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GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday 2nd, Friday 4th and Monday 7thDecember, 2020

(BUDGET PRESENTATION & DEBATE)

Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on
Wednesday 29th July, 2020.

Attendance

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Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on
Wednesday 29th July, 2020.

Attendance

PRESENT

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

Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on
Wednesday 29th July, 2020.

Attendance

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

Prayers
Minutes

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

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

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

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

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 3 - Oath of and Allegiance or Affirmation of a new Member.
Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 30th October, 2020 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Minutes
Announcements

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said proceedings of the Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 30th October, 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. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, it is with great anticipation that we participate in the Third Sitting of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament. Today is a historic day in the life of this Parliament, when we have, after many years, a new Minister for Finance, on whose shoulder would be a tough time, to bring hope to Grenadians by the presentation of the Budget.

This is also a time when we are battling a dangerous enemy that we cannot see, but we know it is there. So we have to give God praise and thanks that He has kept us safe thus far. We have not lost any lives because of this dreaded disease, when we compare ourselves to other countries that are much more prosperous than we are and have greater resources, are struggling not to die.

Today's Sitting is also one of the longest Sittings in the House of Representatives, because it goes on for three (3) days. The debate on the Budget continues on Friday and Monday in this House, and we know that every Member of this House would be anxious to make their presentations and to debate the Budget.

I must however advise, that as you prepare, you get conversant with Standing Order 40, which would guide you according to time. So I am saying this today, so that in your preparation tomorrow, for Friday and Saturday and Sunday, for Monday, you

would keep it as short as possible, so that I don't have extra time to give. So please work within your time. Thank you and may God bless you. Have a wonderful day.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Presentation of Petitions.
Item 8 - Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

1. Office of the Ombudsman 2021 Budget and Plan.
2. Office of the Integrity Commission 2021 Budget.
3. Minutes of the proceedings of a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, held at the Houses of Parliament Conference Room, on Wednesday, 18th November, 2020.
4. Government of Grenada Reports:
   i. Budget Framework Paper, 2021.
   ii. Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy, 2021 to 2023.
   iii. Fiscal Risk Statement, November, 2020.
   iv. Medium-Term Fiscal Framework, 2021 to 2023.
   v. 2020 Economic Review and Medium-Term Outlook.
5. Annual Debt Management Report, 2019.
6. Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, 2021.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, these Papers and Reports are so laid on the Table.

Motions (Gracious Address)

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 - Questions.
Item 11 - Urgent Questions under the Provision of Standing Order No. 20 (1) (Notice of Questions).
Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.
Item 13 - Personal Explanations.
Item 14 - Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion 14 (a) standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS debate on the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor-General, on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament, on Friday, 4th October, 2020, was deferred to a date to be fixed;

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order No. 34, I wish to move an amendment to this Motion, Mr. Speaker, and the amendment is proposed that:

BE IT RESOLVED that the said Address be now accepted by this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, there is an amendment to the Motion, and it now reads:

Motions (Gracious Address)
Motions (2021 Budget Presentation)

That the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor-General, on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament, on Friday, 4th October, 2020, and was deferred to a date to be fixed; that it be now be accepted. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Westminster model, the Throne Speech is read, which sets the stage for the Budget, and now we are, Mr. Speaker, about to debate the Budget, which really gives details to the Throne Speech. And it is in that context, Mr. Speaker, that I am proposing that we accept the address by the Gracious Governor-General and then we move into the debate of the Budget. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the question is that the amendment to the Motion would now read: That the said Motion be now accepted by the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion amended and Gracious Address accepted by the House.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

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

BE IT RESOLVED that the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2021 be approved.

Question proposed.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this is a Money Motion, I wish to signal to this Honourable House that I have the consent of the Governor-General to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the 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.

1. The Medium-Term Fiscal Framework 2021-2023, in accordance with section 9 (2) (a) of the Regulations for the Public Finance Management Act, No. 17 of 2015
2. The Budget Framework Paper 2021, in accordance with section 13 of the Regulations of the Public Finance Management Act No. 17 of 2015;
3. The Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy 2021-2023, in accordance with sections 5 (1) to (3) of the Public Debt Management Act No. 28 of 2015, as amended;
4. The Fiscal Risk Statement, in accordance with section 12 (1) (e) of the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015, as amended;
5. The 2020 Economic Review and Medium-Term Outlook; and
6. The 2019 Annual Debt Report.

Mr. Speaker, as a Nation and as a people, we have once again demonstrated incredible resilience in the face of adversity. For this, Mr. Speaker, I am immensely grateful to the Almighty God for his continued mercies and guidance. Indeed, I am comforted by the words in the Holy Scriptures, in the book of 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 4 verse 8, and I quote: "***We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair."***

I am also extremely grateful, Mr. Speaker, to all our citizens for their sacrifice and patriotism, especially our frontline workers, for putting country above self, in the fight against this deadly Coronavirus. It is through our collaborative efforts that we have successfully managed the pandemic, thus far. I encourage us all to recognise our

individual and collective responsibility, as we continue to safeguard our beautiful country and all of its people.

I also wish to thank our friends and partners outside of Grenada, for their strong show of support in helping us to navigate this extremely challenging period. A comprehensive list of all our partner countries and organisations, which supported us during this period, is included in the published copy of this Statement.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Honourable Prime Minister for the confidence reposed in me to lead the Ministry of Finance in this difficult period. Permit me to also express on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, my deepest condolences to the families, who have lost loved ones in the Diaspora due to COVID-19. Our hearts and prayers are with you all.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in scope and magnitude. As I addressed this Honourable House today over sixty-three (63) million people, globally, have contracted this deadly virus, and in excess of 1.4 million have sadly succumbed to its effect.

The pandemic is expected to shrink global output by US$8.5 trillion this year, alone, and it has thrown tens of millions of people across the world into poverty and unemployment. Here, at home, forty-one (41) cases have been recorded to date, and our economy is expected to experience its worst economic downturn on record.

Mr. Speaker, this is the scope and magnitude of the challenge that we have been grappling with, since March of this year. The road ahead would be extremely difficult, as we reshape and renew or economy and the society in this new and uncertain environment. While we are proud of our response to the pandemic, much work lies ahead. We must therefore remain steadfast in our efforts to protect our people and to rebuild our economy.

Rising from the ashes of this pandemic, will require bold and decisive leadership, the kind of leadership that this Administration demonstrated previously, in rebuilding the economy in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ivan and Emily and the Global Financial Crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the Economic and Social Context of the 2021 Budget. Mr. Speaker, the 2021 Budget has been prepared against a backdrop of extraordinary

uncertainty facing the Global Community. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its World Economic Outlook, released on October 13th, noted that while the Outlook for the Global Economy has improved slightly, relative to its June 2020 forecast, the situation remains extremely grim. Closer to home, the Caribbean Region has not fared better. Except for Guyana, the rest of the Region will see economic declines, ranging from 4% to 20% this year.

The impact on the Eight Member Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) is particularly acute, given the small size of our economies, heavy dependence on Tourism, limited resources and the inextricable link to the Global Economy. Mr. Speaker, more details on the performance of the Global Economy, CARICOM and the ECCU can be found in the published copy of this Statement.

Economic Performance

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's economy expanded at a brisk pace in the past seven (7) years, with economic growth averaging 4.4% in real terms, over the period 2013 to 2019. However, data for the first half of 2020 indicated major declines in all Sectors of the economy, particularly the Tourism and Private Tertiary Education Sectors. As a result, an overall double digit 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. Speaker, Grenada's solid fiscal position weakened considerably in the first half of 2020, as revenues declined sharply and expenditure needs grew to cushion the economic blow dealt by COVID-19. The combined effect exerted a serious strain on Government's finances. By year end, the following results are expected relative to the Approved Budget:

- Current revenues of $654.2 m compared to a target of $786.2 m, a shortfall of $132 m.
- Grant of $114 b compared to a target of $218.6 m, a shortfall of $104 m.
- Taken together, currency revenues and grants underperformed by $236 m, as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

- Current expenditure of $620.1m, compared to a budget of $637.3m.
- Capital spending of $122.1m, compared to a budget of $196.4m.
- A primary surplus of $82.2m, compared to a target of $246.2m.
- An overall surplus of $26.6m, compared to a target of $170.6m, Mr. Speaker.

The negative impact on Government's fiscal position can be acutely seen, when compared to the past 4 to 5 years. The overall surplus of $26.6m or 0.9% of GDP pales in comparison with overall surpluses generated during the period 2014 to 2019, which averaged 3.8% of GDP. Also, Mr. Speaker, the estimated primary surplus of $82.2 m or 2.9% of GDP is significantly smaller than those recorded in the past five (5) consecutive years, which averaged 5.3% of GDP.

Public Debt Developments

Mr. Speaker, significant progress was made in reducing Grenada's debt vulnerabilities and in regaining international creditworthiness. Our Public Debt to GDP ratio fell from 108% in 2013 to under 60% at the end of last year. This is a significant achievement by any standard.

The severe disruption in economic activity this year necessitated new borrowings of long term concessional loans from multi-national creditors, to help address the socio-economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, and justifiably so, there will be a spike in our Debt to GDP Ratio by approximately 13% to an estimated 69% of GDP.

Notwithstanding, our debt remains sustainable and with the anticipated recovery in economic activity over the medium-term, it is expected that our debt would revert to its firm downward trajectory. Once our economic recovery takes hold, Mr. Speaker, Government will redouble its efforts towards achieving the debt targets under the Fiscal Responsibility Law, the FRL.

Unemployment and Social Dislocation

Mr. Speaker, the downward trend in unemployment in the past seven (7) years, which saw a historic low of 15.1% in the fourth quarter of 2019, was reversed to 28.4% in the second quarter of 2020, because of the economic shock, with fourteen thousand

(14,000) jobs being lost. Preliminary data suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the unemployment rate is already declining, estimated to reach around 20% by year end, as many Sectors, including Construction, Agriculture and Wholesale and Retail continue to normalise.

Mr. Speaker, the fallout from the pandemic could have been far worse for Grenada, had it not been for the proactive and comprehensive response by Government, coupled with prudent fiscal management, which has generated surpluses over the last few years. Government has worked assiduously to mobilise concessionary financial resources to offset the significant shortfall in its revenues and grants. To date, Government has mobilised $160.9 m in financial support and debt relief from its Regional and International partners, to help cushion the effect of the pandemic. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue with these efforts to ensure that we improve our preparedness and resilience in this time of great uncertainty. Details on Government's response, including the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Package, which benefitted in excess of six thousand (6,000) individuals and one hundred and forty-seven (147) businesses, as well as early recovery indicators can be found in Public's Version of this Statement.

Major Achievements 2020

Mr. Speaker, despite the major disruption caused by the pandemic, which threatened to make 2020 a lost year, we can boast of several major achievements. I wish to highlight some of the successes in Health, Education, Agriculture and Youth Empowerment.

In Health, the Upgrading of Existing Health Infrastructure

Several Medical Centres and Health Stations were refurbished, including Woburn, Good Hope, Perdmontemps and Grand Anse. The upgrading of the Nurses Hostel at Princess Royal in Carriacou was also completed. Despite delays, the replacement of one of the elevators at the General Hospital was completed.

The construction of new health infrastructure

An Isolation Ward was constructed at the General Hospital, Mr Speaker, which enhances the capacity to respond to and provide essential care and services in the fight against communicable diseases such as COVID-19.

Retrofitting of facilities

As part of the Smart Healthcare Project, several Health Facilities, including the Hillsborough Health Centre and the Princess Alice Hospital were retrofitted to incorporate Smart Climate Technologies in the Health Infrastructure. Laboratory system upgrades were also completed.

On the issue of Sustainable Health Financing, work advanced on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Project including the completion of the Draft Legislation. Mr. Speaker, progress was also made in strengthening healthcare delivery and access to care, including through the procurement of equipment and essential supplies.

***Education – E*-learning Agenda**

Mr. Speaker, significant progress was made in advancing Government's E-learning Agenda, through the procurement of a Learning Management System and twenty four thousand, two hundred (24,200) E-learning devices, for use by teachers and students.

Capacity Building

Seventy seven (77) teachers received financial assistance to facilitate long-term training and Degree completion.

School Infrastructure

Significant progress was made in upgrading school infrastructure through rehabilitation and maintenance.

Agriculture and Fisheries

Construction contracts at a value of $46.8 m, under the Agricultural Feeder Roads Phase 3 Project, have been signed and the sod was turned for the start of work in Grenada and Carriacou. Preparatory works for the construction of several other Agriculture Feeder Roads under the Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Project site were completed.

Government approved $5m for twelve (12) Agriculture initiatives under the World Bank supported Agriculture Competitiveness AGRICOM Project. Financing was provided through the Grenada Development Bank (GDB) to the tune of $1.7m to Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) within the Agriculture and Fisheries Sector. Government increased Farm Labour support by over 330%, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** which created over one thousand (1,000) temporary jobs and benefitted four hundred and forty-two (442) farmers.

The Ministry of Agriculture submitted a $4m Agriculture Youth Entrepreneurship Project Proposal to the CARICOM Development Fund (CDF), which will support Government's thrust to boost youth involvement in the Sector. Preliminary feedback has been very promising. Government provided a grant of $1m to the Grenada Co-operative Nutmeg Association to provide price support payments to Nutmeg Farmers.

Youth Empowerment

Over two thousand (2,000) young people benefitted from on-the-job training and scholarship opportunities. Several Youth Programmes were introduced at the Parish and national levels including the Youth Parliament and Youth Ambassadors. Training and entrepreneurial support provided under the M-Power 2 Project to three hundred and sixty (360) young men to help start their businesses or find gainful employment.

We rebranded, strengthened and expanded the Small Business Unit within the Grenada Youth Enterprise initiative to YUTBIZ, to provide micro financing opportunities to young Grenadians. These are only a few of our many achievements under difficult circumstances, Mr. Speaker. While we are indeed proud of the achievements of this year, we are mindful of the challenging journey ahead. I will now turn to the Theme and Strategic Focus for the 2021 Budget.

Mr. Speaker, our National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) for 2020 – 2035, which was laid before this Honourable House in November, 2019, articulates the following shared vision: ***"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 the environmental progress for all."*** The impact of COVID-19 has underscored the importance of steadfastly

pursing this shared vision for our people. It has also underscored the importance of being nimble, flexible and adaptive, as we plan for the future.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the NSDP is crucially important to guide the formulation of strategic policies that prioritise inclusion, equality and sustainability to support our economic recovery in the short-term and our economic transformation over the medium to long-term. In deciding on the strategic focus for the 2021 Budget, Government consulted widely with key stakeholders and there is consensus on the following: the most urgent priority is restoring hope in our people and supporting the recovery of our economy. Secondly, we must continue to push ahead with our efforts to modernise and transform our economy to meet the new demands of this dynamic global landscape; and the third, Mr. Speaker, we must continue to strengthen community level and nationwide resilience to various shocks, be they economic or the environmental, or shocks to our Health and Education System. Without all these efforts, Mr. Speaker, our country will be trapped in a vicious cycle of low growth, high unemployment and rising debt.

This 2021 Budget must therefore address the immediate challenge of getting us out of the economic downturn that we are currently in and putting us back on track towards achieving our shared vision. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, therefore, to present the 2021 Budget under the Theme: ***"Towards Vision 2035: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience."***

Outlook for 2021

Mr. Speaker, we are projecting a return to positive economic growth in 2021. The Agriculture, Construction, Wholesale and Retail Sectors will drive this recovery. Other key sectors including Tourism and Private Tertiary Education are projected to recover much slower, and will continue to affect the speed of our recovery. Overall growth of 6% is projected next year. Notwithstanding this relatively strong rebound in GDP, the nominal dollar value of national output in 2021 will be below the pre-COVID-19 levels.

Mr. Speaker, we project that the growth in revenues will remain flat next year. While some areas are expected to show modest increases, many major tax types

including the Corporate Income Tax and the Personal Income Tax will decline, given that they are based on the 2020 Economic Performance. Mr. Speaker, significant efforts will be made to contain discretionary recurrent spending to allow for greater recovery spending on the capital side.

In keeping with this objective, Mr. Speaker, the provision for recurrent spending excluding the amount of $13.4m allocated as a contingency provision, is less than the estimated outturn for this year. An expanded Capital Investment Programme will be rolled out next year to support economic recovery and job creation.

Government will strategically prioritise the Public Sector Investment Programme and strengthen systems and capacity to increase the implementation rates of projects and programmes that are deemed to best support resilient inclusive growth and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the foregoing, an overall deficit after Grants, of $18.2m is projected in 2021. This deficit will be financed from budgetary support from the World Bank and from monies that were being set aside to bolster our resilience to shock.

Fiscal Measures

Mr. Speaker, there will be a strong drive to collect tax arrears. Our Revenue Collection Agencies will continue their efforts to improve the administration and collections of revenues, to not only ensure that we all pay our fair share, but to also facilitate and improve taxpayer experience. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance will undertake a review of all Government's services and fees by the first quarter of next year and make recommendations to the Cabinet for updating this list.

Expenditure Measures

Mr. Speaker, Government remains committed to reduce wastage and improving the efficiency of spending. In 2021, the Government will be implementing recommendations from the recently concluded Public Expenditure Review, to improve efficiency and ensure that expenditures are aligned with the Government's strategic development priorities. Government will also strengthen its internal audit capacity with support from the World Bank to conduct risk-based audits to help strengthen our Expenditure Management Framework.

Additionally, Government will target specific areas for expenditure rationalisation, which will save millions of dollars: A freeze on hiring in all truly vacant positions; approximately $11m in savings. Mr. Speaker, it is important to clarify that these are positions for which there are no substantive holders appointed by the Public Service Commission (PSC), and there are no officers holding contracts, acting or serving probationary appointments.

An overall 20% reduction in utilities, electricity, communication expenses and water, approximately $6m in savings, Mr. Speaker. A 75% reduction in overseas travel, approximately $700,000.00 in savings.

Government has made an appeal to Public Sector Trade Unions, regarding a deferral of negotiated salaries increases for 2021, estimated to add $13.4m to the Wage Bill. Further, Government is appealing for restraint in making any demands for wage and salary increases in 2021. Mr. Speaker, these measures could go a long way in helping to preserve jobs in both the Public and Private Sectors in this extended period of economic uncertainty. Government remains hopeful, that as a Nation, we will find common ground on this issue.

