as a Trade Unionist, I accept the fact that you need to keep it alive, give hope, you have to give hope to your workers. But to use it to say, as a result of this, we are not going to accept and accede to that, you are in fact and indeed saying and undoing all the many good things you say. That you are happy and you want the Government to continue to be able to provide jobs and knowing fully well that if Government was to go now on the recurrent side to add $13.2m to the Wage Bill that there definitely would have to be, one way or the other, either layoffs or a significant cut in the capital budget and the jobs that we are hoping, while many of them may be temporary, to inject that life back into the economy and bring the confidence as you have said, Honourable Senator that local people are not investing because they are not very confident that we can rebound and get out of that situation soon enough. The investment by the Public Sector would allow them to get that confidence, so I say and I advise, that let us look at the issue of a deferral of the 4% as an independent and separate issue. I am not a Trade Unionist, you may not agree with me but I think for the benefit of all the workers and the jobs that we want to save, we need to do that.

One of the very first things that you said Honourable Senator, Mr. Deputy President, through you that… I want to use a word that I have heard before, that I take great umbrage with and I think after recognising, Mr. Deputy President, the implication of what you said, he went over and said well that's the implication that we get and maybe that's not what was meant. That the Government is levelling blame on the population for the present situation that exists with Sandals, I did not get that impression. And I do not believe for one moment that Government would want to blame the public. Someone said to me that they thought the Minister for Health looked a little angry, again their impression when he was being interviewed. But I recalled the Minister clearly saying that that issue and what has happened will be investigated thoroughly and that if there were breaches… if breaches were found in the protocol, that whoever has to get it, whatever blame, whatever else, whatever decision will be taken, will be taken. So with that statement only, I don't know and see how the Government or

anyone in Government can turn around and blame the Grenadian population. I don't know if we are getting mixed up, the fact that there is a constant call by those in authority for our populace to continue to obey the protocols and to continue to practice what is being asked of them because even before we had that unfortunate situation with Sandals, we have been told time and time again we do not know where, we do not know when but we cannot let our guards down. We know we are dealing with a very fluid situation and there are those who are of the opinion that Government must be blamed because if they did not open up the borders. Leadership is not an easy thing because sometimes you have to make decision that may not necessarily be popular but may be correct.

And having said that it reminds me, Mr. Deputy President, that when I entered politics, I entered with a motto and those who have been around me for long enough will know it, especially the people in the constituency that I represented for three consecutive terms. I do not aim to do what is popular but what is correct, that has always been my motto and I believe for most of us in public life we have to accept that. There are times we may do things that will not be popular but correct and of course when the Government, of course, with the COVID team being present and advising, decided that it was time and yes let's open up the borders and they did it in a phased basis to open up wholesale and retail places gradually before international flights was allowed back it. They did always recognise and announce that there was a level of risk with that but they do not have the responsibility as a Government only to protect lives but also livelihoods which both Government and the Trade Union Movement will agree with each other that the protection of jobs and livelihood of people is something that is of great importance. So I do not agree and I do not share and I want to debunk that the Government is blaming the population, we can't, we won't… well, not we so much but they can't and they won't. I have to understand that yes I am in the Senate but I am not, Mr. Deputy President, a Member of the Government.

I want to move on, Mr. Deputy President, and in moving on I want to take a look at another area Infrastructure Development and just the capital side of it, not necessarily the recurring because of course the Minister with responsibility for Infrastructure, they

have dealt with that but our good Senator, Senator Noel did this morning in his presentation make some pronouncements which I will like to just offer a few things to and of course from Senator Lewis' presentation earlier on. One of the early things he said is that he continues to plead for the Police Officers in that case at the Grenville Police Station. The need for more work or some work to be done on that station where they are being housed and I sought to get you a little bit of answer or some answers and one of the things that I was told is that at the moment there is active discussion. Over the years, a lot of work has been done on that Police Station and there is a strong possibility that one or two things may happen; either a completely new building would have to be put there, demolish what is there because there appears to be from preliminary studies some structural defects or there may have to be a total relocation. But either or, it needs time, planning and budgetary allocation. However though, I was told that some remedial work will be done, however small it is, during 2021 to ensure that at least the accommodation for those officers will be much better than it is presently and that your concern will be addressed. We will work together right, all the time, yes, hand in hand. We don't agree on everything but we work together sometimes.

There was also the fact that you mentioned and I want to clear up and finish up on that, that more aggressive monitoring for areas where people are being quarantined or what have you…

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Senator just as a time check, you have just under half an hour left.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Just about?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Half an hour.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Half an hour again. …that I do agree and I think that the Government will agree, that after review, because remember nothing is really perfect, that we have to review and ensure that we do better. The issue of changes of

Permanent Secretaries, so many of them having been changed in the Ministry of Finance, I think most of us know part of the reason why. One of the better Permanent Secretaries that we all had and loved very much and I think probably the entire nation may agree… I don't think everything we say everyone would agree was Mr. Timothy Antoine. **(Applause)** He has been probably one of the better ones we have seen for a very long time in the region, I agree with you. And we know definitely why we had to relinquish him… we would have rather keep him here but one cannot prevent a seed from growing when the time come. When he left, his deputy took over, Mr. Mike Sylvester who sometime soon after that had an opportunity to be seconded to the World Bank where he got much needed experience and exposure, again one did not expect a Government to say no to something like that knowing that he will come back at some later date to continue to serve. Then we had Ms. Ophelia Wells who after his departure took over, she too went to study and of course as we speak now Mr. Mike is back, he is back. I can't hear you; you have to talk loud enough for me to hear what you are saying. **(Laughter/inaudible comments)** So those things has happened and of course that's why we have seen some turn around but it is not because I think… and sometimes when you lose, we have to accept the fact, when you lose a very good person who have set a certain standard in a position, sometimes it is difficult to immediately get someone else to replace that person and to operate at the very same standard like them. They need tome to grow and to emerge and of course I think in Mr. Sylvester, we will soon find that having worked along with Mr. Antoine and getting that exposure at the World Bank for two years or whatever period, he will soon I believe prove to us that he has the kind of acumen that is needed for the job.

The fact that the Private Sector don't invest, well if they are not that's why foreign people come because we don't want to take the opportunities, we have the same opportunities. And I just want to say quickly, let's take CaneCo, Renegade Spirits as an example, they are here, Mr. Deputy President, the local company is called CaneCo, the prime company is Renegade Spirits who operate in other parts. I think they have some work doing in Ireland and some other places. They have arrived here and decided to plant sugar cane, something we all knew and we moved away from some years ago. I

recall, as the Minister for Agriculture when these people first came, I wondered if they were for real. I honestly did wonder if they were for real. I say sugar cane and the first engagement that we had, what they really wanted was to have local cane farmers produce cane and sell to them, that was the first arrangement. They did not come here with the intention to get into cane production themselves, they were prepared to build their factory and of course to do some work in the manufacturing of the product to age the rum and to send it out of Grenada. They indicated then and I don't know if that policy has changed since, that they had no intention of selling their rum on the local market. But the inability again to get and I remember we bringing in the Cane Farmers Association that we have had several discussion with them and they could not agree on how they will, as an Association grow sufficient cane because the people said look, for what we are getting into, we need at least 500 acres of cane that will give us a year round supply. The inability to get that, an opportunity for our own local farmers to be the growers and then sell it to them did not materialise so they had to get into the production of cane, hence the forming of the company locally called CaneCo.

To date they are already producing rum, they have just about 200 acres of cane under cultivation, leasing lands from local owners, they have not purchased except for a portion of land where the factory is being built. Every other piece of land that they are planting cane on is being leased and at I believe very reasonable and lucrative price, Mr. Deputy President, if you have some land that is idle as we said before you can make good dollars. They have been renting for at least $1,000.00 an acre per year, so you have a 20 or a 30 acres of land that is unproductive at the moment, you don't do anything else than sign a document, they take a lease agreement for at least 5 years in the first instance and balm you could see $100,000.00 coming into your hand in 5 years' time for leasing your land to CaneCo.

But we had local people who could have done the same thing, there are some people who have been complaining, Mr. Senator for Agriculture that they are coming and take all the lands and plant cane and I know I have heard it myself especially from the Cocoa Association. It's something that we have to talk about. **(Inaudible comments)** We're going back to slavery, we're planting cane again, over 150 people

are presently employed and labour must be glad for that. So you must help us sell it and say this is not a bad thing for Grenada, it is providing **(applause)** jobs and ensuring livelihoods for people. So, Mr. Deputy President… **(Inaudible comments/laughter)** I know it's Christmas you know, but I find these Senators behaving as though they're on vacation already.

We're talking infrastructure, 46.1% of the Capital Budget, 10.8% of the overall budget $133.7m dollars. So I hear about nothing, Senator Noel that there is a clandestine move to ensure that St. Andrew's get nothing. Your good friend and neighbour who is the Senator for Labour, you didn't see the sign he make? He says he will lend you his glasses because it ain't look like you could see too well. **(Laughter)** Because Senator, Mr. Deputy President, there has been so much happening… Mr. Deputy President, so much happening. The same CaneCo that I made mention of had built millions of dollars… multimillion dollar factory right there in Conference in St. Andrew's not too far from the home of the Senator for Agriculture, a very good thing for him, he's getting all the fumes so he don't even have to buy it again, **(applause/inaudible comments)** multimillion dollar. Waste treatment plant, a mill that can crush over 300 tons of cane in any one day but you know what is also interesting because there is a lot of concern about youth and young people not getting jobs and being trained. There are four (4) distillers employed, Mr. Deputy President, with that company presently distilling rum. One, graduates from St. George's University, all four of them, **(applause)** but secondly and most importantly all female **(applause)**, Mr. Deputy President, all female.

Mr. Deputy President, we come a little lower down, Paradise right in Progress Park two point plus million dollars, the construction of the Paradise Preschool soon to be completed in the parish of St. Andrew's. A little way up the road, Mt. Horne, the most modern day nursery and child development centre completed in St. Andrew's. Soon to start in 2021, the construction of two schools; Anglican Primary and of course in the village of Pearls which I'm very proud about, not very far from my dear Senator's home, Senator on the "Other Side," St. Cyr, the construction of the Grenada Christian Academy, **(applause)** brand new school. A project that was enshrined since in my

time as the representative and I'm happy that I was able to secure the lands then for that construction because at one time when it looked as though we were unable to find lands in the community within the village, there was consideration of moving that school to another area and as the Representative then I said no, it will be a travesty if that school has to move from Pearls which is still a slightly under develop an impoverish village and that a Secondary School with modern labs and library where the community may have the opportunity on an afternoon to utilise will definitely make a difference in that community, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)** So we ensured that we found lands and pretty soon construction of that school. So I just wanted the Honourable Senator to realise in case he was unaware, things are happening maybe not everything that you want but things are happening. Millions are being spent, the Minister for Infrastructure did say within the budgetary allocation that they have for the Capital Budget under infrastructure that there will be some more work and repairs done to the Grenville Bus terminus which will bring it up to standard and to where we want it to be.

There will be the construction of the Commercial Complex that will house all Ministries that Government has operating within St. Andrew's. But more importantly will be a revenue generator for Government because that will be something that will go under a similar… I think it's like a bolt operation where… (no it's not a bolt operation), but they have an anchor tenant which we understand have already confirmed to be taking the first floor to make sure that Government will also be generating. Not only will they save money from not having to rent facilities around Grenville and to free up some of those facilities that they are utilising for private sector investment. But more importantly, we have heard and rightly so, that there should be some consideration, Mr. Deputy President, some consideration for women and that the jobs that will come under infrastructure will be mainly men and maybe so yes. There are some women these days getting into construction and doing very well and we need to encourage more of them. It's a small amount for now but you know we also have to admit that in the academics, the women are doing far better and we are becoming an endangered species in that area. So we need to kind of strike a balance, bring a few of them more into construction and a few of the men into construction and hence the reason the M-

Power Programme under the Ministry of Youth is so critical and important **(applause)** my dear Senator because we have to try to strike that balance, you know, get some more of our young men into the academic side and doing some of the things that they need to do.

Mr. Deputy President, this is going to be the engine that is going to push a lot of the other things. The Agricultural Feeder Roads is going to make sure that more of our farmers can bring inputs into their land and take out what is needed. But having just said that I just want to mention one more thing, it would be remiss of me if I don't do that. I believe there is a misconception, Mr. Deputy President, I keep hearing that COVID has exposed us as it relates to agriculture, to see that we should produce more and what have you, some people have been saying that and then there is another school of thought that said, well as a result of the lockdown and people losing their jobs a lot more people went into the land and we have seen increased production, maybe more people went into the land. But I firmly believe there have not been any significant increases in agricultural production. What we saw is a number of people on the street, in the villages because they couldn't come into the town, into the market as they normally would, having to set up their little booth or table and umbrella to sell their produce. But more importantly and it shows definitely now why it is so important that even though tourism is fickle and very fragile, when anything happens on the world stage that would affect our tourism, it will also affect agriculture. Because normally, Mr. Deputy President, half of what we saw on the streets immediately after COVID would have gone directly to the hotels and would have been consumed by SGU and I know that for a fact because I have friends who are into farming and they said listen, we planted a lot of watermelon, we planted a lot of cantaloupes, we harvested our bananas because we know generally around this time coming up to the festive season, the carnival and so, we'll definitely get sale by the influx of foreigners coming here. Hotels lock down, little or no sale, because we have to be factual. While we continue to encourage our people to grow more and we talk about eat local, let's remember charity begins at home. Our local people have a preference for what is foreign more than what is local and until and unless we are able to put a campaign in place and more of us stick

together and encourage our people to eat more and leadership here and I do agree with you does not only mean Government. Leadership means you, it means me, it means anyone of us that will get people to listen to us, anyone of us that has a following. The PRG had good leadership but there was a lot of fear too, let us not forget that. So people had to agree and do certain things.

Mr. Deputy President, we move on **(time bell rings)** yes 10 minutes Sir, 15 minutes?

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): 10 minutes.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: 10 minutes, it's running fast. I want to touch quickly, there is so much. Mr. Deputy President, it's a pity nobody left a little thing back everybody took all their time **(laughter)** so I can't get any bonus. Only Senator Garraway yesterday got bonus, I heard he talked about his bonus. **(Chatter amongst Members)** Let me just quickly mention a project that Government is moving into and I just want to say a few words on it. Something that I believe is critical, very important but I want to give a word of caution, in this year's Budgetary allocation we saw that the Ministry of Housing and Social Development got an increase, absolutely important. Housing is a critical issue, while we have to concentrate on so many other things, health and education and they are all important, housing is one of the vexing problems that we have in Grenada and I must commend this Administration. Mr. Deputy President, they have done quite well. We have within the Ministry of Housing that Housing Programme, it's called the House Repair Programme and that's what it means, the name means it, house repair. A lot of our under privileged, a lot of our low income people, even some who have no income will benefit from that but the demands are always more than what the allocation can afford. There has been an increase this year and I'm grateful for that.

There are several other social programmes that assist our people. We talk about the SEED Programme which helps, not just senior folks and some people say it's a pension, it's really not, it's an assistance, it's a public assistance for those most in need. We complain that it should be more; I do agree that it should be more because

sometimes what some of these people get is all they depend on. But there are a few things I just want to say quickly about that. We also did and the evidence is there, Grenada Housing Authority, they have moved from a position under this Administration where they were red, red, red, red, red no money, had to depend on heavy borrowing and loans and all kinds of things to survive to the point now where they are doing well that they can if demanded, because they are a statutory organisation, pay dividends to the Government **(applause)** at this time, they're doing well. And as a result of that, Mr. Deputy President, they have been able to provide hundreds of loans for middle income people up to $30,000.00 on a monthly basis to do repairs, to do renovation, to do addition and modernisation of their homes.

They also have another programme that is doing extremely well where lands that Government has vested in them, they will go on and sell it to people who have the funding to buy it or if you cannot buy it cash up front, they are going to build for you on those lands and you take a mortgage with them which you pay monthly and you can now become the owner of house and land. And that is open to all the public servants as well, my Honourable Senator for Labour. Many of them do take advantage of it.

But I want to mention also that with the concurrence of Government, the GDB, Mr. Deputy President, has over the last couple of years been doing a fantastic job. Government has helped in negotiating for them to receive a loan of some $9m from the Eastern Caribbean Home Mortgage Bank which they unlend with very special conditions first and foremost for public servants, they will get 100% financing, there is no limit. The only thing that will limit you to the amount is what salary you have, your ability to repay. They have now extended it out to the public. But that's not all, they have so far because of the arrangement that this Government has put in place with PetroCairbe received $25m from PetroCaribe for the same purpose and to date have disbursed twenty five plus nine million dollars… I'm not good in maths so all you could check that. That is thirty how much? That's not $34m if… big money again to assist with the Housing Project. We don't want to go into the Chinese Housing; we know what is happening, 664 soon to be rolled out early in the New Year. What is important is that when this Government renegotiated with the Chinese for low income house after

Hurricane Ivan we negotiated for 2,000. That six something would just be in the completion of the first thousand so our people, your people in agriculture Senator St. Clair, your people in Labour Senator Lewis can look forward from 2021 onwards not only to receive what is presently done but can see as long as we can fulfil our side of the bargain, providing the lands and the infrastructure meaning roads, electricity and water to the site for a thousand more of those units to be built. A Government that cares and concerns about its people **(applause)** so what we see in the budget is… and when we say that what's in the budget is not all, we mean that.

$5m, Mr. Deputy President, for the Pit Latrine Eradication Programme. **(Applause)** We talk about public sector health, we talk about environmental health, what can be better than after a person who work hard was not able to put away much and that's something we have to talk about under the social programmes… advice that I want to give and you are in a state now where you're not as strong as you used to be before and the state can help you put a bathroom and toilet to your little home to help you feel more dignified, this is what we are saying. Despite of what is happening and I do agree with you that the public servants of this country need more for their moral, they need to get their 4% and they will get their 4% but we cannot, Mr. Deputy President, forget the fact that there are others who do not have people like you Senator Lewis to speak on their behalf and to demand that they be paid because they have no pay to get and **(applause)** and they need some service too. You know, they say democracy and integrity need no promotion, when you do it for the right purpose you just do it and leave it there.

Mr. Deputy President, $2m, a new initiative for single headed homes which we all know most of the times are headed by the female. There are a few male headed that are single, I don't like the idea though… I don't like the wording single headed home but that's what it's called. And I will tell you why I don't like it; I honestly believe that the Government has listened, I honestly believe that the drafters of the budget, those who went out and have the consultation, they heard the appeal, that they recognise that in these covideous times, in a time when earnings has been lost, when some people who were once employed has become unemployed, the difficulty to take care of their family

is something that Government needed to look into. My only caution that I want to caution about the other social programmes is that we do not continue to feed into a dependency syndrome. I totally support that programme, I totally agree with it. However, I believe the criteria for how you get in must be strong, must be well put together but in addition that we don't end up having to hear the Senators on the "Other Side" complain about the exit strategy for it. Because we do not want people to start believing that this is going to be there forever, we do not want people to start getting the idea that now I can settle because whatever the amount may be, I don't know if that has been computed yet, that I can just sit back, relax and wait. I believe we need to start teaching our people how they must plan for retirement. So I absolutely believe that retirement planning, whether it is in the Fisheries Industry, whether it is in the Farming Industry, wherever it is, it is something that is absolutely necessary and important that the Trade Unions must come on board, that other organisations, that associations like Nutmeg and Cocoa must come on board and talk to their farmers about it, that we can coordinate that because for too long, a lot of us do what we have to do while we are up, we are strong. And make no mistake, there are some disparities, there are those who earn more than others, there are those who have the affordability more than others, there are those who can save and put aside more than others. But everybody should at least know that a time and a day will come… the Government knew and that is why they had in years when things was better and Senator Lewis, I hope that will help you and others when next you have to negotiate for wage increase. Don't only talk about the surplus but understand that a little surplus must always be there for in hard times like now we can dip into it to ensure that we save jobs and continue to protect livelihoods. **(Applause) (Bell rings)** That's it Sir.

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Yes, but I will give you a few more minutes to wrap up.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Mr. Deputy President, so much more that needs to be said. This Budget is so rich and there has been such rich debate from the "Other

Side" and there have been some misconceptions and there are so many things that we need to rehash and talk about. So the fact that our goodly Senator Noel did indicate to us that he would have liked to see in a time like now not only Government talking about reaching out to collect unpaid taxes and what measures they would use but he would have liked to see a drop in the rate of taxes, commendable. It probably would help all of us but in the same breadth is calling to see all of the main roads being repaired and wanting to see more happen for sports and wanting to see more investment for so many other things, there must be a balance. We have to remember that we only have a limited amount and there may be a desire to have more in every other area but we have to understand that only so much can be given from the cake when it's sliced and that we have to make do, we have to work together, we have to ensure that there's greater implementation, that there's less wastage and all of us have to take responsibility for that and make sure that at the end of the day, those who need it most gets it and do the best with it.

Mr. Deputy President, I want to thank you. I want to thank all of my colleagues and I want to thank the Prime Minister and others for the opportunity to return and I do pledge that I hope my presence here for however long it will be, would be one of value and that I will be able to add to whatever is being discussed in this Honourable House and ensure that Grenada as a whole benefits from whatever we do here. I also just like to say thank you to my family, my wife in particular and the children. They have given me the concurrence to return here because when I left mainstream politics it was solely because my wife had some health problems. Thank God she has had surgery, she is doing far better and I appreciate and thank all those who helped. I don't know, Mr. Deputy President, are we going to be back here? If not I just want to… **(Inaudible comments)** oh we are, before Christmas. **(A Senator said tomorrow)** I don't know if I would have a chance to talk again on the adjournment. Thank you so very much, thank you everyone for listening. **(Applause)**

Adjournment

Mr. Deputy President: Thank you Senator Bhola. I can see your addition to the Senate have certainly improved the quality of the debate in the Senate and brings a certain special historical context that some of us younger Senators need to also be aware of. So I can tell you from listening to your speeches this afternoon that I have learned so much about what has happened and what the context in certain things are going to be. So as we move forward to tomorrow morning to start promptly at 9:00, we still have two Money Bills to do and Quarantine (Amendment) Bill and we also have a Motion in the name of Senator Cox to also go through and discuss and hopefully approve before we end tomorrow's Session and we still have two more Senators to debate tomorrow in full and of course the Mover of the Motion to wrap up the debate on the Budget. So we need to start promptly at 9:00 and hopefully we could get through hopefully by just after midday tomorrow afternoon. I know I would be challenged to stay here beyond 12, 1 so I know I start off the debate tomorrow on the "Other Side," so hopefully my President will be back in his rightful place in the Chair so that he can facilitate what I also have to contribute to the debate.

With that being said I want to thank all the Senators for such a vibrant Session this afternoon. I know none of us fell asleep and we were all kept on our edge on our seats to hear what each party had to say from Labour and of course Senator Bhola's Maiden Speech in the Budget after such a long absence. I don't want to say it's very long but a long absence and I want to say a special thank you to Senator Bhola's family for allowing him to come back to us and have such a good quality debate this afternoon. With that said Senators, I now adjourn this Session to 9 o'clock tomorrow morning promptly for a start to hopefully conclude our discussions on the budget and other matters. This Senate now stands adjourned.

Senate adjourns at 5:30 p.m., until Thursday 17th December, 2020.

Resumption
Attendance

The Sitting of the Senate resumes on Thursday 17th December, 2020 at 9.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr. President
Senator the Honourable Chester Humphrey
in the Chair

Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell	Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries, Disaster Management
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 with responsibility for Disaster Management
Senator the Honourable Cathisha Williams	Parliamentary Secretary – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair	Member
Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis	Member
Senator the Honourable Christopher De Allie	Member
Senator the Honourable Tessa Alexander St Cyr	Member
Senator the Honourable Terry Noel	Member

Prayers
Announcements

Sergeant-at-Arms: His Honour, the President.

Mr. President: The Honourable Senator Roland Bhola. I'm not seeing Senator Garraway here as yet.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Thank you, Mr. President.

(Senate Prayer were said)

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Honourable Members please join me in the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: This second session, or third session of this sitting now commences. Honourable Members before we get down to today's business, just a brief explanation. I have been away from the Chair on urgent matters of national importance. The House may know that I sit on the COVID Committee and as a result of the current situation that the country faces, the Committee has been meeting to deliberate urgently and that has taken me away from the Chair, but I have been ably represented by the Deputy President who from all reports and from my own quiet observations has done a fantastic job, and I wish to thank him. **(Applause)** Just to say again that I may have to leave the Chair again sometime around 11, as the Committee is expected to be meeting with the Prime Minister. So just please take note of this development and I thank you for your indulgence Members. Thank you.

Clerk, brief me where we are now. I think we have the mover of the Motion plus two other persons to speak.

(Clerk converse with the President in private)

Mr. President: Oh, Senator De Allie, yeah. Senator the Honourable Chris De Allie the floor is now yours and you are a Presiding Officer, so you are conversant with the rules, so there's no need to give you…

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

Mr. President: …a reminder or refresher. And from my observation you are not affected mentally by any diseases related to the age question as far as mental capacity is concerned. So the reminders are not necessary in respect of the rules. The floor is yours Senator.

Sen. the Hon Christopher De Allie: Thank you again, Mr. President, and good morning to fellow Senators and colleagues. Mr. President, as I rise to give my comments on the Budget, I want to first of all start off by welcoming my good friend Senator Roland Bhola on the "Other Side," and the evidence would have shown yesterday, Mr. President in his debate and his response to the revenues and expenditure for 2021. We can all understand the measure of contribution he's going to make to this Honourable House as we move forward. We very much appreciate, I did very much appreciate what he did yesterday and how he did it, and it speaks to the quality of the gentleman that has just joined us in this Honourable House. **(Applause)** So brother Bhola welcome on all fronts, from my side in particular.

Mr. President, I want to start off this morning about budget, the theme and what it is. You know generally we all understand what a budget is. It is normally our best estimates of what the expectation is going to be in a future period and best expectations

meaning how we think we could spend the monies that we think we're going to collect and it is very much an estimate. We call it, I don't want to use the word "guestimate" because we, it is a "guestimate" but we use certain parameters to understand how to arrive at figures. We us historical data and so on and so forth and current trends, but I raise that in the sense that in this particular environment that we're in, this COVID environment, it is even more uncertain as to how we estimate and the accuracy of our estimates going forward.

Mr. President, none of us can deny that this is a very unique time. We exist in an environment that is very fluid and can change instantly, as we have just noticed with our particular cluster situation in that premises in the South, and how it can impact our economy in general and the lives of our people in general. We have seen from since March of this year, the level of unemployment, collapse of sectors, poverty situation and the public health challenges that we have all come to see with a pandemic. I never thought I would have experienced what is a pandemic. None of us in business would have catered for the word pandemic. All of us would have catered for issues of disaster after a hurricane or a natural disaster of some sort. You know, you talk about bomb threats, you talk about issues that would affect there but never, ever in all of our emergency preparations did we have a pandemic. Because the last pandemic was in, I think 1917 with the Spanish Flu issue, so none of us expected that, so it is a very new environment for us to operate in and so too for Governments. I don't think any nation in this world expected this little virus to put all of us at our knees, both economically and otherwise. And the answer for this and what we can do as we move forward, none of us really knows for sure how to answer it. And I come to a quote just recently that was given, that was said by a very good friend of mine, which I like so much. And he said, **"the only thing that we can be certain about going forward, especially in 2021 is uncertainty."** I want to repeat that, **"the only thing we could be certain about is uncertainty,"** and I think that aptly describes the environment that we're going to be heading in, for 2021. It is never going to be a situation where it's going to be business as usual.

I am certain, Mr. President, that when you look at the theme that speaks to recovery, transformation and resilience, there is a good aspects of that, in the sense that in this new environment that we're going to be faced with all this uncertainty, we have to prepare ourselves to change what we're doing. And this is where the transformation come in, but we have to also be able to provide hope to the people that we're speaking to, and the Government has a serious role in that to play, and I believe that the provision of hope is a critical thing, because COVID has not only affected us economically, by loss of jobs and business and so on going under, but psychologically as well. So we need to prepare to give people some sense that things will get better. And we hear about the vaccine coming and some of the challenges that would come with that, but it does provide some level of hope for us, as we move forward. And I believe this budget and when we prepare a budget and we talk about estimates of how we plan to use the monies that hopefully we will collect, because it's still hopefully. Because we're not sure yet on how this will pan out, that it must provide some level of hope to the people. So the budget when we present and we present in the Lower and the Upper Houses, it's not only to talk about the figures and our plans and our hopes, what we're going to do it with these monies, it is also about to talk directly to our people to say, listen, we expect certain things to happen or may not happen and as a result we would need to prepare you, both psychologically and otherwise to deal with the issues coming forward. We know the understanding of Government having to do this legally, so that the Government Departments can get the authority to spend, and we have no issues with that.

Some general comments overall on the budget, Mr. President, in that this is the first time in probably the last five or more years, we have seen the Government presenting a deficit budget. And that is significant, because when you think about all the other countries who have had the opportunity to present budgets so far, most of them, if not all of them, have presented deficit budgets. It is speaking to the times, it is speaking to uncertainties in revenues and it is speaking to the fact that we have certain fixed cost in particular that all Governments and all nations have to meet, Public Sector wages is one, and I'm going to come to that a little later. The fact that this budget is

linking what they're saying to the 2035 National Sustainable Development Plan, to me is important because it is now saying to us that, listen, we're working strategically with a plan that we have prepared for 2035 and we want to start to link our current budgets and budgets going forward to this plan, so that we can keep on focus, because that is important. A budget is not only about a plan for the figures and what we intend to achieve within a one year frame, we must also frame it in a 2 or 3 year cycle, so that we can check to see if what we're presenting and how we're using what we say we're going to use, is in harmony with what we have set strategically, set for ourselves over the next three to five years in the first instance and beyond. So I believe that is a plausible thing and I congratulate the Government for linking it to the 2035 plan.

Mr. President, the issue of the Government and what they have done with this plan, needs to be commended from the point of view that it is never easy to prepare any sort of figures and propose any sort of plan with the level of uncertainty that we face, because as the framers of this particular budget would have to be challenged the issue of, are we going too far this way or are we going too far the other way, and how much can we go here or not here? I mean, we just finished preparing budgets in my business and it was a challenge, it was a significant challenge, because you just cannot estimate properly and you can't use much historical information. So for some of us who are preparing budgets, we have not used 2020 figures as a measure to compare to, which is the normal thing that we would do. All of us are going back to 2019, 2018 and the further back you go with the historical nature of these figures, the more uncertain it becomes, but you have to have a base. So I just say to the technocrats on the "Other Side" and the Government on the "Other Side," that I think we have to applaud the effort. It is never an easy thing to do.

We must applaud the fact that when the crisis started for us in March of this year, the Government was able to provide support to various groups that had significant dropout, Tourism Sector in particular, provision of $10m in unemployment benefits through NIS, of course and the suspension of some NIS payments, the provision of some GRENLEC electricity power supply support. So we saw a Government coming forward to help and we must commend that, commend the Government on these areas,

because as I said, none of us understand what this pandemic would have brought on to us, none of us understood in particular how we needed to react, but we know for sure that some level of reaction was required and that was done, and we applaud the Government for the moves that they have made in this area. No Government in this region, particular the OECS is not going to use and identify the sectors that we have identified to help in the short term and to a lesser extent the medium. Most Governments who have prepared budgets are highlighting construction, are highlighting agriculture, in particular in the OECS and retail sectors, and to some degree education services. Most of our economies in the OECS as you know, Mr. President, are all very similar and all linked. All of us are heavily dependent on tourism, all of us are heavily dependent to some degree on agriculture and retail sectors. In recent times education services have become a major player. Grenada in all of our OECS territories can boast of being the most diversified economy in terms of its sectorial revenue and how it receives it, but nonetheless what this pandemic has shown, when we had the 2008 crisis, financial crisis, education services were shown to be very robust and stood up to that crisis, and we benefitted as a country. In this particular pandemic situation that is not the case; the only area for us in terms of diversification that stood up in this pandemic was the CBI **(applause)** and I will come to that in a little while. That is the only one, and that is testament to our level of diversification, and all the OECS countries that have programmes can tell you that CBI is the only thing that withstood the vagaries of this pandemic and how it infiltrated the various sectors.

So when the Government is proposing in this budget to use agriculture, construction and retail, to push their revenue and the revenue streams, I applaud that in the sense that, I don't think that they have much choice, that is the way they have to go. I will come and talk about construction and my feelings on that and where I think we are going to go and a lot have been said already on that and agriculture. The fact that we expect tourism and education services to recover slowly again is good thoughts on that, because all indications from all international markets where we depend heavily for tourist arrivals are showing that tourism would not come back to its full pre-COVID state until probably 2024. That could be a daunting task for that sector and the support that

we have to give that sector in the time. Educational services is expected to come back a little earlier than that, but certainly tourism because it is just a reality of life, that even though our destinations may be ready and protocol and have the relevant COVID protocols to accept certain guests, the international markets through their own market and their response to COVID as well as, the fact that the airlines are not able to travel, and those that exist and survive the COVID crisis financially, how much of them are going to be around in the volume to carry guests is another discussion that will come up.

But the hope around the corner is the vaccine and if the vaccine can come in a timely manner that could encourage people to travel that would be a good thing, but in all of this, Mr. President, the most important thing for me is confidence and confidence for the tourists, the perspective tourists to come to our destination. Confidence to attract foreign direct investment and I'm going to again come back to that under the discussion I want to have on CBI. But really and truly the aspect to develop confidence both in our locals and the foreign persons to service our economy is going to be an important thing and the budget I believe must address that, and to some degree have addressed that even though it may have areas of weaknesses that we need to raise.

I want to spend a little time, Mr. President, on CBI and of course I want to spend a little time on Marketing Board because I note from the discussions so far, those two particular institutions came in for some discussion and being where I sit on these two organisations, I thought it relevant to spend a few minutes on them and to talk about them. I want to start with the CBI Programme and before I start and talk about the programme, I want to talk about the staff at CBI and to compliment and as we say in local parlance big them up, because you know this a group of young people and really dedicated people, that when the crisis and the lockdown started in March, we deployed them with laptop units and that staff of CBI continued to work throughout the entire crisis with all the issues that we were facing, bout in securities, about food and all the things that was happening in the lockdown and continued to process files of potential applicants under the programme, and I must compliment them and give them a big hurray. **(Applause)** When we talk about our people and work ethic, yes. So, Mr.

President, as I mentioned before, the programme has been one of the few bright spots in this particular crisis and have been very resilient. We have been able in the CBI unit to process a number of files during this period and everything was down. We have been able to get monies into the National Transformation Fund that would assist Government with infrastructural development and putting aside monies for contingency issues, which would have been used to support some of the spend that we had to do when we had all these programmes to help in the various sectors that were collapsing. And when you compare what CBI has done to the other sectors, the main sectors like tourism and agriculture, you could understand that we have to say thank God we had a CBI programme that could have helped us through this particular period.

The programme continues to sell very well under its two sections, primarily section 10 and section 11. Section 10 is for monies coming in to the National Transformation Fund and section 11 is for investments coming in for the Accommodation Sector and the various other sectors identified by the Government as it relates to projects that could be undertaken under CBI projects. One of the things that we need to say with the programme, the programme continues to be one of the best run programmes in this region, it's still the golden standard programme. We just recently had a very good a migration round table which was led by the CBI unit and co-sponsored by the Cooperative Bank, where we examined all the areas of strengths and weaknesses and how we could better frame the programme to attract high investment and net worth individuals. And I want to spend a little time on that, because in this time of COVID and the environment internationally, foreign direct investments have been depleting over the years and have gotten more difficult to attract and our destination, when you look at where we are and what we have to offer, the ability to attract any significant FDI has been a challenge. CBI has been helping significantly in that area, Mr. President, and we must acknowledge that. That is one of the areas that we have used successfully to attract foreign direct investment into our country in various areas, and as you know in the budget CBI Programme is expected to bring in $174m in relation to grants as it comes to finance the PSIP, the Public Sector Investment Programme.

So it is going to be a significant player as we go forward in 2021 and the programme is making sure it is getting ready to assess and to deal with the level and the volume of applicants that we believe is going to happen under the programme in 2021. So for example, we have just digitised our platform and we are now by the 1st of January, well 4th of January going to be able to accept all applications digitally and approvals and so on and so on will all be able to be handled digitally. So we are preparing to get that programme fully operational to accept the demands. And when we looked at the international trend for investment migration, Mr. President, I can say to this public and to the Grenadian public in general that it is a growing market, growing, it is a trillion dollar business. Grenada only occupies probably 2% or less of the market, so there is real room for us to grow, but we have to do that in a managed way.

I want to spend a few minutes on Marketing Board, because it has come up for many discussions and I sit as Chairman of that organisation and I want to make a few points because I think it is important. Everyone knows that Marketing Board has had its issues, financially primarily and there is recently a discussion of the focus of the Marketing Board in terms of its marketing of farmers produce. But before I go to talk about some of the ills of Marketing Board, I must also talk about some of the positive things that have happened over the years with Marketing Board. We're the only organisation that has been HACCP Certified, HACCP Certified here meaning that we are the only organisation that can certify produce that needs to be exported in a healthy and real packaged way. And you know, when our soursop was given that access to the US market, it was not by accident, it was because they believed that we have a certification here that can verify that the things we do are done in a proper manner, from the time we pick it, to the time we package it and we sell, and we export. Marketing Board over the years have been consistent in its relationship with its farmers and we may argue that that relationship over the years have changed and it has changed, and we may argue about pricing and what is happening about pricing and how we deal with farmers. But let me just say that over the years, Marketing Board has been consistent in being able to offer farmers an avenue to come to them and sell. We have probably

two hundred farmers still on with contracts; that is significant, it is not insignificant **(applause)** and Marketing Board plays its role.

In the crisis we said to all farmers, when there was no hotels to sell to, when there were no areas of, the supermarkets and what was happening to sell to, we said to them, come to us with all your produce, we will buy everything and we did that. So farmers who had produce in the field never had the issue of spoilage or couldn't sell, we took everything, we took it, we in turn sold to the public, we sold, we gave to the institutions, the hospitals, the prisons and so on, but we were there to provide that support to our farmers. So I want to make it very clear that Marketing Board continues to be an instrumental, instrumental part of the farming community. We have extension officers that go out regularly to discourse with farmers to understand what is happening and how it is happening, and you know our farmers' representative was a former employee of Marketing Board. He's very familiar with what to do at Marketing Board. I am not saying that we don't need to relook the formula, relook what we have in Marketing Board and the present model and to see how we could change it, to get it to react better and to be better.

I can say to this House and to the public in general, we have just done a significant amount of analysis on Marketing Board, both financial and otherwise, in order to understand going forward, how the financial model needs to be tweaked to get this organisation to be profitable, to get the organisation to have the kind of cash flow that it needs to, to service its obligations properly and on time. So that is one of the things that we have done and as we present our budgets, as a matter of fact, later on, on Friday, this is one of the areas that we're going to be looking at. What I can say though, is when you have looked at the analysis, I know that the model that we have now cannot change unless we need to, the model in the sense that commodities interacting with fresh produce and what we do and how we do that, that needs to be significantly looked at, because without commodities I can tell you Marketing Board will not survive. And I say that because if we were to go only on fresh produce our gross profit margins on fresh produce over the last 7 years have been in the 20's. No organisation could survive on a gross margin, a gross profit of 20 something percent. In other words a cost

of sale of seventy plus cents on every dollar that you collect, it cannot to meet its other expenses. So we either change the entire project profile of Marketing Board or we have some more serious discussions as we go forward on that.

And then in recent times, the channels to market, the various channels we use to market our produce and other things have changed significantly with COVID, significantly. The number of little sellers we have now out of their vehicles, out of their little tables and so on, has significantly grown. Farmers are now going directly and sell to these people and then they go and sell to the general public. So it is no longer a situation where Marketing Board probably has an outlet in Grand Anse, one in town, one in Sauteurs, one in Grenville and being able to meet the needs, because everybody is all over the place, and so we now have to adjust to that change and see how we can work with it as well.

We have been very consistent in Marketing Board in paying our farmers. I want to say a little thing on price, the pricing situation for us, we have always come under the hammer for that, but in years when you look at, we have always over the years, average price keeps going up and part of the issue with price is that a lot of farmers don't understand their cost as well. So when a farmer comes to us and say listen, you want to pay me $3.50 a pound for tomatoes and that too low, my next question is what is your cost of production of the tomatoes per pound and a lot of them can't tell us that. And if they can't tell me that, how they know that my price of $3.50 a pound is too high or too low? And that is part of the problem, and when I listened to Senator Bhola yesterday talking about the need for our farmers to get more business oriented, it is critical. They need to understand that farming is not just a situation of you put down 200 trees of tomato, you expect a yield of x% and this is how much pounds you get and what is happening and whether or not, when you put in your costing, the price that you sell, or the price that you need to get to get to recover your cost and other things is a reasonable price. And we have said to farmers, I have said to my friends in Marketing Board, and the management in Marketing Board, we are happy to pay more, but if you want me to pay more, you have to guarantee me supply, guarantee me quality, so there is a production side to it that needs to be addressed as well. We have no difficulty

paying farmers more, but it cannot be paying more and I'm not sure what I'm getting from one day to the next. So we must get a certain level of production planning in place, so that we could get this thing to be done properly. The other part is airlift for export, there's a lot of potential for export. I think Senator for Agriculture mentioned the issue of fruit flies with golden apples and the challenges that came with that, so these are areas that we have to look at. The issue of export of soursop and what happens there, we have some serious challenges there, but the export issue and the airlift for export is critical, and the fact that we're going to have in the new airport design, an area set aside for that is positive. We now have to get ourselves ready to maximise on that and exploit that in a major way.

So with those few words on Marketing Board, Mr. President, I want to say that yes the institution has its difficulties, we've been working hard over the last year or two, to rectify them and get them in a place where they could be more assured of how they go forward and what is going to happen to them as we move forward.

I move quickly into the issue of fiscal issues and talk briefly on that. In this presentation of the Private Sector this year, Mr. President, I am not going to spend a lot of times on, a lot of time on the figures because as I said earlier, the only certainty we have for 2021 is uncertainty. So I know some figures have been presented, but I take it in the sense that it may or may not come as we would like it to happen. But I want to make some comments. When you look at the analysis that has been presented, we expect to decline by 12.2% in GDP for 2020, that's the expectation, that's the forecast. We're also projecting a growth of 6% in GDP for 2021. In absolute terms we're talking about an eighteen plus percent turnaround in GDP from where we expect to end and where we expect to be in 2021. Now, when you look at the sectors to drive that which is agriculture and construction and to some degree retail trade, I have my concerns about that. The fact that we have never in the last 5 years had a GDP growth of 6%, haven't, it has averaged around 4.5% for the last 5 years or so, we have never attained 6%, so I believe that 6% could be a stretch and the fact that we have to come from a contraction at 12.2% and grow by 6, we're talking about a turnaround of 18% in GDP.

Now, the budget is heavily premised on construction, construction rightfully so is a short-term measure to create employment, to generate revenues, activity in the economy, it is a short-term measure. All governments, all countries are going to use construction and PSIP to generate economic activity and to get the economies to move. A lot have been said on our ability of capacity and implementation. We have had an issue of implementation, we put in a Ministry of Implementation and we still weren't able to reach the capital budgets with what we budget to what we spend. So we have a real issue with implementation and I want to add on top of that, the issue of capacity. Capacity is a little different to implementation. Implementation, as Minister Cox said yesterday and as I said, the devil is in the details. He gave some of the details yesterday to help with implementation, thankfully so, he said they're looking and they're going out to hire more technocrats, whether it be engineers, project managers and all of that, so that these project can be, you know, move quicker and slower and to reduce the red tape and the bureaucracy. That is welcomed, but if we're doing that, we have to do that now, because as the year starts, 2021 starts in the next couple weeks and the implementation rate is going to have to be phenomenal for us to get that 6% growth under the construction budget, and the PSIP plan. And I'm wondering and seriously wondering if we can do that. Capacity issues speak to the fact that, do we have enough crawlers, equipment here now, Mr. President. If the Private Sector as detailed in this budget is going to be involved in billion dollar projects that we are projecting to come, Mt. Hartman and others, and these projects start in any serious way in 2021 and they start using up our equipment in terms of crawlers and backhoes and so on, would the Government have enough for their projects, and what they want to do under the PSIP Programme? The road construction and all that comes with that, is going to require serious equipment and the deployment of that equipment. This is capacity; do we have the capacity in terms of the equipment to handle the rate of implementation of these projects and the completion and to generate the level of employment and economic activity that we want to do in the economy? And I want to come specifically to this economic activity aspect through construction because, you know, Mr. President, I've stood up in this Senate over the years and complained bitterly that local businessmen

are treated as though they are poison when it comes to projects of Government. Why I say that, and I say that with very little apology, we does have to go and beg to be included to get work under the material aspects and other aspects for the projects. I mean, I know of no other country, and I want to speak Barbados in particular. You think any local businessman in Barbados have to go and beg a Government project to get the business. They won't sometimes even give us an opportunity to bid, and there is this new technical, technical term about sole source and there is a rule against sole source. We are not saying sole source, come to us only, we are saying, give us an opportunity to bid on the project and let us see whether we can meet the quality requirements, the technical requirements and the pricing. And we have, we just keep going around with this thing and when we go to the various Ministries, Works and so on, they tell us this is what the contract requires. How could we as a Government engage in a contract, whether it's grant funding or loan and say to us that we're excluding our business people in the sense that it has to be sole sourced and other things that we use? I can't understand that. And why it is that we have to be begging to come to be part and sit on the table to get an opportunity to bid for these projects. We must change that, we must and if we want to invest a 300 and something million dollars in the PSIP programme and get this to work, the only way the economic activity from these projects could trickle down to us in this economy is through our businesses, and through those who provide services to these projects. The people who run heavy equipment, people who make blocks, all of us, all of us need to be part of this issue of getting into the projects and we must change that thinking, Mr. President, or else, I don't know how we're going to get the economic activity that we want.

When we look at their Medium-Term Strategy paper, it says that over the next 5 years, the projected GDP is going to go from 6% to 4.8 to 3, so we're actually seeing for 2021, 6, 2022 it's dropping to 4.8 and 2023 it's dropping to 3. So in other words we're getting back to more realistic terms of what GDP growth is going to be. So that's why I said initially, Mr. President, I wonder about that 6% growth for 2021 and I'm going to talk the downside and upside risks in a little while.

Issues with the Construction Sector, not really issues; the positive side is job creation of course, increased economic activity, which I just spoke to and the short term part. The issue of construction was mentioned I think by Senator Cox and Senator Bhola, productive investments in what we do with projects under the PSIP versus going into straight construction like roads and bridges that have a very short lifespan. You invest in that, people get employed for a few weeks, a few months and then the project ends, the economic activity ends. So there must be a certain level of balance in the productive side of the PSIP Programme and that is where a lot of discussion came in from my colleague in Agriculture of agro-processing in particular as one area where we could get a productive investment and will continue to generate business and income from over the years and I'm going to come to that in a little while. I spoke about capacity, implementation and of course the devil in the details which we spoke about.

I know a lot have been made about the cap spend and the part with loans, and I know my Senator to my right spoke about the fact that we're going into more loans. Yes, we are going to go into more loans, we are going to take according to the figures presented $44m in loans, $174m is going to come from grants through primarily NTF and other grants. The public debt is expected to end 2021 at 65.7 moving to 63.7, moving to 62.7, 2022 and 2023 respectively, so it's going to stay in the range of the 60's. We are coming from a 58%, so it is going to increase, but I'm not worried from the standpoint that there is no country coming out of a pandemic that would not have to entertain more debt in order to deal with what its macroeconomics is presenting. I recently read an article coming out of the IMF recently, where the IMF is now looking to engage more deeply in countries, to have available over a billion US, available to countries that need to engage in concessionary loans, to help to bring their economy back to some level of stability and economic activity that we're accustomed to. IMF wouldn't look to do that if they didn't recognise that that was one of the ways and the instruments that we have to use. The question for us is being able to generate the level of GDP that could keep the debt to GDP at a ratio that is not burdensome and we know what it is to have high debt to GDP ratios. So, I am not very concerned about that and I am saying that from a Private Sector point of view because in the past when we had

debt, there was a risk that the Government engaging in more debt could crown out the Private Sector if it wanted to engage in expansion and being able to access debt through the traditional banking institutions. That is not an issue now, because we understand that the liquidity situation in these banks are pretty strong, so that once bankable projects and I want to state that quickly, bankable projects and I know when my Senator from Agriculture spoke about some of the ideas which I applaud and I'm going to talk to just now, and Senator Bhola spoke about the bankability of projects, now this is a serious thing. And one of the reasons that traditional institutions, banks, don't get into agriculture is only because of one reason, risk, and how to mitigate risk. I am not going to lend money to you in any project whether it be agriculture or not, if you can't mitigate the risk for me when you present your project. Agriculture is one sector that comes under higher scrutiny than others because of the risk, because of the nature of agriculture and its dependence on whether disease, the lack of diseases and so on, and so forth. How you mitigate that is going to be a serious question. I know we talk about greenhouse, I know we're speaking about engaging more technology in agriculture and if we want to move agriculture, we have no choice but to do that, and we must do those things.

Unemployment, the Government has indicated 28.4%, approximately 14,000 jobs as a result was lost through the collapse of tourism and hopefully construction is going to help to bring back some of that to some degree and create some level of hope. But we must continue to understand, Mr. President, that part of the risks associated going forward is still our vulnerability to natural phenomenon that could present natural disasters for us. We have been very fortunate in this season, we had thirty plus systems going through, we outlived the normal alphabet and we had to go into the Greek Roman Alphabet in order to **(laughter)** meet some of the names that was coming forward, and climate change and what that brings to us is significant as we go forward and we look at these issues that are coming to face us. So we have to be prepared to deal with these risks and what is going to happen. I did promise I'm not going to spend a lot of time on the figures, I think the figures are what they are and I said initially that there are a number of areas that is cited in the budget and we have to pray and hope

that a lot of it is hinging on the fact that we're going to be heavily involved in construction.

But I want to spend a quick time on the risks that was presented, and when you read the papers presented, there is one at risk and the background and the context within this budget was presented and to highlight some of the risks coming forward. There is the pandemic of course and how the pandemic in the developed markets are going to be mitigated and how it's going to be dealt. Hopefully through the vaccine and how that is going to impact our area here, in terms of the tourism and the rebound of the Tourism Industry. There is the issue of tightening global financial markets and our access to funding, whether it's through loans, grant funding or otherwise, that is going to present a challenge; risks again for us on the revenue side. The reduction in remittances, that is significant, since remittances represent a significant inflow of revenue to the average person that could help put money in their pocket and help again generate economic activity, help to deal with VAT and the collection of VAT as they purchase goods and what is going to happen across that tax type. Contraction in the trading centres affecting tourism and foreign direct investments. As I mentioned earlier we do have a cushion for that through CBI. Rise in international oil prices, something that is going to affect us on the energy side and the cost. As you know oil pervades every aspect of our society. Vulnerability to natural disasters, we spoke on that and how that can affect our debt to GDP.

But the one I want to spend a little time on, Mr. President, which I don't think the framers of this budget in the risks identified, and that in my view is a major risk, and that is the issue of the labour climate, and I believe that is critical for us. A lot of what Government want to achieve on the expenditure side rests on labour becoming a partner to deal with us on these issues. Industrial relation issues, salary increases, suspension of deferral, attitude to work, job security versus increased payments and other benefits and how we posture to deal with that, is going to be a significant downside risk if we don't manage that properly. You know a lot was said about the 4% increase and Senator Bhola dealt with it aptly yesterday in his response, I don't need to repeat that. But I believe if all of us is being called on for sacrifice, and I hear labour,

labour has always said that every time we talk about sacrifice we look at employees first to make sacrifice. And that may be so to some degree but for us in business and otherwise, paying salaries is a critical thing and it is our major fixed cost and if the average man don't understand what fixed cost mean, it means that regardless of what we do, that's a cost we have to meet. You can't vary it, because it is agreed ahead of time, that that is an area that we must pay, so paying salaries for any institution is a critical think. Senator Bhola spoke about yesterday, the fact that Government paid right throughout the crisis, nobody lost their job, and everybody was paid and not only paid, paid on time **(applause)** paid on time. For us, not Government alone, even in the Private Sector, those of us who were able to keep our employees, SGU is a good example. We in the Private Sector paid everybody on time and without any loss. There are many businesses, Mr. President, that had to cut salaries by 20%, some as much as $50%, some had to take out shifts, some had to send home people, downsize. A lot of people have been stressed, but there are a lot of us who have gotten these things but we're not counting our blessings.

Barbados, when they were challenged with the lock down, were offering to pay their public servants with bonds. It was a big hurray about that and a refusal and I don't know if they ever got around to settling their issue, but that was where the Government had to resort to. In Grenada's situation, we didn't have to come to that, and we need to be appreciative of this situation. We need to ask ourselves the question, Mr. President, from where I see it in a Private Sector point of view. Which is more important, having a job or asking for increases or asking for bonuses, whatever it is and have the risks and possibility of that business having to downsize as a result? We need to significantly ask that question, and it's not only about sacrifice. I know of properties where the first people to take salary cuts was management, not only line staff, so it's all of us, all of us in this in a partnership, all of us are required to think a little harder and deeper as we go forward. As I said, Mr. President, I'm repeating it again, the only certainty we have is uncertainty, and this situation is very fluid as we go forward. My businesses may be doing okay now, but in a matter of one instance, we could go back into lockdown if we have a community spread or some sort of spread. And we know, I heard the Minister

for Health say we might have access to vaccines in March, I hope so, but we know that countries like ourselves, small and micro even though we have the COVAX situation which will ensure that we have some access to these vaccines, would not happen until probably significantly in the second half of 2021. So we have to be very careful between now and June to ensure that we follow the protocols and do what we have to do. So it is important for us to stay on ball and on target as we move forward.

Quickly, Mr. President, I want to touch on the issue of the Private Sector and our view of what has been presented so far. First of all we welcome the fact that there are no new taxes that were put on into this budget. **(Applause)** It offers the Private Sector the ability to be more predictable and it offers us the opportunity to plan better as we move forward in this very uncertain times. We do have some concerns though, when the Minister for Finance in the "Other Place" spoke about the collection of arrears, and I want to spend a two minutes on that. Over the years we are sure that the arrears figure that comes forward from Inland Revenue Department has never been very accurate, and that is the first challenge the Government will face. The ability to understand the level of accuracy in the arrears figure that comes forward, on all the tax types, and I have personal experience of that, Mr. President. I pay my land tax on time, every time and every time I get an estimate it's telling me I'm owing arrears. I go back one time and I tell them, I show them all the receipts, the guy tell me thanks Mr. De Allie, we go take out the arrears situation in the computer. I tell him eh, eh, I want a letter from them saying that I am not owing, and the next year it come up with the same arrears figure. I say that to say that if my experience on my land tax is that, I shudder to think what some of the other areas are, and how accurate that arrears figure is. So when I hear the Minister for Finance say we're going with some level of enthusiasm to collect this arrears figure, I want to know probably if he knows how much of it is really arrears and could collect. And I think the issue have to, not so much be on arrears, because when we had the pandemic, the Government gave us moratoriums in terms of giving us a break as to how we pay and when we pay and that was welcomed, and we welcome that. And I believe the issue here has to be more around compliance and how much of us have complied since March and since the pandemic, and I am certain that the

compliance rate which normally averages in the 80's for most of the tax types, so we have corporation tax, we have land tax, we have stamp tax, we have withholding tax, all of these taxes. I am certain that the compliance rate previous to COVID was in the 80's, particularly land tax, I know it use to hit the 90's. So the issue is, have the compliance rate come down to a point where we need to get more vigilant and engage in more discussions with the people who owe us these taxes and to see based on their situation, whether they need moratoriums or whether they need a payment plan, based on their current situation. And I think that has to be the approach more so, than saying we're going after people who owing the Government plenty money. And you know arrears carry with it a thing called interest and penalty, and 90% of the time the interest and penalty is not collectable because the arrears figure wrong. So then the Government gets a false sense that they have a lot of money to collect under that particular type in the Tax Department. So that is something we need to pay some attention to and look at other ways we could improve the compliance and hopefully get businesses that are in trouble, some of them have died and so on, and what can be done in these situations. I mentioned that the Private Sector is hopeful and we hope that the confidence level as this budget is hoping to project is achieved through the various construction projects, in terms of implementation, capacity and rate. And hopefully we can see some spin off in our businesses that can help us to generate economic activity and to keep us sustainable and alive as we move forward.