I now turn to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the specific areas of intervention for 2021.

Overview

Consistent with the imperatives for recovery, transformation and resilience, the 2021 Estimates of Expenditure provides for a total expenditure including Amortisation of $1,232,670,049.

The overall Budget is summarised as follows:

Recurrent Revenues	-	EC$653.5m
Total Grants	-	EC$263.6m
Current Expenditure	-	EC$629.6m
Capital Expenditure	-	EC$305.6m
Current Account Surplus	-	EC$23.9m
Principal Repayment/Amortisation	-	EC$297.4m
Primary Surplus after Grants	-	EC$45.5m (1.5% of GDP)

Overall Deficit after Grants - EC$18.2m (0.6% of GDP)

The foregoing represents a loosening of Government's fiscal stance relative to the pre-COVID period. This expansionary fiscal policy is needed at this time to stimulate aggregate demand, support the speedy recovery of the economy and enable job creation. To facilitate this, we have again invoked the 'Escape Clause' under the Fiscal Responsibility Law. Mr. Speaker, once the recovery takes hold, Government will return to the rules and targets under the FRL. We anticipate that this will happen in 2022.

Allocations

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

1. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Transport and Implementation - $133.5m, or 10.8% of total expenditure.
2. Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information - ($124m), 10.1% of total expenditure.
3. The Ministry of Finance, Economic and Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy – $119.9m, or 9.7% of total expenditure.
4. Ministry of Health and Social Security - $ 94.9m, 7.7% of total expenditure.
5. Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management - $73.3m, 5.9% of total expenditure.
6. Ministry of Housing, Social Services and Community Empowerment - $60.2m, 4.9% of total expenditure.
7. The Police - $51.6m, 4.2% of total expenditure.
8. Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment - $19.3m, 1.6% of total expenditure.
9. Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry - $18.6m, 1.5% of total expenditure.

10. Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries & Co-operatives - $17.6m, 1.4% of total expenditure.

More details, Mr. Speaker, on the 2021 Budget allocations are available in Appendix I of the published Statement.

Financing of the 2021 Capital Budget

As indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, we will roll out an expansive Capital Investment Programme next and justifiably so. Reducing investment in this period will only hurt the economy further. Many countries across the world are pursing this policy, and in some cases are forced to borrow significant sums to finance their expanded investment programmes.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, our Capital Budget will be financed largely, through Grants from the National Transformation Fund (NTF) to the tune of $172m. The $172m will be secured from projected NTF Grants, next year, as well as draw downs on NTF grants accumulated in previous years.

Strategic Interventions - Agriculture

Mr. Speaker, promoting a strong and vibrant Agriculture Sector, to ensure Food Security and Nutrition continues to be a priority. It is imperative therefore, that we continue to appropriately invest in this sector to achieve the desired result. Beyond the goal of Food and Nutrition security, a strong and vibrant Agriculture Sector will support economic growth, employment and foreign exchange earnings.

In the current environment, the Agriculture Sector is already showing signs of a strong recovery and is one of the few sectors that offer the greatest potential to expedite our economic recovery.

We must therefore seize the opportunity to redouble our efforts to achieve a modern Agricultural Sector that includes value added production, youth involvement, application of relevant technology, capacity building, research and development and adaptation to climate change.

Mr. Speaker, consistent with this thrust, Government will embark on the following key policies, programmes and actions next year. As part of the Climate Smart Agriculture and Rural Enterprise Programme, (SAEP), funded jointly by the Caribbean

Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Government of Grenada, several initiatives will be implemented in support of strengthening the resilience of the Agricultural Sector to climate change and other shocks. A sum of $10.8 m has been allocated for implementation of this project next year. 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.

Mr. Speaker, youth development and the use of available technology are essential to achieving a modern Agricultural Sector. Government therefore, will continue to provide the training and support to incentivise the participation of young people and the infusion of technology in the Sector, including to address the longstanding challenges associated with Praedial Larceny.

The OECS Regional Agriculture Competitiveness Project (AGRICOM), which seeks to address issues relating to market access by small scale farmers, fisher folks, as well as aggregators and agro-processors, will continue to be rolled out next year. An amount of $1.2m has been allocated to support matching grants to eligible agricultural businesses.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the enhancement of the Mirabeau Meat Harvesting and Processing Plant with grant support from the CDF is critical for the development of the Livestock Industry. This project will support the refurbishment of the facility and the procurement of equipment along with training and improvements in procedures to support the enhancement of Meat Harvesting and Processing at the Plant.

Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture Sector is highly prone to climate change and weather related shocks. Government will therefore continue to participate in the Caribbean Oceans Assets Sustainability Facility (COAST) and the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), to help protect the livelihoods of our farmers, fisher folks and agro-processors.

Additionally, Government is committed to engaging in public consultation on the subject of cannabis. Research will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of the

industry and develop proposals for the way forward. The investigations will be thorough and the science driven. An amount of $10,000.00 has been allocated to commence stakeholder consultations.

Mr. Speaker, while the allocation directly under the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Forestry for this year is $18.6m, the overall allocation of this sector is significantly larger. Several projects including the Agriculture Feeder Roads and the SAEP Project are allocated under various other Ministries. When combined, Agriculture's share of total spending in the 2021 Budget will exceed $40m.

Infrastructure Development

Mr. Speaker, high quality public infrastructure is a necessary condition for economic growth and the transformation. In this crisis period, investing in resilient infrastructure will play a central role in driving the recovery, in creating jobs and in preparing the economy for future take-off.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Speaker, Government will scale up its infrastructure development in 2021. A key component of this, Mr. Speaker, is increasing Government's capacity to prepare and implement capital programmes. Several Organisations including the Green Climate Fund and the World Bank are supporting Government's efforts in preparing designs and other preparatory works, as well as providing support to complete shovel-ready projects, which will help to boost the overall rate of project implementation.

In 2021, Mr. Speaker, the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) will generate in excess of 4,500 direct jobs, creating a significant boost to economic activities and putting much needed cash into the hands of workers, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Some of the major infrastructure projects for 2021 will include:

The Grenada Climate Resilience Water Sector Project (G-Crews)

This EC$125m project, which is jointly funded by the Green Climate Fund, the German Government and the Government of Grenada was officially launched in February this year. The major infrastructure development under this project includes

improvement in the water supply at Mirabeau, Les Advocat/Petit Etang, Vendomme, Victoria and St. Patrick.

The water supply in Gouyave and Carriacou will be expanded. The procurement of key expert development of operations, policies and procedures and personal training are on-going. Construction components of this critical project will commence next year and will generate at least, fifty (50) jobs.

Enhanced Direct Access (EDA) Project

This is a regional project financed through a grant of EC$54m from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The objective of this project is to make accessible grant resources for climate change resilient investments to the Public Sector, NGOs and civil society organisations and communities. Implementation of this project commenced in 2020, with the recruitment of a local Project Coordinator and Technical Officers. A sum of $3.2m has been allocated for the rollout of this project in 2021.

The Maurice Bishop International Airport (MBIA) Upgrade

Mr. Speaker, the EXIM Bank of the People's Republic of China has approved a concessional loan for the upgrade of the Maurice Bishop International Airport. Construction cost estimated at EC$165m will include rehabilitation of the runway and bypass road, an upgrade of the passenger terminal to enhance disaster response capabilities. The project was officially launched in October and construction activities will commence in 2021, and will generate close to two hundred (200) local construction jobs.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, on November 11, the World Bank approved funding under the Caribbean Regional Air Transport Connectivity Project (CATCOP) in the amount of US$17m for additional safety and resilient works on the MBIA, to be undertaken concurrently with the Chinese Funded Project. CATCOP will provide a new cargo facility, runway and safety end zone areas, capacity building and advanced safety and landing instrumentation.

The Grenville Commercial Complex

This project will be a major undertaking by Government in the Town of Grenville. While the main aim of the project is to house our District Revenue Office and the Public

Library, the project will also facilitate the rental of commercial space to support the growth and expansion of the Private Sector in the Parish of St. Andrew and surrounding areas. The preparatory work for the project is well advanced and construction will commence early in 2021. An amount of $8m is allocated for spending next year and an estimated sixty (60) construction jobs will be provided.

St. John's River Flood Control Project

The Construction of this crucially important project is scheduled to commence in February next year, generating in excess of one hundred (100) jobs. The Consultant for the project has been engaged and design works are on-going. An amount of $10m has been allocated in the 2021 Budget.

St. Patrick Road Rehabilitation and Upgrading Project

Mr. Speaker, this project is funded through a loan of EC$27m from the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). The scope of works entails the construction of sixteen kilometres (16 km) of roads including all bridges, drainage and ancillary works, from Duquesne to Sauteurs and from Poyntzfield to Morne Fendue. Construction works are on-going. The project is expected to generate up to one hundred and fifty (150) construction jobs over the next two (2) years. The sum of $15m is allocated for the continuation of this project in 2021.

Natural Disaster Rehabilitation and Reconstruction - Gouyave Extreme Rainfall Project

During 2021, Mr. Speaker, construction works will commence on this US$8.6m project, with funding from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The project involves slow stabilisation in areas such as Brothers, Clozier, Gross Point, Maran, Market Square and Millette, as well as the Brothers Bridge reconstruction. A sum of $1.1m is allocated for the rollout of this project in 2021, which will generate one hundred (100) construction jobs.

The Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) Ninth Cycle

Mr. Speaker, this project, with grant funding from the Caribbean Development Bank commenced in 2020. A sum of $5.6m is allocated for the continuation of this project, which has major poverty reduction associated with it, Mr. Speaker, and

approximately twenty (20) jobs would be generated from construction activities under this project.

Grenada Education Enhancement Project (GEEP) Phases 1 and 2

Mr. Speaker, rehabilitation and upgrade works under Phase 1 of this $42.5m CDB-funded project are progressing smoothly. Several schools were targeted this year including the Bishop's College, the Presentation Brothers' College and the Grenada SDA Comprehensive, which generated in excess of eighty (80) jobs.

Phase 2 of the Grenada Education Enhancement Project at an estimated cost of EC$40.5m will be presented to the CDB Board later this month. The realisation of this Phase 2 will see the construction and rehabilitation of several schools throughout the country including St. Andrew's Anglican Primary and the Grenada Christian Academy. A sum of $7.5m is allocated for the furtherance of this project, with additional job opportunities to come on stream.

Integrated Solid Waste Management Project (ISWMP)

Mr. Speaker, good progress was made in advancing this $40.9m CDB-funded project during 2020, including the design and award of the tender for the Landfill Cell Development, the completion of the Composting Feasibility Study and the Engagement of the Planning and Capacity Building Consultants. Several other activities are on schedule for completion in 2021 including the closure of the two (2) existing dumpsites. This project is expected to generate direct employment for twenty-five (25) persons. Mr. Speaker, the Government will continue to push forward on this project next year, to permanently relieve the problems being experienced, particularly by residents in the area.

Western Main Road Corridor Upgrade Project

This important project, Mr. Speaker, is financed through a grant of EC$46.7m from the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, under the UK-Caribbean Infrastructure Facility (UK-CIF). Mr. Speaker, the scope of works for the Project has been finalised and includes land and road slippages in Molinierre and Woodlands. To date, the consultancy contracts for designs, including the geotechnical investigations, have been awarded. Construction activities will

commence during the third quarter 2021 and will generate approximately two hundred and fifty (250) jobs, over a three-year period. A sum of $15m has been allocated for the rollout of this project next year.

Mt. Kumar Road Construction

Mr. Speaker, the Mt. Kumar Road Construction is critical to ease the flow of traffic through the Mt. Moritz bypass-road, as we move forward with the works on the Molinierre land and road slippage. This project will be funded from NTF Grants to the tune of $5m and is expected to commence early next year, creating at least thirty (30) jobs.

Grenada Water Expansion System and Sewerage Improvement Project

This EC$35.8m project is financed through a Grant from the UK-CIF, with National Water and Sewerage Authority as the implementing Agency. The goal of the project is to contribute to the strengthening of the Water Sector in Grenada, reduce Water Sector risks, improve the Sewer System in the Town of St. George and build resilience to the impact of climate change in the sector's infrastructure.

Construction and Refurbishment of Government Buildings

Government will continue its drive to construct and rehabilitate Government-owned buildings to provide adequate space for its offices and reduce the outlay on rents. Preparatory works for several Government buildings are completed, or underway. Work will commence on a cross-section of these buildings as early as January 2021, which will generate in excess of one hundred (100) construction jobs. Mr. Speaker, an allocation of $9m is provided for this project next year.

Concrete and Asphalt Works

Mr. Speaker, maintaining our road infrastructure is critical, not only for road safety, but for supporting economic activity. A sum of $14m is allocated for concrete and asphalt work next year, with the potential to create over fifteen hundred (1,500) temporary construction jobs.

The Simon Cultural Centre

This project, Mr. Speaker, will involve the construction of the Simon Cultural Centre in St. Andrew, at a cost of EC$16.5m. Financing will be through the National

Transformation Fund with up to two hundred (200) jobs created, over three (3) years. A sum of $3m has been allocated for the rollout of construction works on this project next year.

Renovation and Extension Programme – Schools

Mr. Speaker, $2.7m were spent on the renovation and expansion of several schools during this year. An allocation of $3m is made for next year. Some six hundred (600) construction jobs will be created under this programme.

Agriculture Feeder Roads Phase III

The implementation of Phase III of the Agricultural Feeder Roads Project, which was delayed due to the pandemic, has commenced, and major construction rollout will be seen in January next year, with over two hundred (200) construction jobs to be generated. Mr. Speaker, in contrast to Phases I and II, this phase is financed from domestic resources. This phase involves the construction/rehabilitation of 44.2 km of road, including buildings and ancillaries, in various communities across the Island. A sum of $15m has been earmarked for spending next year.

Retrofitting of Traffic Lights

Government will use this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to incorporate renewable energy technologies in the retrofitting of our traffic lights, which should result in significant savings and environmental benefits. Given traffic has doubled since the installation of our traffic lights, the advice given by New York University (NYU) while investigating the traffic situation under the consultancy for making the Town of St George a Climate Smart City, will be incorporated in the new designs. A sum of $3m is allocated for this project.

Special Projects

Mr. Speaker, $4.4m was spent on critical small infrastructure works, such as concrete pavements and walkways, railings, bridges and public baths and toilets in various communities, throughout Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. An allocation of $7m has been provided for the continuation of this programme, next year, which will create over one thousand (1,000) temporary job opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to another key pillar that drives economic recovery next year.

Support for Private Sector Expansion

Mr. Speaker, a vibrant Private Sector can play a major role in driving job creation and in bolstering the economic recovery. In our interactions with stakeholders, several areas for support were flagged, including access to credit concessions and business facilitation services. Some of this support has already been made available through the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Package announced in March, to cushion the adverse impact of the pandemic. These include:

- The Small Hotel Facility at the Grenada Development Bank (GDB);
- The Small Business Soft Loan Facility also administered by the GDB.

To complement this financing support, Government recently granted approval for the GDB to borrow $10m, to provide access to credit to support recovery access across a range of economic sectors.

Government is also considering approval for GDB to access a line of credit from the European Investment Bank (the EIB) and the CDF to the tune of US$10m and US$4m, respectively, to further bolster access to Private Sector credit.

Mr. Speaker, despite the pandemic, investor confidence in Grenada remained at an all-time high, as the GIDC continues to receive significant interest for new investment opportunities with several new projects given the green light to proceed.

As of November 2020, forty-one (41) applications for investment incentives were received across various sectors including, Tourism, Manufacturing and Services. The proposed investments in these new projects will exceed EC$6b, with the potential to generate over five thousand (5,000) jobs.

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to support our farmers, fisher folks and agro-processors to access markets, both locally and internationally. In this context, Government will work with the Marketing and National Importing Board to improve its governance and financial performance, enabling it to better serve farmers. Moreover, Government, through the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs and the

Grenada Bureau of Standards, will continue to work to boost export of our local products and services. The upgrading of the Grenada Bureau of Standards' Laboratory facilities, with EC$2m in grant funding from the CDF is key in this regard.

Major Private Sector Investments

I wish to highlight some of the major projects facilitated by the Government during 2020, as well as projects in the pipeline by the Private Sector.

Projects Commencing Operations in 2020:

Tourism Facilities

The SD Grenada Limited (Royalton)

This EC$300m project, Mr. Speaker, involving the refurbishment and expansion of the Grenadian by Rex Resorts commenced operations in March of 2020. However due to the pandemic, the hotel closed its doors in the same month and is now scheduled to be reopened in January 2021, creating three hundred (300) direct jobs.

The Point at Petite Calivigny Resort

Mr. Speaker, Phase 1 of this luxurious Boutique Resort commenced operations in January 2020, adding a total of thirty-two (32) luxury rooms to Grenada's current room stock. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the facility is still open and employs eleven (11) persons. Phase 2, which includes sixty-five (65) hotel rooms and fifteen (15) villas, is scheduled to commence in early 2021. This phase of the project is estimated at EC$175m, and is anticipated to create construction jobs for up to one hundred and fifty (150) individuals. Estimated employment during operation is sixty-five (65) persons.

Siesta Hotel Expansion

This project located at Morne Rouge has added twenty (20) rooms to the Tourists Accommodation Sector and created construction employment for over forty (40) workers. It is expected to create employment for seven (7) persons, once operation commences next year.

Student Accommodation

Waldorf Apartments

This project, Mr. Speaker, involves the construction of one hundred and twenty (120) apartments for student accommodation at True Blue, St. George. Total investment to date, is EC$32m. Employment was created for one hundred and ten (110) persons during construction and permanent employment is proposed for seven (7) persons. The project is expected to become operational once the St. George's University (SGU) resumes face-to-face classes.

Renegade Rum Distillery Limited

This project commenced operations in September, 2020. Total investment in the project was over EC$100m. Renegade Rum Group currently employs one hundred and fifty (150) persons; twenty-five (25) within the Distillery and one hundred and twenty-five (125) in the CaneCo side of the business.

Projects Currently Under Construction

Range Development

This EC$300m tourism development commenced construction in October 2020, and will create construction employment for up to three hundred and fifty (350) persons and permanent employment for about one hundred and fifty (150) Grenadians when completed. This project is scheduled to commence operations in the first quarter of 2023.