I want to quickly go and talk on agro-processing, Mr. President, as part of a Private Sector initiative. You know, when I, in previous times stood in this Senate I was extremely critical of GCNA and I made no apologies at the time when I was critical of GCNA, because I think their governance structure requires some adjustments still. But you know when I engaged my Senatorial colleague on my left and I see some of the great work he has done with his organisation, he being at the helm, I wonder if that is a reflection of youth and youthful energy or is it a reflection of a change in thinking, and I'm praying that he has the support of his Board to continue in that line. And, Mr. President, I will be the first one to jump and say, that in recent days I visited their shop in the Lagoon and I had an experience with a particular drink called the Nutmeg Cooler

and let me tell you. I have been impressed from the time I went to the shop **(applause)** and experiencing the Cooler and if that is an indication of where GCNA is going to go with value-added. Because you know we have spent a lot of time on the oil issue and talk about the successes and failure of that but here is a young MD, young GM that have decided to take the pod of the nutmeg. Now we never use to get anything for the pod. Right to be more biologically precise the pericarp, we have never as farmers been paid for that, now farmers have an opportunity to pay attention to the pod and when they harvest because they could get, you're coming from zero for the pod to whatever they're paying for the pod now.

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon Christopher De Allie: Right, and then I'm just talking about the Cooler, but they have, they're doing many other things with the pod, they're pickling it, they're making jam, they're doing all sorts of thing with this thing. And, Mr. President, we must compliment when it comes to these things because over the years we have seen a level of inertia on the nutmeg side and it's always about we can't make this, we can't, we need money support, we need this. This is a good positive change, what we need now is to make sure we get the investments to grow these areas. And Senator Bhola on the "Other Side" spoke about the initiatives and if we could use what we have now, and see, we have a lot of nutmeg receiving stations; probably we can change one into a facility where we could do that, production of the Cooler and other things. And this is probably some of the things we need to bear and see how Government could support, not necessarily financially but get Private Sector people to come. He and I have been talking and see if I can get investors to come and take an interest in his products. That's the way we have to go and I compliment them **(applause)** Mr. President. I feel strongly about that, because generally in agro-processing, we have had a lot of starts and a lot of failures in agro-processing, that's the reality. From since the days of the Revolution and Senator for Labour is not here, but since then, we have had a Produce Chemist Lab that have come out with various projects and different

aspects but somehow we slow to be on the uptake with agro-processing. We had a juicing company here, I think it was in St. David's, you could correct if I'm wrong, that used to make some really good juices of soursop and so on. They complained about having the produce and having to be able to get it, and that was an area of raw material challenge and that is an area as we go forward, that our brother needs, we need to talk and see how we could encourage, because agro-processing… from the time you know Mr. President, I know you know that well, you were a child of the Revolution, probably an adult at the time, I was more of a child **(inaudible comments/laughter)** and when we started to make tamarind juice in the days of the Revolution, and juice tamarind and come out with that juice, that was one of the best juices we ever had. We had a problem with the canning…

Mr. President: Especially drinking it with strong rum.

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: I don't know, I won't go there, but when we used to, when we use to engage in that, the first set of canning, the cans used to explode, they used to swell and they eventually rectified that. But when they used to bottle it in plastic bottles it had absolutely no problem, absolutely, and the taste was phenomenal. And I mean, could you imagine, we started that in the days of the Revolution. If we were to have the testicular fortitude, Mr. President, to continue we would have been way ahead, right. But according to Mr. Trump, **"it is what it is…"**

Mr. President: In fact Senator as you know the demand market for the pepper sauce that was being produced was so huge, that there was consideration of setting down a plant just for the pepper sauce alone, so …

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: Yes, and…

Mr. President: You're recollecting well, yes.

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: ...I didn't mention the pepper sauce.

Mr. President: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: You introduced us at lunch yesterday to the pepper sauce again, excellent products, excellent products coming out of… and I have endeavoured to work with my Senatorial colleague in Agriculture and GCB to see if we could get some sort of level of Private Sector involvement and how we could push that forward. We welcome from the Private Sector, the Government's increase to GDB of $1.7m to help with small business and we hope that this could further help **(applause)** because we all know that small and micro business is an area of serious rural employment and a lot of them have died in the COVID environment. So the initiative here through GDB is an excellent one. I caution that, and you know Senator Bhola spoke about it yesterday, our people. I don't want to say farmers, I don't want to highlight farmers, we don't like to pay back. I can't say it any other way. We just don't like to, and especially when they believe is Government funds, it worst. They think Government funds is theirs and it's free and they don't understand that when they don't pay back, then there is no more funds available for others who may need. And that is a vicious cycle. So I want to plead with our people. I mean could you imagine as Senator Bhola said yesterday, a person in a Government institution, when the farmer come to pay, to say to pay, you know he ask him what he's talking about, and you don't have to pay. I can't believe that, Mr. President. That has to be a special kind of thinking that we must change. If that person have a mortgage in a bank and you know, I don't want to use the connotation of a foreigner or a white man on top of us, they're coming assiduously every month to pay their money but when it's us in Government, they tell themselves somehow they don't need to pay. That is a problem and then we must change that. We must change that in order for us to continue.

Agriculture and fisheries; I am not going to spend a lot of time. A lot of time was spent on that yesterday, but you know when I listened to my colleague friend talk about various initiatives under agriculture that he has and he have come forward with, the ideas and I think some of them have to deal with setting up the same processing, agro-processing for farmers and to bring all of them in. The idea of having shade houses or greenhouses in a big area and inviting and leasing, I thought was a revolutionary idea because first time I'm hearing it. First time I'm hearing it, so I think there are ideas that we need to explore. You know the Cooperatives issue, for years I wondered why Cooperatives don't work in Grenada, for years. At one time, Mr. President, I thought the word was the wrong word because anytime you say Cooperatives we put in failure. Most, a lot of Cooperatives have started and failed, there are a few around now that's working primarily led by women, and I believe that is a virtue of the lady folk. They're serious, they're detailed in their approach and when they set their mind on something, 99% of the time they achieve it **(applause)** and if that is what we have to do, I'm sorry for our men but we have some problems. Boy we have some issues with that, but when I heard the Senator for Agriculture mention about the size of the Cooperatives and the fact that the legislation doesn't cater for small ones like four, and so on, I say ah, here is a bottleneck, here is a bottleneck. So probably the bad word is not Cooperatives, the bad word is, we need to change, amend the Legislation to be able to facilitate a four member Cooperative or a 5 member Cooperative as the case may be that can work. And, Mr. President, I think we have to push that and we have to push that fast, because if we want to talk about agriculture playing this pivotal role in relation to food security and giving families an opportunity to gain revenue and get some security on their side, as a financial security. I am not going to touch praedial larceny, that's another sour path. But we must, we must address the issue of Cooperatives and dealing with that and I put that on the side of my colleagues on the "Other Side," that that is an amendment that through agriculture or whoever we need to come to this Parliament quickly to get adjusted so we could facilitate the sizing of these Cooperatives. And I believe that is an area that we need to work on quickly.

I want to talk about fish and I know my brother, if you didn't mention fisher folk you would have been in plenty trouble.

(Inaudible comments by Senator St. Clair)

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: Yes and I want to talk about fish and fisher folk, because the Fishing Industry is an industry in this country that have been given some of the most concessions you could think about and it's not only because we want to encourage men to fish. I think it's also because of the nature of the industry, the dangers associated with it and what happens. But the reality of it, the average fisherman is not a businessman, he's a fisherman or a fisherwoman, he's not a businessman or businesswoman. So when the Representative for Agriculture and Fisheries spoke about setting up these little hubs to manage them and manage their business, help them with business plans, help them to see how to cost their product, understand their revenues, all of that, marketing, I thought that was again a revolutionary idea. We need to invest in them in that area. And it's not the fishermen alone, I know many medical practitioners that don't have a clue about their business, they're excellent doctors because that is how they have been trained, but when it comes to managing their business, lawyers as well, we have a lot of legal people that can't manage their business. It's not a weakness, it is a reality that some of us in our specialities don't necessarily have a business acumen and we need to recognise that, at that level and we need to push that. And I support that wholeheartedly and I say to you, if you need the assistance of the Private Sector, because some of us in the Private Sector tend to be a little better businessmen than normal, you could come to us. And I want to pledge my support to you in that area.

I want to continue with the fishing thing, because for years I've been saying in this Upper House, Mr. President, we have enough fish house. I clear on that, we have enough fish place to go and sell we fish, bring up we fish and so on, and I know Senator

Cox yesterday or Senator Bhola spoke about the issue of the ice makers and the fact that we're going to be remedying that and dealing with refrigerated trucks. I only want to say to you Senator, make sure we have a maintenance programme put in place. If we have to put back eight ice machines or fix eight ice machines in these fish vending areas, something have to be wrong with maintenance, something have to be wrong with the maintenance and every time we go back out and we have to source and get equipment, it's costing us more if we just do the maintenance right. And if Government want to control expenditure that's an area; we must talk about maintenance. I don't want to talk about all the police vehicle and all of that and the fees and all the drama that does go on there, because that's a major leak when it comes to Government revenues in terms of spending to keep our vehicles for the security forces viable and operational, major leak, because we have very little maintenance or no maintenance programme in a planned way. When we have to take vehicles off to check for brakes, check for this, check for that, check for oil, some of our vehicles running under the security, RGPF don't know when last day they get an oil change, and then they seize and then we have to buy a whole engine. But, coming back to the fish issue, I believe and I know it was spoken about by the colleague Senator, dry fish, fishing school, all of that I think is areas the Minister for Agriculture, and in discussion, and he seems to have a very good relationship with the Minister for Agriculture, both for fisheries and agriculture, because we separate them now. And that could be a good thing because we could isolate what we want to do. But when we talk about getting US$1.8m I believe from Japan, I want to put this on the table for consideration, can we please ask them to look at a project to do fish processing?

(Time bell rings)

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: That means I have…

Mr. President: 15 minutes.

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: 15 minutes, right. Could we please look for getting some level of fish processing done? Whether it's… we have a lot of tuna that sometimes we can't ship and tuna is not our prized fish, you know its dolphin and other things. Can't we have some mechanism to cap, we does sell tuna in flakes, in oil, in water, in all kind of nonsense for us here, everything coming in, we can't do that up to now? And I mean I am a chemical engineer, I know the facilities to do a fish processing is not very expensive, and equipment is not a lot. But could you think of the possibilities our fishermen catching tuna, cannot export or doesn't meet the requirements for export and we could still sell it, and to do canning and we could now sell that on, whether it's locally and otherwise. It is a huge area that we could look at, and all these times over the years we're getting from Japan, all the assistance, welcomed assistance to develop the fishing and jetty's and so on, we need to take it to the next stage. We're tired buying fish, teach us to fish now, we want to be supportive of our own self, give us a fish processing plant that we can do that with. So, I don't have much time, I am not going to spend much time on the commodity boards, I think my Senator on the "Other Side" captured that nicely yesterday.

When you talk about insurance, I want to just guide you, Dr. Curlan Gilchrist he's now a PhD. His thesis was dealing with insurance, corporation and the concept and how we could look at something there for our farmers, both on health. It would be good to get a download of his document and take a read. I think there are excellent ideas there on how we could fashion something for our farmers that wouldn't be too costly for us and for us to maintain.

Mr. President, quickly to security, I want to say that you know in all of the pandemic and all that has gone on, and I heard the compliments go out to the frontline workers but I want to, I want to always single out the RGPF because you know in the pandemic RGPF was stretched, I think to the limits of almost bursting to have to deal with the issues of the pandemic and still have to deal with the other issues that we face as a society. Whether it be abuse and child abuse and all that goes with that, whether it be with praedial larceny or whether it be basic crime that will be happening, house-breaking and so on. So if for no other reason, I want to compliment the RGPF on an

excellent job they have done **(applause)** so far for 2020, all aspects of the RGPF. I saw last night on the news that Commissioner Frank just received some help for the Coast Guard to patrol the coast and to help with drug interdiction, again we welcome that and we really look at, we depend heavily on RGPF you know, Mr. President.

We take our security for granted. We could walk down the road, we could go down on Quarantine Point, sit down in a vehicle, enjoy the sky and the moon and nobody ain't harass us. We take a lot of that for granted and the only time we does really get to understand that, is when we see what's happening in other countries and we compare ours. Right next door, Trinidad, what's happening in Venezuela and to some degree in Trinidad, we have to be thankful for our security forces and what they have done and how they have protected us over 2020, not only from the security standpoint but from the public health standpoints. They have done an excellent job **(applause)** and we must say that and I keep on saying that. We have not seen a spike in crime and you know Senator St. Cyr spoke about the psychological and the psycho-trauma that comes with a pandemic and being locked down. And we knowing that a Caribbean people, our sociability, we don't know about not hugging and kissing and touching and so on, and when you prevent us from those, the psycho-trauma that comes with that could be significant. And again I say we have been able to manage that, not probably to the best but once we are aware of it, we can look at interventions that can help. So I want to say thank you, a big thank you to the security forces. They have been allotted $51.6m in the budget, I hope they use all. I know they do use all and if we could give them more, more. And I heard my friend talk about the Grenville Police Station and I hear the response to that from Senator Cox and I'm happy to hear that.

I also hear the response on the Fire Station, because I had planned to knock him over his knuckles if he had moved the Fire Station from town and he didn't give us some sort of relief. So I'm glad to hear that it's not being contemplated in the way some people are saying it's going to be contemplated. So I'm happy about that, Mr. President, and you know we didn't talk about the response of the fire service. The last fire we had, down in lower Lucas Street, we does quick to jump on social media and say all the wrong things, Mr. President, but when we have to compliment our firemen for

reaching there, dealing with the situation, isolating it, buildings to the left and to the right didn't sustain any major damage, they may have some water damage but clearly the response time. And I am noting the last few incidents of fire, everybody have been complimenting the fire service on their response time, and their ability to deal with the situation quickly. We must commend that **(applause)** and we have to knock table, we must.

So I quickly move to, I think I have 10 minutes left, 5 minutes to wrap up.

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie: 10, right. I want to quickly talk about the environmental sustainability and what happens there and security. And I know my friend, Leader of Government's Business, that is his particular area and I want to say that you know the Private Sector supports the fact that the legal framework for dealing with solar energy in Grenada needs to be changed, clearly, we support that. And when you look at CARICOM and particularly I want to single out Barbados in this issue, and where Barbados is going with solar technology, and where we are so far back, in terms of vehicles and ports to charge and so on, and so on. It is working in serious close relationship with the generator of the power and what needs to happen there, so we must deal with that. I want to throw out something to you; recently a Private Sector company in Barbados launched a project of solar panels. So they set up a solar farm, with say 500 panels and one of the things that came out of that is that, instead of selling shares in the business, they were selling panels as shares. So you come in this business you buy 5 panels. It may cost you $3,000 or $5,000 but the intent of this business is that when I sell what I produce from this panel farm to the grid, the monies I get back I share it in proportion to the investment you made in my panels. That is a revolutionary idea **(applause)** of how to change investment and how we do investment differently and how we could capitalise on sola, something that we have 319 days of the year, that we could deal with. Revolutionary and it is starting in Barbados, Mr. President. We could talk about it here. I know the Government have initiatives about

removing duties and so on, on solar related technology and technology related to these kind of things. Excellent, but we need to take it a step further, we need to encourage businesses to partner and let's see how we could develop these ideas. **(Inaudible comments)** Well that's right, I spoke about the legal framework first and I'm clear about that and, Mr. President, that is an area I want to see us moving. I know about the city and getting all of that, excellent, but we need to take it a step further and make it workable for our people.

A young man called me the other day, Mr. President, and he said Mr. De Allie you know when young people start to work, some of them who have work, the first thing they does want to buy is a car to move around. He say why they don't have a certain amount of shares allocated for me in agro-processing business that say for young people between 18 and 25 we're putting aside 10,000 shares for them alone based on their age and encourage them to invest in vehicles like that, not the car. Yes you can get piece of land but get them into business and investing in business. None of us don't do that when we put out shares, say that a certain portion is allotted for young people. Come, we might even give them a difference price, you never know, but the amount we may see coming might surprise us. We need to think about our youths in that kind of way and encourage them to invest in that kind of manner.

I believe I spoke about labour and the risks and I want to quickly say on labour that when we talk about motivation for workers, I highlighted a few things: being paid on time; being paid (generally); safe work environment; providing pension benefits, health insurance and recently I heard about housing for public servants, giving them preference to use that. It is not all about pay, it is not all about pay. Mr. President, you have been a Trade Unionist for many years, you know that pay ranks probably third or fourth down on the list when it comes to worker satisfaction in an environment. Pay is never at the top, we need to change that.

And the quick thing about productivity that was mentioned yesterday, the Union and Labour in this country still frowns on linking performance to productivity and to pay and to bonuses, they still frown on that. A lot of us in the Private Sector and I know Senator St. Cyr where she working, if you don't perform, you will be assessed and if

your performance is below they will deal with you in one form or the other. You have to get us thinking about linking performance to pay, we have profit sharing, excellent idea; I have no problem with that. But somewhere along there, we have to find a way to link payment of profit sharing to some performance. That is something we have to talk about in deep and deeper.

Mr. President, I wrap up. I want to say as I conclude that COVID and this COVID environment is not going to be an easy challenge as we go forward, and I want to implore all of our people to pay attention, be safe, practice what we have been practicing for most of this year and have been kept safe. It works, the protocols work, social distancing, wearing of our masks even though it is uncomfortable, hand sanitising, it works. Let us keep doing it. That is the only way we could keep ourselves, our family and our extended family in the country safe, and we must be responsible to do that. And some of us, you know we had a recent thing with a "zesser party" in Trinidad and we don't want to go down that road. I know our young people having cabin fever and they want to go out, and they want to do. I wanted to go and fete this weekend, Mr. President, I can't fete now, I have to stay home. All of us have it, but we have to make the sacrifice.

I want to express great thanks to my Senatorial colleagues for the support this year. It has been a challenging year and all of us I believe have worked particularly in good form to keep this House at the level and quality it is at. We have two new young Senators, three on my side: Senator St. Clair, St. Cyr and I don't want to talk about St. Andrew's but you know, Mr. President, I agree with you, we go have to start putting something for town and St. George. I welcome our new Senators, I think they bring a level of **(laughter)**, and my good Senator on, well I am not putting you in that class. You're way past that youthful stage. **(Laughter)** You know when I see the quality of these young people and what they have presented to the Senate I'm proud. Yes we have little things to learn and develop and so on over the time, but they were on their maiden voyage as it relates to a Budget Debate and they have done themselves well. They have little tweaks but that's fine, you'll learn as you go along, and we're proud of

them, and it's time to show to us as some of the older folks, we have to release to you guys, take it and run. I'm happy to see that.

I want to also express thanks to my Private Sector colleagues and our chambers and all the Private Sector organisations for keeping me here and giving me the opportunity to express on their behalf and to articulate what I need to as I see how it will benefit not only us in the Private Sector but our country in general. Because at the end of the day when we sit here we think about country even though we have constituents to think about, but the country is always our main focus and to how we can better what we have.

I want to thank my family, Mr. President, because without them and the support they have given to me over the years, and this year in particular for being in the Senate, I thank them from the deepest part of my heart because they're very important to me. So I thank them and I thank my creator for giving me the health and strength to be able to continue to articulate as best I can on the issues and as best as they are to present themselves.

I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a productive New Year, and a safe New Year, and I want to hope that as we move forward in 2021 with all that we have presented, I leave us with the same quote I started with **"the only certainty for 2021 is uncertainty"** and we need to be patient and work hand in hand, the Government and everybody else, to make sure we could get what we are predicting that we'd like to. I thank you, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator De Allie. As usual, very in-depth and comprehensive. Senator Cathisha Williams, you now have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: Yes.

Mr. President: And I preside with great expectations.

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: Thank you, Mr. President. No pressure, no pressure. Mr. President, Honourable Members, I rise to give my support to the Motion to approve the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2021. Mr. President, the story of human civilisation and indeed the story of governance is inexorably one of triumph and adversity, of destruction and the transformation. Grenada, notwithstanding its tender age has certainly endured its share of adversities, from being the centre of a global war of political ideology to being the epicentre of a zone of destruction in the wake of natural disasters. And this year our Islands find themselves in the grip of a ferocious contagion, the only distinction with this latest trial, Mr. President, is that our tribulations are shared with the rest of the world. But while this is a shared struggle, the reality is that the repercussions of this crisis can be much more disastrous for small nations like ours. The fact that the death tolls in certain countries are multiples of our population brings home this stark reality. We are only 112,000 people and the death tolls in some countries are 300,000, Mr. President. So that tells you the extent of the threat that we face. And, Mr. President, this state of affairs demands drastic, bold strategies and decisive action. This state of affairs demand skilful leadership and I'm sorry that my friend Senator Lewis on the "Other Side" is not here because he mentioned the type of leadership that is required in situations like these. The situation requires leadership that is informed, leadership that is level-headed, leadership that has been forged in the crucible of a hurricane aftermath, of an economic recession and a successful economic recovery. Mr. President, yes there's a lot of uncertainty, but I am certain of this, that there is no other team of leaders that is as tested and true. No other team that is as experienced in the art of pulling a country back from the brink, and no other team that is better equipped to turn the tide of sickness that threatens to destroy our way of life, than this current Administration. **(Applause)**

Mr. President, this Government including the Ministry of Health and the COVID team has done a stellar job this year, particularly in ensuring that Grenada remained in the CDC's low risk category. And while recently, there have been unfortunate setbacks we must not let this deter our resolve. This is not a battle that can be won by policies and regulations alone; this battle can only be won through the unified efforts of

Government and the people. **(Applause)** And I stress on people, Mr. President, putting aside our political differences, our ideological differences, so that we may protect our nation and hasten our return to some semblance of normalcy. And, Mr. President, this is what this budget is all about, restoring our way of life through our recovery efforts, while transforming our economy and building resilience to better withstand any possible future calamities.

Mr. President, we shall be grateful for the day when this period is just another footnote in history, just another story of triumph over adversity, but we have a lot more work to do in this coming year. A lot more collective responsibility to exercise, a lot more discipline, a lot more collaboration to make this a reality, and this budget provides the roadmap for our way forward. Therefore, Mr. President, I am pleased to share with you the achievements, plans and projections for three of our Ministries and I'm going to attempt to do that with limited time. And those Ministries are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs; the Ministry of Social Development, Housing, Community Empowerment and Hospital Services and the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

But, Mr. President, before I get into the Ministerial Portfolios, I just want to comment on something briefly mentioned by my dear Senator colleague De Allie on the "Other Side," and that is the scepticism he expressed in the projected rate of growth for the next year. And in my limited economic knowledge I will leave this to the more experienced economists, but from my understanding the drastic curtailment of economic activity, resulted in the contraction of the economy by a percentage of 12.6%. That's because there were sudden loss of jobs, sudden closure of businesses. So we are starting at a point of extreme loss and it means that in the coming year, we will be seeing the sudden opening of businesses, we will be seeing large numbers of persons suddenly going back to work, we will see businesses starting to return to their normal mode of operations and because of that we will see a higher growth rate in that period. So it doesn't mean that all of a sudden, we're just taking off with this spurt of growth. It means that because of the sudden return to economic activity, we will see an unusually

higher growth rate than in the previous years. Because this is not gradual growth, this is the sudden return to economic activity. **(Applause)** So in my…

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: …well yes, but that is just to alleviate some of your concerns with the unusually high growth rate that is projected for the coming year.

So, Mr. President, I hope that satisfied my Honourable Senator, and now I will get into the Ministerial Portfolios, starting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs, previously only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so we have added International Business and we have stressed CARICOM Affairs in the nomenclature. Mr. President, this Ministry while continuing to perform its core functions, has been instrumental in mobilising resources and rallying the support of our international partners in the fight against COVID-19. All of our Embassies and Consulates have given selfless service to diaspora communities affected by the pandemic, providing aid and comfort to members of the community, especially those who have lost their loved ones. And we have been fortunate here in Grenada that we haven't experienced any loss of life but we must remember the members of our diaspora, our friends and family overseas, who have lost their lives and this Government sympathises with those who are still grieving, Mr. President.

Now to aid the fight at home, we have received substantial donations of PPE, PCR and rapid test kits and related medical supplies from the People's Republic of China, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and our Missions to the United Nations and our Consulate General in Toronto and Miami. **(Applause)** Mr. President, we have also received donations of over EC$40,000 to the COVID Relief Fund from the High Commission of Grenada to the United Kingdom and the Grenada Consulate in Dubai. Further, our Missions to the European Union and the United Nations worked with officials from the Ministry of Finance to ensure that Grenada gained access to COVID related financing packages,

available through various agencies. Mr. President, in addition to this material and monetary support, we have also benefited from the generous gift of human resource from the Republic of Cuba, who dispatched **(applause)** teams of doctors and nurses to Grenada, as they have done all over the world. And I must say again, that Cuba continues to be an example in this world, of a pure demonstration of internationalism. While having to battle their own domestic problems, while having to fight COVID like the rest of us, while having to deal with the loss of life of people in their own country, from COVID-19, they have been dispatching their nurses and doctors and experts all over the world, to help with this fight.

It is said, Mr. President, that the firmest friendships have been formed in mutual adversity, as iron is most strongly united by the fiercest flame. And this quote is particularly relevant this year as we have seen the reinforcement of our historic bond with our international friends through their altruism and generosity, at a time when they are faced with their own domestic trials. Therefore, Mr. President, we acknowledge the assistance from our regional and international partners, and express our heartfelt gratitude for their unfailing support in these perilous times. This is not the first global crisis that the world has faced, nor shall it be the last, but we shall overcome this one, as we had done the last. As a global community, as a family of nations and we shall emerge stronger and more equipped to face any other eventuality.

Mr. President, in addition to providing support during the pandemic, our missions and diplomats has been doing their part to remain active and engaged members of the diplomatic community. Grenada's Permanent Representative to the UN currently serves as the Chair of the SIDS DOCK Island Woman Open Network or IWON, which is a network that assist in the building of the capacity of women, to participate in the transformation of Small Island Developing States' Energy Sectors and our Prime Minister, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell continues to serve as the President of SIDS DOCK. Grenada also currently serves as the Chair of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization or Committee-24. Mr. President, in February of this year, at the initiative of the Permanent Representatives of Grenada and Botswana, representatives of the African Group and the CARICOM Caucus agreed to establish the

African Group CARICOM or AfCAR collaboration, which is an initiative to reinforce the bonds of friendship between African and CARICOM States. As a consequence of this initiative, Grenada is in the early stages of establishing diplomatic relations with the Republics of Sierra Leone, Kiribati and Rwanda. The AfCAR Joint Steering Committee is also currently co-chaired by Botswana and Grenada. And, Mr President, I would just like to note here that Africa is uncharted territory. In a lot of our diplomatic relations we are quick to form relationships with our partners in Europe and North America and Asia, but Africa, Africa is where it's at now, Mr. President. Africa is a land of opportunity and our partners in the People's Republic of China, they have realised that, and it's time that we also realise that and improve our diplomatic relations with our ancestral brothers in that great continent. **(Applause)**

In addition to seeking closer relations with our African counterparts, on the 6th and 20th of October of this year, Grenada signed communiques establishing diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the principality of Monaco respectively. Grenada also expanded its relations with Turkmenistan, Albania and the Eurasian Economic Union. In 2021 the Ministry will continue to strengthen its relationship with regional and international partners, manage and maintain Grenada's diplomatic work and do our part to show up security and the economy. And our course of action will be guided by our strategic priorities for 2021, and these priorities will provide the roadmap to support Government's efforts towards recovery, transformation and building resilience across all sectors. And, Mr. President, I will try to give a quick summary of these priorities. There are five priorities and they are as follows:

1. Resource mobilization;
2. Implementation of Treaties and Conventions;
3. The establishment of an effective cadre of Honorary Consuls;
4. Developmental for our International Business Portfolio; and
5. Implementation of a Diaspora Policy

Firstly, resource mobilisation, and this is an obvious one, Mr. President. And this year, well in the coming year, the Ministry will pursue a robust resource mobilisation plan, which will entail mobilisation grant funds, equipment and services, to aid in the

implementation of plans outlined in the 2021 Budget. And this is particularly relevant in the fight against COVID-19, when we're trying to resuscitate our economies. While I go through the other priorities you will hear resource mobilisation being mentioned continuously, because it is the common thread, it is a common thread in our strategic priorities for the coming year.

So secondly, I move on to implementation of Treaties and Conventions. Now the goal of resource mobilisation brings treaties and conventions into focus, because Grenada is party to a number of Treaties, a number of International Treaties. However, the implementation of these Treaties is often slowed or delayed, and that is because of a number of reasons: lack of resources, lack of human resource. In Grenada the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a small Ministry, but the Ministry recognises that the implementation of Treaties can yield significant benefits, including securing opportunities for our people and vital resources for the State, which is what we need in this COVID recovery period. Therefore the Ministry will place renewed focus on the implementation and fulfilment of its treaty obligations in the coming year. Specifically, the Ministry will seek to implement its new Treaties Policy, to ensure that there is consistency throughout Government in its approach to Treaty making and implementation.

The third priority area, Mr. President, establishment of an effective cadre of Honorary Consuls. As we know consular services, assist Grenadian travellers and Grenadians living abroad through the provision of, among other things, passport renewals, visa applications, other information, contingency planning in times of crisis. And in our resource mobilisation efforts, we recognise the need to increase our consular representation, particularly in regions where we have zero presence, and I mentioned Africa earlier. We are also cognisant of the financial realities facing Government, so therefore, we have to strategise and find a way to improve our presence, without further burdening Government's coffers. And in order to do this, the Ministry plans to develop a three-year consular strategy, aimed at strengthening the delivery of consular services and also enhancing public messaging.

Mr. President, we move on to the development of our International Business Portfolio, our fourth strategic priority. Now the International Business Portfolio was previously under the Ministry of Health, it has now been transplanted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry intends to leverage its international diplomatic network, to drive investment and business development through this portfolio. This International Business Unit is expected to co-ordinate Grenada's participation in international trade events, to monitor our ease of doing business rankings and devise strategies to create international business partnerships, as well as enhance business activity in the State of Grenada. Speaking of international trade events, Grenada will be participating in Expo 2020 next year. It's called Expo 2020 because it was supposed to have been held this year, but for obvious reasons it has been postponed, it will be held in Dubai from October 2021 to March 2022. Mr. President, fifteen million people are expected to visit Expo 2020 and this presents an excellent opportunity for Grenada to promote its investment opportunities, as well as goods and services in the Manufacturing, Tourism and Agricultural Sectors. My dear Senator St. Clair, I don't know if the GCNA has already registered, but this is an excellent opportunity to introduce the world to the Nutmeg Cooler, which **(laughter) (applause)** which Senator De Allie is a big fan of, and which we all sampled yesterday. So far we have twenty-five local manufacturing companies registered to showcase and sell their products at this event. So Senator St. Clair, through you, Mr. President, this is an opportunity.

(Members mentioned pepper sauce)

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: Yes, for the pepper sauce also. Our fifth and final strategic priority area, is the implementation of a Diaspora Policy, with assistance received from the International Office of Migration, the Ministry has concluded the Grenada National Diaspora Engagement Policy and Action Plan. This policy recognises that the diaspora as an important actor in Grenada's development. And yesterday Senator Noel mentioned remittances in a sort of pejorative manner, and I want to ensure our Senator that remittances are nothing to be ashamed about. They

play an important role in assisting members of our society, there is certainly nothing wrong with receiving gifts, financial and otherwise from your families and friends overseas. Certainly nothing wrong with continuing to clear your barrels, but the Ministry has recognised that the diaspora can be engaged in a more meaningful way than just sending barrels and money through Western Union. So therefore, the Ministry plans to strengthen the engagement process, along clearly defined areas, identifying education, philanthropy for social development, investment and human capital transfers as transformational sectors on which partnerships can be built with the diaspora. Therefore in 2021, the Ministry will be implementing the Diaspora Policy, with the official launch of the Office of Diaspora Affairs. Mr. President, this concludes the summary of the strategic priority areas for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Of course we are currently led by Minister Oliver Joseph, our new Minister and under his guidance we will continue to do our part to further the collective vision of 2035.

Our next Ministry, Mr. President, is the Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and Hospital Services, which I predict will take up the lion's share of my presentation, because this is a humongous Ministry that does, similarly a humungous amount of work. And of course, this Ministry is led by the Honourable Minister Delma Thomas, who we know that Senator Lewis is a huge fan of, from his utterings yesterday, and I wish he was here to hear more about what this Ministry has been doing and continue to do, to help the people of Grenada, to assist the people of Grenada.

Mr. President the pandemic has compounded already existing social and economic challenges faced by our people. The Ministry of Social Development, aware of its key role in meeting these challenges was thus compelled to expand its safety net and the suite of services offered to the public. And this is reflected in the significant increase in the budget allocation to the Ministry to $60.2m, representing an increase of 28.6%. **(Applause)** And, Mr. President, this is an example of the responsiveness of the Government, and many people, not many people, but some in the public space have been uttering that, this is not a budget that is centred on COVID, there's nothing special in this budget. But if closer attention was really paid to the figures, to the

estimates, to the areas of improvement, it is clear that this is a budget that is in direct response to the challenge of COVID-19. The work done by the Ministry in 2020 and the expectations for 2021 will be explored under the headings of the Psychosocial Unit, the Social Services Division, the SEED Programme, Housing, Juvenile Justice, the Division of Gender and Family Affairs and Child Protection Authority, quite a lot to get through, Mr. President.

So we begin with the Psychosocial Unit. The Psychosocial Unit was poised to respond to the psychological fallout from the pandemic, occasioned by job loss, the resulting economic hardship and domestic disputes. And this is in keeping with the Mission of the Unit, to improve the functioning of families through rehabilitative work, and to assist individuals to achieve positive mental health. My colleagues Senator St. Cyr and Senator Lewis yesterday had expressed concern about the degree of work that is being done in this area. The degree of that is being done to give support to persons who may be suffering mentally, because of the repercussions of this pandemic. So they shall be pleased to know, Mr. President, that during the period January to October 2020, the unit was able to provide individual counselling to a total of 560 persons, 380 of those persons received support during the COVID lockdown period, while in quarantine and in isolation facilities, Mr. President. Three churches participated in psycho-educational sessions on coping skills and stress management, also during the lockdown period. Another three participated in educational sessions on mental health and coping. Five workplaces, both private and public benefitted from psychosocial support during the period May to July 2020, and further the Unit provided services to two schools, during the stated period.

Mr. President, our nurses, our police officers, other first responders, our heroes on the frontline were also recipients of the Unit's counselling services, and I must joint with the Other Members of the House in applauding, lauding and thanking our first responders for the work that they have done and continue to do, in keeping our country safe. **(Applause)** Mr. President, in addition to its COVID specific response, the Unit continued its crisis intervention in trauma inducing situations, in particular for families who lost their homes due to fire, benefitted from the Unit's services. Nineteen families

received psychosocial assistance due to the sudden death of a member of the family as a result of suicide, murder, vehicular accidents and other unfortunate incidences. Similarly three (3) workplaces received crisis intervention due to an employee's sudden death.

Men, Mr. President, because of the traditional roles assigned to us, because of our traditional perceptions of what a man should be, and because the role of the man as the leader of the home and the country, and all of the pressures that are put upon men to be leaders in general, and to be strong in general, they often suffer silently, so men are usually reluctant to express that they are going through some mental hardships, they're suffering depression or having thoughts of harming themselves. And the Ministry has recognised that, and therefore in response to the mental health challenges faced by our men especially our young men, the Unit led a programme called Man Box, which provides support to young males in targeted communities, covering topics such as depression, suicide and positive coping mechanisms. This pilot programme I am pleased to announce, Mr. President, was a resounding success, and it will be replicated as a programme under the Social Services Division. In 2021, Mr. President, the Unit will continue to do the following: conduct debriefing sessions for individuals and families in times of crisis, provide individual family and group counselling at main and district offices, provide psychosocial support to residents at the Cedars Home, provide psychosocial support to students at the Programme for Adolescent Mothers, conduct psycho-educational sessions with churches and other community groups, develop and disseminate via the media educational messages on various issues affecting the population, and conducting training sessions for all of the social development units.

Mr. President, I now move on to the Social Services Unit. As the designated essential service provider, the Division of Social Services provided support specific to the COVID response, as well as its full range of social support programmes including family community interventions, burial assistance, fire victim's assistance and water assistance. Under this Unit, Mr. President, the Desk of the Elderly continues to ensure that senior citizens receive direct services in geriatric homes, probation officers continue to deliver exemplary services to the court and persons in conflict with the law, and the

Early Childhood Unit continues to provide and promote excellent childhood simulation for children up to the age of three. Notably, Mr. President, for the period of January to October 2020, the Division has assisted over 1,935 persons, Mr. President, and I will just give a brief breakdown of that number. Of that 1,935 persons, family and community interventions was given to 382 persons, social enquiry reports were provided on behalf of 79 persons, burial assistance was given to 97 persons, fire victims assistance, 12 persons. There were approximately 827 walk-in clients, Mr President. Child Maintenance Support, 146 persons and the Water Assistance Programme, 190 persons. Mr. President, our colleague Senator Bhola already mentioned the single headed households' programme, which is a new programme, intended to support households with one parent, and an amount of $2m was allocated to that programme. I will again join my Senator in commending the Government for this initiative. **(Applause)** Mr. President, SEED, the Support for Education Empowerment and Development. As the House is aware, this ground-breaking programme provides monetary assistance to vulnerable members of our society, particularly our elderly and young people. This year the allocation to this programme is $18m, Mr. Deputy President…

Sergeant-at-Arms: Deputy President is in the Chair

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: ...yes. Representing an increase by $4m and I would just like to restate that, since there was a little intervention in the sentence. This year, Mr. President, **(laughter)** the allocation to this programme is $18m representing an increase by $4m. **(Applause)** And currently, the programme is conducting its first recertification of beneficiary households, and through this recertification, there will be an assessment of the impact of the programme on the recipients, as well as a determination of whether the current beneficiaries will continue to be beneficiaries. And yesterday Senator Bhola mentioned that we have to be careful, not to inculcate a spirit of dependency. Now SEED is a valuable programme, and it is important to ensure that the programme casts as wide a net as possible, to cover as many vulnerable persons

as possible. So it will not be productive to continue to provide this relief, this assistance to persons, who have in some instances improved their station in life and are able to fend for themselves. So that is why this recertification process is essential, so that other people, other members of the public, especially those who have found themselves in less desirable positions because of COVID-19, are also able to benefit from the SEED Programme. A total of 918 households will form the first batch of beneficiaries to be reassessed, and the results of that reassessment will be communicated to the beneficiaries. Mr. Deputy President, I will just like to mention here that a number of student beneficiaries of the SEED Programme, have performed exceptionally well in school, in their exams and the Ministry extends its heartiest congratulations to those students and encourages them to continue to strive for excellence. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, housing; housing continues to be a priority for this Government. The goal is to enable our citizens to live comfortable lives based on established minimum standards. In pursuance of this goal, the Government in collaboration with the People's Republic of China, will soon commence the distribution of low-income housing units. Mr. President, a total of 647 units are scheduled for distribution in the coming year. **(Applause)** Further, the Ministry continues to provide material and housing brigade building assistance to families. For the period January to October 2020, the Ministry provided over 420 families with material assistance and over 83 families with housing brigade building assistance, which includes the construction of 38 new houses, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Crucial in improving the living conditions of our people and preserving their dignity, is access to modern sanitary facilities. Hence in June of this year the Ministry commenced the Indoor Bathroom and Toilet Construction Programme. This programme spans the entire Tri-Island State, with implementation in every single constituency. And to date, the Ministry has assisted over 409 families, Mr. Deputy President. My colleague Senator Bhola also touched on the work that the Housing Authority of Grenada is doing. And this Agency must be highlighted for their contribution to improving the housing stock in Grenada. Through the Soft Loan Programme, in the first year of 2020, the authority assisted 31 families with

disbursements worth over $700,000. It was projected by the end of this year, by the end of this month; the housing authority would have assisted 60 families, totalling $1.5m. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, Juvenile Justice. Our Government continues to make significant strides to improve our juvenile justice system. With the support of the OECS and USAID, the Ministry continues to build the capacity of those working in the Juvenile Justice System. And this they have done by providing on-going training in the following areas: reintegration and treatment plans training and this was support the reintegration of juveniles upon leaving the Bacolet Rehabilitation and Treatment Centre; trauma training, to address the associated immediate post-traumatic experiences of juveniles and juvenile assessment and intervention system training to support the risk assessment of juveniles.

The Ministry is also developing a mentorship programme, to provide guidance to at-risk youth and this mentoring programme, Mr. Deputy President, is expected to reduce recidivism or repeat offending. This project will be done in collaboration with the Juvenile Justice Reform Project, which has committed US$25,000 for the execution of this pilot programme. The Grand Bacolet Juvenile Rehabilitation and Treatment Centre continue to be an example in the Caribbean, of an effective institution for juvenile justice. It provides rehabilitation services to young people in conflict with the law, and those deemed in need of special care and protection. And one of the Centre's focus this year, is on increasing the earning potential of its residents, so that they are reintegrated into society they can contribute to society, as productive members. In this regard the Centre is currently focusing on crop production and poultry rearing, which is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Caribbean Agro Industries. And largely because of the programmes of this Centre, its residents are showing great promise. An example of that is that a total of 5 residents at the Centre, sat the CSEC/CXC exams this year and obtained a total of 16 passes, Mr. Deputy President, in areas of Mathematics, English Language and Literature, Principles of Business, Office Administration and Social Services. In 2021 the focus at the Centre will be on the delivery of the Hydroponics Programme, the expansion of the Skills and Academic

Programmes, staff development and the development of a strong Non-Residential Programme.

Mr. Deputy President, I now move on to the Division of Gender and Family Affairs and the Ministry through this Division is currently engaged in the preparatory process for the full implementation of the Spotlight Initiative Project. The aim of this project is to eliminate violence against women and girls. And support for this project is being provided by the UN, the ILO, PAHO and the WHO. A grant of €2m has been allocated for the implementation of this project. The Unit is also leading the implementation of the EnGenDer Project, and EnGenDer stands for Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean. And this project seeks to address some of the existing impediments to equal access to disaster risk reduction and climate change solutions for men and women, boys and girls. But the EnGenDer Project has made some adjustments to accommodate the COVID-19 response, and those adjustments include:

1. The disbursement of food hampers and food vouchers to survivors of intimate partner violence which would be implemented through the Cedars Home.
2. Agricultural grant support, in the form of vouchers to the self-employed and persons engaged in agro-processing at the micro business level; and
3. Tourism grant support in the form of vouchers given to spice and market vendors and the producers of craft products.

A grand total of $99,732 has been committed for these activities and, Mr. President, as it relates to gender-based violence which continues to be an issue in Grenada, sadly we have seen a marked increase, in instances of gender-based violence, especially cases involving intimate partner violence. And this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown period, where persons were forced to be in constant contact with each other. So unfortunately as a result of that, the Women's Emergency Shelter is now filled to capacity, Mr. Deputy President, but notwithstanding this Government has put in place interim measures to assist the women who are at high risk. And, Mr. Deputy President, the Government can do only so much. There needs to be a change in the culture, Mr. Deputy President. There needs to be a change in the

way persons perceive each other, and the way they interact with each other. There needs to be some responsibility taken at the family level, how we teach our children to respect others, how we teach our boys to respect women, how we teach our children to resolve conflict, not with physical means, but through words, reasoned words, because words are also a weapon, Mr. Deputy President, resolving conflict through discussion. The Government cannot do this, Mr. Deputy President, so there needs to be discussions at those levels, at the family level, at the school level to teach our people how to treat each other. We cannot defeat gender-based violence at the Government level; this is something for the people of Grenada to take on. We cannot keep filling our shelters to capacity with abused women and children. We cannot continue to abuse our young people sexually and otherwise, Mr. President. The Gender-Based Violence Unit has been working tirelessly to continue to provide the range of client support that it has done during the years, but this, this is a challenge for all of us as a people.

Relatedly the Child Protection Authority has been doing its part to protect the children of Grenada, and a part of doing that, is ensuring that the Authority has the widest reach possible. Therefore there has been an expansion in counselling services, there has been an expansion in family support and court support with increased access in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. To strengthen the Authority's operations, it has developed a five-year strategic plan, operations manual and a comprehensive web-based case management plan. And, Mr. Deputy President, that brings me to the end of, of what is a truncated account of the enormous number of undertakings of this Ministry. This Ministry is a colossal Ministry and it is impossible to express the value of their work. It is impossible to express the impact on the lives of the persons whose lives they have touched.

Now, staunch capitalists may not agree with this, Mr. Deputy President, but the role of Government is not just to provide the environment where business and enterprise and industry, can grow. The role of Government is to take care of its people also, and this is where this Ministry plays an important role. Any country, no matter how big, no matter how powerful, if you cannot take care of your people, if you cannot provide them with basic social services, if you cannot do that as a country, you are a

failed state. And in the State of Grenada, we are certainly not a failed State, because we have been doing the best that we can to provide essential social services to other people. In this regard, this Ministry is a pillar of Government, and we must continue to applaud them for their efforts. **(Applause)**

Mr. President, the final Ministry, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, under the leadership of Minister Kindra Maturine-Stewart. And in 2020, the Ministry continued its quest to carry out Government's Legislative Agenda, in line with its national priorities and developmental goals. Now in spite of the challenges faced by the Ministry, in terms of limited resources, human and otherwise, the Ministry has risen to the challenge this year, to provide the legal framework to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Grenada. Thus, beginning late March, the Ministry drafted a number of COVID related laws and regulations, including the Emergency Powers Regulations, the Public Health Regulations, the Quarantine Regulations, the Quarantine Tests and Time Periods Regulations and just recently the Quarantine (Amendment) Bill. Further, the Ministry worked to provide much needed and timely economic reprieve, to our citizens with the passage of a number of Acts and Statutory Rules and Orders, including the COVID Tax Relief Act, which occasioned a 3 month suspension of specific taxes. There was also the National Insurance (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations, which gave a temporary reduction of the rates of contribution to the National Insurance scheme, and the National Insurance (Unemployment Assistance Benefit) Regulations, which saw the temporary introduction of the Unemployment Benefit Assistance.

In total this year, Mr. Deputy President, there were 12 amending Acts, 6 principal Acts and 24 Statutory Rules and Orders enacted. And apart from those laws and regulations governing and regulating the fight against COVID-19, there were other significant legislations drafted by the Ministry of Legal Affairs, including the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act 2020 the Praedial Larceny (Amendment) Act 2020, which created a licensing regime for farmers, and also increase the penalties for Praedial Larceny. I know Senator, I see Senator St. Clair nodding his head because I am sure that he would have been pleased with the passage of this Act, that help to protect our farmers and the fruits of their labour. As for perspective legislation, Mr. Deputy

President, the Ministry is currently in the process of reviewing a draft National Health Insurance Bill and the Ministry is holding consultations on the Sexual Offenders' Registers Bill. Additionally, consultations are on-going for proposed amendments to the Civil Code, the Criminal Code and Evidence Act, which aims to provide greater safeguards to victims of sexual offences.

Now following expressions of concern over the COVID-19 Bill which did not make it to the house floor, the Ministry has intensified its efforts to increase public engagement in the legislative process. Therefore on the Government website there is an assigned page where legislation that have been passed and perspective Bills will be made available to the public. The public, through this page will also be able to make comments and ask questions, concerning legislation. In addition to its legislative drafting responsibilities, the Ministry gives considerable support to all other Ministries of Government, through the negotiation, drafting, review, vetting of commercial agreements for Government projects. It also deals with the day-to-day legal issues arising in the Public Service and the handling of the litigation portfolio of Government. Over the past year the Ministry undertook several initiatives, aimed at improving the overall operations of the Ministry. Among them, the Ministry has now moved to a fully functioning secure e-office, and this, Mr. Deputy President, enables access to electronic data from any location, at any time, thus improving the speed of delivery of service. As it relates to administration of justice, generally, efforts have been made towards improving efficiency in court administration, the recently passed Supreme Court Fees Act, 2020, sanctioned the harmonisation of fees throughout the region, and laid the foundation for the implementation of the e-litigation platform. And once this platform is implemented, Mr. Deputy Speaker, payment of court fees and filing fees will be done online. Lawyers and Clients will be able to access their court files online. This system will address numerous issues that the legal system currently face; issues with archiving, issues with the storage of documents, issues with the time to perform certain mundane functions, like the payment of fees.

Mr. Deputy President, the events of 2020 has forced the reimagining of the way we do things, has forced the reimagining of the structure and functioning of our Courts.

Fortunately, the Court Office was quick to adjust to the restrictions in contact and movement, with the implementation of a remote system, which enabled the court to conduct virtual hearings since March 2020. However, Mr. Deputy President, applying virtual technology to jury trials has presented some challenges. An interim solution was to host these trials in large spaces, to maintain social distancing, and through this method over 10 trials have been conducted since August 2020. Notwithstanding this, the Ministry, the Registry, in collaboration with the Ministry of ICT is currently exploring ways to eventually host virtual jury trials. Mr. President, in terms of physical infrastructure, recognising that the registry compound was no longer adequate due to structural, health, environmental issues, in February of 2020, the Ministry identified new accommodation to host the Registry. And these accommodations were retrofitted by the Ministry of Works. Therefore, as of the 24th of March 2020, the registry was relocated to the Jay McCormick building on Church Street, St George's. The Registry is also the beneficiary of two initiatives, launched in the last quarter of 2020, under the World Bank funded CARCIP project. The first project is the digitisation of the records in the Deeds and Land Registry and secondly the data entry of digitised records for the Deeds and Land Registry into the existing database.

Now we have been hearing from our friends in the legal fraternity for years now, the difficulty of finding records in the Registry, especially deeds, having to go through mounds, piles of these huge books with deteriorating pages, just to find records. So hopefully, Mr. Deputy President, the launch of these projects and the launch of the full e-registry will help in alleviating these issues. In 2021, Mr. Deputy President, the Ministry plans to undertake the consolidation of the Laws of Grenada. Currently our Laws have been consolidated up to 2010, so it has been 10 years since we've had a consolidation of Laws. And this has posed a great difficulty in trying to get a concisive picture of a particular law, and I know, Mr. Deputy President, will identify with this when it comes to the CBI Laws and Regulations. So many amendments have been made over the years, and it has been difficult to track the progression and change in the laws with so many different documents to refer to. So the Ministry plans to undertake the consolidation of the Laws of Grenada in 2021, and I know that this will be welcomed in

all sectors of the country. Mr. President, in conclusion under the Ministry of Legal Affairs, in 2021 the Ministry will continue to build on its improvements in its operations, it intends to increase its human resource pool and introduce new strategies to meet the changing needs of the legal system. Mr. Deputy President, I have concluded much quicker than I anticipated **(laughter)**, so as I close…

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: Oh yes, yes. Of course I will yield my remaining time to our Leader of Government's Business. Mr. Deputy President, as I close, it will be remiss of me not to acknowledge the work of the Minister and Ministry of Finance in preparing these Estimates, and in general, managing our finances, ensuring that we remain fiscally prudent as a nation. So we sincerely thank the Ministry under its new leadership of course, for its continued diligence. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President, the writer Eckhart Tolle said and I quote **"When faced with a radical crisis, when the old way of being in the world, of interacting with each other doesn't work anymore, when survival is threatened by seemingly insurmountable problems, an individual life form will either become extinct or rise above the limitations of its condition through an evolutionary leap."** Mr. Deputy President, extinction is not an option, this crisis presents a grand opportunity for us to take an evolutionary leap, to re-examine our crisis response mechanisms, our public health infrastructure, our social safety nets, our approaches to travel and the configuration of our economy. Mr. Deputy President, we shall not let this opportunity go to waste, this budget and its theme "Recovery, Transformation, Resilience", is an indication of that…

(Time Bell Rings)

Sen. the Hon. Cathisha Williams: …and it is my hope, (just on time), it is my hope, Mr. Deputy President, that our nation can embrace this opportunity, can embrace

this vision collectively as we strive to build, and in this instance rebuild our beloved country. Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy President (Sen. the Hon. Christopher De Allie): Thank you, Senator Williams. Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy President. Mr. Deputy President, in wrapping up these last three days of debate, I just wish to start by thanking my colleagues on Both Sides for their significant contribution to this debate. And it comes at a sitting where we have four new Senators who I think all have done themselves proud in terms of their Maiden Senate Budget Presentations. Maybe with the exception of Senator Bhola, he is new to us on this round but he is certainly not new to the parliamentary discourse. And his contribution certainly demonstrated his vast experience, maturity, knowledge not just of what is happening on the ground, what's happening in the country but experience he can draw from his time in Government. So I wish to thank him for his contribution. But of the three newer Senators, I wish to single out Senator Cadet and Senator Williams for their contributions. I have seen and had the privilege as we all have, to see them grow and develop, and the quality of their presentations over these last couple of days makes me personally proud and I wish to acknowledge their contribution and their continued growth.

Senator Cadet, I feel particularly attached to, as I was part of that process in terms of your selection from here and all of us were involved in that decision making process, you have done us proud. And for Senator Noel and for St. Cyr, their contributions and I think they have an appreciation of the significant amount of work that goes into preparing for the Budget Debate and I commend them for their contributions. And I am hopeful that with time and based on the performance of the Senators on "This Side", they too will grow as their time and their career in this Chamber evolves. So once again I thank all Members for their contribution.

Mr. Deputy President, as a general comment, I want to reiterate the statement that I made in my opening presentation and that is we are living and operating in

extraordinary times. What we are seeing and the challenges that we are facing, challenges that the global community has not experienced in the last century, it sets a context for the budget that is before us and it will set the context to my comments as I wrap up. And the key message is that this is a period where it is not business as usual, couldn't be further away from that. So just referencing the state of play with COVID and this recent spike and the increase in the infection rates and the cluster that we are seeing, it is of significant concern to us as Government, to us as a nation but it is also important to put what is happening into context. We have stated all along as successful as we have been up to this point in managing the pandemic, we've always stated there is significant risk and the need for individual and collective responsibility.

Mr. President, firstly I wish to say that all that can be done in terms of tracing, testing, isolation, the three key pillars to managing this virus, all that can be done is being done and the Ministry of Health and all the frontline workers are working round the clock to manage the challenges that are faced. But again, in terms of setting the context to this, as things stand today, there are 85 cases recorded for Grenada; a significant increase than what it was last week, 85 cases and 0 deaths. That number is likely to rise as more results with the testing come back but to put that number into perspective and this is not a competition, this is not about checking one country to another. Every infection that we experienced here, everywhere, is one infection too much. But as things stand today with the spike, St. Kitts is the only Caribbean country with a lower case rate than us at the moment at 28, so Grenada stands at 85 with no death. That number will go up, Dominica currently stands at 88, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 98; Antigua 148; St. Lucia is 278, 4 death; Barbados 301, 7 deaths. So we are all in the same boat with this, we are all trying to do the same things but as we balance, that very, very difficult balance between lives and livelihoods, those risks, those threats are always there. And I again want to give credit to all of our frontline workers who are doing all they can to ensure that we are here as safe as possible, the Ministry of Health, the COVID Committee, the healthcare workers and I said the teams are working around the clock.

With regard to this cluster and the spike, investigations are still taking place to identify the breach in the protocol and with those on-going investigation it is too early to say exactly or to comment on precisely where that breach occurred but investigations are taking place and we've made it very clear that once that breach has been identified, the necessary action, all necessary remedial action, appropriate action will be taken. However, Mr. Deputy President, I am a little disturbed and hearing of an unsubstantiated statement by a particular media house that a visitor who allegedly tested positive on two occasions before departing for Grenada was allowed entry into Grenada. Mr. Deputy President, this statement has serious, serious implications. It implies that the Airline… it is the Airline that is the first port of call, the first barrier in the protocols, was complicit in some way, breaking their own regulations, their own rules in terms of protecting the safety of the passengers on those flights and this reckless statement implies that the Airline was complicit in some way in terms of breaching that protocol. The news report is libellous and Government is considering taking steps in terms of legal action because statements such as that are unnecessary, reckless agenda driven especially at this time. And I simply want to reiterate Government's protocols and the position that is taken is that the requirement is for a negative PCR test to be presented 72 hours prior or to be taken 72 hours prior to travel and then on arrival in Grenada to be quarantined with another PCR test within 4 days and only once a negative result is acquired that person can enter the community.