Kawana Bay

Work is currently underway on the fourth and final building of this project, which is scheduled for completion in 2021. Investment to date is over EC$150m, with up to two hundred and forty (240) construction jobs created. The Resort, which will add one hundred and thirty-three (133) rooms and thirty-one (31) suites to Grenada's room stock, is expected to be operational in 2022, creating three hundred (300) permanent jobs.

Grenada National Resort Project

Mr. Speaker, to date, over US$70m has been invested in the acquisition of property and to undertake preliminary works, which include the feasibility studies,

surveys, site preparations and on-going construction. The construction of this facility is expected to create employment for over five hundred (500) Grenadians within the Parish of St. Patrick, of which one hundred and thirty-five (135) are currently employed. Once operational, up to eight hundred (800) permanent jobs will be created.

Mt. Hartman Resort Group Limited

This US$2b project commenced construction of its showroom in August of 2020, creating fifty (50) constructions jobs. Its showroom will be constructed, as a mini Resort, to feature seventeen (17) suites, a restaurant, business centre and offices for staff. It is expected to be completed in June 2021. Construction employment is expected to increase significantly, with the start of construction of the main Resort and University Town in January 2021. This phase is expected to be completed in June 2024, and will provide at least five hundred (500) job opportunities.

Luxe Modern Residential Living

Construction works on this EC$9.7m project, located in Lance Aux Epines, are currently on-going, with over twenty (20) persons employed. The facility is expected to become operational by March 2021 and will create permanent employment for at least seven (7) persons.

VK Holding Inc.

This project, Mr. Speaker, involves the establishment of a small luxury eco-friendly tourism accommodation facility located at Quarantine Point. Phase 1 of the project, which is estimated at EC$5.5m is 75% completed. Some twenty-three (23) persons are employed in the construction of this facility. It is expected to be operational in August 2021, creating employment for about fifteen (15) persons.

Solomentè Villas (Phase II)

This EC$10m expansion project will add ten (10) rooms to an existing ten (10) bedroom Luxury Boutique, Villa Resort and Retreat Centre, at Lance-Aux-Epines. Construction employment has been created for twenty-two (22) persons and permanent employment is proposed for five (5) to seven (7) persons once operation commences next year.

Karnani Investments Limited

Mr. Speaker, construction activities on this EC$3.8m project are on-going, with forty-five (45) construction jobs created. Permanent employment will be created for five (5) persons upon commencement of operations in 2021.

Virgin Beach Development Limited

This EC$40m project involves construction of one hundred and forty-six (146) apartments for student housing at True Blue. Over EC$35m have been invested in the project, to date, with over one hundred and fifty (150) construction workers employed. This project is expected to become operational, once St. George's University resumes face-to-face classes.

Xenia Apartments

Mr. Speaker, this project involves the construction of EC$1.8m student accommodation facility at Point Salines, creating permanent employment for eight (8) persons. Forty (40) construction jobs have been created.

Gafsons Investments (Grenada) Inc.

Construction on this EC$6.5m project involving construction of thirty-six (36) apartments for student housing at Lance Aux Epines is on-going, with over thirty-five (35) persons employed.

Crystal Sand Apartments

The student accommodation facility, Mr. Speaker, is estimated at $2.5m and involves construction of thirty (30) self-contained apartments for students' accommodation. Construction employment is proposed for twenty (20) to thirty-five (35) persons, with six (6) persons employed, once operation commences in December of 2021.

Lavo Housing Limited

The project, Mr. Speaker, involves the construction of a twenty-four (24) bedroom student accommodation facility. The facility, which is 90% complete, employs over forty (40) construction workers. Investment to date is more than EC$6.5m. The facility is expected to be operational in March 2021, creating employment for an average of five (5) persons.

Agri-Business

Excellent Farm Limited

Construction of this $3.8m poultry operation in Patrick is on-going and will create permanent employment over twenty (20) persons, once operational next year.

Grenada Tobacco Company Limited

The proposed project cost is EC$7.8m and involves the manufacturing of cigarettes, using fine imported blends, for 100% export. **(Applause)** The project is estimated to employ a total of thirty (30) persons.

I now turn to some major Private Sector Projects in the pipeline, with planned commencement dates, next year.

The Beach House

Mr. Speaker, construction of this EC$54m project will commence in the first quarter of next year, creating one hundred (100) construction jobs. The commencement of operation is scheduled for the third quarter of 2023, which will provide permanent employment for seventy-five (75) persons.

Silver Sands Legacy at Mt. Cinnamon

The proposed construction start date for this EC$216m project is the fourth quarter of next year, with the commencement of operations likely in the second quarter of 2024. The project will generate up to three hundred (300) construction jobs and employ at least two hundred and fifty (250) persons during operations.

Grenada Chick Inn Farm Limited

This project, Mr. Speaker, involves the establishment of a poultry operation, at Felix Park, St Andrew. Proposed investment is EC$4m with the potential to create construction and permanent employment for over eighty (80) persons. The project is scheduled to begin in early 2021.

Homa Limited

Homa Limited is moving ahead with plans to develop a two hundred and forty (240) room Luxury Resort, encompassing three (3) properties located in True Blue. This EC$60m project is carded for implementation in 2021. The project will create permanent employment for twenty-five (25) persons, when completed.

Star Development Limited

This project is a sixty (60) room Luxury Hotel and Spa, to be developed in three (3) phases on 3.67 acres of land, perched above Dr. Groom's Beach in Point Salines. This EC$56m project, when completed, will create permanent employment for fifteen (15) persons.

Mr. Speaker, these and other Private Sector Projects, will generate in excess of five thousand (5,000) construction jobs, and over three thousand, three hundred (3,300) permanent jobs in 2021 and beyond.

Tourism and Private Tertiary Education

Mr. Speaker, our Tourism and Private Tertiary Education Sectors, have been hit the hardest in this pandemic and are anticipated to be the slowest to recover. This Budget provides for $19.3m to support a new thrust, including the renewal of our Tourism product offerings. One example of this, is the work that is unfolding under the OECS Regional Competitive Project. The project's objective is to lay the foundation to improve the competitiveness of the Tourism Sector in Grenada.

With respect to the private Tertiary Education Sector, Government will continue to collaborate closely, with St. George's University, to facilitate a full return of all students and faculty to the St. George's University Campus, in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Speaker, ***Transformation***

I will now proceed to outline some specific areas that will support the Social and Economic Transformation of our country.

Education and Training

Mr. Speaker, I join in congratulating our students for the excellent performance in this year's CSEC Examination. **(Applause)** This is a clear demonstration of the commitment and dedication of our educators and the parents, the strength and tenacity of our students and the resilience of our Education System. In 2021 the Ministry of Education will continue to build on these pillars.

Some of the key initiatives for next year include:

i) The e-Books Programme – $6m;

ii) The e-Testing Programme at a cost of $0.2m;

iii) School Infrastructure Programmes (GEEP Phases I and II) – EC$7.5m allocation;

iv) National Skills Development Programme - $0.7m; and

v) The STAR Programme - $0.5m, Mr. Speaker.

Government will continue to support the education of our teachers and students through various scholarships at local, regional and international universities. We have allocated $124m to help drive the transformation agenda in the Education Sector. **(Applause)**

Health

Mr. Speaker, Government reiterates its commitment to prioritise the health of the Grenadian people. The recent appointment of a second Minister in the Ministry of Health, with the responsibility for Hospital Services and Community Health Services, sends a strong signal about the seriousness of Government's commitment. **(Applause)**

A key project in this regard, is the World Bank supported OECS Regional Health Project, aimed at improving the preparedness of our Health Sector, to respond to public health emergencies. This project will strengthen health infrastructure, surveillance, laboratory systems and health emergency operations.

Government will continue its efforts, Mr. Speaker, to ensure adequate dialysis services for our dialysis patients. Only recently, Cabinet approved the purchase of critical surgical and medical equipment and supplies, to support the administration of dialysis.

The refurbishment of Carlton Home to provide support to our citizens, who are facing challenges with substance abuse, cannot wait any longer, Mr. Speaker. The Government applauds the Grenada Cooperative Bank Limited for recognising the importance of this facility and for their stellar efforts in raising resources towards its reconstruction. Government has provided the sum of $1m to commence rehabilitation of the Carlton House, next year. **(Applause)**

Work will continue on developing an appropriate framework for a sustainable National Health Insurance (NHI) Programme.

We have allocated $94.9m in this year's Budget towards improving healthcare delivery.

Youth Development

In 2021, Mr. Speaker, the youth budget will see a 43% increase over the 2020 figure to $40.4m **(applause)** of which $17.9m, Mr. Speaker, is allocated for the important New IMANI Programme.

Mr. Speaker, a significant change to the budget for Youth Development this year, is the inclusion of a Transitioning Strategy Programme, which will complement the New IMANI Programme. This programme seeks to address the fundamental challenge associated with transitioning from the IMANI Programme into sustainable jobs. Under the programme, service providers will be engaged to provide services to the Government and the Private Sector, and they will in turn provide sustainable jobs to our young people. Several initiatives have already been rolled out, including a Youth Sewing Cooperative that will be involved in the sewing of school uniforms and other clothing products, and a Furniture-Making Cooperative. Mr. Speaker, a budget of $7m has been allocated to facilitate the rollout of this programme next year.

The M-Power Programme, Mr. Speaker, continues to touch the lives of our young men at risk. The allocation for this programme has been increased $4m this year to $6m in 2021.

Digital Transformation

One of the key elements of Government's digital strategy is ICT infrastructure. Significant progress has been made in this area under the World Bank-supported Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Programme (CARCIP), which facilitated increased access to regional Broadband Network, as well as the development of IT and IT-enabled services in Grenada and the Caribbean region.

Another key element of this strategy is the digital transformation of Government's operations and services. The continued roll out of the Digital Governance for Resilience Project (DG4R) will support developing the enabling environment to modernise service delivery, leveraging digital technologies to deliver selected services and strengthening institutions and managing change for digital literacy and inclusion.

Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to implement key reforms and programmes in the area of Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy. Permit me to touch on these briefly.

Mr. Speaker, Government has one of the highest rates of energy in the region, at the around US$0.41 per kilowatt hour. Government will continue its efforts to diversify Grenada's energy mix into renewable sources and to reduce the cost of energy.

The restructuring of the Electricity Sector therefore, is of paramount importance. Significant progress has been made in this regard, with the passage of the new Electricity Supply Act and attendant regulations. The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) is now fully constituted and functional. Government will continue to press ahead with reforms in the Electricity Sector.

Mr. Speaker, plans for the development of a 15 Megawatt Geothermal Plant on the Island are progressing smoothly. Government will continue to aggressively pursue this project, including by mobilising grant financing, to help support the reduction in the cost of energy to consumers.

The Solar PV/Battery Hybrid Project, with grant funding support from the United Arab Emirates - Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund to the tune of $8.6m, is another important project that will support Grenada's thrust towards renewable energy. This project would facilitate the design, construction and installation of a Solar PV/Battery Hybrid Plant in Limlair, Carriacou. An allocation of $3.2m is provided for the commencement of this project, next year.

Mr. Speaker, developments in the Water and Telecommunications Sectors, as Public Utilities, and their key role in sustainable development and the economic transformation process, has been examined earlier.

Physical Development

Mr. Speaker, the orderly, safe and effective physical development of Grenada is a critical element of the transformation agenda. For this reason, in January of this year, Government took the bold decision to implement the transition of the Physical Planning Unit, under the Ministry of Finance into a full-fledged Statutory Body, the Physical

Planning and Development Control Authority, contemplated since 2017, with the enactment of the Legislative Framework. Mr. Speaker, the pandemic affected the speed of our efforts in this important reform. In 2021, Government will accelerate the finalisation of the transition.

Resilience

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to prioritise building resilience into shocks, both economic and environmental. The 2021 Budget supports this thrust with many of our policies and programmes designed with resilience considerations in mind.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to implement its Paris Climate commitment in the fight against the threat of Climate Change.

Grenada's commitment, through its revised Nationally Determined Contribution of reducing its emission by 40% of its pre 2010 level, by the year 2030, will be pursued vigorously.

With the Electricity and Transport Sectors accounting for over 70% of our Carbon Footprint, efforts will be concentrated on reducing and reaching at least 30% of electricity generation by Renewable Energy, and 20% of vehicles being powered by renewable energy resources within the 2030 deadline.

Additionally, Government will continue its efforts to reduce the leakage of plastics to our pristine, but vulnerable coastal and marine environments, as well as the amount of plastics that will reach the Landfill.

I will now briefly touch on a few cross-cutting areas.

Safety Nets

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the tight fiscal situation next year, Government will increase its Social Safety Nets and Poverty Alleviation Programmes. Allow me to outline some of these major Poverty Alleviation Programmes for 2021:

1. Support for Education Empowerment, and Development (SEED) – $18m, an increase by $4m relative to the 2020 allocation.
2. Road Improvement and Maintenance Programme, (Debushing) – $10m allocation.
3. Farm Labour Support/Strengthening Rural Opportunities - $1.5m.

4. Needy Assistance - $1.4m.
5. Uniform Allowance – $1m.
6. Burial Assistance - $300,000.00

Mr. Speaker, Government will introduce a new safety net to provide support to single-headed households to cushion the impact of the continued adverse effects of the pandemic. An amount of $2m has been allocated to this programme.

The total allocation, Mr. Speaker, for the Ministry of Housing, Social Services and Community Empowerment is $60.2m, an increase of 28.6% over 2020.

Housing

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to give top priority to the housing needs of our people, especially the less fortunate. With support provided by the People's Republic of China, a total of six hundred and forty-seven (647) low income housing units will be available for distribution during the course of next year.

There are several other major areas of housing assistance available next year, Mr. Speaker. These include:

- Housing Assistance Programme – $5m.
- Grenada Home Improvement Programme – $10m.
- The Soft Loan Housing Programme – $4m.

Disaster Management

Mr. Speaker, with support from the United States Southern Command Humanitarian Assistance Programme, Grenada will benefit from two (2) Emergency Operations Centres, one on the Mainland, to also serve as Headquarters for the National Disaster Management Agency, and one on the Sister Isle of Carriacou. Construction is estimated to cost US$6.6m. Mr. Speaker, EC$4.7m has been allocated in 2021, for the continued implementation of these two (2) Centres.

Pension Reform

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that Government continues to make good on its commitment to provide relief to retired Public Officers, pending the legal outcome of the matter of Pension for Public Officers. Close to $340,000.00 was paid out this year.

This is a clear testimony that this Administration is serious about resolving the longstanding issue of Public Sector Pension.

Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs

Several major achievements were realised this year, including the awarding of a contract for a major Agriculture Feeder Road in Cherry Hill, and the continued rollout of the Chinese Low-Income Housing Project in Dumfries, which is nearing completion.

Government will continue to implement critical projects on the Sister Isles in the coming year. More details and development in Carriacou and Petite Martinique can be found in the published copy of the Statement. The total Budget for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, for 2021, is $17.2m, which represents a slight increase over 2020.

Sports, Culture and the Arts

Mr. Speaker, the Government remains committed to the development of Sports, Culture and the Arts, as a priority, given their significant role in the transformation of our economy and the people. Notwithstanding activities in these areas have been significantly curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Government has allocated $12m for the continued development of these critical areas.

National Security

Mr. Speaker, Grenada is considered one of the safest countries in the Caribbean region, given our relatively low homicide rates and crime levels. Moreover, we continue to see improvements in our crime fighting efforts, with a reduction in reported cases of all major categories of crime, except in areas such as praedial larceny and housebreaking. That said, we cannot rest solely on our reputation and become complacent. Government notes with concern, the increase in homicides in recent times and therefore appeals for greater tolerance, the use of alternative methods of conflict resolution and more respect for the value of human life. **(Applause)**

The Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF) is committed to collaborating with stakeholders, as part of a holistic approach to fighting crime. The allocations for the Royal Grenada Police Force and Her Majesty's Prisons next year, Mr. Speaker, are EC$51.6m and EC$9.6m, respectively.

Acknowledgments

Mr. Speaker, let me once again thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his confidence in me to lead the Ministry of Finance at this time. I also take this opportunity to thank my other Cabinet Colleagues for their support.

Further, I wish to recognise the valuable contribution made by the Cabinet Secretary in handling the affairs of the Executive Branch of Government, and also Permanent Secretaries, for their collective contribution to National Development.

I also give special thanks to the Permanent Secretaries and staff of the Ministry of Finance, as well as the Clerk of Parliament and his staff, who have given me their full support and who have the enormous task of preparing the 2021 Budget and facilitating my Presentation today.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise and thank all other Public Workers, and I look forward to their continued enthusiasm, as we work collaboratively, to execute the plans announced in this 2021 Budget. In this whole of Government approach, Mr. Speaker, every link in the chain matters.

I once again express thanks to stakeholders in the Private Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations, faith-based Organisations, Trade Unions, Civil Society and Youth Organisations, which participated in the consultations on the 2021 Budget, in September, for contributing valuable ideas and suggestions for economic recovery, transformation and resilience.

Last, but not least, Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to my constituents of St. George South-East, for their continued support and confidence in my representation in this Honourable House.

Conclusion - Stronger Together, Under God

Mr. Speaker, this New National Party Administration is once again faced with the great responsibility of leading our Nation out of adversity. On this occasion, we are confronted with a crisis of unprecedented proportions. This is unlike anything we have ever seen before. 'The Great Lockdown,' as it is referred to, has led to the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression of 1929. All across the Globe, Mr.

Speaker, Governments are grappling with social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here at home, the pandemic has triggered an unparalleled decline in our economy, resulting in serious hardships for many of our people. The pandemic has also compounded our major developmental challenges, including a still high rate of unemployment and continuing debt vulnerabilities. If we are not vigilant, Mr. Speaker, many of our hard-won gains will be permanently reversed.

Mr. Speaker, this is arguably the most difficult period we have had to face in our economic history. Overcoming our current challenges therefore, requires an extraordinary response.

Mr. Speaker, as a Nation and a People, we are responding well. Working together, hope in our Nation and our people is being restored. Our economy is beginning to show initial signs of recovery. Our people are demonstrating impressive resilience.

Mr. Speaker, as we have done before, with God on our side, we will prevail. The policies, plans and programmes announced today, will help us recover in a robust and inclusive way, support our social and economic transformation and further build resilience.