Mr. Deputy President, I am glad Senator Lewis has returned, I was troubled by his statement that the Prime Minister in his national address was blaming the population, the general population for what has occurred. So I took time to re-read the Prime Minister's national address and I could see no such statement, I mean the statements that were made was about the real and serious threat of COVID and how we as a population have to adapt to these new circumstances and with regards to the threat, that they underscored the need to constantly adhere to the recommended protocols and that deviations from those protocols put us at risk. His advice, Mr. Deputy President, was for us not to drop our guard and that immediate steps were being taken to address the situation. He also went on to say that there was an obvious breakdown

in the protocols of the hotels' application of the protocols and that the precise nature of that breakdown is still to be determined. But Government's commitment in enforcing the law is where breaches had been determined. As I said, these investigations are on-going, there are no formal conclusions as yet. There was a call for the public and business community to work together with Government in partnership, that it was a collective responsibility and we need to work together. And then a general call with the holiday period in order for us all to demonstrate restraint and responsibility. Mr. Deputy President, the Prime Minister expressed his concerns about safety, the threat, his empathy for the individuals involved, the families involved and again that need for individual and collective responsibility. Mr. Deputy President, nowhere, nowhere in that statement was there blame apportioned and I simply, going through this, it is important, Mr. Deputy President that the record is set straight on this matter. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Deputy President, just going through some of the comments with regard to the Budget, that common messages, common comments that were generated and I will go through… I kind of grouped them together rather than going through each person individually. But there was a comment by Members of the Opposition that there is nothing different about this Budget and I think, Mr. Deputy President, sometimes we think if we keep repeating the same message over and over, it becomes fact it becomes truth. But, Mr. Deputy President, this Budget is a very, very different Budget to previous budgets. Firstly, environment in which this Budget has been developed and produced is fundamentally different to any environment we have had the Budget for, even beyond the likes of hurricanes Ivan, the period of Ivan and Emily. The global crisis, the threat to health and life, global economic meltdown, those markets that we're so dependent on, that provide the foundation for our own economic development are struggling and we're seeing challenges that the world has never faced in 100 years where revenues, Government revenues have fallen by half and we're being called upon to do much more with so much less. Where we're having to support those who have been worst impacted by the crisis, where global travel and tourism is in suspension still, where workers have been sent home with… well we're now seeing some of that recovery but we're seeing workers sent home, hotels, bars, restaurants, venues, vendors, taxi

drivers, water taxi operators, dive operators, farmers, fishers, hairdressers, barbers, small retailers, trade persons, all seriously impacted by the economic challenges that we're facing in managing this pandemic. But with significant support, drawing on Government resources in order to support all of these worker groups, the $50m that is provided in payroll support, income support, support for our small hoteliers, our small businesses, the provision of unemployment benefit for the most vulnerable. All of those support services, they are being provided at this time and will continue to be of as and when necessary we do not know when this crisis will end. The tens of millions of dollars that's been expended in preparing our schools for reopening, the safe reopening of our schools; the tens of millions of dollars in protective personal equipment, essential medical equipment for the isolation was a strengthening of our Healthcare system. The millions have been expended in PCR testing, tracers, wardens, all of those front-line staff that has been bolstered to keep us safe, Mr. Deputy President. The financial burden the Government has been called upon to provide, the significant financial burden continue to in the upcoming period is significant and we would meet those demands as and when presented in order to keep our nation safe and to protect livelihoods where we can.

So, Mr. President, we have presented a Budget that takes into account dealing with the current crisis but a Budget that is focused on capital expenditure. A budgetary allocation for capital expenditure of $305m, the largest capital budget in Grenada's history of which a significant portion, 46%, is allocated to the Public Sector Investment Programme. Government recognises and this is a model, this is not just us guessing, this is a model that is being used the world over, that investment in our productive sectors, investment in the Construction Sector is the fastest way to recovery, it is the fastest way of re-stimulating the economy, it is the fastest way of creating more and more jobs that is so needed at this given time. This is fact, Mr. Deputy President, not guess work. This focus creates immediate demand for labour, immediate demand for goods and services. As construction workers receive their salaries, their wages, that money is immediately put back into the local communities, whether it is at the local grocery stores, local businesses, go straight back into the economy, whether it is the

call for goods and services, building materials, the duties that are generated by that, the revenues that are generated by that, again, go back into the economy.

The indirect benefits, other retailers, other wholesalers, vendors servicing those worksites; the trickle-down effect in investing an activity in the Construction Sector is significant. But in addition to that, these projects have high value, these projects all speak to our national development. It speaks to the developments of our road networks, maintenance of our roads, the upgrading, construction of new schools, government buildings, investment in the Water Sector, investment in the Sewerage Sector, in waste management, in agriculture, in tourism, in the digital economy, in healthcare, in housing, these are all activities that speak to the needs of our people and that drive to develop our nation.

So you have an increase in that Capital Budget that will directly stimulate recovery of the economy. But then on the other side of that is a reduction on the Recurrent Side, a reduction in discretionary spending, in waste management to keep the operations, the cost of running Government as low as possible so that those savings can be taken to plough into the Capital Budget. But, Mr. Deputy President, it's not all about and the Budget is not all about public spending, it also speaks to the creation of the enabling environment for Private Sector investment which is a significant part of what is going to drive our economy and our recovery. A pipeline of $6b worth of projects and these aren't pie in the sky; many of those projects within that pipeline are either in the process of being completed, work in progress or work about to start. Grenada is embarking on a construction boom if you like, both on the public side and on the private side and again in areas that speak to our productive sectors and our national development. The Tourism Sector, billions of dollars are being invested in new Hotels and Resorts which will provide opportunities, significant opportunities during the initial construction phase and as I said contribute to the recovery of the economy but also permanent quality jobs when those hotels come on stream.

Mr. Deputy President, what is incredible about this, in addition to focusing on the productive sectors, creating the enabling environment for those who can produce, we're also seeing increases of investment in our youth, in youth development and also our

social safety nets to protect our most vulnerable. Mr. Deputy President, what is being presented before us is not business as usual; it is fundamentally different to anything that's been presented as a budget before. Mr. Deputy President, this brings me to another statement that was made; two things now, the first is there is nothing transformational about what is being done and Senator Norland presented us with concepts of an alternative budget and his warnings of us going back to the dark and desperate days prior to 2013.

So on the transformation side, Mr. Deputy President, we've heard throughout the presentations from "This Side" the focus on and taking advantage of the opportunity that COVID has presented to us in terms of digitisation. So whether it's in education and the incredible transformation that's taking place in terms of how we teach our secondary school students, the move to the E-Learning platform, the focus is on devices, connectivity, content, training, the entire package, 20,000 students, 1,700 teachers, Mr. Deputy President. This last 6-month period, this transition to this e-learning platform bringing our bringing our education system into the digital age, that is transformation, Mr. Deputy President, and **(applause)** benefits will be felt for generations to come. Whether it is Senator Williams who spoke about the Electronic Registry and how that is transforming the legal system, the court hearings that are being heard virtually the improvement in efficiency…

Sergeant at Arms: The President in the Chair.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: …the improvement in efficiency in our legal system, whether it is digital governance, whether it's through the CARCIP Programme, all of these technologies, the embracing of technologies in different sectors is absolutely significant. This digital agenda, there is work going on right now with UNDP who have just done an inventory of all of the digitisation projects taking place across the country within government, that number stands at 59 projects. They're developing a vision and a strategy identifying opportunities, further opportunities within that, gaps within that, how we can fill those gaps, this is transformation, Mr. President. Scholarships,

education, training, since we came into office in 2013, 1,600 scholarships at Degree levels and above have been afforded to our young men and women, Mr. President. **(Applause)** Never before in our history have so many scholarships been awarded in areas that again speak to our national development, so that's on the academic side. Over that same period, 5,000 CVQ/NVQ certificates have been issued. So for those students who may not be academically inclined, more vocationally inclined, are being trained, being developed with the skills that meet and align with the opportunities that are being created, whether that's in the Construction Industry, whether that's in the Tourism Sector, in agriculture, in agro-processing in other areas, Mr. Deputy President. So in terms of building capacity within our young men and women, transformation is happening.

Investment in our youth and their skill development, whether it's the YUTBIZ Programme in terms of training our young entrepreneurs, whether it's the M-Power Programme taking disenfranchised young men and providing them with hope and opportunities, whether it's the new IMANI Programme and the transition to permanent quality work, Mr. Deputy President, this is transformation. Whether it is building resilience; whether it is in our Water Sector, the GCF Funded G-Crews Project which is the single largest investment in our Water Sector in history, building that resilience; whether it is the Climate Smart City Programme; this is transformation, Mr. Deputy President. Whether it is in Agriculture, Climate Smart Agriculture (SAEP) Programme, these are transformative programmes, Mr. President. Our Hotel Sector, billions and billions of dollars being pumped into our Hotel Sector, creating 1600 new hotel rooms over this next period, almost doubling the number of rooms that we have in this country, this is transformation, Mr. President. And providing Resort developments not just in the South but up in the north of the country in Levera, in La Sagesse. We've talked for generations about decentralising our tourism product, it is happening now, Mr. President.

In our agro-processing area, there was a comment nothing is happening, we have two new major investments in the Poultry Sector. We constantly talk about our high export bill; poultry alone is over $35m per year in imported, often poor quality

chicken. Grenada has the crown of I think, one of the highest per-capita consumers of chicken. Two new producers together with the existing producer will reduce our poultry food import bill by over 1/3, Mr. President; again this is transformation.

Our self-sufficiency in terms of egg production, we no longer have to import eggs out of the US, we can produce our own. The Poultry Policy that's taking so much time to put in place is starting to work. Whether it's Renegade Rum, CaneCo, $150m project revitalising a sector, not just in terms of agricultural production but also the value add in terms of the rum production, world class rum, Mr. President, that is transformation. In Healthcare, continued work and these are difficult financial times but the on-going work with National Health Insurance which will provide a more sustainable means of financing our Healthcare system moving forward, this is transformation, Mr. President.

Sports, I heard Senator Noel speak about we need to be doing more in Sports, we now have two Stadia, two world-class Stadia; a cricket stadium and an athletic stadium. We now have two programmes for two new swimming pools, one of which will be an Olympic sized swimming pool. We are developing world-class athletes; our athletes are performing at the highest levels in a major part because of the facilities we are able to provide and the future sporting stars. I read that we actually have a number of international athletes who have come to Grenada to train in our facilities, one because we're relatively safe in this COVID period but the facilities that we are able to offer are able to attract international athletes to train. This is transformation, Mr. President.

The list goes on, Small Business Development; with a Small Business Development Fund, over 800 small businesses have been positively impacted by the support that Government has provided. Again, our young men and women who have an idea, who want to development those ideas, we are giving them the opportunity, 800 businesses positively affected; that is transformation, Mr. President. So when I hear these comments, that this is un-transformational, this is just about concrete, what is before us is far deeper than that, far much more than that. And then I want to touch on, Senator Noel, I don't want to pick on you but I'm going to pick on you. You presented an alternative budget and I've heard this alternative budget being discussed in the

"Other Place" so what was presented is the rational, the thinking of the approach that this New National Party Administration has taken to recovery, resilience building and transformation of this nation. The alternative budget that is before us and it's good, it's good and I encourage all Members, it's not just a case of talking about problems, come up with some solutions, offer some ideas.

Senator Noel, you suggested the alternative budget, we must cut taxes, we shouldn't collect taxes, we shouldn't borrow, we should increase salaries, we should spend more on roads, on sports, on house… spend more, spend more, spend more. Mr. President, I struggled then. Each individual line item, it sounds sexy, cut taxes, don't collect taxes, don't borrow, the only avenues a Government has to generate revenue in order to serve the nation, to serve the needs of its people is through taxation. Revenue generation is through taxation, whether it is Corporation Tax, Income Tax, VAT, Property Tax, that is how countries the world over... Beyond that, it is then to borrow, taxes if the revenues that are being generated are insufficient then we must borrow but if you're saying we can't collect and we can't borrow, how are we going to meet the shopping list of requirements? Senator Noel went on to then say he warned us and he went into great detail and he was preaching to the converted we should not go back to that period prior to 2013 where we were in another economic crisis where there was another Government in place. Another Government who were given the opportunity to demonstrate how they can do things differently and we papa, did they? **(Laughter)** Absolutely showed us how differently they can do it, record high unemployment, 40%, public workers, we're talking now about, we're getting into this tussle. It's a wonderful conversation to actually have, Mr. President, about salary increases. At that time, public workers weren't getting paid and the only way they could get paid and paid late was by selling assets. Unpaid Claims, $110m, all our businesses on their knees, Government couldn't pay its way, couldn't pay its workers, couldn't pay for the goods and services it was receiving. We had an economy that was in extreme recession and to top those numbers, there was a deficit because we have gotten used to now since 2013 about deficits and what's been presented… sorry we've gotten used

to talk about surpluses since 2013. The Budget before us has a budget deficit, a budget deficit of $18.2m, that's in the entirety of a Budget valued at $1.2b.

During that period 2008-2013, the monthly deficit was $18m, Mr. Deputy President, and no means of financing it. A Finance Minister who when presenting his and the country's, the boast was it was the country's first $1b budget with a $600m financing gap. When he was asked how you're going to fill that and our document shows exactly and when we come onto the Loan Authorisation Bill, we will talk about the $18m. But when he was asked how is he going to fill the $600m financing gap, what did he say, trust me, trust me. So Senator Noel, no we don't want to go back there and this is the Administration since 2013 who has grabbed the issues by its bootstraps, dragged it out of that deep and dark hole to a place where we've gotten used to surpluses, growth, job creation all of those things. And a Government that is responsible enough to put laws in place, to put the necessary measures in place to protect those gains. So when I hear we don't want to go back there, absolutely not. This is the Government, this is the Administration who understands that and understands how to move us forward. But when I hear, Mr. President, cut taxes, don't collect taxes, don't borrow, spend more, we will be going backwards so that is not, that alternative Budget is certainly not the direction that the Budget before us is taking us.

Mr. President, I now wish to move on to Senator Lewis, the issue of Government's request for the deferral of the 4% pay increase to public servants for 2021 valued in excess of $13m. Mr. President, through you, at a time where 14,000 workers have lost their jobs in this global crisis period, where Government is doing all it can, mustering resources to provide income support, payroll support, unemployment benefits for many of those workers. When there is a need for us to reduce our recurrent spending so that we can take those savings to put on the capital side in order to grow the economy and protect and create more jobs. So, Mr. President, what Government is asking for is recognising that this is a signed agreement, we're not asking workers to forego, we're simply asking for the deferral of that increase to a time where those resources are available and at a responsible time to pay and it's not to say that public workers are undeserving of that. It's just at this time, a time when we have to come

together work together, Senator De Allie outlined perfectly well the risks that we face and the need for those labour relations and that labour climate to have employer and employee in sync in order to preserve jobs, we have to learn to create more.

Mr. President, we must also consider those without voices, unorganised labour. Many of those 14,000 workers who are now without jobs, LIAT workers, ASG, Hotel workers, Sandals with what is going on there, there may be a need for workers… there are insecurities there, Mr. President, all of the small business owners. Mr. President, it is only fair, it is only just to have a moral responsibility certainly as Government to take care of all workers, not just organised labour but all workers, all vulnerable people.

Mr. President, it is also important to note that Government has provided significant support to public workers in this last period. I think to date something like $140m since 2013, $150m, that is the PSIP (the Public Sector Investment Programme) budget roughly. $140 million dollars has been expended in salary increases, back pay increments, one-off payments. We negotiated 2020, 2021, 2022, 12% increase in salaries, agreed. But as I said, Mr. President, we have 14,000 workers without work, we need to do all we can and this is where the call from Senator De Allie, the call from Government, is that we must work together and find a way, taking care of our Public Sector workers. We're doing that, we've demonstrated that but now we need a little cooperation from Public Workers, from the Labour Movement to buy us some time so that we can help others who need that help even more, Mr. President. So I simply reiterate the call of Government and for the Member on the "Other Side" to seriously consider the request that Government has made for the sake and the benefits of those tens of thousands of other workers out there who aren't as fortunate and aren't in such a fortunate position as public workers are now. Let us be our brother's keeper, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I will now move on to Senator St. Clair, Agriculture and Fisheries. And I think it was actually a pleasure, both listening to your presentation but listening to Senator Bhola's also and what I… well the first thing is I think Senator Bhola covered many of the detailed ideas and suggestions and your wealth of suggestions and not just coming up with the problems but solutions also so that was encouraging. So I won't

repeat that. But my positive take away from the Debate that took place is that we're in a good place to have a real conversation now about the development of our Agricultural Sector. We have you, Senator St. Clair in a privileged position representing farmers and fishers here in the Senate. Your position at the GCNA and your vision for propelling the GCNA into the 21st Century, your experience and your time at MNIB, all of your career has been spent in this area. Minister Bhola, former Minister for Agriculture but still sharp, knows his stuff, still passionate about what's taking place. We have a new Minister for Agriculture, Minister David, again hitting this hard, passion, real vision, the former Minister, Minister Bain-Horsford, again she did a phenomenal job in her time in bringing everybody together. And I think we're at the crossroads, Mr. President, where we can have some real conversations with partners who want to see the sector progress with the experience, with the knowledge. We heard some of the insights that Minister Bhola shared of some of the obstacles within the Ministry and Senator St. Claire you know them too, obstacles within the GCNA, you know the obstacles, within MNIB, this call for the refocusing and Senator De Allie as Chairman, gave a very, very good assessment of the financial challenges… short term financial challenges, there are some solutions. But the understanding that there are structural inadequacies, that need for refocusing so that the Marketing Board can fulfil that vision of the founding fathers. And can adequately, not adequate… adequate is a terrible word, can successfully address the potential of our Farming Sector and we have that opportunity.

But what it requires is some bold decisions now and this is where leadership comes in and leadership I think should be a theme through all that is being done, everything that's associated with the budget that is before us, leadership. And within the Agricultural Sector, real leadership is required, there needs to be a cultural shift, how we look about agriculture needs to be looked at, the world has changed. Our commodity boards, the world is a very different place to how it was 70 odd years ago when that original ordinance was presented. It's no longer fit for purpose, it no longer serves the needs of our farmers, is doing them disservice. It does not fulfil the potential that Grenada has as an agricultural producer first and foremost for its own food security. One priority should be the, food security and there's one thing that we should have

learnt from this pandemic is the need for food security, that's number one and then where we have a comparative advantage to be able to exploit the export market; Cocoa, finest in the world, nutmeg, finest in the world, soursop, finest in the world. We have secured access to exclusive markets, how can we exploit that? We have a man in the seat; we have another man and another woman still in affectively. You have a Government… **(Inaudible comments/laughter)** … you have a Government with the ambition and the vision to turn this thing around. But it requires and the call from Senator Bhola was, we all need to put our shoulders to the wheel. So, Senator St. Clair you're going to be tested and we will see how you draw on, you come from the bowels of this. What effluent you need to leave behind and what we need to do to push forward, so I was encouraged, seriously encouraged by the conversation but it's for us now to not just talk about it but we have the opportunity to do it.

And I just wanted to… this on-going debate about tourism and Agriculture. I spent time in Tourism, I spent time in Agriculture and this debate always frustrates me and it's a non-argument; both go hand in hand, both are of equal importance, both benefit of the other. And when I looked at, totalled up the number of new rooms… so current hotel stock is about 2,400 rooms just with the projects that's carded to be delivered within, to come on stream within this next period, that's the addition of another 1,600 rooms. Every developer, one of the first conversations that take place after agreeing the technical elements of that development is a conversation for the acquisition of locally produced agricultural produce. All of the investors, all of the hotels want to locally source and that's where the world is gone, farm to table, it's about local production, a premium would be paid for that and the hotels and the additional room stock that is coming on stream with developers who want to actively encourage our local farmers and fishers to supply, it's a massive opportunity. And again that opportunity is for us to deliver on, so the market is there, the market is right on our doorstep. The attitude, the openness of those developers is there so it is for us to deliver on that.

Mr. President, I now move on to the remarks from Senator De Allie and as ever his analysis is deep, his analysis is very, very balanced. First is the CBI Programme,

never before has the significance of the CBI Programme been there for us all to see. And I know we've had some very heated discussions in this Chamber in this Session and the previous Parliamentary Session where Members were constantly, constantly trying to undermine the value and the significance of that programme. Grenada still holds that accolade of being the gold standard for CBI Programmes with the due diligence and the care that goes into the selection of investors in programmes is of the highest level. And it's considered to be one of the best within the region, but what is telling is in this period, and we look at the financing for the 2021 Budget $172m dollars will be derived from the CBI Programme and this isn't just about forecast, we're guessing how many we're going to get and praying and hoping. A significant portion of those funds are already held, are already deposited based CBI revenues already. So this is concrete, real concrete financing sources. So the significance of that programme and how we should be able to continue to build on that, maintaining that gold standard is even more important now than it ever has been. We heard the comments again about MNIB and some of the positives within MNIB so the need for fundamental rethinking and restructuring of that organisation. But there are positives whether it is HACCP Certification, access and this is one of the core functions of the MNIB, it's ensuring access to external markets. And the HACCP Certification isn't something to take lightly. It provides significant access, why we're able to export our soursop to the US and then a contract with 200 farmers, again that's not insignificant but the need for that model to change.

And the comment about risk from Senator De Allie, risk to the budget and risk to the 6% growth, I think Senator Williams did a phenomenal job in explaining where that 6% comes from and that because we have experienced a significant level of economic contraction, negative growth of -12.2%. So it's not 6% on top of growth, on top of growth. There's a trough; we're coming from a very, very low point, the lowest point we have been in recent times. So the starting point is low. So that 6% growth is still well below where we were in 2019, 2018, 2017, we've gone back years, Mr. President. And what we will see with the risks which I will speak to in a minute, but what we are seeing is an immediate rebound. We saw it after Ivan, after Emily where once those risks are

managed, a significant increase in demand and activity which will show that spike and as Senator De Allie then showed 2022, you see a levelling off again.

So I think what is being presented is realistic, but those risks that Senator De Allie outlined, implementation, we can't shy away from that. We have a history of low implementation rates, significantly better than the previous Administration when we came into office in 2013, significantly better but still with deficiencies which is why millions of dollars have been ploughed into the Division of Implementation. Senator Cox went into great detail as to some of those actions, whether it's new engineers, project managers, management team, every effort is being expended to minimise that implementation deficit risk. It's a risk we recognise but positive measures are being put in place to address that. So that to some degree is within our control. The risk in the numbers that is outside of our control is the pandemic. Our local management, global management and we still see in the US, UK, across Europe, Mr. President, we're still seeing those great countries struggling, still on their knees. We're trying to figure out how we're going to manage ourselves over the Christmas period. My son just left to go to the UK to spend time with his family there, it's a miserable time he is going to have, miserable on lockdown, on complete lockdown struggling to maintain and to control things from a health perspective and their economy is struggling. So, Mr. President, it comes back to our ability to manage those things that are within our control. And some of the risks that we're trying to manage are within our direct control and going back to the comments previously made, it speaks to our collective responsibility. Once we all do what we are supposed to do, we stand the best chance of getting through this at the least cost.

So, Mr. President, in concluding, I'll conclude as I started. These are extraordinarily challenging times and we're faced with threats and risks as never before, health wise and economically. What we are facing is unprecedented but the Budget that is before this Honourable House speaks to keeping our nation safe, it speaks to re-stimulating and accelerating economic growth. It speaks to getting our people back to work whether it's those out of work, whether it's those who are newly entering the workforce. It does build resilience and it is transformational, it is getting us on that

transformation path. Mr. President, this Budget is also presented in the knowledge that this New National Party Administration has a track record of delivering in difficult times, whether that was Ivan, Emily, the financial crash or COVID-19, we delivered then, Mr. President, and we will deliver once again now. And it's for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Motion to this Honourable House.

Mr. President: Thank you Honourable Stiell.

Question put and agreed to.
Motion approved.

Mr. President: Honourable Members, I think it is opportune to take the recess for lunch. During that time between the recess and the recommencement, I would summon a brief meeting with the Standing Orders Committee because there is a matter that we need to discuss. It's now 12:31 and I was contemplating that we'll be back here at 1:30 for us to address the Bills and the Motions and then wrap up by about 4, I would think, Senator Stiell. I think that order of time and allocation seems to be realistic. Considering that I wish to convene, as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee, a brief meeting of the Committee, I would therefore suggest that we resume not at 1:30 but at 2:00 so it's a little bit extended. The Members of the Committee, Senator Cox, Senator St. Cyr, we can meet in my office, you can give me an indication whether you wish to have your lunch now and then we meet or we wish to meet and then have lunch, a simple nod of either of the heads can tell me which direction I need to do. In any event this Session now stand adjourned until 2:00.

(Sound of gavel)

Senate adjourns at 12:32 p.m. for lunch.
Senate resumes at 2:08 p.m.

Mr. President: Good afternoon Honourable Members, please be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Mr. President: The afternoon Session of the Sitting commences. Senator Stiell. One second. Senator Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I beg to move that item before us be deferred to another sitting.

Mr. President: Which is the Motion to amend the Standing Orders?

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: That is correct.

Mr. President: So you are withdrawing it?

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: That's right.

Mr. President: Ok, well there is no need to cast a vote on that although it's in the name of Senator Cox. **(Inaudible comments)** Ok, so you are acting on behalf of Senator Cox. And the Motion standing in the name of Senator Cox Honourable Members is being withdrawn at this moment. There is no need to canvas a vote, the Motion is withdrawn, it's withdrawn because a Government Motion needs no seconder. So the Motion Honourable Members which is Motion (b) on the Order Paper standing in the name of the Honourable Norland Cox has been withdrawn by the Leader of Government's Business on instruction of Senator Cox. So Bills?

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Bills

Mr. President: Senator the Honourable Simon Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, I beg to introduce for first reading of the Bill for an Act shortly entitled Appropriation (2021) Bill, 2020.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to make provisions for the appropriation of a sum not exceeding One Billion, Two Hundred And Thirty Two Million, Six Hundred And Seventy Thousand And Forty Nine dollars to the service of the State of Grenada for the period January 1 to December 31, 2021 shortly entitled Appropriation (2021) Bill, 2020.

Question proposed.

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.

Question proposed.
Question put and agreed to.
Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. Mr. President, I wish to indicate that this is a Money Bill and that I have the Speakers Certificate which provides me with the authority to proceed with this Bill. Mr. President, the Bill before us is the formality, it is the legal framing of the debate that has been held over the last three days on the Estimates for Revenues and Expenditure for 2021. And outlined within the Bill before us gives this specific allocations Vote by Vote which then speaks to the different programmes that are outlined within the budget which we have discussed, deliberated on in detail over the past couple of days. And what we

spoke to, we spoke of the extraordinary times that we currently find ourselves, we spoke to the challenges that we face, both in terms of lives and livelihoods at this time. It spoke to the need to carefully construct a programme of work for the year ahead of us that will address the critical priority of a path to recovery for our economy. And at the heart of that is the preservation of jobs for those who have and the creation of jobs for those who do not have.

Mr. President, I cannot emphasise enough the need for cooperation at this time. What is being asked of us is not just of Government, it's not just of our public workers, it's not just of the executive, it's not just of the business community, our civil society, our churches, the Labour Movement. This is an extraordinary time that is calling for extraordinary leadership and calling for extraordinary levels of cooperation.