We have rolled out one of the largest capital budgets ever, which will generate thousands of employment opportunities for our people. Our Private Sector is energised and will add thousands of new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we are ready for the difficult road ahead. The responsibility resides with all of us. As a caring and responsible Government, we will play our part. I call on each and every Grenadian to continue to do his or her part, as we move forward, in unity and from strength to strength. The more united we are, the stronger will be our response and the sooner we'll be able to put the pain and suffering of 2020 behind us.

Mr. Speaker, I end as I began, in reference to the Almighty God: *"**For in him we live, move and have our being**."* We are not afraid of what the future holds. ***"For God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*** Psalms 46:1.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to end by thanking my family, for their love and unwavering support, in my many years of service to our beautiful Nation.

May God continue to bless Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Finance. In another life, I used to be a teacher and you feel exalted when you see your student rise to the occasion, especially when it is difficult times. And even you do not want to take on the responsibility, so you pass it on to one of your student that you know could do the job. And I am sitting here and I am looking at the former Minister for Finance and I can see a constant beaming on the side of his mask. I don't know if he ever taught you, but if he did, he is beaming with pride. I don't know where we're going to get the money **(laughter)**, because other countries are saying that they don't know where they're getting the money. In some countries, fifty (50) million people would be going without food they say, for the end of the year and into next year, and how many millions would be going without jobs.

But somebody said to me yesterday: **"If it could be done, Greg and them would do it."** So Honourable Minister, I want to thank you very much for the message of hope that you have preached today. And I know that if it could be done, you would get it done. And when I say "you" here, I am talking about the entire Parliament would get it done. So thank you very much. **(Applause)**

At this time, Leader of Government's Business and Minister for Finance any contribution? After our Budget is read, we get to begin to prepare for our debate, which starts on Friday. So, as I said before, please, Honourable Members, get ready for your debate. Consult with your Standing Orders to make sure that we stick within the timeframe and tell us how we would get it done. And at this time… Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand to make a request that was established a norm in this House from since 1974 to now. In terms

of the Presentation of the Budget, it has always been done on a Friday. The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition has always been given three (3) days, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, he comes back on Monday. But now, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at it today, and I will have to come back on Friday. This just gives me one day.

I remember in the Finance Committee Meeting, I made reference to the amount of time given and in such a comprehensive Budget, Mr. Speaker, with over six hundred (600) pages, it has to be done electronically, it cannot be printed again, I did ask that I be given two (2) days, as the norm established. A day, Mr. Speaker, would not be enough. I realise that we are pressed for time. But there is nothing in the Standing Orders that say I should present on Friday. I mean, if other Members want to present present on Friday, then so let it be. But, I would request that two (2) days be given to me, as for the last fifty (50) years, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I have not seen anywhere in the Standing Orders, where it said that you must be the first person at the debate. What it does say is the timeframe and so on that will be given to you for your debate. So, I see no reason why your request cannot be accepted.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Gregory Bowen.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the meeting of the Standing Committee for Finance, the Member asked and the staff of the Parliament, we looked at the timeframe, and when the last date, and when we decided it could not be on the 27th and then it could not be on the 4th. The 4th, Mr. Speaker, will give the staff of the Parliament no time to get the Assent from Her Majesty to publish, that it must be published and for it to continue. The Senate must meet after, Mr. Speaker.

I discussed at length with the Leader of Government's Business in the Senate and with the Clerk and we facilitated the Leader of the Opposition, by giving him all the

rest of today, the customary programmes to come in tomorrow. We put also tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and the debate will commence on Friday and on Monday.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to go down to midnight, on these two (2) days of debate, in order to allow the Senate to get its proper notice and to meet. Mr. Speaker, if we only encroach on Tuesday, then everything will be thrown into chaos again, and the staff in the Parliament will not be able to do what is necessary. And the Ministry of Finance will not be able to do what is necessary to get our system prepared to start for expenditure on the 1st of January, 2021, so a lot went into it.

And I indicate, Mr. Speaker, that we do have the Leader of the Opposition, and he acknowledges that time is tight, it is tight all around. And we must recognise that this is not ordinary times. These are times that COVID has pushed upon us and we must respond. And I do believe, Mr. Speaker, as was articulated there, we can and we will respond.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition will be able to respond. And what the public must know that all the documents went out on the 25th. The only thing that the Member will be seeing and the general public will be hearing at the first time is the Budget Speech, which says what is in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. So everything said here is there. It simply puts it in a policy perspective for the Nation to look at where the thrust will be.

I daresay, Mr. Speaker, that I will encourage the Leader of the Opposition to utilise the rest of today, tonight and tomorrow, together with all the preparatory work that I know he has done from the 25th to now, so that we can move and advance together, as we fight this dangerous pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Mr. Leader of the Opposition, you wanted to make some comments.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that you were very clear. There is nothing that says that the Leader of the Opposition should present on Friday.

There was no time given there. So, it is, Mr. Speaker, that the debate can start on Friday, and I will get my two (2) days, if necessary, on Monday.

But, I do believe we should stick to the norm. It did not say when or how. The Standing Order said that I should be given equal time with the Minister for Finance, but not exactly when. So, I am saying in order for me to facilitate, this is his first time. This is also my first time, and we have to get it right. I think he got it right. So, I would like the time to get it right.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is something else. Yes, that the information was sent out. It was sent out electronically and I sought to get it printed. But, now we say that we're going green, and we have gone so green that the Budget Document is not printed. Mr. Speaker, you sit in front of a computer and try to read six hundred (600) plus pages, it's one of the most difficult things that you have done. Mr. Speaker, I consulted with my with my colleague there from St. Patrick and I know he is having problems with his eyes. And, for him…

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: All right. Leader of the Opposition, let us not go through a debate now, please. Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I noticed we're having a debate in the House with no Motion. I am wondering what's going on? A point was made, a reply was given that should end this. There is no debate here, otherwise we could go on for the rest of the day. I think that is a clear understanding of what the procedures are. So, I don't know that we should be tolerating that.

Mr. Speaker: Alright. Honourable Members, we would adjourn for today and be back here on Friday, at 9:00 in the forenoon, exactly 9:00 in the forenoon to begin our debate. Lunch is provided. Please, Honourable Members, do not leave the lunch. I

could only eat so much and no more. Honourable Members, this House is adjourned until.

House adjourned on Wednesday, 2nd December, 2020 at 11:50 a.m.

Resumption
Attendance

House resumed on Friday, 4th December, 2020 at 9:03 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr. Speaker
The Honourable Michael Pierre
in the Chair

Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	- Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	- Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	- Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Forestry and Labour
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	- Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	- Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	- Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development

Attendance

Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and Minister wrf Hospital Services and Community Health Services
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker

ABSENT

Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of the Opposition

Prayers
Announcements

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

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

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, this Honourable House is now in Session. I don't know what has happened. We forgot the time. My Notice said 9:00 o'clock this morning, and we were reminded on Wednesday that we would be starting at 9:00 o'clock this morning. Is my watch fast?

And remember this is a continuation of the Third Sitting of the Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament, and it's really a continuation of the Budget Presentation and Debate. The Presentation was already made. The Debate is expected to begin and continue today, and I was hoping to see the Leader of the Opposition here to begin the debate. We have no communication, as to the reason for his lateness. This is unfortunate, but we shall not be held up by anybody, and so we will proceed. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as put forward by the Member for St. George South-East and Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I firmly support the Estimates as presented by the Member. I find it very fitting for the times that we're in, and even though I am still asking how are we going to do it, I trust in God, first of all, and secondly, I trust in the performance that we have seen this New National Party Administration execute, in a very difficult time in 2020, and I expect the same will continue.

Mr. Speaker, on my way here, I usually pass on the West Coast and around this time, it's the beginning of winter and we will start to see a few Cruise Ships coming in.

(Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell rose)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order. I just apologise for just being a few minutes late, but the Minister for Finance has presented his Statement on the Budget. The Opposition Leader is supposed to reply before any Member, otherwise we won't have a debate. If the Opposition Member does not reply, then we won't have a debate. If a Member gets up to speak, I would have to be informed, what is the procedure? I don't know what is taking place. So, I thought some direction will come from the Speaker, as to what is going to be happening from now onwards, because I don't know. I have to prepare myself accordingly, because that is the basic order of when a budget is read and there's an Opposition. If there's no Opposition, then we have the Members making presentations, not a debate.

As it stands right now, if the Opposition Leader does not respond, then we go into presentations. So, I think the Speaker need to give us some clarity. I would appreciate some clarity, because I don't know what's going on. I don't know what the situation is. I think people outside and the audience and the public would need to know exactly what is taking place. So, I think some clarity needs to be given, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister and Parliamentary Representative for St. George North-West. The schedule and the timing that was given to me and for all Other Members of this House, was 9:00 o'clock this morning. The last statement I made on Wednesday said 9:00 o'clock this morning. We actually started at three (3) minutes after 9:00.

The Leader of the Opposition has failed to communicate in any way, whether he is late, if there is a problem, or if there some issue. It is clear to me then, that the Leader of the Opposition has no intention of debating the issue today or any other day, and so we couldn't wait for him indefinitely.

I expect every Member of this House to have respect for the House and that means that when you are expected to be here to do something or to debate or to make presentation, that Members are here on time to perform their role. That would mean, therefore, that we have gone back to having presentations made. The Leader of the Opposition, when he comes, if he comes, would be allowed to make a presentation, just as any other Member of the House, the timing of which will be one (1) hour. His would be a presentation. It is unfortunate, but we cannot hold up the entire nation and this Honourable House to the fancy of the Leader of the Opposition. I pray this explains the reason why we have to take the action we take, and it's unfortunate that we have to revert back to making presentations rather than having a debate, but it is beyond the control that we have. Thank you. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark, would you continue your presentation, please?

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, coming down on the Western side this morning, I did not see a Cruise ship. But on the horizon, I saw a rainbow, and for me, that was a rainbow of hope. **(Applause)**

This is what we need now, Mr. Speaker, to accept the hope that God has given us. But we also need to stand here to give hope to the people, as Leaders. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed. I was looking forward to have a debate, based on the response that the Leader of the Opposition would have given.

Unfortunately, he has robbed the nation of that opportunity and therefore, I cannot be content to making my presentation. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as you have said, no one is above the Rules and the Guidelines of this Honourable House, and we are guided by you and I will continue with my presentation, and I am sure that at the appropriate time, every Member on the Government Side, would rise to the occasion, as we have always done in the past.

So, Mr. Speaker, hope. We have had some very, very trying times, from March to present time and perhaps even a little before March. Especially in the Tourism Sector, we saw the fallout, the beginning of cancellations, February, maybe towards the end of January, as well, and we knew that it was not going to look good for us.

I never thought it will go that long and that strong, Mr. COVID, but he did. And listening to the news, up to this morning, in the early hours of the morning, I am hearing on CNN, record high in deaths, record high in hospitalisations, record high in number of cases. And so we know that we have to put our trust in God, and I want to quote from Romans 12:12, which says, and I quote: ***"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulations, continuing steadfast in prayer."***

And, these words guide me and these are the words that would guide us in the Tourism Sector, as we face these serious challenges, never faced before. And, these words I hope, will also guide our nation that we stay steadfast in prayer and we continue to hope. But not only to hope, but we continue to do our work. And I am so pleased that the Ministry of Tourism, that the Grenada Tourism Authority, that the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Organisation and all of the others in the sector, many of them, perhaps, not all, maybe some have given up. But you know, in speaking to some of the hoteliers, I spoke to yesterday, there is hope, Mr. Speaker. So, with hope in mind, I want to start my presentation.

As we all know, the Tourism Industry has been for many years, a significant pillar in the economic development of this country. It is said that tourism contributes about 25%, approximately 25% to the GDP of our country. And very importantly, contributes to about ten thousand (10,000) jobs, directly and indirectly. In a population of one hundred thousand (100,000) this is 10%, one-tenth of our population, Mr. Speaker. And

that tells you how important this Industry is to the persons in the Accommodation Sector, persons in food and beverage, vendors, taxi operators, the jumpers, whether they be at Annandale or anywhere else, the Dive Sector, the Airport workers and many others, not forgetting our farmers and or fisher folk, Mr. Speaker, whose livelihoods depend, to a large extent, on the Tourism Industry.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the closure of our borders, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Grenada was on its way to a bumper tourism year, similar to what we had experienced in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, this Honourable House would recall that we hit the half a million, a milestone for us, a significant breakthrough in the industry, in our visitor arrivals. And we repeated that milestone, or we built on it, in 2019. And then came 2020, and we saw the great fall out in the Tourism industry. We were seeing additions for the room stock. Certain hotels were about to open. Several more were in the process of either starting construction, or continuing construction and we had the fall out.

But, Mr. Speaker, even for the few months, January, February, and perhaps, a little bit of March, Grenada, our Tri-Island State continued to receive a number of accolades, which I will just mention a few in the interest of time. Belmont Estate, one of our gems in the Industry was recognised by Trip Advisor for the Travellers' Choice Award in 2020, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Spice Island Beach Resort was again, for the seventh time, awarded the Six Star Diamond Award from the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences. **(Applause)** The Caribbean Journal named our Spice of the Caribbean, one of the top twenty (20) Caribbean destinations to visit in 2020. **(Applause)** So, these were expectations that we would have been seeing persons visiting us, based on all of these achievements.

Mr. Speaker, just in these few months, January, February and March, the number of accolades, they are noted here, Mr. Speaker. And in the interest of time, I would seek your indulgence to allow me to disseminate among the Members of this Honourable House, the number of accolades, so that we know that we have done well in the industry. Our country, our people have done well and that there is hope that we'll do even more.

Mr. Speaker, just to give a bit of data on the difference between 2019 and 2018. Mr. Speaker, under Cruise, in 2019 we had two hundred and seventy-six thousand, five hundred and six (276,506) visitors to all shores. A comparison of the same time in 2020, showed that we had one hundred and sixty-two thousand, five hundred and seventeen (162,517) cruise visitors, and that was a decrease of 41.22%.

Stayover passengers, one hundred and forty-seven thousand, three hundred and thirty-six (147,336) visited our shores in 2019, and in 2020, thus far, we are still grateful for it, we have seen forty-one thousand, eight hundred and fifty (41,850) persons coming in to Grenada. Some of them are repatriation, they're coming home, they were stuck. But we are happy to see that in between, we do have an encouraging number of visitors wanting to come to Pure Grenada, Spice of the Caribbean. **(Applause)**

So, overall, Mr. Speaker, four hundred and forty-six thousand, nine hundred and forty-three (446,943) visitors came to our shores, in 2019. In 2020, two hundred and fourteen thousand, seven hundred and thirteen (214,713), thus far, up to November, have visited our shores, and that is a decline in visitors of 51.96%.

Mr. Speaker, I want to belabour the point, because, as well as this Government has done and I will list some of the things that has happened in the Tourism Industry, but overall how Government has kept this country afloat. I want to urge all Grenadians in whatever walk of life, be mindful of… just in Tourism, the decrease in numbers is significant, because it also represents a decrease in revenue for the Ministry of Finance or the Consolidated Funds, and it therefore, means that we will not be able to do all of what we projected to do, like for example, what we would have projected to do in 2019 or 2020, we cannot do it now because our revenues would experience a decline and therefore, we all have to be cognisant of this and make the necessary sacrifices that are required, if we are going to keep Grenada afloat, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we know the Tourism Industry was one of the first to be hard hit and we expect a very slow recovery, the team of the Ministry of Tourism, GTA and our other stakeholders have worked very tirelessly, worked very hard in order to look at ways that we can stimulate some recovery and we have seen some responses, we have seen some Airlines coming back and I will speak to that shortly. But, Mr. Speaker,

it cannot be as before and it cannot be business as usual. I am pleased to say that in the downtime, when we had no visitors to our shores, that our team, we took time to inform ourselves, to educate ourselves on the industry from every avenue. We attended every meeting, virtually, that we could, so that we could know more about the industry that contributes so much to our country and that provides jobs for all of us. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thanks to the team, for continuing to show hope and continuing to put their shoulders to the wheel.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the operations at the Airport and the impact of COVID, a comparison of Airline and passenger movements in 2020, we saw a decline in aircraft movement, a decline in passenger movement and a decline in passenger movement by 73.8%. Very few passengers were coming in and we saw a decline in freight movement, by 35.5%. Also mail improvement, persons would be complaining that they were not receiving mails, of 56.0%. It means then, that the Airport had lost significant revenue, and that the Airport will not be able to do what they had to do. So, whether it be GAA, whether it be ASG, they do not have the funds that they used to and therefore, every action that we take, must be guided by the revenues that we generate. You cannot spend what you do not have, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our Government, under the leadership of the former Minister for Finance, responded strongly, to give support to persons, Island wide, in various areas of business, but I want to focus on the Tourism Industry support. Government provided substantial financial support for three (3) months after the closure of the border, and support in the industry accounted for 40% of the overall Stimulus Support Budget. And financial support was given to the following groups: vendors; taxi drivers; water taxi operators; tour operators; jumpers; persons in the Dive Sector; persons in the Food and Beverage Industry; and of course, not forgetting, the Accommodation Sector.

Mr. Speaker, with the suddenness of the closure of borders and the suddenness of the closure of hotel facilities and tourists not coming, the persons in the industry would have had a much more difficult time to adjust to that situation, had it not been for that 40% support that the Government gave to so many people. I was trying to get the numbers; I did not get it, but a significant number of persons, who operate in all of these

sectors. And I want to compliment the team from the Ministry of Finance who worked night and day to ensure that the effect was cushioned with that support. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Government also implemented a Soft Loan Facility through the Grenada Development Bank, where a maximum of $200,000.00 was allocated for persons in the Small Hotel Industry, or the indigenous Hotels. But what we found in 2019 was that persons were very reluctant to access those loans, because of the interest rate, because of the difficulty they experienced in the processing of their documents, some of them opted not to pursue it. But the Ministry of Finance again, looked at the situation, heard our cries and decided to revisit that Soft Loan and the outcome of that was that there was a decrease in the interest, which was reduced to 2% for the first year and to 3% thereafter.

Mr. Speaker, extremely concessionary conditions you will not see 2% and 3% in any bank in Grenada, and perhaps you will not see that anywhere in this region, I can pretty much say. And, I am happy to say that now we have more takers. Eight (8) persons have already been approved to the tune of $1.95m, and there are other applications inside. While I would have liked to see the total of $7m that was allocated for that purpose, be totally used up, so that persons could use this downtime to improve on the plant of their facility, to do training for their staff, so that we would be ready, better prepared, when we are in full operations, I quite understand that it is a difficult time for persons to make these kinds of financial decisions, and therefore, I am very happy for the eight (8) who came up and so far, have accessed the loans.