On reflection there was one point I missed in my wrapping up of the debate and it was a point that was made by Senator De Allie on risks that are associated with the budget and he spoke to implementation as a major risk and we spoke to all of the measures that Government has put in place, is continuing to put in place, to ensure that that implementation deficit that we have a history of is addressed. So how do we mitigate that risk? The second risk is what is happening externally to us with the pandemic. There's so much that is outside of our control with regards to this global crises, so that is a risk. The implementation piece is a risk that is within our control, the global crisis is outside of our control but how we respond to it is to some extent within our control. The third area that Senator De Allie spoke of was the labour climate, the industrial climate and the risk associated with that. He eloquently ran through the different components, the moving parts that determine whether that industrial climate is one that is conducive to us all putting our shoulders, our collective shoulders to the wheel to achieve this ambitious plan. But it's the only plan that we have. Mr. President, this call for collective action, collective responsibility, collective cooperation, I wish Senator Lewis through you, Mr. President, was in the Chamber at that time to hear the conversation. He and I been having discussions outside of this Chamber again about the need for this mutual cooperation. I'm sensing that there is a meeting of minds in

terms of the importance for a level of maturity, a level of responsibility, a level of leadership that is needed for us to achieve this.

I'm going to throw this out, Mr. President, and I'm happy to be wrong but if my understanding is correct, at the time we were having that discussion or Senator De Allie was presenting about that risk with regards to industrial relations, there were others who are outside of the Chamber engaging in discussions regarding industrial action within one of our essential services on a matter that speaks to an individual, an individual matter where resolution had been found and established within the organisation and then there is a turn of events. I don't know what would have inspired that turn of events but having employer and employee reaching a mutual agreement on separation, the acceptance of the terms of that separation to the satisfaction of both parties, then a turn of events which is being escalated beyond what is in the direct interest of that individual, of employer and employee. To a point where there are those that are calling for a strike, strike action at a time of national and international crisis in an essential service that impacts every Grenadian at a time of crisis and at a time where we're talking about the need for cooperation. I'm happy to be wrong but if my understanding is correct, it brings into question all that we have discussed leading up to this. This collective aspiration to do what is best for the country in these difficult times, to climb a mountain when some of us may be trying to undermine that work, but for why, what reason? I believe an explanation, an explanation is due, Mr. President, because I do not understand… I do not understand what we have just gone through these last two (2) days. Laying out a plan of action that will create jobs and protect lives for an individual.

So, Mr. President, I throw that out as I once again outline the significance of the Bill that is before us and the content of the work programmes that are contained within it. And I simply want to underscore the importance of all stakeholders, all Grenadian citizens, patriots, nationalists, to come together, to work together in what is in the interest of every man, woman and child of this country and not just for today. This is about laying a foundation, protecting this generation and continuing to build a foundation for generations to come. So, Mr. President, as I lay before this House the

Bill before us, it is that call for collective action and collective cooperation that I commend this Bill to this Honourable House.

Mr. President: Thank you Senator Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I rise to give my full support to the second reading of the Bill that is before this Honourable House and to speak to the time and the season that we are in and it is no question that in order for us to get through this there must be a meeting of the minds but most importantly a decision to working together. As we all are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic, nobody called it on themselves, we didn't call it into Grenada, the world didn't call it but it came and with it coming, it has disrupted the lives of everyone in this globe and as such it calls for us to soberly look at what is before us and how we can get through this period in one piece. We understand there would be efforts probably that will not work towards this one piece but we can only ask for it. Before us we have $1.2b budget that we want to get passed and why, Mr. President, to ensure that the measures that we have spoken about in this Budget Debate is realised. We spoke of a decline of 12.6% in the last few months or within this year and we are hoping that we will be able to turn this around next year and we projected 6% growth. 6% growth is hinged upon a very strong and robust Private Sector Investment Programme. Yes the projects are there, approval has been granted, what is before us is to ensure that we have an environment that will be conducive for this to happen. Government could create the environment but in order for this to be achieved we must have people willing to work. COVID has in fact interfered with that positive environment that we have created. There should be nothing more or nothing else coming to further disrupt the lives and the direction that we want to see this economy go in 2021, nothing else should come to disrupt that.

So, Mr. President, I want to speak to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. We have an opportunity before us to work together and to advance this economy to move it in the direction that we believe we have the ability to take it and at the same time to bring our workers along, bring our hard-working men and women of

this country along without further disruption in their lives. I remember in my presentation I spoke to us working as a team, starting inside of this Chamber, both sides of the aisle working together to create that environment for the nation to succeed. And I called passionately upon my fellow members on the "Other Side" let's work as a team to achieve the goals that we have set ourselves. I'm making the call again, we have to work together.

Mr. President, I just want to look at a quote from the World Economic Forum within the World Bank and it said **"many of the most vulnerable developing countries including Small Island Developing States may not be able to endure and recover from this crisis in the absence of adequate development financing"** unquote. The outlook before us is bleak; the outlook is stating that it will be difficult; we should not do anything, Mr. President, to make it become more difficult. Any disruption in the peace and harmony of this country will create that environment to cause it to become more difficult. According to the outlook, we will need support and in order to harness or to get the support that we need in this time there must be a culture of peace, there must be an environment of peace and working together. If not, remember I said, if we politicise health and other issues, it creates that problem for us that much needed aid could be lost and I'm seeing before us, Mr. President, that staring us in the face. What the Leader of Government's Business just spoke to a while ago and he said he is wrong, if that is true this could be double jeopardy for us. COVID is one terrible thing already, various entities are stretched to their limit, some holding the strain and not wanting to sever any workers in this point, in this period, they're holding the string. Some on overdraft to keep this going keep this afloat, why do we want to make it more difficult?

So I want to speak to the workers out there, it's a risk you would take and you will go against our COVID Protocols if you go on mass demonstration and so forth. But what is dangerous here, Mr. President, is the signal or the message that we are sending to the outside world. Do we want to send that negative message and disrupt the opportunity for us to get that sort of support that we're seeing from our friendly Governments? Do we really want to do this? I don't think so. I don't think you want to

do this. Yes, it might be for a fallen soldier but if a soldier has made a decision to accept separation and agreed to terms in this regard well then let it be allowed to flow, why are we trying to change this? And at the same time to create a climate that could be painful to all of us? I am calling on my brothers and sisters at this point to let's look at the bigger good, let's look at Grenada, let's look at our children, let's look at the message that we will send. In the Prime Minister's last address he spoke to curtailing of movements and over a 7-day period we will look to review. If we will take this time to demonstrate and to march the streets and so forth, we might just be sending the wrong message to our young people that it could be life as usual and they could involve themselves in activities that could create the environment for the pandemic. Do we really want to do this? I always believe there is a seat at the table where we can speak as partners and find solution but allow the process to be followed. There are mechanisms established to bring solution to problems and if the mechanism fails then we go to the other level, let's not jump the gun. Let's allow the mechanism that has been established to function, allow it. After all, we are people of law and order, let's allow it, let's allow it. Let's not send the wrong message out there and I do believe we can sit back and think about it.

And I want to speak to the one employee the Leader of Government's Business spoke about, I want to speak to you, you can put this to rest. If there was a big man agreement with your employer and you decide to move and that was agreed to, you agreed to the terms and you received a settlement and you were happy with it, this is in your hand. You can put an end to this right now and say my word that I gave when I agreed to the terms is more important at this point, let your word stand. Protect your fellow brothers and sisters who can be exposed to so many different things. But given COVID is around, let's not create an environment for further problems in this country. And what is even worst, if anything should fall out as a result, negatively, from any escalation of demonstration and so forth, and there could be infection from COVID, or so, it even make it worse for the entire State, because we understand how much productivity drops, when one (1) person is infected with COVID-19, because it is not just the one person, but all those who came in contact with them. Let us balance this out,

and I do trust that we will allow the spirit of the Season, of Love, Peace and Harmony to take precedence over everything else. I thank you, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

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

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Thank you, Mr. President. So, Mr. President, I think we have outlined the importance of the Bill before us, the work plan that is before us and the need for all stakeholders, all nationals to play their part, their role, take on their responsibility, demonstrate leadership and what is in the best interest of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And, it is for those reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for its 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 the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. President: Senator Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, I beg to introduce for first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, 2021 Budget Loan Authorisation Bill, 2020.

Bills

Clerk: A Bill to authorise the Minister for Finance to borrow from various sources, an amount of Three Hundred and Thirty Million Eastern Caribbean Dollars (EC$330,000,000.00), shortly entitled, 2021 Budget Loan Authorisation 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.

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. And as this is a Money Bill, I wish to state that I have the Speaker's Certificate, which gives me the authority to proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, again, this is a standard procedure, which is seeking Parliamentary approval, in order for the Government of Grenada to engage certain Lending Institutions to access loan resources that would be used to finance the Budget. The amount stated for this Loan Authorisation Bill is the sum of EC$330m). And, Mr. President, it is important to note a number of things. First of all, the deficit the Government is seeking to bridge, the financing that it is seeking, the deficit in the Budget, which is a sum of (EC$18 m).

The $330m as outlined in this Bill covers a number of elements. Of the $330m, $152.5m of this is for the reissuance of Treasury Bills and Notes comprising of Regional Government Securities Market (RGSM) and non RGSM issues. And this is called a reissuance or the colloquial term is a 'Rollover.' These are Treasury Bills, Treasury

Notes that have become mature and that sum, basically, would turn to zero (0), but then the immediate rollover of an additional Bonds, Treasury Notes to cover that debt window. So, there are funds that are coming in, funds going out, at the same time. So, the actual impact on Grenada's debt stock is actually zero (0). So, this is signalling the resources that are coming in to fill the gap that would be created, as those existing Treasury Notes on the Regional Securities Market mature, so in real terms, the sources of financing that are presented here, so, the external financing from the World Bank, the DPC2, to the value of $67.5m.

This is for Budget support through IDA19. This is a facility, highly, highly concessional loan, that is .75% interest with a ten year grace period, over a forty year repayment timeframe. It is a highly concessional loan. And these are resources that Grenada is eligible for based on its fiscal prudence. These monies would not be made available to us if we were mismanaging our economy and the World Bank is one of the Developing Partners, we have been working very closely with, since 2013, both, in terms of the restructuring of our economy over that period, an on-going support that we are eligible for due to our strong fiscal performance and management. So, these are resources available to us that other countries within the region are not eligible to receive.

The other sum is, again, through the World Bank, for the Caribbean Regional Air Transport Project, which is for $34.1m. Mr. President, this was covered in the Budget. This is part of the Maurice Bishop International Airport, redevelopment project. We are receiving resources from EXIM Bank. We are receiving resources from the World Bank, to enable us to address the upgrade requirements of the Airport. And we spoke at length, about why this is the right time for us to be investing and seeking highly concessionary loan resources, to enable us to upgrade the Airport, ensuring it maintains its international standing, upgrades to the runway, upgrades to the terminal building, safety, communication, navigation equipment, all the things that are required to ensure that the Airport is kept at international standards. And this is the first major reinvestment in the Airport, since it opened in 1984. So, ensuring that our critical air hub is at the standard it needs to be, and this is the time to do it.

It would take somewhere in the region of two (2) years for these works to be carried out. And in addition to creating jobs, significant jobs during the construction and implementation phase, enables the Airport, when it is ready to resume full operations in its new configuration, upgraded, would be in time for the projected uptake in global tourism, as the globe gets through this pandemic crisis situation.

The other loan facilities under the GEEP Phase II Project, $40.5m and again, Mr. President, we spoke of that throughout the Budget Presentation, over the last two, three days. And this is a major upgrading of many of our schools. Somewhere in the region of twenty (20) schools have already been upgraded and refurbished to date. And this is for the second phase, where additional schools, which we outlined, will be constructed and upgraded. So, that is the seeking of Parliamentary approval for the contracting of this loan, to enable us to continue the significant investment in our school infrastructure. And to date, with this concessional loan through the Caribbean Development Bank, signals a $100m investment in our school infrastructure, over the course of that GEEP Programme.

So, Mr. President, the only other item on this, seeking authorisation is the ECCB long term credit allocation, and this is for the sum of $35.4m. And this is a facility that is available to Grenada, to access again, at highly concessional rates. The original credit allocation was at an interest rate of 6.5%, but has been reduced to 2% to members of the Currency Union. And this is a flexible financing facility that is available to us, if required, that we can draw down over the course of 2021, if there are additional expenses, if there are other shortfalls that need to be filled.

Other countries within the Union have already accessed this facility. But because of Grenada's tight fiscal management, it is a facility that is available to us that we would draw down if and when required and the focus of that would be on productive activities. The intention is not to use that for recurrent expenses.

So, Mr. President, what we have before us is part of the financing facility. As I said, half of it is simply a rollover. It is a mechanical transaction. The other portion, the $142m are for programmes that have already been identified, we have the Airport, our

schools, etcetera. And it is for these reasons, Mr. President, that I commend this Bill for its second reading.

Question proposed.

Mr. President: Senator Winston Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I rise to give my full support to the second reading of the Bill that is before us, and to say that everything that we speak of today, have been predicated on the fact that COVID-19 has showed up and has affected everything that we do. Everything that we do today has a lot to do with responding to the impacts of COVID.

But, Mr. President, I am extremely delighted, in the sense that with the Loan Authorisation that the Leader of Government's Business just presented to us, with all the concessionary financings and so forth that he just presented, I wouldn't go back there, but it is important to note that $330m is the value that is being presented of the loan.

It's important to note, Mr. President, that despite the fact that the Budget this year has a deficit of some $18m, and we are only asking for $330m in loan authorisation. The reason why we are seeking approval, the Minister is seeking approval for this low amount is because within the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2021, under Grants, there is a figure here of $174m coming from the NTF. That cushion is the reason why the Loan Authorisation is only $330m. Other than that, it would have been $500m we would have been asking for.

But, I am speaking to the wisdom, when we introduced a few years ago, the CBI Programme, the Citizenship by Investment. And there was this hoorah in the Nation on selling of Passports and all sorts of negatives. Today, we are seeing the benefits, the wisdom of this visionary leadership to move into this direction of the CBI. And we heard from Senator De Allie this morning, with everything that fell through in 2020, because of COVID, the CBI Programme was the one bright spark that provided resources to this

country and today, we are reaping the benefits, with a cushion of $174m in grants to finance the 2021 Budget. This is extremely good, Mr. President, extremely good.

Also, within this, we have concessionary financing from the World Bank of some US$25m and the reason for this again, and Grenada being the… I should not say the only one, a few years; it was 2016, when we got the first $25m from the World Bank, forty years to repay, ten years grace. So, for the first ten years, we paid nothing, and a .75% interest, almost giveaway, we were the only one that qualified. And what created that environment for us? It was a decision we made in 2013 to restructure the economy. The Structural Adjustment Programme established the platform for growth and development, so we were able to work and reduce the Debt to GDP Ratio by growing the economy and our GDP was on the upward march and we succeeded.

But, you can recall, I want to believe, Mr. President, and I can recall, the attack, again we got when we decided to introduce our Home-Grown Structural Adjustment Programme, to kick start the economy. I remember the former Minister for Finance saying that we were reckless, when we said this is what we are going to do. But again, visionary leadership has brought us to this place and history would record that in the period of great trials and testing within this country, this Administration, this current Administration is always at the helm to lead us through and to take this country out of those deep financial holes, and today, we are here doing this. And in this period of COVID-19 pandemic, we will overcome, we will succeed. The foundation has been laid. What is needed right now, is all hands on deck, to make it happen, and we will succeed in 2021 and beyond, because of the positive work that has been established. With this, Mr. President, I want to give my full support to the second reading of this Bill. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator Garraway. Senator Stiell. It doesn't seem as though anybody else wants to contribute.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Okay. Thank you, Mr. President. So, in closing, the loan facilities that we are seeking to access, or have potential access to, as outlined

in the Authorisation Bill, will address the budget deficit that needs to be filled, and the incoming resources that are required to fund critical programmes, such as the redevelopment of the Airport, such as the upgrading of our schools, and it is that final component, which is the treasury rollover. And, it is for those reasons, Mr. President, 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.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. President: Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I beg to introduce for first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Clerk: A Bill, which seeks to amend the Quarantine Act, Cap. 271, shortly entitled, Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Mr. President: Senator Garraway.

Bills

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: 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.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. President: Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill. Mr. President, as stated before, the COVID-19 pandemic is unchartered territory for every country. It has unleashed both global and health emergencies and unprecedented economic crisis of historic magnitude. Our response, to date, is targeted to saving lives and by strengthening the health facilities, ensuring that enough frontline workers are in place and trained, and that the necessary medical supplies and equipment are also in place.

We also ensure that adequate public awareness information is being presented, so the public would be aware as to what needs to be done to protecting themselves. Well, with all this, Mr. President, we have seen, at some point in time, behaviours that were not consistent with the protocols that have been established, and as a result, it has brought undue pressure on the Government's purse.

The Bill before us, the Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020 **"seeks to amend section 4 of the principal Act, to insert a new subsection, to empower the Minister to create offences and regulations for non-compliance with the Regulations, and to set the maximum penalty that maybe prescribed for such offence."** And Clause 3 **"seeks to insert a new section 4A to the principal Act, which confers on the Minister the power to make regulations relating specifically, to the response to COVID, without the requirement for confirmation by the House of Representatives."**

Bills

Clause 4 **"seeks to amend section 7 (2), to increase the maximum penalty for a fine, from $10,000.00 and an imprisonment from 6 months to $25,000.00 and 12 or 1 year, respectively."**

Mr. President, we all would recall Case 25, when, for some reason, that individual left quarantine before receiving information, as to his status, the response to the test that was taken, and only to realise, after getting into his area, his movement was widespread around the country. At the end of it all, when the result was finally presented and he finally received the result, he had a positive diagnosis. But, at that time, by his movements, seventy-seven persons were in close contact with him. We had one (1) positive case, but all seventy-seven and himself, seventy-eight, had to be quarantined and to be tested, and to be tested twice, to ensure that they were medically cleared.

And given that one test, Mr. President, cost EC$405.00 that had to come from the State's purse for seventy-eight (78) persons, and to do it twice, the bill to the Government's purse was $63,180. And then we had other breaches, 31 and 32, their movement was not that extensive but thirty-eight persons were quarantined as a result. And looking at having to test them twice, at $405.00 per test, we're looking at just over $30,000. So for these two breaches, the Government had to pay close to $95,000, monies that could have been used to bring more people on the frontline to work, could have been deployed within the Ministry of Health, but had to be used because people breached the quarantine. Fines are imposed on Bills because you want it to be a deterrent, so as it stands, for persons breaching the quarantine the fine is $10,000 or imprisonment of six months, but that didn't matter to me, because folks breached quarantine. This Bill seeks to increase the penalties, and I think justifiably so, from $10,000.00 to $25,000.00, and from six months imprisonment to one year imprisonment. And I believe this is justified, because, this, any breach affects the productivity of the country, affects the smooth operation of this country. And the intention here is to encourage people to obey the protocols.

Section 3, **"insert a new section 4A to the principal Act: the power to make regulations in response to COVID-19."** Well what is most important here, Mr.

President, is the negative resolution. Because of the seriousness and the gravity of this, you want to give the Minister, and the Minister in here is Minister in Cabinet, the ability to make regulations as quickly as possible in response to an emergency as it relates to COVID or any other disease. And in this case here, and for the COVID, is to give him the tools to be able to respond as quickly as possible, and to establish the regulation, the environment, or the platform to collect information and to dispense information, and to make it mandatory for masters on the ship, or pilots to provide information to the Ministry as it relates to epidemiological issues, as it relates to the persons you have on board, information about the health status, those things are important because we have a country to protect. But importantly, Mr. President, most importantly is to give the Minister the ability to respond, and respond quickly to establishing those regulations. As we'd all agree, COVID-19 came in as a thief in the night, and as, from the time she came continued to create, create panic in the world. **(Inaudible comments/laughter)** Well COVID-19, he or she, has no gender. **(Laughter)**

Mr. President: I didn't know there was a sex to the…

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: I said she came as a thief in the night, and it appears that it affected our young ladies and I didn't want to do that, so COVID is a man, okay.

(Inaudible comments)

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: So, no. Historically we men could take it, so, he came in as a thief in the night, and is creating mass havoc and panic. **(Inaudible comments)** Okay, so gender neutral, so it came in as a thief in the night. The point here, Mr. President, is this; we have to respond to COVID and in so doing, protecting this piece of rock that is ours. And if we don't, and let me bring in this point, COVID-19 was not budgeted for in 2020, and we had to respond and we had to find resources to

make sure that we mount the adequate response. And as I've said here, having the necessary equipment so that our frontline workers can do the job and do it well, funds had to be found to do this. But it makes it more difficult for us to mount a proper response, if our people are not responsible. We're going into, or we are into the Christmas Season, the best time of the year. A time when you let down your guards and you want to have a good time, you can't do it this year. You can't let down your guard; you have to be on guard at all times, because COVID is out there. You cannot say well, we ain't have a death, so we can just do what we want, nobody is aware and knows if COVID is lurking around the corner, we have to be on guard at all times.

So we must not create the environment to get into any sort of activities that could cause infection. Going back to the Prime Minister's address, curtailing on gatherings and so forth, yes, it has taken away from the plans that we may have had, to having a good time for the Christmas, and to enjoy the times with probably the boys and so forth, and the girls and maybe just family, but we have to do everything in moderation at this point in time, because COVID is there. Mr. President, it's unusual times and it calls for unusual responses. What we would love to do at Christmas time, we are not permitted to do it, because COVID is there. But at the end of the day, we want to ensure that we continue to protect the lives of people in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and this Bill here, is designed to do just that. So with this few words, Mr. President, I want to commend the Bill for its second reading.

Question put.

Mr. President: Sorry, Senator Cox you had your, sorry I missed your... You have to excuse me, but my normal pair of glasses, one of my lens fell out.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Oh, thank you.

Mr. President: So what I have here is a reading glasses and I can't see just beyond reading, so I didn't notice your light. So you have the floor, sorry about that. I reverse the question which is about to be put.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. President. No need to apologise, you know. I myself too recently realised, seems like I'm getting there, you know. There is a litmus test that you normally use to know where you are, see if you can thread a needle with the naked eyes, and if you're having difficulties then, that is a requirement that you should visit the… then, yeah **(laughter)**, the eye specialist, you know. **(Laughter)** When you have to call somebody to help you thread a needle, you know you have problems. **(Laughter)**

Mr. President, I am grateful for an opportunity to make some contribution on this important amendment before us, this Bill before us. Mr. President, really and truly what we are actually trying to do, each one of us, is we, and this Government together with the nation, we're trying to save lives. At the same time trying to lead a normal life and that is the difficulty before us. How do we try to do everything that we can, as we used to, at the same time without creating harm for us? And that is where the difficulty lies. As human beings, we are creature of habits, and it's difficult to change those habits. Even sometimes, we know that we're supposed to wear our masks, sometimes you forget, sometimes you jump out of the car, as you go to enter the building you realise, gosh I forgot my mask. So we understand the challenge in persons getting accustomed to this new behaviour, this new attitude, but you know, like everything else, there are some persons who are going to do it deliberately. So, we have to, we have to and wherever we can, use every measure to try to sway persons to, in order to protect everybody. The question is before us, are legislation, can legislation go far enough to do that? It may not, but we do believe that there is a requirement for us to make every effort, use whatever measures that we have in front of us, to make sure that everybody feels safe, so hence the reason why I really support this amendment. This amendment basically just seeks to address two primary things, and I'll go into a little more justification later, but the presenter of the Bill, did speak to the regulations in terms of

being able to respond, using this Quarantine Bill, this new Bill that will become an Act, to respond to COVID-19. Because the Quarantine Bill, for obvious reasons, when constructed initially could not pre-empt that we will have something called COVID-19, and so what we are doing here is actually encapsulating the COVID-19 response within the Quarantine Bill as another measure for going forward. As you know this may be with us for a number of years. Hopefully, we address it, the discussion I believe in the next three to six months will not be so much about testing, but will be more about vaccine, and so, those discussions will continue to go forward. Who knows, maybe we might be coming with a Bill to treat with vaccine going forward, we don't know. So those are the things that we will have to take it as it come.

The second part has to do with infringement of the regulations, and the penalties for those offences so there is a variation upwards in terms of what the court can charge, so we're moving from $10,000.00 to $25,000.00. I think that is somewhat a hefty deterrent on the pocket of course, so we hope that that does work and then in terms of imprisonment, not exceeding one year. But I think most importantly, why we are making this and continue to make this public appeal, we all have done it in this house, since this pandemic met our shores, and we continue to re-iterate as Government, we take this responsibility seriously, from the Prime Minister, Cabinet Members, every opportunity we get, we continue to make this appeal for every individual to look after themselves. Do everything that you can, that is possible to protect yourself in this time. While we as Government, we have a responsibility to do what we can, it is clear that we cannot, you do not have a handle on each individual, really and truly, but the most you can do, is try to encourage, persuade, but that responsibility lies with the individual at the end of the day, and that is the fact.

So, we believe that this is important, and as the terms is addressed, the borders, the entries into the borders, and one of the reasons why we do that. Now, how our economy operate, our economy operate and thrive on people moving backward and forward, people being able to trade. We have our local vendors, we have persons who go to other countries, buy stuff, come back here, sell; that is their livelihood. That is what this pandemic has done, it has hampered that to some degree. We have goods

for supermarkets, for persons who have businesses here, persons who are involved in small manufacturing, some of the materials, they have to get it from outside. So we understand that there is a risk in having that movement, those trades taking place, but that is essential for livelihoods to thrive, and to thrive successfully. So that is the meat of the matter before us, hence the reason why those measures from this amendment, seeks to try to protect movements within that sphere, in terms of ensuring that trade can happen, persons can move, but there is certain requirements in terms of gathering information, giving early notice, what is taking place, who is coming, what you're moving with, and things like that. So that is critical in the event that something do happen, that we can do the necessary tracing to manage this.

So, Mr. President, this amendment, while it may seem very small, it's a very significant amendment for us, by adding another layer, another tool for the Ministry of Health, and of course, by way of the Government of Grenada can respond most appropriately to this pandemic before us. And it's for these reasons I give my full support to this important amendment of the Quarantine Act. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you Senator Cox. Senator Noel.

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Thank you, Mr. President. And on the Quarantine Bill, let me just add to it, because, Mr. President, I know that tourism has its parts to play in the development of this economy, and let me not hasten to say as well, that the diaspora has its part to play in the development of this economy. And sometimes, I hope this Bill is not unfair to the people in the diaspora, our people who is returning on a regular basis. Like I already said, they have made significant contributions and are still making, significant contribution to the development of this country and the economy, hence the reason why sometimes I get the feeling as though we relax certain protocols where the tourist is concerned, and then we tend to put the hammer on our own who are returning, and are always making significant contributions to this country, where

sometimes I get the feeling that the tourists are exempted and our own people are sometimes being treated unfairly, in this regard.

Again, I just want to make the point that somebody wrote an article, I think was Ms. Linda Straker and we must give credit where credit is due, in terms of on the quarantine, the naming of Quarantine Point. Which is somewhere quite in 1892 where it was established, they built some buildings there to isolate people and so on, from small pox, yellow fever, malaria and so on. I think Angus Martin did some work on it, as a historian guy, and she mentioned the point, that's where the name came from, Quarantine Point. So if in 1892, that could have been established, I notice that the Members on the "Other Side" or the Government have never really went into that development, in terms of establishing a quarantine area or facility, since this pandemic has started. Barbados did one in a quick space of time. I have privy to the pictures and I know, I have information on it. They did probably built a quarantine area, probably within the space of a couple weeks, state of the art too, and they are now even trying to transform it, possibly because it was so good, into probably a possible hospital later on, but we haven't gone in that direction here. I've seen St. Lucia as well, when there was one time an issue of community spread, busloads of people leaving the facility and so on. We haven't ventured into that, so I'm just making the point. It's a good thing, maybe we should have gone into that area, haven't seen we gone into that, but the point is, the people in the diaspora, they play a significant role.

I know, the Senator on the "Other Side", Senator Williams make mention to the fact that I mentioned the diaspora. But, it is just the fact that I'm stressing the significant economic contribution that these people have made, and still making. We need to be careful how we go about that, and bearing in mind that these people are still making significant contribution and bail us out, during Ivan and during this pandemic as well, they're still making significant contributions. These are our own people, and we need to be mindful of that, and that is just what I have to say on that matter.

Mr. President: Just before you take your stance on this… Senator Noel there is in fact, from a factual point of view, and I have knowledge of it, because I sit on both

COVID Committees, the committee before and now. There is in fact a dedicated unit, a completely new wing, set up, extend to the hospital that would deal with hospital COVID cases, and it has its own ICU unit. I think if I'm not mistaken, I believe that there may be either eleven or fifteen bed unit there that is separate and distinct from the hospital. That unit occupies what use to be the former CID, what later became the kidney dialysis centre, which was incomplete and never used. It was refurbished, it has both private and individual isolation rooms, it is in fact an isolation ward, so from a factual point of view this Government of the State of Grenada, has made these arrangements. Obviously we don't have a unit the size of Barbados, simply because we don't have the size of Barbados economy, etc., etc., but there is such a unit.

Secondly, yes I know of Quarantine Station which gained its name from when the early outbreak of small pox, in fact it was leprosy I think, that first triggered that isolation centre down there, and we do have isolation units here. The St. George's University has made available to the State of Grenada, for purposes of an isolation facility, or a quarantine facility, its former campus on the Grand Anse Beach, that has several rooms on the upstairs, and that is being used. In addition to which the Government has rented several other, well not rented, but has certified by virtue of these facilities meeting the necessary quarantine standards, and these are Private Sector quarantine facilities, that has been approved and individual persons who have to go into quarantine, can elect to go into a private quarantine setting. And some hotels have been so certified, and are prepared, the workers have been prepared and shown how to handle patients like those, and so on. For those persons who cannot afford and can prove that they don't just have the funds, right, there is that facility provided by the University, in addition to which, because most of the dorms at the University are empty, the University has also made some of those available for purposes of quarantining, especially as I can tell you, I mean my daughter is a medical doctor, who was one of the doctors in the COVID infectious unit. In fact she was one of a limited number of doctors there, and she had to quarantine at a facility, a hotel that the Government had to rent in order to put them there. So I'm just talking factually what the facts are, and maybe Members of the House are not conversant or are acquainted with those facts. So I just thought I would make it

known. I'm not entering the debate, but for the benefit of all, from a factual point of view, I'm just saying what currently does exist, yes, okay. St. Cyr, yes.

(Inaudible Comments)

Mr. President: St. Clair, sorry. I always get this mixed up. I'll get it right one of these days.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Alright, don't worry. Thank you so much, Mr. President, for accommodating my comments on this. I'll say it's a historic Bill, historic not necessarily for this part, but the Bill in its entirety from the parts that we don't have here today. Because I sit there and I say, but did we have a Bill, I am not too sure, maybe for the same leprosy and those things back then. Did we have a Bill? I'm not too sure, Ms. Williams, Cathisha, maybe…

Mr. President: Yeah, there is a…

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: …there might be something on the books, there might not have been a Bill for that.

Mr. President: Yeah, yeah, yeah…

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: There was?

Mr. President: There is Public Health Laws…

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Okay, so this is it…

Mr. President: …that deal with these matters.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Well you see, and that's the beauty of being new, so I am learning the process, and it's for history, because, sometime a lot of persons in the country are not aware that, and they say where they coming out with this thing again? And so, I stand here because I am personally affected. I mean in our work, in the nutmeg, in the cocoa, I think the whole country knows that, our farmers and so on. Our vegetables, for everybody, especially from the food end, are affected, from a lot of different angles, from one in terms of unable to sell their products as they would like to, especially in the export market, the fisher folks and so on, they are still affected. In fact, only yesterday I had to go to Gouyave to get some fish, and the guy said you know this is good fish, you know, because you know the plane not going to America, so what you're getting here, is what really should have gone away. **(Laughter)**

(Inaudible Comments)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: You see, so it comes back to the point of **(laughter)**, so I had to buy, I don't know if I got a special price, but maybe if we had some agro processing facility we might able to add some value to it, and have it at some stage, might able to ship it out and get money down the road. But the point is that again, when it gets tough, our farming community, fisher folk, will still have to feed our nation again, so they are in a catch-22. They need to have funds to continue their trade, they need to think about their own livelihood, yet still they have, and they know that, that obligation and sort of moral responsibility to ensure that we can consume. I say this on the backdrop that from my constituents, we don't want to go down in that whole problem anymore of these restrictions and so on. And so, whatever can be done to make the penalty tougher, make it more enforceable, so as to make their lives and all of our lives eventually better, we will support. Of course implementation we know is always an issue, and of course the police we commend and all of those things, but we want you to, I would say, do your work, because this is your arm of doing the work.

Now, I have a few comments I want to make specifically to this, that I, I'm not too sure if this was considered, or if it's just another part and maybe the next month or two,

as a situation arise we will modify again. But I want to comment that when I read this, I'm seeing a lot about the ship and the airplane and, so it's about a lot of coming in, because I know we want to protect our borders. But we need to also realise that after you come in, and we have seen that, and I stand corrected to the process and the protocol, because I've never been out, to come back in during this time, but I learned that you come in, and you have to be checked and tested to make sure that you're okay. I'm not too sure if that is 100%. However, when you come in, you must go into some facility of quarantine, for which our President has clearly outlined the process and facilities available. And while you are in this facility, some testing would take place at some time later on to see if you get the all clear that you can leave and this is where my concern starts. So I am interpreting that this Bill here as presented is saying if I leave, if I escape this quarantine facility or if I was given the permission to get home quarantine because I understand in extreme situation, it is possible that it could happen and that is ok. But if you are in there and you break the quarantine, this is what I am interpreting this to achieve. So I am waiting for the result and the result has not come yet but I break the quarantine and I am going to be charged this monies. I have no problem with the amount of monies of the $25,000.00 and the one year in prison.

My concern is while I am in quarantine, I wait for my test so I might be tested and say oh, he is positive. So I'm in True Blue, Grand Anse facility and I was tested on whatever the day as prescribed. I didn't break it I am waiting, I am a good guy and the results come, you are positive, so based on the protocol if I am getting it right, stand corrected, I need to remain there and then there would be some follow up to check me again to make sure that I get the all clear before I can go. However somewhere in that waiting that I know that I am positive and I am there I behave bad, I say you see me I cannot take this thing anymore, I know I have it but I need to go. So I break the quarantine and I go, so I knowingly have it and I go by my good friend André, Senator for Labour, I say boy watch, I'm from La Digue, I come out, I need some food **(laughter)** and it so happen sometime down the road we discover André got it. We do the tracing and realise, no, but this guy supposed to be in quarantine, he broke it for a night he come back, how did he get it? This person in this context to me is not catered for here,

it is catering for, we are making the assumption that all who comes in would be negative so don't worry about that other part. But as Senator De Allie said clearly this morning, we are living in a time of uncertainties and many possibilities and that is a possibility and so I think this person should have a… that's the person who wilfully went over so, it's me…I went over, should be fined at a much higher rate because I knowingly went and do that. In fact if I am not mistaken and I say I am not a lawyer even if I play around it sometimes, individuals with HIV committing such matters, I think can be subject to some sort of penalty and so it's along that sort of line I was thinking.

In fact when I read, there is a word here that says danger and danger means something to be scared, it means there is some… and that is why we are wearing our masks because there is danger; you are armed. So the COVID is like a… imagine you have a knife or a gun and you… so people right now… in fact it was said yesterday I think maybe by Senator Noel, sorry Senator Lewis regarding some situation where the health care have to come in and coach the workers because they were scared. And so, I think if someone is infected is certified and they are aware and the Ministry would have said to them you are certified, should they in any way, because they should be in quarantine, so I'm just saying, should there be anywhere around because they should be in quarantine. The fact is that once they go out and they create that infection then I think that they should have a different fine which is much higher. **(Inaudible comments)** I don't know, I am not telling you to reduce what you have here but I think it should be more because it's like I'm coming to you with my open hands and I just give you two cuff versus I having a cutlass coming down the road, the Jurors would see it different because you have a motive and this must be addressed.

And I understand Senator Noel's point about let's not get the diaspora scared because it sounds like an infringement, a sort of restriction but when we put this part to it, I think it makes it more fair and in fact we are not there yet because I understand it's cluster spread that is happening and not community spread. At a community spread level, we have to be catering for these things there because it have to be rapid operations and it doesn't mean that we have to come back here quickly to pass a Bill to make this little adjustment of two lines again, ok. So I would like us to look at this.

The second thing regarding this is that, I'm not too sure if it's there; if that's the interpretation so again I stand guided. That section on page 4 of the Bill, item (g), speaks about **"authorising the making of charges and providing for the recovery of expenses"** and I trust that what that mean is that should I not only… so that's one charge but should I now cause André, Senator, my friend to be infected and he has problems down the road, he cannot work, livelihood affected or maybe I would have gone in a business place in a shop to get some goods and I caused this business to close down or something like that, this infected person should have some responsibility in this regard. Because they know, I don't know, you don't know, they know and so if (g) covers that I am ok and if (g) covers that also I want to further get some clarification, what sort of penalties, charges is associated with that. And I don't think it's penalties in the form of going to prison because going to prison doesn't put food on the table, it doesn't help the business go back up and running, the loss of jobs, of persons having to stay home for many days, it doesn't cut it. So these are my comments and I strongly support this because we cannot have more disruptions.

Right now from where I sit on the Nutmeg Association in particular, the fisher folks and all of those who are exporting, I'm here and I'm worried and I'm just trying to pray that we can get certain things done before it get to the situation that we don't want to because it would be hard. I know the Government is making a lot of tries and commitment, finding monies, all the stimulus package to help with the labour and so on. It is tough and we have to do as much as we can from where we sit to send a very strong message in this regard but also to enforce and implement to its fullest. So these are my contributions to this point.

Mr. President: Thank you Senator St. Clair. Senator St. Cyr now, I think I have to get this correct.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, like Senator St. Clair and my colleagues on the "Other Side", I stand to support this Bill, however I do have and I am placing my concern here because I have an emergency, I

need to go outside. I read the principal Act and the principal Act states that the CMO… let me quote it here **"the person from time to time holding the office of the Chief Medical Officer shall be the quarantine authority."** So I am asking here just for clarity, again I am not the legal mind so Senator Williams may be able to clarify this for me here. Because the Act says **"establishment of quarantine authority…"** that's section 3 **"and appointment of staff, for the purpose of this Act, there shall be a quarantine authority."** Two (2) says, **"the person from time to time holding the office of the Chief Medical Officer shall be the quarantine authority."** So I am wondering here if we're repealing that and the Minister is going to become the quarantine authority or it's in addition. **(Inaudible comments)** It's a totally different thing. Ok. So we're simply amending section 4 and adding.

That being the case, I have another concern because basically we're dealing with the Quarantine Act and the amendment speak specifically to COVID-19 and I'm wondering here if it doesn't make more sense to say public health emergencies as opposed to COVID-19 because public health emergency, COVID-19 will fall under that instead of having a specific public health emergency mentioned. So, Mr. President, those are just my… other to that I think the Bill is a good one and I fully support the fine that is there because we have to understand that public health crises are no joke. We have to take them seriously and persons have to abide by the protocols and procedures that are set. Thank you very much.

Mr. President: Senator St. Cyr, Senator Cox… not Cox. Sorry Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: (Laughter) No, one is C and one is G. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, let me start by thanking the Members for their contribution and I just want to start with the last one first. Let me hold on, probably Senator St. Cyr will be back when I speak to it. But I want to thank Minister Cox for the historical context put to this and the value of it as it relates to ensuring that we capture everything that is coming in into the country be it goods, be it

persons and the responsibility of masters and pilots to ensure that they provide all the information to the relevant authorities as it relates to whatever consignment that they have in their care.

I listened to Senator Noel and I just want to allay the word of fears you have, lay it aside, to know that this Bill will be no respecter of persons and everyone would be governed according to the legislation. So it means that our diaspora nationals should not fear anything in the sense that there would be one standard for them and one standard for other persons, no. The Bill will establish the parameters in which you will have to follow and that's what it is, so you're just ensuring that the Bill will just be clear and straight forward and everyone would be governed according to the dictates of the Bill. As it relates to Senator St. Clair, the Quarantine Act as it is, speaks to what you are talking about re a person knowingly is infected and may decide probably to have a little party, celebration. If that is the case, one, he is… the police can and the Bill say it, not here, but in the quarantine Act, the police can enter into his property even without a warrant and to shut the party down and take the necessary measures to curtail or to curb the possibility of spread and so forth. So that is there, it is covered. We're specifically dealing with two issues here but it is there in the Quarantine Act, the Public Health Act I should say. The reason why we are making this amendment here, part of it is the negative resolution we are talking about so that the Minister does not have to come back into Parliament that will even take up the time and create the environment probably for further spread.

The Minister can make regulations without coming back to Parliament and to ensure that we protect the people as much as possible via those regulations. As it relates to the issue Senator St. Cyr raised… the two of them the first one is, the amendment here speaks to do two things. The Quarantine Act speaks to the role of the CMO, this is not what we are doing here. We are speaking to, as I said, amending two and three and that is to ensure that information is provided at this point in time to the authorities as it relates to, one, persons who you have in your… be it on the ship or on the aircraft or whatever consignment you have, goods whatever it is, those information must be provided for. And the other issue that Senator St. Cyr raised as it relates to…

she was concerned as to… be it a specific disease that the Bill was capturing, why we didn't look to probably amend the entire Public Health Act and we're saying no because within the Act every disease will have to be named so that regulation would be specific to it. So all what she spoke of before, be it chicken pox, leprosy all of them are a part of the Public Health Act as it currently stands. What we are doing here at this point is to introduce Covid-19, it was not there before, it was novel. So now you have specific information as it relates to COVID and going forward regulations would be made re COVID but it would be a part of the Public Health Act.

So as it is right now, based on what we have before us, everything that needs to be covered right now is being covered and we do believe this will give the Minister the necessary authority to introduce regulations that will govern as it relates to COVID-19. But let us not be in any way, let us not forget the seriousness of COVID before us and what is important for us to ensure that the measures that are being imposed is to one, save lives. And that's the primary objective, to save lives and it is not to restrict or to take away civil liberty or your freedom of movement. We are faced with an issue right now that has the ability to decimate your economy. When we look at what is happening in some of the first world countries with how many thousands of people being dead as a result of COVID, we have to make sure that we protect our people and in protecting our people, this amendment has been brought here today. So with these words I want to commend the Bill for its second reading.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Mr. President: Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I beg to move that the Senate resolves itself into a Committee of the whole Senate to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resume.

Mr. President: Honourable Members it's my pleasure to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and notwithstanding very lively discussion was passed without amendment. Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. President: Senator Garraway.

Sen. the Hon. Winston Garraway: Mr. President, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. President: This Bill has succeeded and has passed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 16 - Public Business.
Item 17 - Adjournment.

Adjournment

Mr. President: Senator André Lewis you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much…

Mr. President: Let me just remind colleagues. According to Standing Order, it's 10 minutes, I'll tell you the exact Standing Order here, it's 10 minutes on the adjournment. "On the Motion for the adjournment of the Senate, any Senator may rise and speak on any matter of public importance or urgency up to a limit of 10 minutes." Senator Lewis you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much and just in keeping with my goodly friend on the "Other Side" in terms of a curve ball, I just thought I should rise first. The first thing I want to do, Mr. President, and I'll just ask for consideration for this contribution not to be deducted from my 10 minutes after I have done that. I really want us to congratulate… **(Inaudible comments)** …no my brother Stiell… I just want us to congratulate the Clerk, comrade, I'm saying comrade because of where I had come from… that's Andrew Augustine on the following and then I guess you would agree with me not to take it out from my time. Our Clerk has become the President of the Governing Board of UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. **(Applause)** It is a strategic arm of UNESCO devoted to the transformation of the Education Sector in the region, essentially a policy making body and he served as the Vice President of the Board from 2018. So I think that is something that we should recognise him for. I stand on that. **(Applause)** My personal congratulations to you my brother.

Labour has always indicated our willingness to cooperate, in this period it is extremely more important and urgent, it has to be two ways. COVID must not be used as an opportunity by some employers to break the rules and then try to blame labour and I guess we can all agree on this. So for instance where Collective Agreements call for dialogue, the process of retrenchment, if there is a discussion on retrenchment with the Union must be completed with the Union and we must not make efforts to go behind

the Union back to try to reach at agreements. I'm just saying this for whatever it's worth. This will prevent some of the problems that we may run into and those who are involved in Law will understand that if you are the representative of someone in the Court how these things occur. Principle is important to abide by these things generally. So we give our commitment, this is a general point and just as a saying, it is also important to note that in forging this working unity that is extremely important in this period, always been important but more so than ever, that any attempt to stroke fear or imply threat or to cast blame whether pre-emptively or so, in most instances can only sometimes inflame the enthusiast or the situation so we need to be guided by this as we respect each other. And I am using this appeal to call on all employers, the Labour Movement also, but all employers that whenever there is a problem or a concern that you may have, that has arisen, let's do engagement. It is not about a power relation that things are tight and people are afraid to lose their jobs so I can do someone what they want. We must respect the dignity of the human being, so I'm just calling for the following of procedures on all matters.

I want to also at this time once again empathise with all the workers who have been impacted and citizens who have been impacted by COVID and in particular with the recent cluster at Sandals and to make a specific request that anyone who has been impacted and has to be quarantined or whatsoever should not suffer any loss of income, should not suffer any loss of benefits. I want to end so I wouldn't use the 10 minutes because this is a period really for us to work together and that's why I decide to start first to send that message. I am sending this message because we genuinely believe so. I know many times attempts have been made; Labour is always to pull down. Workers are always the first to be called upon to make sacrifice and because what we have is our ability to speak out so that people can hear... We don't sit in the boardroom and make the decisions, and when the decisions are made in the boardroom the public is not aware of it. The public becomes aware of those decisions when we bring it to the public, so for those of us who have influence on those who make decisions, let's be guided by this.

Adjournment

I take this opportunity to wish everyone all the very best for the season, this is a season that is not normal, that is not as we're accustom with and whatever we do, try to avoid getting involved in crowds, try to avoid being exposed unnecessarily, wear your mask, follow the health professionals and I am requesting of the health professionals to be guided by the science as they have always done and therefore in addressing national issues stick to the science. Because anything that impacts Grenada and I'm seeing what is happening in the region, I'm seeing some of the talks both in the US, because remember Sandals is an international company. I'm seeing what is being said in Jamaica, I'm seeing what they are saying in different places and therefore we all need to pull ourselves together, we all have equal responsibility but there are some of us who have more responsibility based on where we sit in terms of the authority. So Labour give that commitment as usual to keep working in the interest of all but please let us do it with mutual respect. So everyone have a very good Christmas have a good New Year safe as possible. To all my colleagues, the Clerks, the Officers, my colleagues on the "Other Side", my colleagues here, we wish us all the very best to you and your family and to all the workers of this country. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Senator the Honourable Norland Cox.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, I too want to congratulate the Clerk on his big post **(laughter)** and to thank, Mr. President, through you as the Presiding Officer, the Parliament for accommodating us throughout this period. They have worked well. I know that when we were having meetings here earlier in this year they were here making sure that everything is in place, they abide with the protocols, things like that. So I just want to thank the staff of the Parliament for the work that they have been doing to accommodate Members throughout the course of this year. As always, they have done a remarkable job including the Members of the Royal Grenada Police Force who stand guard here inside the Chamber and outside, we want to thank them as well.

Adjournment

Mr. President, I want to just express some thanks to the Prime Minister and my other Cabinet colleagues for giving me the opportunity to perform in this new portfolio that I am in and finally convincing me to steer the Ministry going forward for 2021 as we have a normal task ahead of us, I really want to register my thanks in that regard.

Mr. President, I want to recognise a few very important… I do have serious recollection of where we were in February, March of this year and where we are now. Because I had an intimate relationship in what is taking place in the background I think it is prudent to recognise a number of countries who would have really helped us to really get where we are now. Not in any order of priority but countries that I know made significant contribution to Grenada during this period, I think it is important that I recognise them in this Sitting. I think it is critical that we do. The Italian Government, they have contributed significantly especially in the area towards NAWASA in the development of our infrastructure, I just want to recognise them. **(Applause)** The United States Government, they have given significant in supporting the Police in particular during this period. The United Kingdom **(applause)** they have contributed as well. Mr. President, the People's Republic of China **(applause)** the people and Government of Cuba **(applause)**, Venezuela, Mr. President, **(applause)** and all our colleagues in the region, they have supported in some way. When we run out of stuff we could have made a call to Dominica, we make a call to Trinidad and so we want to recognise our CARICOM brothers **(applause)** and sisters. Mr. President, I want to single out not a country but an organisation that has helped us, really, really helped us, that is the Canadian Bank Note. **(Applause)** I mean they have… we could have just placed a call and they just roll out their credit card and get stuff for us so that was something that we want to put on record, we want to thank them for their contribution in this regard.

Mr. President, you know there is this quiet national institution that does so much for Grenada but sometime often time when we hear of them is either some issue or some kind of controversy or something. We do not hear enough of the good and the contribution that the National Lotteries have been making to the development of this

nation and they have contributed significantly to our fight again COVID **(applause)** so I just want to register that.

With that, Mr. Chair, I want to thank my family of course. I had to ask for permission to come here this morning, I didn't want to say it out loud but I normally have to ask for permission every day. **(Laughter)** I just want to thank my wife, my family for their support and of course my colleagues here. It's a pleasure to be part of this Senate in this country, a part of this Government at this point in time. I think it's a true privilege and I'm happy to be here sharing this experience with everybody. I want to wish you all the best for the holidays. It's going to be an unusual one but we implore that persons be safe as much as possible and of course we look forward to a new year. It's going to require a work from each and every one of us to ensure that we achieve the objectives that we set not only for ourselves and our families but what we set for our country. With these few words I just want to say thank you very much, Mr. President.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you so much, Mr. President, and of course I take this opportunity to stand here to speak on a few matters; one of course we want to recognise and I think it was… I'm not too sure if was Senator Bhola or Senator Stiell that spoke about women and of course we are aware of our women in Agriculture group. Ms. Theresa Marryshow and her team, the GRENROP women and they are supported heavily by the IICA and there is a regional organisation called the CANROP and this is a group of women farmers, agro processors involved in the Agriculture Industry and they have different linkages with some of our major hotels procuring vegetables and other poultry and so on. Of course I stand and I say this because this year and only a few days ago to be exact they would have celebrated their 20th year of existence. **(Applause)**

So sometimes we do have good examples in this country but as we are seeing, it's the women. So it's something that even a lot of the organisations, we need to look at going forward how do we involve the women to keep those things going. Sometimes the men might be there to do the hard work but the women keep the fabric connected and of course by saying that by extension, if you look at the whole Agriculture Sector

while a lot of men and male might have their names on the land papers and all these stuff, the women does a lot of managing the affairs of selling and marketing and they tend to have a much better connection and that is proven in various parts of the world in various sectors not only in Agriculture. So what we need to also look at in our whole speaking moving forward is not only about the youth per se but the youth women because we need to learn from them, all of us as our male counterparts.

So that's the first thing that I want to say and I want to by extension use this opportunity to give good regards to all our farming community, our fisher folks, that despite all that is happening the world is not going to end in the morning. I don't know if I have the powers to say that but the signal doesn't say that because we have just made great plans for 2021 and this is the encouraging part. They say that where there is a will there is a way and God will always allow good things to happen. So I say this to say that all our farmers, fisher folks the whole group within that whole food supply don't be daunted despite what you may think. Behind every dark cloud they say there is a silver lining but it has to take motivation and trust as to what the future will bring. So I want us to ensure that we can provide good healthy food for our nation during this time. I'm asking our nation to again, I made a call previously through a press release to let us support and buy local especially in this time. It is the healthy choice, it will support our local economy, it will keep the money in Grenada. So that is the next call I want to make.

I want to say further that we all need to keep healthy and healthy… sometimes people say if you have a little bit of size like me you're not healthy but size is not about healthy. Healthy is about as Senator Lewis said, it's about the science, you know what is your blood pressure, what is your blood sugar and all of those different things, this is what makes you good because you can have a big three litres vehicle but it is not performing whilst you can have maybe a 600 litters and it's performing good because it is healthy, it is well tuned up. So I'm saying this to say that, let us tune up our bodies with good food and all of these things so that we can be able to move into 2021 with good energies. I say also that we need to ensure that we start have forward planning because from the Farming Sector, we know that a cabbage or a tomato would not be

ready in January 1 or February 2, so we have a lot of preparatory work. So whilst some persons might be relaxing during this holidays, a lot of work by the farmers would be going into place so that there is food on the table come January. So as Senator Bhola said this morning to me, he said he was planting potatoes this morning before he got here. So this is what our farmers are doing. We have to really recognise this and for my personal stand point for the opportunity provided to me here to represent the ten thousand plus farmers, their families, farm workers, agro processers, I will continue to try my best, continue to learn. It's a good experience being here, the connections, the sharing of knowledge, the wisdom, the camaraderie the vision of wanting to see Grenada do better, the question would be… we may have different ideas how to get there and I think it was a brilliant idea today by your wisdom, Chairman at the time, President now, of that select arrangement. Let us look at previewing a lot of these documents so that we can be able to add more value for this country. I commend you strongly on that guidance.

I want to further say, I want to thank everyone who have guided me through my time, who have been supporting me through this period particularly advising me, the farming community who have been receptive and connecting. My friends, families, I will say my workplace also in terms of I'm here for three days, so all of these. I want to thank for the support both Minister David, Minister Bain-Horsford for reaching out with me and so I think 2021 will be good. And I will do my best to ensure that I am not ready but I will put up a little bit more speed in the process. Thank you so much and happy holidays to everyone, the staff of course and all the Officers and so on at the Parliament. I feel safe, I feel at home, I am not feeling displaced at all so thank you so much for the hospitality. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you Senator St. Clair. Senator Noel.

Sen. the Hon. Terry Noel: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me just begin with congratulating the Clerk on his new position and so on. Let me also, Mr. President, thank the frontline workers in Grenada for keeping us safe and so on this far. It was a

difficult job in this pandemic, as the budget said COVID-19 has in terms of magnitude and scope, was unprecedented. So I will like to thank the nurses, the doctors, ambulance drivers, the farmers, the bus drivers, the police officers, teachers, garbage collectors and anyone who I would have left off. And I want to thank the entire population in general and I will also like to thank the Opposition Leader for the opportunity where I could be here in the Senate and making my contribution to the development to this country and so forth.

I also will like to thank the Grenadians in the diaspora as I have been talking about a lot today who have been helping us a lot. Almost every disaster that we have, they have been pitching in and making their significant contribution as well to this country and despite the global pandemic where everybody was affected, they still was able to put a lending hand and support people, the Grenadians here in this country. And I already said I want to thank the entire population and just wishing everybody happy holidays and Merry Christmas and so on and we know it's a different challenging time, different type of Christmas but at the same time we have to make it our best, make the best out of it. So thank you very much.

Mr. President: Thank you Senator Noel. Senator Judd Cadet

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, like the others I also want to congratulate the Clerk on his appointment. Mr. President, I also want to use this opportunity this special opportunity also to speak to the young people of this country. I think, Mr. President, understanding the challenges that we are going through in 2020, Mr. President, we are going through a lot. We didn't get the celebrate Easter, we didn't get the time to play our Carnival, I mean **(laughter)** some did grab the opportunity but the fact is, Mr. President, the reality is that many of us did not. A lot of artiste, Mr. President, suffered economically this year and a large portion of them are young people, the promoters again a lot of them are young people, Mr. President, some of them could not have their events. And now many of us would not be able to have the Christmas that we would like compared to over the years.

So in addition to that, Mr. President, our studies; I am a student at the St. George's University and I can tell you, Mr. President, it was very challenging time doing it online. And I can say that a lot of students would have suffered from the perspective that many of them from the environment that they had to study if they do not have the conducive environment some of them struggled and sometimes you're doing your exam and your internet drop in the middle of that. In fact I remember one situation where a girl would have gotten an F in a particular course and it's just… some of the situation did happen. So we struggled a lot but the fact is we have made it through the year 2020 and we looking forward to 2021. As you rightly said, we have just passed a great plan for 2021 and we are very hopeful.