Mr. Speaker, we, in the Ministry of Tourism, Grenada Tourism Authority, we want to encourage our stakeholders to invest in their business and to ensure that they are ready to hit the ground running, because we believe in this industry and we believe that it will recover in the not too distant future. We hear about a vaccine. We await to see the outcomes of that, and we believe that this would be a major game changer for us, and as we speak to the Airlines, other things are happening. Persons would have expressed difficulties in being able to get a test within seventy-two (72) hours and now the Airlines are coming forward to offer test for persons coming from UK, in the Airlines. Virgin and British Airways have made arrangements that persons can get their test with

a turnaround time of seventy-two (72) hours, and they are even offering it on the Airport before they leave. And the Ministry of Health is looking at this, because we believe that the flight taking about eight (8) hours to nine (9) hours to get here, that the results can be uploaded and Ministry of Health can have it in time. But we still have said that the Airlines must take responsibility and ensure that everyone is tested before embarking on the plane and that everyone has a negative PCR test.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are rays of hope. There are little bits of rainbow out there in the clouds and we are trying to take every opportunity we can. We are well aware in this sector that we cannot let a crisis waste and we are making the best of it. So GTA has provided a number of training opportunities for staff and other persons in the industry and if time permits, I will go into it. But I will say that, every opportunity that was available, we have availed ourselves to it, so that we can better be prepared for the full return of the Tourism Industry.

Mr. Speaker, in preparing for the reopening, we undertook to work with the Ministry of Health, to train all of our staff, all of our staff in the industry, as well as to train other posters in the Private Sector, and we have had some successes in that. We have managed to see that we have had very little transmission of the disease and zero (0) deaths. But also, we know that the few cases of spread that we had, was really because of persons not following the guidelines and not necessarily staff not doing what they have to do.

But, Mr. Speaker, to date, we have inspected over two hundred and sixty (260) tourism businesses and they have been given the approval stamp of Pure Safe Travel which was approved by World Travel and Tourism Council, and this says that this establishment has complied with all of the requirements, all of the protocols. However, the disease is dynamic and we find that even though persons would have taken it upon themselves or they would have implemented certain measures, not everyone is consistent, and not everyone follows closely, the guidelines of the Ministry of Health. So, the Minister for Health and his team, they have been inspecting buildings, and so, the list is a dynamic list. If one qualifies today, then one may not qualify tomorrow, based on what is found, or what is discovered in the establishment when they have

visited. So, we are working, to ensure that there is compliance and we're also working to ensure that when there is non-compliance, that the Law takes its course.

However, I must commend the Ministry of Health, they are very patient. They sit with the persons, who have not followed the Regulations; they have assisted them as far as possible. They have given warnings and I know they will only resort to the ultimate, when all of their options have been taken. So, I want to thank the team for that.

Mr. Speaker, we are well aware that just having a site, just having a waterfall, just having a beach, just having a lake is not enough for the visitors. They want a little more. They want a little activity. They want something outdoors. They want to experience nature. They want to do climbing. They want to have Ecotourism products, and therefore, we have to marry the local product. Whatever we have that exist environmentally, we have to have that with an experience for them to enjoy.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am very, very pleased to say, and I know I am jumping the gun, but Annandale is a very clear example of that, and I have spoken of this in this Honourable House. And I know we saw then, when I spoke about it, a lot of negatives in that regard. And people said we were selling Annandale lands, all kinds of things. But, Mr. Speaker, I have found that anytime this Administration tries to implement something that makes sense, you get opposition, not because they think it's not good for the country, but it should not happen under this Administration, and that is why we get the negative feedback, time and again.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that all of the raves I've heard about Annandale are coming from local people. People are now saying to me, that is the way to go. We had the same pristine, beautiful waterfall and so on, the natural settings for Annandale, but now two of our son and daughter of the soil came together and decided to put the experience. So now Annandale is alive, in the day, as well as in the night and our locals are loving it. And, I do know that when our Tourism Industry becomes a little bit more operational, the visitors would really love that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have done some work on the Tri-Centennial Park, that is just over where NAWASA is. We have enhanced it, to put seating arrangements and some

very beautiful landscaping, and it is going to be a place where Grenadians who come into the city can just go up there and relax, but also we can have a number of experiences and activities for persons to go to.

We have started interpretation and signage in various areas, and we've chosen a number of areas. We have not left out our Sister Island. There are ten (10) signs, nine (9) are on Mainland and one (1) in the Sister Island of Carriacou, and these are depicting the historical nature of the particular area. So, Carriacou will have its own. Other areas will have their own. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, permit me to just list out the areas. We have one; it has been installed already in the area of Beausejour, I think it's completed. One (1) to be put up in Annandale; one (1) in Palmiste St. John; one (1) at Waltham, St. Mark; Richmond Hill, Mt. Rich, Marquis, La Sagesse and one (1) in Grand Bay in Carriacou.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Annandale Waterfall, and Annandale Waterfall was commercialised based on the policy of the Government, to commercialise sites in the Tourism Industry that we believe could be better enhanced and better managed by the Private Sector. So I want to reiterate that the land and the property of Annandale remains the property of the people of Grenada, but it's being managed by Private Sector and we have seen the great changes, Mr. Speaker, because of that, and we are going to continue in that light. **(Applause)**

I want to compliment the two (2) investors. And, persons were saying that, well, we are bringing in people from overseas to come here. We do need the people from overseas. We do need the room stock and they make a tremendous contribution. But, we are very, very happy and very accommodating, when Grenadians step up, and these are two (2), who have stepped up to the plate **(applause)** and we worked with them to ensure that this happened, and persons are really enjoying it. I think most of my staff have gone there already, and other persons from the Private Sector. I think our Prime Minister has already gone, and it is an amazing difference. Chalk and cheese is what persons are saying.

Mr. Speaker, we also decided to contract out the Lifeguard Services at Grand Anse. We have had problems. We have had persons drowning, when onlookers felt

that more could have been done, and I do not blame those Lifeguards. I do not think that they are properly trained and properly managed and that was an area, because of the importance of saving lives that we decided to also contract out. And I must say again, so much outstanding difference. They are all equipped. They have their walkie-talkies. They have their kayaks to, how you say it, row out when somebody is in difficulty, so they're not fighting to swim, and all the equipment they need. They get monthly training and they have to be certified. And recently, they added two (2) defibrillators; one, which the company ordered and brought in a team of persons to train the Lifeguards, so our Lifeguards do not just have a defibrillator, they have been trained how to use it, for over a few weeks.

So, whereas we had about six (6) Lifeguards, you know, for almost the same amount of money we have sixteen (16) persons now employed. Fifteen (15) Lifeguards and a General Manager, and I am pleased to say there are two females. I know some of my colleagues said it is not a good gender balance, but it's a start. And, we are not discriminating; we are training many females, so that they will take their rightful place in that, as well. But, the training was offered to more than that number, so that they will have a cadre of persons, who are able to fit in at any time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we complain that we are giving this out and we are doing this out, but, Mr. Speaker, if we want things to run efficiently, sometimes it is better to put it in the hands of the Private Sector, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak of the OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness Project, which deals primarily, with Fort George restoration. This project is funded by the World Bank and Grenada's component is $6m. St. Vincent and St. Lucia are the other partners in this. Each Island had to choose its own tourism attraction that it would develop to entice more tourists to the country. But also, we were looking at a ferry that will take tourists or any other passengers between the three (3) Islands. But again, Mr. Speaker, because of COVID, we found that we had to… not us, we still wanted the ferry, but the other two (2) Island partners, they decided to use the funding for the ferry for other causes that they felt was more important and therefore, Grenada had to give up that ferry opportunity for the moment.

But, I must say that quite a lot had been done in the COVID time. We have seen the completion of the final design drawings for the rehabilitation of Fort George. It would not be the complete rehabilitation, but a significant portion would be done. So, I call it Phase 1 and I expect that we will pursue Phase 2, as soon as that is over. And now they are advertising for bids, to have a contractor, who will actually undertake the restoration of Fort George. They have procured Border Management System for the Immigration and Passport Department and that is to be used in the Harvey Vale Ferry Terminal. I know my sister from the Sister Island, always wants to hear something happening in Carriacou. So, the installation and testing have been carried out and so we expect it to be completed in this month.

We have already started consultancy to prepare a National Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, and that will be ready in the next few months in 2021. The process for the safe relocation of documents stored at the Fort; as we all know Fort George is a very important historical site, in our country, and there are lots of records on that Fort that were left there, unattended, and some of them were being destroyed, and now the Ministry has undertaken, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Library Department, to train some young people in salvaging the documents and now they are being photocopied and stored adequately and a significant amount of these documents have now been salvaged and stored and work will continue.

Also, under the OECS Competitiveness Project, the GTA has been able to secure funding for upgrading of the website, Mr. Speaker. So, the website is our puregrenada.com. It includes translations into different languages, because, as we know, English is fast not becoming the most popular language. There are some other languages that are even more frequently used than English. And therefore, if we want to target persons from different parts of the world, with different languages, then we need to do that. So I want to compliment the Communications Team at GTA, for that implementation and also for the inclusion of virtual reality.

Mr. Speaker, Tourism Awareness Month, which was the month just gone, November, it saw a number of activities that were carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and GTA, and the Theme was: ***"Tourism Connects Us All."*** A number of activities

were carried out. The launch of the reality tours, some of the team visited the schools virtually and shared videos on careers in tourism. Seven (7) appreciation videos, highlighting importance and benefits of the Grassroots Groups, within the industry etcetera, etcetera, and a number of Radio Programmes and Television Programmes, too numerous to mention, in the limited time.

In Carriacou and Petite Martinique, we saw major focus was placed on training in Ecotourism and in Culture. We had some cultural workshops in schools. I mentioned that was earlier on in the year and we saw Island wide engagement, with Primary and Secondary schools, who were engaged in workshops featuring String Band, Big Drum and Shakespeare Mas. I believe that mostly alludes to Carriacou and Petite Martinique. We had persons trained and tourism businesses. A number of areas, I'll just choose out a few; in Fire Safety, Food Safety, in Infectious Disease Control, Front Office Procedures, Basic Housekeeping, all of the things that will put us in good stead, as service providers in the industry, to impress and to serve our visitors adequately and locals, alike. In Carriacou again, we saw an Ecotourism Project, which saw the making of the High Knot Trail Navigation easier and safer, with the introduction of interactive signage on local flora and fauna.

Limlair Trail Development, that too was developed, so it seems to me as though Carriacou got more than its fair share, but we are happy for that. Limlair was one of largest Estates in Carriacou, over five hundred (500) acres I was told, and it produced Indigo and Cotton, so we're trying to work with the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, to preserve what has been left of that historic time, and to use it for the edification and the education of our people, but also for the enjoyment and pleasure of persons, because we know that a number of persons, when they come to our shores, they like to enjoy our heritage.

Mr. Speaker, GTA collaborated with the George Washington University, in a Consultancy Project where support was afforded to the team in a number of areas. So you had a training in Market Analysis, in Solutions to Reopening Tourism Business, which is very relevant for this time; an Accommodation Toolkit on how the Accommodation Sector can adapt in the new environment and many other things. GTA

carried a number of surveys in the first half of the year and those surveys will be utilised to assist us in determining areas of importance, for example, what the visitor is looking for; what age group the visitors come from, so that we can better prepare ourselves and the major income range of those people.

And so therefore, again, all of the statistics would prove extremely useful to us. So some the areas of surveys were done in Visitor Expenditure and Motivation, in Spice Island Beach Tournament Survey, that is one of our very important and well-liked tournament and we wanted to see how we could better enhance it, and of course, the Tourism COVID-19 Impact Survey. We could not do surveys without finding out how it was impacting on persons and this information was utilised to assist the Ministry of Finance, in developing the stimulus package.

Mr. Speaker, I already spoke to the number or the difference on and the great fallout in the numbers of visitors between 2018, 2019, and this 2020, the figures speak for themselves, so I would not go into too much details. Suffice it to say that we've seen a decrease of over 50% of the visitors that we had in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, Airbnb as we know is one of the fast growing type of accommodation, worldwide and also in Grenada. And previously, the GTA was only able to register and to licence facilities that were three rooms and over. And we passed in this Honourable House, Legislation, so that now, facilities that have only one bedroom can be registered and licensed, so that all facilities would be held accountable for standards, they would be trained in standards, but they would also be held accountable. Tourism is a very competitive thing and standards are critical and they make the difference between whether someone comes into Grenada or they go to one of the neighbouring Islands; people like quality standards.

Our Hotel room stock, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, the pandemic caused some hotels not to open, it caused a slow down or halt in the construction, but I am pleased to say that a number of accommodation facilities have risen up again and are either continuing or have started construction. I just wanted to name a few: the Royalton opened in January, 2020 with two hundred and sixty-five (265) rooms, but it closed shortly afterwards, due to COVID. And again, Royalton is due to reopen in

January 2021; we look forward to the number of room stock increasing. The Point at Calivigny Resort; it commenced operations in January of 2020. It has a fantastic Resort of thirty-two (32) luxury rooms and they are working on the second phase, which would see sixty-five (65) hotel rooms and fifteen (15) villas constructed, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Siesta Hotel Expansion, they added twenty (20) rooms in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I take time off to mention those numbers, because room stock is a very important bargaining tool. When you speak to Airlines, one of the things they ask, how many rooms do you have, how many beds do you have, because that will tell them whether it makes sense they're coming or not. And we have been disadvantaged, because a number of our neighbouring friends do have much larger room stock than us, significantly, twice or three times the room stock we have. So, they get daily flights, or maybe five (5) days a week flights from UK while we get two (2) flights and while we have to share with them, and this would certainly be an important leverage for us in the industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I hear people say one hotel of five hundred (500) rooms is not sustainable, that we don't need that, then, if we want to bring tourism or people to this country, and if we want to contribute to the industry, then what do we do? Where do we accommodate them, in a hammock? You know, it's interesting. People always tell us what we cannot do. I really would love to hear the few Grenadians, who make noise, tell us what we can do in this country, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in some countries, Mexico, five hundred (500) rooms in one (1) hotel is a joke. You are talking fifteen hundred fifteen hundred (1,500) rooms and over and other Islands nearby. So even if we do the research, we will know that Grenada needs that competitive edge. Our numbers are growing, but others are continuing to grow. So, if we stay behind and we do not get the room stock, what will happen to us? Ask the ten thousand (10,000) people, who have been hurting from March, 2020 to now, who have not had a job and who know that while Government has given them three (3) months support, 40% of their salary, that this cannot continue and that we have to find ways to work with them. So, we have to be careful. We are guided by the Ministry of Health, but we have to keep this Industry continuing because it will save lives and

livelihoods, Mr. Speaker, and it would especially keep people's mental stability going. So, I mentioned those that have commenced, rooms that have been added to our stock or will soon be and I want to speak of those that are in the pipeline… sorry they're in progress already, not just in the pipeline.

Range Development; Range Development is going to construct a Six Senses Resort, and I will just say in the interest of time, that I will ask my fellow Grenadians Google a Six Senses Resort and we will see what difference this would make to our country. And work began in October and we expect that to continue and that will add one hundred (100) bedrooms to our stock.

And even though COVID-19 has delayed the construction progress of the Kempton Kawana Bay Resort, work is now fully underway and when that is done it will contribute 160 rooms in the first instance. The Grenada National Resort at Levera, a five hundred (500) Five-Star Hotel, Mr. Speaker. That again, will be a game changer for us in the Industry; and also the Mt. Hartman Resort, with one hundred and fifty (150) rooms, in the first instance.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked with our small hotels, the indigenous ones, our locals. I mentioned the Soft Loan that Government has provided, but we also worked with them to train their Senior Management staff and other staff, because we know the quality of our service would set us above the rest.

This initiative started in 2018, it continued in 2019 and also in 2020, and we have develop a Microsite for them and a brochure, because we realise some of the smaller hotels need a little support and therefore Government, through the Ministry of Tourism has provided that support, in terms of training and in terms of putting up their own Microsites for people who want a small hotel, something that is cosy and they coined it, their Umbrella Brand was named 'Simple Stays.' You just wanted somewhere simple that you can have more interaction with people, then those small hotels are the place for you and we are working to promote that.

Mr. Speaker, we have continued the marketing, and I mean, thank God for technology. We have not had to travel, but what we've kept Grenada on the minds of persons. So, initially, before the COVID lockdown we started to advertise in Trinidad,

as is customary. For the Carnival Season, we start advertising very early. But of course, we did not benefit very much from that, but we keep Grenada on the minds of persons. We keep advertising in other places. We have partnered with Canada Bell Media Advertising to reach millions of Canadians, and also we have placed television ads and so on, in UK with 'Sky Ad Smart.'

We've done a number of destination campaigns and we have seen more emphasis placed on digital media, Social Media Networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We have to find more appropriate, more effective ways to market Grenada, now we cannot go to other countries to do that in the Trade Fairs, but we have been doing an excellent job and I want to compliment, again, the team who has been responsible for that.

Mr. Speaker, we started with 'Just for You,' in this COVID time, saying to people that Grenada is the destination that you want to be in. Grenada is the safest destination and if you want to be safe, if you want to be healthy, than it is the place to be. It's not crowded, so you don't have to worry too much about the 6th feet distancing, there is enough space in our Tri-Island State for persons to enjoy themselves. We communicated with our public and with others abroad through Television Programmes, Newsletters and weekly articles in the Newspapers.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Nautical, we were able to collaborate with Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, Customs, Immigration to repatriate over three hundred (300) local crew members, Mr. Speaker, safely back to our country. And I want to thank all those, including the Cruise Lines, who cooperated and collaborated with us to make sure that our sons and daughters were brought back to our Island, safely. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we have developed a protocol for yachting, and we also have a draught Legislation for the yachts. We are concerned about some of the practices of yachts, the way they dispose of waste, especially sewer waste in our waters and we believe that it is time that we dealt with this matter in a legal way and put structures in place, put facilities in place, where they can dispose of their waste. But to ensure that our waters remain pristine for their beauty, but also because they are an important source of food for this country.

So, a number of the Private Sector worked with us on that, Royal Grenada Police Force, Immigration and Customs, the Marina, MAYAG, the Marinas in Carriacou and otherwise. We were able to come up with that, so in another time we'll be in this Honourable House, talking about this Legislation that would put guidelines as to how we do things.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move quickly to Civil Aviation, just to say that we have worked with ICAO and IATTA International Regulatory Bodies. We have worked with FAA to ensure that we comply with all of the international Regulations. And, where we were found wanting, we are working aggressively with support from ECCA and said ICAO to remedy that situation.

Our nation is well aware that ECCA was downgraded from Category 1 to Category 2, and while that has not impacted on the flights that are coming in, it would prevent us from taking new initiatives, from bringing new Airlines until we remedy that situation. So, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airport Authority, we are working with Legal Affairs and with ECCA and the OECS Authority to remedy that and I daresay that hopefully within 2021, we will see that happening.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Airlift, we have seen a slow start, but it has increased our numbers. I saw that for the month of November gone, we had over one thousand plus persons coming into our Island. When we remember that for some months we only saw zeros, one thousand is a welcome addition at this time.

So we're working with American Airlines. They now come five (5) days a week and they have given an indication that they can increase to seven (7) days, with two (2) flights on Saturdays. JetBlue is once a week for now. Virgin and BA, they have given us a schedule. We are looking at that and we have other Regional Air Carriers, InterCaribbean, One Caribbean, I think I did mention SVG, if I didn't, SVG Air as well, American Airlines and so on. And just recently, LIAT touched down again on our shores and we are watching to see what happens there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, because of how Grenada has managed the COVID, we received very high ratings from the Centre for Disease Control. I know the Minister responsible

will speak to that, but I just want to say this is a plus for us, because a visitor wanting to travel, or a person wanting to travel would look for a place that is safe.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of work, infrastructural and otherwise that is taking place at MBIA. But, I just want to take the opportunity given the short time that I have to mention that we did purchase a Crash and Rescue and Fire vehicle, well, we call it a Fire Truck, which is in keeping with international standards, and we have trained the appropriate numbers of persons, who will provide services at MBIA. That is one of the things that contributed to us getting back to a Category 9 status, and I am very happy for that and I want to say that we will do our utmost to ensure that this continues. On Lauriston Airport, we had improvement in the infrastructure and also we put in an x-ray machine at the cost of three hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars plus. There are other operational safety enhancements that were done, but again, time does not permit.

I want to take a little time on the MBIA Runway and Road upgrade and rehabilitation and that is the controversial one again with the financing from China. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this project is very timely, that negotiations started since 2019 or thereabouts; 2018 or 2019, somewhere thereabouts. However, it just came to fruition at this time. The point is, Mr. Speaker, none too soon, some of the things that are going to happen would assist us in improving the landing and take-off conditions for the Aircrafts. It will lower Airport operating costs, because we're going to use more cost-effective energy saving equipment. It will increase passenger comfort and convenience, increase the convenience and efficiency of the Airport.

Now, I mentioned these things, because again, we have to be competitive. People have choices and if we do not do what we have to do, they'll just go somewhere else. Mr. Speaker, I know one Island is negotiating with Virgin, and I was virtually present in one of the meetings, where they ask you to be the hub for the whole of the Caribbean. So, Virgin comes there and offloads and goes wherever to the other Islands or the visitors take another Carrier. I would have loved the hub to be here. We do not have, we cannot compete with that. That Island, the Airport is much larger, a lot of spaces. We have one (1) gate, you know. We call Gate No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, but it's one

gate. When you go to the Airport, there is one place that people exit. So, two (2) flights, three (3) flights coming in at the same time, what is going to happen, are people going to fight? We cannot continue having an International Airport, and we do not want brother Maurice Bishop to turn in his grave, we have to continue the work that he started. We cannot continue. We must have a bridge. We cannot have people coming down steps in torrential rain, because the planes have to turn around. **(Applause)** They have to turn around, so you cannot say, well, let's wait when the rain over. You know we do that in Grenada, but airplanes coming in, they have to move. So, we need the two (2) bridges that are down here to be done, otherwise the people will go elsewhere. **(Applause)** They will go elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. And, we do have competition right around us in the OECS and further afield. So, when persons disagree, they must look at what alternative do we have? We talk about agriculture and farmers. People do not come to our shores, the farmers suffer, the fishermen suffer and all of the other persons in the ten thousand plus that I mentioned, would suffer.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am just looking for the list, so we will be doing the bridges, we will be doing the runway, it has to be done and the Meteorological Office has to be upgraded. The equipment is old and it's obsolete, they can't even find the parts for it. So, we are already behind time and we need to hasten and we will hear a lot more about the project.

So, people are concerned and I respect that, I respect that. When you are going into a debt, even if I am going into a debt, I'm a bit concerned. Will I be able to pay? Will I not be able to pay? But I just want to say to them that the track record of this Government has proven that we have serviced our loans, and where we were not able, we have renegotiated and we have done an excellent job thus far **(applause)** and I expect we will continue, because we have the same people at the helm, Mr. Speaker. Even though we've changed the Minister for Finance, but the Minister for Finance was always involved in financial matters and in Cabinet. My colleagues will tell you, sometimes he would even question the then Minister for Finance and say, can we do that? Is that…? And, so he has been there, from ever since.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have the confidence. I do not trivialise the concerns, but I cannot trivialise the Airport. We need that airport expansion. There are a number of things that need to be done, otherwise tourism, and by extension, a lot of us, a lot of people in this Tri-Island State will go out of business.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for fifteen (15) minutes more, if you would so oblige.

Mr. Speaker: Sure.

Hon. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I can also tell you where you can get the fifteen (15) minutes.

(Inaudible comments from Mr. Speaker)

Hon. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: From…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member, continue.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll just run through quickly. Under Climate Resilience, as we know this is under our Ministry as well, and I'll just name a few things that have happened under Climate Resilience.

The Smart Climate Cities Project, which is limited more to the South and to the St. George's area. A lot of work has been done in preparation for that, and we all know the problems with climate change. I think next week there will be a UN meeting on climate change, talking about global warming, increase in greenhouse gases, coastal erosion and all of these things, and we are seeing some of that in our very Tri-Island

State. And we know that eventually this will lead to rise in sea levels, and if it does, a number of areas around Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique could become submerged, and especially our beloved Carenage is also threatened. And so, the Climate Smart Cities Project is aimed at mitigating that.

They are looking at a promenade, building a promenade around the Carenage, and that will assist in or improve the pedestrianisation of the Carenage, as well as allow possibilities for vendors and so to be accommodated there. This is a major project, all of the studies have been done and we await within the next week or so, the final document, which is going to be presented to the International Authorities for financing for that project. I look forward to that. It also includes other areas like the improvement of the sewerage system for St. George's. We have heard concern about that. It would also address vulnerabilities to the Airport. So part of that project is going to look at coastal erosion around the Airport at MBIA. And Grenville, we have seen the flooding, especially in recent times and part of that project will look at the flooding in Grenville and many other things. It's a major project, Mr. Speaker, but in the interest of time, I have to run, because I'll need five (5) minutes for my constituency. But, this is a very important project and we look forward to it.

Mr. Speaker, the ban on plastics came into effect in February of this year, and that is a major, major, major milestone for us. We know the importance of our seas and we realise that Grenada is no different to the world in that we have concerns. The world has concerns about the accumulation of plastics on land, but very importantly on the sea, as well and we are very happy that this ban is being carried out. You know, sometimes I still go to the supermarket with no bag in my hand, once in a while, Mr. Speaker, not all the time, because I have a lot of shopping bags. But sometimes, you know, I make a pass and I go without and they either give me my grocery in my hand to go with or I have to buy a reusable shopping bag. And while I'm a little, you know, I am not upset, but I am a little, what shall I say, I am disappointed in myself, for not going with the bag, and I promise myself, to put some in my van, so I could always run back and get it, or to purchase a new one, which I usually do, but the numbers are climbing. So, I am pleased to see what is happening. Even in the smaller shops now, they don't

give you the two handle plastic bags. And I want to commend Climate Resilience for the work that they have done and the collaboration they have received from the businesses and so on, to make this a reality.

The next step is the ban on single use utensils, and that took place on the 1st of September. I am not sure and I cannot say how effective that is for now, but I know a lot of work has gone into it, a lot of public education, a lot of consultations with the businesses and I know that they have purchased already, the wholesalers have purchased the replacements in there and they have them available. So, if it's not being used, it may be that people don't know. So, I just want to let them know that the non-plastic containers are already available in the shops. So, the education will continue in 2021.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to move quickly to Solid Waste Management Authority. We know that there has been a lot of concern about the smoke at Perseverance and very importantly the overall way in which we handle waste. Indiscriminate dumping by the side of the road, by the corner, some things that could be reused are just thrown away. Some things that could be recycled, we do not have the proper recycling measures in place to do that and Solid Waste Management is working aggressively, to deal with that. We have put together a proposal for the CDB. They had promised to assistant in funding for outing the fire and the closure of the old Landfill. Even now, as work is going on for the opening of two cells in the new Landfill, which would recognise all of the standards for a new Landfill, so that the offensive site, the offensive smell and everything would be dealt with, Mr. Speaker, in the first quarter of the new year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy for that. We will embark on training, we will embark on education. We will have an intensified effort at the smoke Landfill, the old Landfill. Now getting in, we have to get more people to work. We have to get the proper smoke protection gears for them, but we are committed to doing that and very soon, by next year at this time, definitely, this smoke will be a thing of the past, and we'll be using our new Land site, at a cost of US$12 m.

If we use it right, it can last over fifteen (15) years. If we dump every bottle, every plastic, every branch, every construction waste, Mr. Speaker, it will probably last for five

(5) years and whoever is presenting on Solid Waste, will be talking about another twelve million dollars ($12 m). So, there's a lot of education that has to go into this, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to work on it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of plans for 2021 for the Airport, construction and improvement. In terms of tourism, improve on our marketing, reach more people, bring more people in, bring more Airlines in, and we are happy for the increase in the room stock. Training of persons will continue, Mr. Speaker, but I have to end here, because I need a few minutes for my beloved constituency. I will just take five (5) minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I am just amazed that with about 50% decrease in revenue, that our Government has delivered on so many of the promises that it made through us to the constituencies. And while we all would like to see more done, because that is how we are, we compete and we like to see our constituencies do more, I am very pleased to say that a number of persons have been given significant support in the Parish of St. Mark.

So, I want to start with SEED, because the Bible says: **"The poor will always be with us."** And therefore, we have to be cognisant of that and take measures to care for our poor. In the SEED Programme three hundred and forty-seven (347) households are beneficiaries, and a total of $110,925.00 is paid out every month, in that little Parish of St. Mark. So, I know the other Parishes, they have bigger numbers, but I mean a total of approximately 1.4 million for 2020 in St. Mark only. **(Applause)** This is a feat, Mr. Speaker, and it is a demonstration of the prudent management of finances by our Ministry of Finance and by our former Minister and by the present Minister. I hope we'll get a little more than the $1.4 m, but the reality is, this is a lot of money.

SEED sends children to school. It takes care of the grandmother; it takes care of the single mother in the house. It gives them a lunch in the school, Mr. Speaker, so we ensure that our children have no excuse for not going to school, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** SEED is a great programme, and what I like about it, you don't have to stay there. I mean, I don't want to steal the Minister's thunder, but you don't have to stay as a SEED recipient. As your children graduate from Secondary School to College

and wherever, they start to take responsibilities in the home and the family that needed so much SEED, after some point in time, doesn't need it. And I've heard the Minister say that they're going round and check, so I just want to prepare our people. If you've graduated; graduation is a nice thing, put on your gown and enjoy it. **(Applause)** It's a nice thing to graduate, where you don't have to wait at the end of the month for the SEED money again but you could dip your hand in your pocket anytime and say, I have sweated for that or my son and my daughter has given that to me.

Mr. Speaker, when I used to give my mother a little money at the end of the month, I mean, I used to do things in the house. But, when I give her a money, nobody else could touch that money, you know, she child gave her that. And, that is where the pride comes in. So, we are proud to take care of three hundred and forty-seven (347) households in St. Mark. But, I look forward that someday, the children we help to send to school, Mr. Speaker, we pay for some, their tuition fees, let me see, let me take what I get, Uniform Assistance – three hundred and fifty (350) households in St Mark, to the tune of $87,000.00 was given to students in St. Mark, so that they can go to school. So, we say, when you go to school and you graduate, then you have to take over a little bit, and let us look at the less fortunate and we don't always have to remain the less fortunate in our country.

I am looking for those that we help, the number of students we assist with tuition. This year, we didn't have a lot, sometimes we have more than that, but we had eighteen (18) students that were assisted with tuition; that is to go to mostly like TAMCC and SGU, kind of tuition and those who are doing online courses. And, we assisted forty (40) students with transportation. Those who have to go to Secondary Schools that are far away, those who have to go to TAMCC and so on, we were able to assist them, to get there.

Over four hundred (400) food baskets; I have been seeing that four hundred (400), but I think I have to check with my staff, at the Constituency Office. It is a long time that four hundred (400) has been there, and we have given a lot more food baskets, since then. So, Mr. Speaker, through you, I have to chastise them a little bit, because I think they're going back to the old number. I am sure by now, we have

increased that. We have made sure that our people do not become desperate. So, we have given food baskets, we have given hot lunches in the various villages and so on, just to assist in easing the burden that has been inflicted by the COVID. We give medical assistance, through the Government's Programme, the Needy Assistance for medications and certain procedures, like CT scans and so, which are pretty expensive that the poor cannot reach.

Mr. Speaker, Debushing; even if I don't speak about anything else I must speak about that. From July to now, nine (9) fortnights, I have never seen this. I mean, in a time when we are not making money, there were nine (9) fortnights of work. What a blessing for the people, who have no employment, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Twenty (20) gangs going out. So, twenty (20) by seven (7), how much is that, one hundred and forty, something like that? So, seven (7) persons in a gang and for nine (9) fortnights. Plenty, plenty people got plenty fortnights that they have not seen in a long time. **(Applause)** And, I am so happy for them, because they do not have a permanent job.

So, while we've been doing training, we've been doing training in sewing, teaching people to sew, because me and my sister Kate has to do uniforms, for the different programmes in the country. But, we have been training them in sewing and we've been also training them in the processing of fruits. Too many fruits, mangoes, damsels, golden apples, they just fall to the ground and waste, and so we've had training at the Grenada Produce Chemist Lab. They've had training at the Bureau of Standards and we started packaging, and the group's name is WOW, W-O-W, and it means Women of Worth. **(Applause)** They are finding out that they are women of worth, Mr. Speaker.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: And, I am so proud that we have trained them. They're packaging their things nicely, and they're selling and they're getting a little change in their hand. We have not started with the Sewing yet. So, Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Wardens, house repair and all of that, Community Brigades, I think we

fixed almost all the little culverts, all the little drains, all the little steps that need to be done.

(Inaudible comments by Members)

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: We did so much. I could say all, but it's not all. But, we still have a lot. The thing is the more you do, is the more you have, and when you realise that the Government is doing so much, they come back and they tell us.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thanks, Mr. Speaker, to all of the staff at GTA, GHTA, who has worked with us, the Ministry of Tourism. I see many of them here. I am so pleased and happy to see that they filled this place, Mr. Speaker. They've come to hear the Minister, and to the staff at the Victoria Parliamentary Office. Thanks everyone and thanks to my beloved constituency. I love you. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark. Honourable Members, remember you have one (1) hour to speak, and the other fifteen (15) minutes is a discretionary fifteen (15) minutes, which I have decided I will give if you ask. But, please remember every fifteen (15) minutes adds up. You must decide what time you want us to end here today or on Monday. Is it 2:00 in the morning, Saturday morning, or are we going to extend the day? We don't want to. So, please stick with your time. When the Clerk rings the bell, which should come ten (10) minutes before the hour, you'll consider this as ten (10) minutes to your end. So, I have given ten (10) minutes before. I am not sure I'll be so generous again. So, please let us stick with our time. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-East.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to give my full support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as presented by the Minister for Finance under the Theme: ***"Towards Vision 2035 - Recovery, Transformation and Resilience."***

Motions (2021 Budget Debate)

Mr. Speaker, the year 2020 has indeed, been a very challenging one for everyone as a result of COVID-19. Over the past several months, we have had to make many adjustments in the ways in which we learn, the ways in which we work, the ways in which we conduct business transactions and more importantly, the ways in which socialise and interact with each other.

Our Tourism Sector, Mr. Speaker, has suffered a major blow and many of our people, including our young people, who have been out of work for the past eight (8) months. Mr. Speaker, our Government is fully aware of the fact that it is tough times, mentally and financially for many families across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. However, our Government has demonstrated its deep care and concern through the Income Support and Payroll Support that it has provided to thousands of workers across the country.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident that we will overcome the difficulties brought about by COVID-19 with the solid initiatives that are about to be rolled out in both the Private and Public Sector in 2021. Mr. Speaker, our citizens can rest assured that once we all play our part, our goal to recovery and transformation and increased resilience are indeed realistic and achievable.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Division of Youth Development. Our Government continues to remain committed to youth development, and that is why our budgetary allocation for the year 2021, is an amount of $40.4 m, which is an increase of 43% to that of 2020. **(Applause)**

We will continue to strengthen the delivery of all our programmes to bring about greater sustainable opportunities for our young people. I begin with the New IMANI Programme. The year commenced quite positively, with many trainees completing the Direct Skills Training in various occupational areas and receiving placements, affording them the opportunity to connect what they learnt in the classroom with On-the-Job Training.

However, Mr. Speaker, the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the operations of the New IMANI Programme. COVID-19 had a significant effect on the Apprenticeship Training for all participants. All Training Centres were forced to halt

TVET training and internship activities, while many businesses in the Private and Public Sector closed their doors during the lockdown.

Recognising the psychological effects of the sudden changes and protocols on staff and trainees, meetings and one-and-one sessions were immediately held virtually, to provide the necessary support. Supervisors and Mentors actively reached out to trainees, via telephone, to offer support and guidance where necessary. At the end of the period under review, the total number of trainees stood at two thousand, one hundred and eighty-nine (2,189).

Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges of COVID-19, I am happy that our Government was able to continue its biannual intake of trainees into the programme. Therefore, in November of 2020, we were able to launch Batch 7, targeting seven hundred and fifty (750) participants. These include participants for the inaugural Grenada Football Association Elite Football Programme, trainees for the Nursing Assistance Programme and those who are supporting the Ministry of Education in the e-learning devices maintenance.