I am very certain, Mr. President, that with the outlook of thing and the fact that we have the vaccine on the way, the fact that we are now getting to understand this virus. In fact, Mr. President, I remember we called 2020 one of the worst period not just because of COVID but how it started. Remember it started with what seemed to be like a World War III between the US and Iran and many of us were scared that some craziness would have happened and then a famous NBA star, Kobe Bryant died in the helicopter crash, so that was very scary for a lot of young people. We're now moving into 2021 with the great plan that we presented over the last 3 days. I am very certain, Mr. President, and we are very hopeful that a lot of things will open up for us. We are very certain that looking at what will happen, more jobs and more opportunities will come to us, we are hoping that, Mr. President, that our studies will, some level of normalcy will return and we're looking forward to a lot of things happening and hopefully, Mr. President, we will have a lot of activities return.

I know for example one young lady, she was telling me yesterday she returned from Tanzania and she was actually saying that she was looking forward to this Christmas to celebrate with her family, many of us would not be able to do that in the large gathering. Also, Mr. President, I want to let our young people to continue to adhere to the protocols because this is important. Because we don't want to spread this virus and this is a very serious virus and we must adhere to these protocols so that we can return to some normalcy.

At this point in time as well I want to wish them Happy Holidays and I want to wish everyone Happy Holidays. Mr. President, it has been a great pleasure being in this Honourable House. I always love to listen the debate among us and the "Other Side". I am happy to have our three new Senators this year and I congratulate you all on your Maiden Presentation, it was a pleasure listening to you guys. But, Mr. President, again I want to wish everyone happy holidays and I look forward to working with you in 2021 and we have a lot of work to do and I am happy to hear our Labour Senator mentioning that he will be working with us even more and this is much more important because as Mr. De Allie would have said a lot is bent on the relationship and we look forward to the corporation because this is very important because we have a lot of work to do and a lot of opportunities to provide for our people, a lot of hope. So I thank you, Mr. President, and I wish everyone again, I want to say Happy Holidays. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank You Senator Cadet. Senator St. Cyr.

Sen. the Hon. Tessa St. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, like my colleagues who would have gone before, I wish to enthusiastically congratulate the Clerk. We would have had many discussions as it relates to education before my becoming a Senator and I know he is very, very passionate about education. So congratulation sir on your elevation. I wish you all the best in this new post and I know you are going to do a great job.

Mr. President, I will also like to take this opportunity to encourage the entire nation, I am not sectioning out anybody, but the entire population, encourage the entire population to pay attention to the protocols and the procedures that are in place; wear your mask, do your sanitisations, wash your hands, continue with the social distancing, do all that is within your power to keep yourself safe and to keep others safe. Mr. President, I will also like to wish the Honourable Members of this House starting with you, Mr. President, I must confess at times when I saw an email from you I scratch my head and I say oh boy. You have offered me quite a number of opportunities but those

opportunities came with work, time and effort, learning but yet work. And I do have some things pending to report, I am a bit tardy with that but I can assure you that they are going to be coming your way.

So I wish everybody here, I know we say Happy Holidays, I choose to say Merry Christmas and I hope I'm not stepping on any toes based on beliefs, I choose to say Merry Christmas. I wish everybody all the best for 2021; we are always stronger together even though we sit on different sides of the aisle. Believe, continue to believe, I know we spoke of resilience in the budget debate and we have always been a resilient people. COVID-19 could only take us down if we allow it to take us down and I have been saying to some of my friends and family members you know change our mind-set, change our thinking. What you focus on is what you see manifest in front of you all the time, so if you only focus on the problems or the challenges associated with COVID, that's what would be perpetuated in your mind or in your thinking.

I also want to take this opportunity, Mr. President, to encourage us to look out for our neighbours. There are some persons who walk around stressed, perhaps frustrated, offer a helping hand. It will be a good thing this Christmas for those of us who have to give something to others. I've already started although I do not say it, I love my gardening, I love my gardening. So I have a little back yard garden and I got so much sorrel and I harvested my sorrel and I started giving out to some friends and family. **(Inaudible comments/laughter)** So I want to encourage us as a population to look out for our neighbours, to look out for our friends, to look out for each other. Yes we have differences but we're all Grenadians and we have to be our brother's keepers. Again there is always something to be thankful for, always. We may have a lot of challenges as I said, but there is always something to be thankful for. So I want to encourage us as a people to continue being hopeful, to continue to believe that you know we're going to get through this. This is you know but a pandemic, others have survived it and we more than likely would survive it if we do the right things.

On that note, Mr. President, again I just wish to thank everybody here, the Opposition team, phenomenal secretary. I call her so many times, the Clerk, I maybe frustrate him with so many questions that you know I need guidance on; Terry for his

support. Obviously the Opposition Leader and only yesterday I had to express my gratitude for him believing in me to offer me such a position and to support me through this journey so far.

Despite our debates inside here, believe it or not I like the bunch just as Judd expressed, I really like this bunch. We may knock heads softly sometimes and very hard other times but it's all about the nation's business and again I urge us to continue taking this seriously because our nation is depending on us. Thank you, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator St. Cyr. Senator Bhola is it your light I'm seeing?

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Yes, Mr. President.

Mr. President: I'm operating with my reading glasses.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: It's alright and I am not so clear that you can read me easily so. **(Laughter)** Thank you very much, Mr. President. Like the others before me I would like to congratulate my friend of course the Clerk, on his assention to a higher position in the organization that you have been involved with, and I really do hope that it doesn't only bring satisfaction for you, but that through whatever work you will engage yourself in, that our country as a whole, will reap some of the benefits.

I would like to, Mr. President, thank all of the staff of this Chamber and the House in general, whether they are permanently here or auxiliary staff, they have made our stay here a very pleasant one, and for that, we are very grateful. As one of our Senators said earlier on, we feel very safe. We feel that we are in a very secure place, and so we appreciate that, and we want to wish them a real happy Christmas and enjoyable holidays.

Mr. President, because of my background and the length of time that I have spent with the farming community and so many people there, I want to specially single

them out, and to wish them, not as the Senator affords them here, but as a friend of the farming community. And just to mention, there was something of importance that just slipped me yesterday in my presentation that I wanted to mention, and it came as a result of our young Senator here, Brother Cadet, speaking about the fact that I think, I am trying to remember the country you said, the Netherlands, was it?

Sen. the Hon. Judd Cadet: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Roland Bhola: Yes, the Netherlands, despite their small size, have been doing tremendous things, in terms of production, because, they are using the science and the technology, and that they are into the hydroponics and other things like that. And there is a serious farmer in our country, who, for almost thirty (30) years now, has been in farming. He is someone that is well known to most of us. He is from our neck of the woods. We normally call him BJ, and most of us know him. He has just cleared from the Docks, a forty foot container, Mr. President, with all the equipment to set up a modern Hydroponic Farm, something that cost in the region of half a million US dollars. And I thought it was important to mention that, because I wanted the other farmers of Grenada to know that despite we complain a lot about what we don't have and the shortage of x, y and z, if we take this thing on seriously, as a business and we put effort into it, it could pay off well for us. So, I just wanted to put that on the table, and to wish him, as a shining example, because over the years, and the Senator for Agriculture would know that, because he has dealt with him many times being at the Marketing Board level and understanding. And with that serious investment, of course, with the support of Government with the concessions and other things like that, I believe we can reach very far, in terms of our food security, in terms of the levels of production that we can increase and the possibility of ensuring that for the export market, we don't just have quantity, but quality produce that we can compete with others.

I want to also use this opportunity, Mr. President, to thank all of the Members of this Chamber, but especially those on "This Side" for the confidence, and of course, the Honourable Prime Minister, for giving me another opportunity to be back in this House.

And I feel the warmth and I feel very welcomed and at home. It is a new building, but in terms of feeling accommodative, I feel very, very much at home. And I thank all of those who made that possible for doing that, but at the same time, to wish them a real happy holiday.

And it has been said, many times before, by many different Senators here, but cannot be overexpressed that we need to continue to follow the protocols and make sure that we remain safe as a people. Sometimes you get the impression when you listen to some people that they are of the opinion when the Government asks, or people in authority ask that you follow the protocols that you are trying to back them in a corner, you are trying to take away, as some people say, my Constitutional rights. But I want to remind them that many of those protocols are put in place for safeguarding our own lives. And of course, we have a responsibility, individually, Government, the Ministry, the frontline workers, the doctors, the medical experts, the scientists, can only do so much. And if we fail to do our part, then, we cannot blame anyone.

But overall, I wish to thank everybody again, and to wish every single one of us, those here, those outside of here, those who have been listening, those who give support in different ways, seen and unseen, a very Merry Christmas and happy holidays, and to encourage them to keep the protocols and make sure that they remain safe, so that 2021, all of the plans that we make, working together... And I have been given, not only public commitment, but private commitment by my friend from Labour that we will work together to ensure that we achieve what this country needs, for the benefit of everyone. We must all benefit as a result of the efforts that we will put out. But that can only happen if we stay alive.

And I want to remind us of a little quote that I sometimes use that says: ***"It doesn't matter how far down the wrong road we have gone. There is still time for us to stop, make the change and get on to the right path."*** So, I believe there is hope, Mr. President. I believe that if we understand that success starts from within us, and we believe that strongly enough, we will overcome, we will beat COVID, we will get above, or climb above, rise above all of the challenges that we face and be a successful people, in 2021.

As I close, Mr. President, I want to thank my wife, and of course, my children, the family. They have always been a pillar of support. And while my goodly Senator to my right, my immediate right that sits to my immediate right, doesn't want to say it publicly, but oftentimes, without their permission, we don't get the opportunity to be here, to act in the way we act. So, thank you to them and I know, together, private as it is, we would make this holiday season a very special one. Merry Christmas everyone and a very blessed New Year 2021. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator Bhola. Okay, Senators.

(Inaudible comments by Senator Stiell)

Mr. President: Hello. Well, I didn't see your light. Senator Stiell.

Sen. the Hon. Simon Stiell: Mr. President, my remarks are going to be very, very brief. It is simply to thank my colleague Senators on "This Side" for all of their support, their work, the contributions that they have made over the course of this last year, and it has been an extraordinary year, an extraordinarily difficult and extraordinarily challenging.

But working with my colleagues here and other colleagues in Government, I think what we have been able to demonstrate is what can be achieved in difficult times, with unity and with cooperation. So, it has been an absolute pleasure over the course of this last year, and I know the year that we have ahead of us is going to be just as, if not more challenging.

And my colleagues on the "Other Side", there are a number of new faces, welcome once again and thank you once again for your contributions. These last three (3) days have been very intense, very fruitful, and have contributed to the discussion, as to what we need to do moving forward.

So to the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, the officers, the Police Officers, and, Mr. President, I thank you to all of you for your support too and the work that goes on

behind the scenes. I think it is easy to take for granted that all of this just happens, we turn up and do our thing. But, I suddenly have an appreciation of the amount of work that takes place behind the scenes and it is much appreciated.

So that just leaves me to wish everyone a happy Christmas, a happy and safe Christmas. This Christmas itself, is going to be a little unusual, those of us who are particularly sociable and having to curb that. So please have a safe time with your families, rest, energise, reenergise and let us do what we have to do in the New Year. Thank you, Mr. President. **(Applause)**

Mr. President: Thank you, Senator Stiell. Honourable Members, it has been quite a long day, and a very intense three (3) day sitting of the Senate.

As usual, not being part of the debate, I do make some observations coming out of that engagement, which I would want to share, very briefly. In fact, I have condensed significantly what I wanted to say, because we had a very long and productive day today.

Let me begin first by thanking the Clerk, Andrew Augustine, firstly for his promotional achievement in the field of Education, going on to the Leadership level of one of the International Bodies dealing with Education. That is really quite an astounding achievement for a small country, and it speaks to his ambassadorial acumen, as well as his intellectual discipline, and that he has been able to combine that work with the work of the Senate and leading the Parliamentary staff.

Secondly, I want to, most profusely, thank the staff of Parliament. It has been a very difficult year, and we have had support from them in many quarters. I heard Senator Cox mentioned the early days with the outbreak of COVID, this Parliament building became the Headquarters of the COVID Committee. And while everybody else was on lockdown, save a few Public Officers, some Parliamentary staff were coming here, to make sure that the Command Headquarters for the Advisory Committee on COVID, was kept in place, and to ensure that because we were working from morning to night, sometimes gathering here, as early as 6:00 o'clock, and sometimes leaving here, as late as 9:00 and 10:00, we had to have food during the lockdown, and there

were Parliamentary staff, who were coordinating all of this, to make this possible, so that we could provide the necessary advice to the Executive, to keep this country safe.

I would like to acknowledge and thank again, the work of the RGPF and the police officers who are here, and who come here, both symbolically, but also to provide the necessary security, and they do this at every Sitting. They have had a very difficult time this year, because of the role that they would have had to play, manning roadblocks, enforcing curfews, and in some cases, dealing with the normal routine of criminality and other things. It has been a very difficult year for them, and they have performed in an outstanding manner, and have contributed significantly, to all that we have been able to achieve.

So far, Grenada has recorded no deaths, and this is a marvellous achievement of which I am singularly proud, but which many people have contributed, the Medical Team, the team of the Advisory Committee, all of the Healthcare personnel. I don't want to name any single person. But, all of those frontline workers, in different fields have contributed. We are in a phase in this pandemic now, which was always anticipated, but which we worked and hoped would never have arrived, but it is here.

There is a very significant statement, which was made as the Theme of one of the contributions in this morning's debate, and I want to repeat it, but I want to add a little amendment to it. And I chose it because it stuck out when it was made, and it encapsules the period that we are in, most adequately, and this was the opening theme statement by Senator Williams, and she said this: ***"This battle can only be won by the people and Government."*** And, I would add, [plus science], and I put that in square brackets, [working together]. And that is such an axiomatic accuracy that I have adopted it. We can only confront this successfully if we are working together, and I have added science. So, scientifically working together, we will overcome COVID.

It is not the first pandemic the world has faced. One hundred (100) years ago, if we were living then, we would be doing exactly what we are doing now, wearing masks, keeping social distancing, washing our hands and burying our dead.

We have had significant breakthroughs, in that Medical Science and other branches of science have advanced, and now several vaccines are in sight. Even Cuba

is working on a vaccine. But, notwithstanding the application of two (2) vaccines right now, today, as I speak, the United States recorded its highest death in this entire pandemic. I think it is over three thousand people died. So yes, there is hope. Yes, there is a vaccine on the horizon. Yes, we are going to overcome this pandemic. There is absolutely no doubt about this. This is not the end of the world. Some may wish to preach that, but it is not. There is the science, which tells us how we must deal with it, and each of us, this is not a Government battle. This is a battle for each citizen to follow the guidelines that are scientifically based, and that would protect you and your family.

From this broad Theme arises a fundamental principle, that has always been part of the journey of people struggling to improve their humanity, whether it is the battle against slavery and oppression, whether it is the battle against colonialism, whether it is National Liberation Battle, whether it is a Trade Union Industrial battle, there is one principle that emerges, that has always assisted in success, and it's captured in one simple word, "solidarity". The World Health Organization has been using that word, over and over again, and I think this is why Grenada has secured a contingent of vaccines, because of this whole concept of solidarity. It is a fundamental principle of the Labour Movement.

The challenges brought on by this pandemic are many, the loss of jobs, fourteen thousand jobs have been lost. The responsibilities of the Government of a State is different from the responsibilities of the governance of the Trade Union, or for the governance of a business, because while the responsibilities of the leadership of the governance of a business is to look after the business of the shareholders and the Board, and some were conscientious enough and democratically minded enough and had a social conscience to see that the workers are important in this.

And while the leadership of those in the Trade Union Movement is to look after its members and so on, we have to be clear that with Government, it has to look after the citizens, and this is an important thing to bear in mind, because fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs have been lost, and in the loss of those jobs, most of them are in the Private Sector.

Adjournment

When I looked at what has happened to LIAT, it has brought tears to my eyes, because, for years I have worked with that organisation, and I have been warning that this day would arrive. I know of workers who have given forty years of service to that business, and have been home since March and have not received a cent in compensation, after forty (40) years of service. And in that forty years, some have lost twenty years of pension, and then the pension that they currently receive cannot handle the challenges that they face, at the evening of their years, it's a very sad situation. Many businesses have closed. Some are on the brink of closure, and uncertainty prevails.

In this situation, many aspects of the economy have been impacted. Our farmers have been affected significantly. One of our largest, singular employers, in fact, the second largest singular employer, only after Government, St. George's University, almost all of its faculty and students are now off-Island. That has significant implications for the property rental market, because you can see all of those buildings, which were put up to house students and faculty, are now empty. There is no income.

The Banks have invested an enormous amount of people's money, lending those property owners, who are unable to service that debt. So we face an obligation in that industry, if things collapse and we can't get the economy moving again. Some hotels have suspended business. Others have had to close half of their hotels. In that context therefore, the payment of utilities is problematic. Many of the hotels, faced with pressure from the Banks to have to pay, or meet part of the mortgage, made choices of which of the critical bills they have to pay. So, I can tell you that some utilities are not receiving payment, simply because their clients, some of those big hotels are unable to pay.

One of the largest supermarkets in the South, that catered primarily for the SGU community and those connected to it, and which provided a market for farmers who produce vegetables and other things like that, are no longer capable of selling, because that market has collapsed, and the business is facing difficulty.

The fishermen, you can see them on the side of the streets, and in some instances, they are selling high quality fish, which can fetch US$10 to US$15 a pound,

being sold at $3 a pound, literally give away. Now, it may be a good thing, because it means we are not going and purchase the chemically treated chicken. But think about the fishermen, who invested $50,000.00 in their Longline equipment, and they have to repay that money, so they are suffering losses, as well.

Think about the fact the State has lost, in terms of its revenue, almost 50%, Senator Stiell? And the State has not only to look after members, it has to look after citizens, especially those who do not have a voice in organised Labour, who has a voice.

Think about the youngsters who graduated and cannot find any work in the Labour Market. Many of their parents are now at home. Think about the fact. I heard insults being thrown at the National Insurance Scheme, because they were paying $300.00. But we must understand that $300.00 is unfunded, because there is no Unemployment Insurance set up by the NIS. So, the money they are using to pay out; and when you have Unemployment Insurance, there is Joint Contributory Fund, so that the workers contribute to that fund. Bearing in mind that our NIS has certain structural challenges now, we were supposed to increase the retirement age, as well as increase the contributions. We did a minimum increase in the contributions, because we just came out of a Structural Adjustment, the economic crisis, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. But we are not on target with the actual recommendations, yet it has found a way to give some relief. And for some who should know better are throwing scorn on the organisation.

Colleagues, I recall at a time when I was an activist in the Labour Movement, when we here, faced Hurricane Ivan, and everything laid flat and everything laid bared. And at that time, I was the most activist and most ardent fighter against the Government of the day. But when I got up that morning after Ivan and I looked around and I looked up at the Prison and I saw it without covering and I saw prisoners who I know were in Prison outside my door, asking for some water and other things, and I looked around and I saw the devastation, I journeyed up to the home of Prime Minister, and I said: “Sir, I am here. How can I help? How can I help?” Because I realised at the time, this was

a time for a Peace Treaty, to address the devastation that faced our country, because that devastation made no distinction amongst Grenadians.

The 2008 Financial Crisis came, and I remembered when it was, I think, in November, or October, in 2008, we convened the second highest decision-making Body of the Union, which I then led, and we did an analysis of the coming crisis. The Banks were collapsing in the United States. There was financial contagion in the economies. All over the world was collapsing. And we did an analysis, and that analysis said that the coming crisis, the only how we could confront this, is working together, and that was the most important thing for, as those, who represent organised labour and let us make it clear, the working class is larger than organised labour. The working class includes the women who do Debushing, whether it is three (3) times a year or four (4) times a year. It includes those who are incapable of taking care of themselves, it includes the youngsters who would have gone through Secondary School, but has no job because the economy has not expanded sufficiently to provide employment for them. They all make up the working class. It makes up the partially homeless and the homeless as well. And I could recall the need for us to cooperate and the need for us to de-emphasise conflict. Yes they are unconscionable business persons, whose only interest is profit. And in very recent times some of them have visited us, some of them have visited us, believe you me, some of them have visited us. Some of them have used the power of money to throw scorn on us.

I remember us, we had just completed after a long time of trying a Collective Agreement, which gave significant increases to a group of workers. I think the overall increase might have been 20 something per cent. I believe it was 6, 8, 8 or whatever it was, I may be inaccurate in the numbers. But during that period of crisis, when the business owner said business is collapsing, we're unable to sell and therefore we have to send workers home, we went back to the decision we took in that October, November period, when we said jobs was the most important thing. And do you know, we sat with that employer and in exchange for keeping the workers employed, we gave up those increases that we negotiated. And it was a battle, because there was some amongst the workers, who by virtue of their talent, could still find employment within the economy

and had no care, in other words, the issue of solidarity. They were prepared to abandon and their position was "I ain't giving up nothing, let them pay me or close the place down." I can recall sitting in the Union Headquarters with a group of these workers up to midnight, arguing with them, "let us give up those increases and save the jobs," because when I looked at those who would benefit from the jobs, they were mainly single young girls, several of them were single mothers, with no place else to work, no place else for food to come on the table, and it was nearing midnight. We finally were able to convince the majority to vote in favour of giving back and we gave up the increases. On the other hand there was a fellow Trade Union group who threw scorn on us, accused us of sell out and decide they ain't giving up nothing at all. What happened to them? Within weeks the business convened a meeting and announced that they're retrenching half the staff. Now, when we took that decision, the employer worked with us, the workers remained on the job for two years. Ultimately the business collapsed and was sold, but the workers had twenty-four months of additional employment, whereas those who refused to be elastic, those who refused to be engaging, those who refused to be flexible, because the only reason why the dinosaurs are around, are not around sorry, and we are around and other animals remain or evolve, is because the dinosaurs weren't flexible, they were not evolvable, so they died under the circumstances. So when the business ultimately collapsed the workers had twenty-four months' pay, because they were working for twenty-four months and that twenty-four months' pay, put them in a higher category, so when they had to receive severance pay, they got a higher level of severance. Whereas, those who were not adaptable, those who were mechanical and straight, not prepared to change, not prepared to concede, they went under twenty-four months earlier than we did.

Now come 2013, and in 2013, I was head of the negotiating team for the public workers together with Sister Madonna, and we had negotiated a set which led to a 6% increase at the commencement of 2014. There was a general election and those increases were supposed to come on board. But we had a situation where three hundred CCC workers, represented by the Union that I led, were out of work for more than five years, and I received a call from the current Prime Minister, who asked me to

come to his office. And I went and he said to me, look, the increase which has been negotiated and signed, we will honour it, the CCC is demanding that the unpaid money due to them had climbed back up to twenty something million dollars. They are holding the contract, for the new phase of the CCC Road Programme, but for them to be able to start that new phase, the Government must fork out I think was $8m or $9m to pay them, and that is the money I have to pay the 6% increase. And I said simply, Prime Minister solidarity, I will go and talk to my rest of Union colleagues but I believe it's proper for the money which was to be paid out to public officers, who were employed for all of the years that the CCC workers were unemployed, and who for the first opportunity in years, were going to find employment, that if we were true to the principle of solidarity, then those who were employed should have no difficulty in allowing those funds which were due to them legitimately, to be paid to CCC so that CCC's three hundred workers and their families could get a source of bread, and that the 6% which supposed to have been implemented in January, to those who were always at work, they could get that money paid on a pay later plan, somewhere down the road, that's solidarity. And I'm explaining this to you because, that I can tell, this is my personal experience and the three hundred workers and their families were reemployed by the CCC, putting bread on the table for many.

And I said this because the State has an obligation and the working class is not just organised labour, it is more than organised labour. It is those de-bushers that I see on the side of the road, we throw scorn on them, we say that they exploited and they only get work once or twice a year. But imagine how worse off they would be, if they didn't have that work. So I make an appeal to my Trade Union comrades, solidarity. During the entire course of the lockdown of the pandemic, all of you who were due to be paid were paid, and this is in a context where, the payer loses 50% of its revenue. He has had to divert money into trying to procure scarce PPE, and Senator Cox is here. Senator Cox knows the tearful moments we've had, sitting here, trying to source equipment from parts of the world. He knows the telephone calls we had to make, to get equipment from Honduras to arrive here, but Honduras had no diplomatic relations with Venezuela, because the only plane we could have found, to fly all the way to

Honduras, was from the Venezuelans. And through our diplomatic and fraternal and solidarity contacts, we were able to get the equipment dropped in Nicaragua, Senator Cox and then get that to go to Venezuela and then ultimately to get to Grenada, so that our frontline staff could have some basic equipment. Because remember this disease came like a thief in the night, caught all of us unprepared, even the great United States did not have PPE's. Frontline workers has had to don themselves in garbage bags, in order to go to work, so I make this appeal for those who received pay, pay on time. Because of the lockdown, most were home and while home they were still qualifying for annual vacation leave, as though they were fully working. It's no fault of theirs, but if we are true to our fundamental principles, if we are true to our fundamental principles, then that word solidarity requires us to consider seriously, in the face, and we are being told now that this phase which is now occurring in the pandemic is worse than anything we are going to see. Even with the vaccine, the United States today hit its largest number of death ever.

So I make this appeal, an open appeal to my Trade Union comrades, don't go the way of the dinosaurs, if you are not flexible, if you are not nimble, if you are not considerate. As I speak to you now, as I speak to you now, it's out in the public, four hundred odd workers are going to be now on the breadline because Sandals has announced, I'm not saying anything that's private, it's all out in the public, that they are closing their doors. Which means four hundred people are out of bread, so those who have bread already guaranteed, must give some consideration of saying well ok, my bread is guaranteed, my bread is being paid on time, I am due to get an increased portion of bread, I am prepared to wait until the bread man is in a better position. And that increase that I get, out of solidarity, share it with my brothers who are going out of work. That to me is the moral imperative of the time.

I know there will be some, who will throw slurs at the direction of what I have to say, but I care not. I bring the message and this message comes from deep within. This message comes because Cuba is under increased embargo, Venezuela is under increased embargo. We are short on nurses and trained people to deal with infectious diseases, where did we have to turn to, Cuba. Cuba sent a recent contingent of nurses,

and infectious specialist, who are now here in Grenada, solidarity. That's a country that's under embargo. I mean if you visit Havana today you can see the effects of the embargo, they have had to send people, they've sent fighters of diseases to Italy. When the Ebola crisis broke out, a country that's under embargo cannot import medicines. So I say to my colleagues in the Labour Movement, the best test of leadership is during difficult times. So I say to my colleagues in the Labour Movement who are privileged to have a Collective Agreement that guarantees them an increase, to defer taking that increase so that money is available to go to those who desperately need it and I end on that theme, in the Christian period of goodwill.

Happy holidays to you and your family and to everyone. And please keep safe. A mask under your chin or covering your mouth is no mask at all. This is a respiratory illness and unless you cover your respiratory orifices, nose and mouth, a mask under your chin is no protection at all; the only person you're fooling is yourself. So wear your mask properly, stay away from large crowds, which is what I did. When I went to Venezuela to monitor the elections, I never entered the dining room; I stayed away from the dining room and had room service. When I came back I did my quarantine and I was cleared on Sunday last. When I got on the bus, well there were just six of us on the bus and I was privileged to be in the company of Evo Morales. And happy am I, the gentleman who was, Government was removed, declared illegal even though he indicated that he will run the elections again, with the support of certain big powers which I will not name, he was removed from office; he had to flee to Mexico. They then recognised as an interim president, somebody who never run in a presidential election, and then they organised an election and Evo all the way in Mexico, his party swept that election and did even better than they did, when he was last there, so he's now back in Bolivia and I had the privilege of being in his group.

So once again the Christian period of goodwill, I bid you all the best for the season. Happy holidays and look forward to meeting you to face a New Year, which will be a difficult year, make no mistake about it. We have planned to confront it, there's a plan, you may or may not agree with the plan, because this is what democracy is all about. But there's a plan to confront it on the economic front, but I again make my

appeal to those who are fortunate to have a signed Collective Agreement with an increase and guaranteed salaries, to defer that increase, to be able to allow the State to deal with those dozens of other workers, four hundred of them are being, on the unemployment line, four hundred of them. I think I've said enough.

Honourable Members, I thank you once again, Police Officers and others who are assembled, the Clerk. I thank you once again, and I bring this sitting of the House to an end.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. President: Senate is adjourned, sine die.

The Sitting of the Senate adjourned *sine die* at 5:55 p.m.

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