As it relates to placement, Mr. Speaker, in this period, over five hundred (500) trainees were placed for Apprenticeship Training at various Public and Private Sector Organisations. In the area of permanent employment, during this period, a total of one hundred and fifty (150) trainees received permanent employment, compared to 2019 where one hundred and twenty-nine (129) trainees received permanent employment. **(Applause)** Bearing in mind the current economic situation, this is indeed a great achievement for the Unit and it shows, Mr. Speaker, that despite the effects of the pandemic, our Division continues to work hard in providing opportunities for our young people.

The scholarship component of the programme has been reassessed and redesigned to provide smoother and more transparent processes for trainees applying for this component. In addition, a bond agreement was implemented affording trainees the opportunities to provide in-kind services during their vacation, as well as to engage in community service activities.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of June 2020, a total of fifty-three (53) trainees graduated with Associates Degrees, Bachelor's Degrees and Masters Degrees. And these include: TAMCC thirty (38), St. George's University fourteen (14) and one (1) out of State University. At present, there are a total number of one hundred and fifty-six (156) trainees, who are benefitting from the scholarship complement of the IMANI Programme. This augers well for the programme's objective to adequately prepare participants for the job market through Competence-based Vocational Qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Training and Certification, one hundred and forty (140) CVQ Certificates were received during this period. In the areas of Reception Front Office, Business Administration, Administrative Assistants, Housekeeping, Fashion Designing, Call Centre Operations and Business Administration.

Our Supervision Department, Mr. Speaker, as we continue efforts to effectively monitor our trainees, the Division commenced an E-monitoring Pilot Phase, which focuses on training our supervisors for its implementation. Our intention is to roll out an advanced technological tool in the first quarter of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that all current trainees in the programme have been verified at the end of November 2020 and this is a quarterly aspect of the programme where we verify all our trainees. Additionally, the Supervision Unit is currently engaged in assessment of all trainees to assess their performance on the job.

IMANI Transition

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward to the New Year, our Prime Minister has already signalled radical changes for the New IMANI Programme. We have acknowledged that the sustainable transition of trainees continue to be a problem for us. And, though we have transitioned 60% of the trainers in Batches 1 to 6, we still have that 40% that must be catered for. **(Applause)** They continue to provide services both in the Private and Public Sector, as IMANI Trainees. This is about to change, Mr. Speaker.

I am therefore pleased to say, that in recent months, we have given serious attention to this issue. While we recognise there are weaknesses with the programme, there are also many successes, which was testimony at the launch of Batch 7. As a first step, Mr. Speaker, we have conducted a thorough assessment of the programme,

with the view to build on the successes, as well as to address the weaknesses identified, as we move forward.

The Ministry of Youth Development and by extension, the Government of Grenada cannot do it alone, Mr. Speaker. Consequently, we will rely on the support of the Private Sector entities that are willing and able to partner with us. Some of them have already indicated their interest and we will engage them accordingly.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this Honourable House that a Committee comprising of senior staff of the Ministry and relevant personnel from within the Public Service has been established to advance the transition process. The Committee has already met and has identified a broad strategy for the way forward. The details are being worked out and we will inform the nation of the progress in due course. We are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that before the first half of 2021, we will see the transformation of the New IMANI Programme.

Mr. Speaker, just by way of success stories of our trainees into the programme. We have one (1) trainee, who was referred to the Social Care Unit in January of 2018. At that time, she had serious debilitating social issues that contributed to her inefficiency at her workplace. After several months of mentorship, she was able to make significant improvements in her life. In March of 2019, she applied and was accepted to work as a Traffic Warden. She was therefore able to transition from the IMANI Programme. As a follow-up, she has revealed that she continues to perform exceptionally well at her job, and these are some of the benefits and opportunities our young people receive while being in the IMANI Programme.

A male trainee who was referred to the Social Care Unit in April of 2019, had several issues, including poor self-esteem, due to traumatic experiences he encountered in his life. After months of mentorship with our Unit, he was empowered enough to use his life experiences as a catalyst for success. He decided to explore the field of Social Work and applied to the T.A. Marryshow Community College in August of 2019. Today, he holds a GPA of 3.0 and looks forward to completing his Associate Degree, so that he can be a source of encouragement to many people, who are facing similar situations just as him. **(Applause)**

I now move to our M-Power Programme. The M-Power Programme caters specifically, for our young men at risk, between the ages of eighteen (18) to thirty-five (35). Mr. Speaker, M-Power 2.0 was launched in March of 2020, with three hundred and fifty (350) males. The total number at present, stands at three hundred and twenty-three (323). M-Power aims to provide quality Vocational Skills Training for our young men through engagement in meaningful Apprenticeship Training geared at reducing incidences of crime and violence throughout our communities leading to sustainable livelihoods. More significantly this year, Mr. Speaker, we extended an arm of the M-Power Programme to Her Majesty's Prisons, where twenty-five (25) participants were registered and are currently engaged in the programme.

Mr. Speaker, Government has invested $4.5 m in M-Power 2.0. Currently, our participants are engaged in the CVQ Direct Skills Training, Certificate Direct Skills Training and Apprenticeship Training at various centres around our Tri-Island State. They have already completed their Soft Skills. As a means of giving back to communities, participants were engaged in many Community Projects which includes environmental clean-up, meeting the elderly and hamper distributions.

In addition, the M-Power Programme recently provided support to one of our young farmers in St. Andrew, as well as distributed ten (10) CVQ Certificates in Computer Repairs Level 2, to the young men who successfully completed the programme.

Mr. Speaker, the following is a list of the CVQ and Direct Skills Training areas our young men are trained in: Electrical Installation; Heavy Machine Operations; Plumbing Installation; Bartending; Commercial Food Preparation and General Agriculture. At the Direct Skills Certificate Training it includes: Basic Plumbing; Electrical Installation; Outboard Engine Repairs; Auto Mechanic and Bee-Keeping.

Currently, the Apprenticeship Training includes one hundred and thirty-nine (139) participants, who were listed for this training. The successful completion, Mr. Speaker, of this M-Power 2.0, will be testimony to the young men who have a burning desire to receive the specific skills training and to explore the possibility of starting their own small businesses.

Additionally, the continuation of the M-Power Project further supports our vision of providing certified, quality training for young men, with the focus on areas identified as market needs. Our young men have been giving their testimonies, Mr. Speaker, and I want to quote from one young man, who said and I quote: ***"The training received throughout the Life Skills sessions have impacted positive values in decision-making and changed my whole perspective on life and the direction I was heading. I would like to encourage all young men at risk, to be a part of the M-Power Project, so they too can benefit as I did."*** End of quote, Mr. Speaker.

Another young man will like to express his gratitude for the implementation of this M-Power Programme, because he was an introvert before getting into the programme. But following the Life Skills session, he indicated that the training has helped him to open up, to be able to express himself more. He now sees himself as a team player, as well as an ambitious and inspirational Leader, with a bright future ahead of him. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I move to our YUTBIZ Unit with the Division. In the Department's quest to curb high unemployment among our youth, YUTBIZ continue to develop our youth through Business Management Training, Business Support and Financing. Upon the rebranding of this Unit and the establishment of the Business Support Centre in St. Mark, the Division had many achievements, which are directly aligned to Government's long-term agenda and the expected deliverables of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that in this period, seven (7) loans were fully paid off, two (2) of which were loans given to past IMANI Trainees. They completed their training, met all the requisites for financing and have completed their payment in full.

Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges of this pandemic, the YUTBIZ continues to realise many successes with the repayment of our loans and thus far, in 2020, we have seen repayments in the amount of $136,540.00.

As it relates to training in small businesses, a total of forty (40) young people were trained, both in St. Mark and St. George, with an additional seventeen (17) trained

in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. They were all allowed to apply for access to financing, and thus far, eighteen (18) new businesses were financed with a total loan amount of $320,000.00.

During this COVID period, during the lockdown, from April to June, moratoriums and loan extensions were offered to all the current beneficiaries, to ensure that their businesses were able to reopen with enough working capital while bridging the financial gap. The continued enforcement of our Credit Management Policy was able to control delinquency at a reasonably low rate, considering the nature of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Division of Youth Development has identified sustainable economic and social development, as a major strategy to fight poverty, unemployment and solve many social ills among our young people.

In this regard, the YUTBIZ Programme is now paying more emphasis on the establishment of various viable Co-operative Business Models, the first of which has already been registered under the Co-operative Registration Act, as Youth Garment Production Co-operatives, and will be governed by a Board of Directors. The Board will provide support to the twenty-five (25) young people, who are currently trained in the Co-operatives production. They are also new IMAINI trainees, who received direct skills in Sewing in Levels 1 and Levels 2.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, some of these members have had past experiences in the Sewing Industry, and this increases the likelihood of the success of the Co-operative. It is therefore projected that the Youth Garment Production Co-operatives will earn net sales of $750,000.00 in its first year of operations, with an annual increase in sales of 5%, thereafter. We anticipate that the business will generate sufficient cash flow to cover all its expenses.

Our overall goal is to promote a Grenadian Economic Development, the Co-operative Culture and to sustain economic stability by creating employment for low skilled young people, as well as providing education and training opportunities in the Labour Intensive Garment Sector.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Division received Cabinet's approval to commence the renovation and retrofitting of the Pearl's Community Centre, which will

be the home of the Garment Production Factory. We have already completed the tendering process. The contractor was selected and he already signed the contract. We are now awaiting commencement of the actual work on the building.

Significant training also began and is continuing with the twenty-five (25) young people. They spent an enormous amount of time in training in areas of Co-operative Formation, Co-operative Management, Production Management and Line Production in the different lines products. Training is also on going to include Soft Skills to meet the required standards. And, Mr. Speaker, we do have success stories from our YUTBIZ Division, because we have one young man from River Sallee, St. Patrick, who received a loan from YUTBIZ to set up his Barber Shop. After one (1) year of operation, in this current period, he was able to purchase his own vehicle and also to purchase an acre of land, which he intends to build on in the near future. This shows that our YUTBIZ Division, through the access of business training and loan financing is giving our young people to empower themselves. **(Applause)**

The Youth Development Centre

Mr. Speaker, we continue to see a steady increase in the revenue collection at the Youth Development Centre, through many bookings of the facility for conferences, weddings, meetings and other special occasions. Additionally, to help create a youth friendly environment on the compound, we will construct gazebos and equip them with Wi-Fi, so that our young people can enjoy a better facility at the Youth Development Centre.

During this year, Mr. Speaker, several upgrades took place to make the Facility more ideal for users. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to note the significant improvement in our presence on Social Media, Radio, Television and Newspaper, as we created the PR Unit of the Division with the on-boarding of a Communications Officer. The Unit coordinates all our PR and communication activities, ensuring that the general public remains abreast with the happenings of the Division.

I move to the Social Care Unit, Mr. Speaker. This Unit was established in 2018, to facilitate the holistic development of our Nation's youth, particularly those who are assigned to the varying programmes of the Division of Youth Development. At present,

the Social Care Unit is staffed with two (2) Social Care Officers, two (2) Counsellors and three (3) Field Monitors. The Unit plans activities and programmes directed towards assisting our young people regarding personal development, goal setting, conflict resolution, work ethics, health and overall psychosocial development. Many of the trainees have been referred to the Unit, because they have had many challenges on their placement sites. Others however, are referred due to social issues, such as family disputes, domestic abuse, financial issues, housing, court matters and health issues.

The Unit has partnered with many Organisations such as St. George's University, the Legal Aid and Counselling, Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital and the Ministry of Social Development, to assist in adequately meeting the needs of trainees. The goal of the Unit is to assess and address the psychosocial needs of our young people, thus preparing them for the world of work through the installation of values and habits that would benefit the trainees beyond the programme and ultimately improve their self-confidence by positively reinforcing behavioural changes.

Thus far for 2020, the Unit has engaged over four hundred and fifty (450) young people in a multiplicity of social issues, ranging from disciplinary, health, court cases, traumatic experiences, conflict resolution and psychological needs.

In addition, the Social Care Unit held several one-and-one Mentorship and Self-Developmental Sessions, once-weekly, where young people, from the various programmes, can meet in small groups and participate in role plays, watch videos and hold discussions on topics such, as: self-esteem; financial management; communication; work ethics; anger management and stress and coping skills.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of people do not realise that a lot of our young people come into our Training Programmes with many issues. But thank God, we do have a Social Care Unit, headed by Miss Nichols, who is ensuring that our trainees can come out from these issues they are facing and make better decisions for their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I move to our Rehabilitation Programme, Project FLY. This Project, Fostering Level Headed Youth started as a three-month Community Based Programme, targeting only twenty-five (25) youth within the ages of eighteen (18) to thirty (30). To

date or should I say, at present, this programme is now a one-year CVQ Level 2 Training Programme. It caters for Juveniles, Youth at Risk, their families and communities and is designed to build resilience against criminogenic factors impacting vulnerable segments of this population. Special emphasis is placed on Life Skills, Literacy and Numeracy Skills and Small Business Training.

In this year, 2020, two (2) cohorts of Project FLY were implemented in the communities of Willis, St. George and in Windward Carriacou, with a total number of seventy-four (74) participants. They have all completed their Life Skills, the Business Labs and currently are engaged in their CVQ certification in various skilled areas.

The Grenada Youth Workers' Association

Mr. Speaker, for many decades we have heard the cries of Youth Development Practitioners, for greater recognition and attention to be given to Youth Development workers, who daily, are significantly contributing to the development and advancement of young people. The Grenada Youth Workers' Association will be an Organisation composed of Youth, Adult Work Aficionados, and those who directly work with young people between the ages of sixteen (16) and thirty-five (35) from various backgrounds.

This Association will be committed towards promoting the personal and professionalism of youth workers throughout Grenada. Training in youth development work was facilitated by the National Youth Academy of the UK and the Commonwealth Secretariat over a four-week period. We have since received commitment from the Commonwealth Secretariat to fund the process that will lead to the establishment of the Grenada Youth Workers' Association. In the coming months, the public will see the implementation of a Stakeholder Consultation before making way for the registration and official launch of the Grenada Youth Workers' Association.

Youth Participation

Mr. Speaker, in this year, on October 29th, we saw the official launch of the National Youth Directory aimed at creating a central access for telephone numbers, addresses, titles and types of community borne groups in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

This was made possible through the collective efforts of the Community Youth Officers, who personally went out into the different communities to gather the aforementioned information, which was then submitted and compiled into a Directory. The Directory consists of three hundred (300) Community-based Organisations, at present, but we expect it should be expanded by the end of 2021.

National Youth Parliament

During this year, Mr. Speaker, the National Youth Parliament Sittings were held in March and September of 2020, at this House of Parliament. The Division was able to forge a great partnership with the British High Commissioner in Grenada, to commemorate Commonwealth Day Celebration on March 9. The Sitting was very successful and well attended by representatives from schools, churches and other communities.

The Parish Youth Parliament took place in all the Parishes and training sessions for the first time, was delivered via the Online Platform. The debates were brought to an audience, using the Facebook Live and the GIS, with over four thousand (4,000) young people viewing the Live at one time. This brought additional viewers to our activity and upon the completion, one representative from each Parish was selected to participate in the National Youth Debate, which was held on August 4, 2020. The chosen debaters were the individuals, who accumulated the most points during the Parish Youth Debates.

Mr. Speaker, top debaters were recently selected to partake in the International Youth Parliament, where they will represent Grenada. Mr. Speaker, one of our Youth Parliamentarians, who benefitted significantly from having the National Youth Parliament gave her testimony and I quote: ***"I will always be grateful for the experience I've had as a National Youth Parliamentarian, the in-depth and high-quality training received have added tremendous lead to myself development. The knowledge we've gained on the Parliamentary process has created a sense of awareness that allows us as young people to make authentic contributions in conversations of National Development. The discipline, commitment, analytic skills and the importance of camaraderie are all life's lessons that were gained***

through this experience. The programme gave us, participants, a wealth of Parliamentary experience. The hope now is that we find our place and make our contributions in whatever way we can."

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to strengthen Youth Group Organisations, the objective of this is of this includes: strengthening the functional capacity of community groups; promoting and developing positive attitudes among young people; and facilitating community involvement in community development.

I am extremely proud, Mr. Speaker, to inform this House that despite the challenges of COVID-19, our Community Youth Officers have been able to organise twenty (20) new Community-Based Organisations, fifteen (15) on the Western side and twelve (12) on the Eastern side of the Island.

The National Youth Ambassadors' Programme

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, we saw the intake of thirty-three (33) National Youth Ambassadors selected from a rigorous interview and engagement process facilitated by a small strategic team of individuals. Each constituency now has two (2) National Youth Ambassadors representing the voices of their peers. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, since their appointment, the National Ambassadors has been actively engaged in monthly training and development, focused on building their professional development and expanding their capacity to effectively function in their role. Some of their training areas include: advocacy; protocol; professionalism; etiquette and diplomacy, among others.

They have already completed their Advocacy Strategy, after weeks of training, as well as their Legacy Projects and are now preparing to roll out these projects in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, all these programmes and projects that we implement at the Division of Youth Development are geared towards the holistic empowerment of our young people. **(Applause)** We do acknowledge that there are challenges sometimes, and there will always be challenges. But we are committed towards working on the weaknesses of the programme, reassessing, so we can make it fit for purpose for the young people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the most beautiful constituency in the whole of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, the Constituency of St. Andrew North-East.

Mr. Speaker, I am indeed proud to report that we, within the constituency of St. Andrew North-East, continue to receive our equitable share of benefits from various Ministries and Sectors. And as the MP, I am quite vigilant and I am very committed in ensuring that we continue to improve the lives of our people and enhance the development of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, with the support of my Office Staff, the Field Workers, Housing, SEED and Youth Officers, our Brigades and all workers associated with the constituency, we are, indeed, proud of our achievements, even during this pandemic year.

I will now highlight some of our major projects with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that in the New Year the Pre-schoolers of Paradise, Símon, Pearls and surrounding areas will benefit from a new and modernised facility in the Paradise Preschool, in its new location behind Progress Park. This will allow them to learn in a more conducive facility that is important as they begin their formative years. This project was completed under the BNTF Cycle Nine 9 Projects.

Other major projects completed, or still in progress, or to be started includes the Ahoma By-road. This included 253 ft. slipper drain, 59 ft. box drain and 571 ft. concrete pavement, 95% completed, at a cost of $125,286.00. The Paraclete Retaining Wall and Box Culvert; 80% completed, at a cost of $150,548.00. We saw the renovation of the Símon Board Bridge, costing $57,757.00. The construction of a new bridge in La Poterie, heading to Moonlight City, and this happened because the old one collapsed sometime late last year, and this was done at a cost of $98,346.00. Currently on going, we have the Paraclete Bridge Renovation and Upgrade, and this will include a 42 ft. box drain; 74 ft. wing wall, approach and exit slabs, side-walks and railing on one side. Work is on-going, 25% completed, and this is at a cost of $114,995.00. On-going, we

have repairs to the Road Office in Pearls, 25% completed, a project cost of $216,397.00.

Mr. Speaker, the next project I am about to speak about is very significant to the people from that area. The Water Supply Improvement Project by NAWASA with the support from the Embassy of Japan in Trinidad and Tobago for the residents of Upper St John and Blaize. Mr. Speaker, because of the elevated location, residents over the years, has had serious challenges with their water supply. On most occasions, they depended heavily on the Water Trucks to supply them with water. This project, which started in March of 2020, included the installation of 7,583 ft. of four (4) inch pipe, from the existing water tank at Carrierre to the tank at Blaize, allowing for water to be pumped from Carrierre to the tank at Blaize for distribution to constituents.

Mr. Speaker, this project is 95% completed, at a cost of over US$67,000.00. And following the completion, the water supply problems faced by the residents will be something of the past, Mr. Speaker.

The Símon back road that is about to begin, 408 ft. of concrete pavement; 285 ft. of slipper drain costing $96,614.00. The contract is already signed and we await the start of the construction of this road. Currently, we have the retrofitting of the Ahoma Community Centre, as a temporary provision for quality health services to the residents of Tivoli, Upper Conference and La Poterie. This is done to undergo major repairs on the main Tivoli Medical Centre. This Centre was assessed and identified to have internal structural issues, and that is why we resorted to the Ahoma Community Centre, as a temporary measure. Work is already 75% completed and the project costing the Government $69,920.00, Mr. Speaker.

Other minor projects include the Pearl's storm drain construction, the Banana Road box drain construction, to make it easier for the farmers in the area to control the supply of water there; a curb wall and access road in Conference.

Mr. Speaker, the Debushing. I must speak about it just as my fellow colleague, because for the past few months, gang after gang after gang, empowering our constituents to have that short term income, very important for them, Mr. Speaker. And

for the past nine (9) fortnights, we have engaged an average of twenty-three (23) gangs per fortnight, creating short term jobs for over one thousand (1,000) people.

Under Special Projects, we have had sixteen (16) Special Projects, covering almost every Village within the constituency, including concrete pavements in the villages of Blaize, Paradise, Moya, Paraclete, La Poterie, Belmont and Tivoli. Box drains, storm drains and slipper drain construction in villages such as La Poterie, Conference, Pearls, Paraclete, Paradise and Símon.

We've also had the excavation of a road in Pearls, by removing large boulders for residents to have proper road access to their homes. The construction of the Public Toilet Facility by the Pearl's Airplane Development; assistance towards toilet facilities for the Carrierre Playing Field and this was done with the Carrierre Development Organisation. We are about to see the construction of a Club House for the Paradise Football Club, the Club that represents St. Andrew, the Club that represents Grenada and has the most players on the National Football Team. They deserve a home and they will have a Club House constructed for them.

Under the Ministry of Sports, we have seen the refurbishment of the Símon and Pearls Basketball Court. We have also seen the completion of the La Poterie Playing Field Development. However, we still have the retaining walls to complete. It was on hold because of the lockdown, but it is 90% completed, thus far.

Under the Division of Youth Development, under the M-Power Programme, we have three (23) young men, who were enrolled. They have completed the Life Skills and are now involved in the CVQ Certificate classes and Apprenticeship Training. Mr. Speaker, so far for our constituency, none of the young men dropped out from the M-Power Programme. They must be commended, Mr. Speaker, because these are young men at risk, who spent a significant time of their lives on the blocks. Putting them into a programme was challenging, but they have not dropped out.

Mr. Speaker, I am also proud to report that while sitting here this morning, information was received that three (3) of these young men secured permanent employment today, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And that is because of their performance for the past three (3) weeks in the Apprenticeship Training.

Under the small business loan, twelve (12) persons within the constituency received small business loans, at a value of $122,750.00.

We are also benefitting from the IMANI Programme, and at present, we have two hundred and sixty-three (263) trainees, eleven (11) who received permanent employment in this period and the additional fifty (50) young people from the constituency engaged in this new Batch 7 intake.

Under the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, we have four hundred and eighty (480) households benefitting from the SEED Programme, and these include one hundred and eighty-nine (189) elderlies, sixteen (16) disabled, three (3) pregnant and lactating, twelve (12) adult poor, sixty-three (63) chronically ill and one hundred and ninety-seven (197) students.

The Housing Brigade

They assisted forty-eight (48) people in repairing their homes during this period.

(Time Bell Rings)

Mr. Speaker: You still have ten (10) minutes more on your regular time.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Oh. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They have assisted fifty-eight (48) households in repairs, and we have had thirty (30) families, who received materials under the Ministry of Housing, Housing Repair Programme. Mr. Speaker, these benefitted over ninety (90) persons with the households.

We are also benefitting from the Bathroom and Toilet Initiative of the Ministry, and so far, in this period, nine (9) senior citizens benefited from complete bathroom and toilet facilities constructed by the concrete brigade at a value of $122,268.00.

Forty (40) constituents received half assistance to complete their own bathroom and toilet facilities, at a value of $139,912.00.

Our Constituency also benefitted from the Farm Labour Programme. Thirty-one (31) farmers benefitted, creating short term employment for fifty-six (56) persons.

Under the Needy Assistance Programme, a total of six hundred and five (605) households benefitted from the uniform vouchers, at a cost of $138,466.00.

We are assisting our students with tuition assistance, as well. Seventy-four (74) students benefitted for Secondary School, TAMCC and NEWLO, and this was at a cost of $51,306.00.

We have assisted fourteen (14) students, who are at University, that is UWI, St. George's University and Overseas Universities, at a cost of $30,000.00. We also assisted constituents with water and electricity connection. Thirty-two (32) persons were assisted in this period at a cost of $16,559.00

Medical Assistance given to constituents who can't afford to purchase glasses, pay for medication, operations and different tests at a total of $10,917.00. Mr. Speaker, all these benefits would not have been possible, if it was not for having this Administration in Office. **(Applause)** And, I am proud to say that I am happy that I am part of this Administration that continues to look for the well-being of our people, especially those who cannot afford it themselves.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I want to recognise our Field Offices and our Office Staff, because they play a significant role in ensuring that the needs of constituents are met. While our Field Officers go out daily, they visit the homes of sick constituents, bereaved families, and other constituents who identify their challenges and those who need support, our Office Staff ensures that all the relevant information is collected from constituents and process all that information, so that constituents can receive their assistance, as requested.

Mr. Speaker, during this lockdown period, staff was sacrificing their time and also their safety to be there for constituents. We were able to provide hundreds of food hampers to constituents and, Mr. Speaker, we targeted the constituents who were single mothers, elderly, homeless, mentally challenged and those who will make their requests, directly. I want to commend, Mr. Speaker, the staff of the constituency of St. Andrew North-East. They are right here, Mr. Speaker, looking on.

As we look forward to the New Year, 2021, we are doing it with hope and optimism, and I want the constituents of St Andrew North-East to know that we can look

forward to the lighting of the La Poterie and Carriere Playing Field; the lighting of the Símon and Pearls Basketball Court; Phase 1 of the construction of the Símon Cultural Centre; construction of the Grenada Christian Academy in its new location in Pearls; construction of the Paradise Library and Research Facility. We will see the construction of bleachers, conference room and changing room facilities at the Pearl's Playing Field. We will have major road developments in many of our villages across the constituency. Many more Special Projects, aimed at community enhancement; further improvement in the quality of life through Housing, SEED and bathroom and toilet assistance. We will continue to support our students for education through the tuition assistance, transportation allowance and scholarship opportunities, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have been given the opportunity to represent my constituency in this Honourable House.

As I conclude my presentation, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that our Government remains fully committed to the empowerment the young people of this country. Despite the financial challenges of 2020 and the expected financial challenges in 2021, we see it as extremely important to keep all key Youth Development Programmes in place, Mr. Speaker, and we plan to do all that is needed to make them more relevant, efficient and fit for purpose.

Mr. Speaker, I now take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all the people of the constituency of St. Andrew North-East. I thank you for your love, your support, your continuous encouragement and also your constructive criticisms.

Special thanks to the Constituency Branch Executive and members of staff of the Constituency Office. You have been a pillar of support to me throughout the past two and a half (2½) years and I thank also, all my Parliamentary colleagues for their continued support and guidance.

My sincere thanks go to the Permanent Secretary and officers of the Division of Youth Development for their hard work and commitment towards moving our Youth Development Agenda forward.

I say a heartfelt thank you, as well, Mr. Speaker to my family members, my friends for being there for me through thick and thin throughout this whole challenging process.

Mr. Speaker, a special thanks to you for giving me the opportunity to make my presentation on the 2021 Budget. The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt from within our hearts. I wish everyone happiness, as we look towards a prosperous 2021. Merry Christmas to all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-East. I hope others are not jealous, because as you said, it's the best. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the 2021 Budget, as presented by our ably qualified, newly-placed Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, first let me speak of the year that has passed and what a year it has been, Mr. Speaker, for the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, this year certainly, is a year that we can say that health became everyone's business, and now more than ever, the aged old adage of***: "The Health of a Nation is the Wealth of a Nation,"*** has significant meaning, or even more significant meaning.

We started 2020 with just the threat of a new Coronavirus, Novel Coronavirus, 2019. It being a distant threat, we were making contingency plans, like we have in the past, for Ebola, H1N1 and other viral threats, real threats, but distant threats.

Mr. Speaker, we started conversations and consultations with CARPHA, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and OECS, to put together a regional response. Port screening was beefed up, based on the science of the day, back then. Persons, we were told, would be symptomatic, presenting with fever or flu-like symptoms, so all we needed to do was to have Port health monitor for such cases, especially with a

travel history from Hot Zones, isolate and test suspected cases. CARPHA would be the Regional Lab to test for this new disease, and by all expectations, had the capacity. All that was deemed necessary was to have the ability to collect the rear samples, if any, and send them to CARPHA Headquarters for testing.

By late February, Mr. Speaker, we realised that the regional response would not suffice. The Ministry of Health, in Grenada, had to step up its game, in order to protect this beloved Nation. We formed a Cabinet sub-committee and stepped up to the challenge of constantly analysing the global, regional and local situations and strengthening our systems, accordingly.

Hot Zones quickly multiplied. China, Iran, South Korea, Singapore, Italy, Spain and then all of Europe; and then that dreaded moment came, our first case showed up. Screening for symptoms would not suffice. Looking at travel histories from Hot Spots would not suffice. Cases were showing up from undeclared Hot Spots. It was suddenly easier to name safe countries than it was to name unsafe ones.

We, like all nations, were being put to the test. We measured ourselves and we found ourselves to be coming up short, as a Government, as a Ministry. We could no longer tell where the threats would come from, but had to recognise that it could come from anywhere.

Mr. Speaker, on March 11, 2020, the disease was declared a global pandemic. By March 16, the pandemic came to our shores. The person entering on that day, became ill on the 17th, so had no symptoms when they came in, passed what was supposed to be the screening then, was tested and the results came back on the 21st, as being positive.

We recognised at that point, that we had to significantly change and adapt and had to make some drastic decisions. We were left with no choice but to consider the unfathomable and incomprehensible, we had to close our borders. One of the toughest decisions I have ever had to contemplate, and I know for the team with me in Cabinet, as well and the same for them. I remember the conversation with the Prime Minister, one of the hardest decisions we have had to make. We had to save those who were here. Time was of the essence and we would end up leaving persons stranded outside,

husbands from wives, mothers from children, brothers from sisters, and Grenadians would be caught outside, but there was no alternative.

The Government of Grenada announced that effective 11:59 p.m., on Monday, 23rd March, 2020 and until further notice, our Airport would be closed to all commercial passenger traffic. By the 20th of March, we had a total of nine (9) cases, from persons who had entered prior to closing the borders, or persons who came in contact with them. Again, we were faced with a tough, hard decision, but had to have resolute determination.

On the 29th of March, we announced a 24-hour curfew. We had to nip the virus in the bud. We were seeing First World Nations, with much more resilient health systems and far greater resources than ours, falter and lose control. We could not allow this to happen to Grenada.

This extremely difficult period of harsh restrictions continued in various iterations until the 10th of May. During this period, the team at the Ministry and our friends and stakeholders from far and wide worked tirelessly, to strengthen our systems, particularly in the following areas. We were able to procure, not just one, but multiple PCR machines, and became the first OECS Nation to have COVID-19 Testing Facilities, as a response to COVID-19. Dominica did have COVID-19 PCR Testing Facilities, because they had recently built a new hospital. But, we were the first, as a response to COVID-19, to have this.

This was not a simple process, but was accomplished with a nightmare scenario of certain nations seizing much needed devices and supplies that would have passed through in transit, to their shores. This was only possible with the help of SGU, PAHO, CBN (Canadian Bank Note) and International Atomic Energy Agency. There are others that I would thank later on, who assisted.

Also, we bolstered the stocks of relevant PPEs, medication and necessary supplies during this lockdown period. We commissioned the Isolation Facility, at the General Hospital. We strengthened our Medical Response Team with Doctors from Cuba, although Cuba was itself, in need. We facilitated a phased manageable return of many of our stranded Grenadians by cruise ship and charted flights. We set up

measures and protocols for the inevitable reopening of our economy and our borders. We established quarantine sites and protocols for the management of those sites. We set up a cadre of Wardens to monitor and enforce the protocols throughout the Nation. Truth be told, we also allowed our environment to recover. Grand Anse Beach never looked so beautiful.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we stopped the spread. **(Applause)** And as a nation, we collectively came to terms with, and the value of what we had accomplished, as it came at a heavy price, but a necessary price, one that by the Grace of God and the diligence of our people, we do not wish to go through again. Our drive to adapt has resulted in lasting benefits. More resilient systems, proved positive that necessity is the mother of invention. Team Grenada has delivered. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we are now opened to the world under a new norm, a COVID-19 norm. This norm requires new demands… no, demands, diligence and adaptation. The threat of COVID is even greater now than it was in March, but the country is more prepared. Have we catered for every eventuality; certainly not. We must still expect the unexpected. Most importantly, that someone may, purposely, or inadvertently, place us at risk. Of equal importance is the fact that the virus is more rampant now, than it was in March and it will get worse before it gets better.

Grenada now ranks 37th in the world, if we take the basic cases per population, and No. 14 in the world, being only twenty-four (24) countries, to have zero (0) deaths from COVID-19. **(Applause)**

While we take pride in these accomplishments, that has come from individual, personal sacrifice and united, resolute leadership. We must acknowledge that the war is not over. We will continue to pick up cases at our borders and there are still some, who may put us at risk, because they do not respect or comprehend the need for individual, personal responsibility.

As one people, we have made it this far. We must acknowledge, that as long as we have persons entering our borders, who are infected, that we also run the risk, God forbid, that someone may succumb to the virus. I hope that day never comes. By the Grace of God, the strength, resilience and prayers of the nation, we will do all possible

to avoid this, but nevertheless, recognise that it is a possibility. Our need to tighten our entry protocols have led to the implementation of a paperless health Immigration and Customs system, at our Ports of Entry, the legacy of this period.

Let me state categorically, that the systems and measures that we have put in place are for persons returning or visiting Grenada. We did not do so to create hardship, but quite the opposite. These systems and protocols are there to prevent the intolerable hardships of COVID-19 entering our communities. Nonetheless, there are additional measures and rules that create disruption compared to the pre COVID travel, but they are a necessary unpleasantry at this time. The vaccination is around the corner. We have moved from closed borders to fourteen (14) day quarantine, to 72-hour pre travel negative test and swabbing on the fourth day and clearance by the seventh day.

We are already preparing for the imminent arrival of persons with vaccinations and the vaccinations themselves, here in Grenada. That day is nearly here. We must be realistic in this, as well, and the public needs to be informed through this House, or reminded through this House, that the World Health's estimates are that 3% of the population could receive vaccinations by the end of the first quarter next year, and 20% by the end of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, enough of this issue, for the time being. There will be, guaranteed, continued public discourse on this, in the days, weeks and months, to come.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me now speak to the $94.9 m that has been allocated, or budgeted to the Ministry of Health and Social Security for 2021. Mr. Speaker, this reflects approximately 8% of our GDP. This puts us in the range of OECD countries, not OECS countries, OECD countries, in terms of the percentage that is being allocated, nationally, to healthcare. There is much to be done to improve our healthcare system still, but the first major step is to appropriately, appropriately, allocate a budget, and we have done this, this year, as we have in previous years; and here are some of the highlights in 2020 and 2021. Mr. Speaker, as I have spent time before and we are all aware: managed and sustained, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, acceptable levels of healthcare service through the COVID-19 pandemic;

managed the national response to COVID-19 in collaboration with National, Regional and International partners; Universal Healthcare coverage and National Health Insurance (NHI); Draft NHI subsidiary Legislation is completed with the support of European Union (EDF 10) budgetary support, and is ready to be presented to the public and public stakeholders for discourse, adjustments, if necessary and acceptance to be brought back to this House; Project Development Plan and development projects, in collaboration with key stakeholders to support health systems and strengthening through to 2024, but started in 2020; OECS Regional Health Project, US$2.5 m, being used at present, for COVID-19 response and strengthening of our systems, going forward; UN/India COVID-19 Response Project, US$312,000.00, to strengthen community health systems and public health surveillance, response capacity and Chronic National Non-Communicable Disease Programmes and Communicable Disease Programmes; refurbishment of buildings, Mr. Speaker, in Health Infrastructure; redesign of Health Centres and Medical Stations to enhance safety and service delivery. 2020 and 2021 Projects, within 2020, already: Woburn, Good Hope, Perdmontemps and Grand Anse, Mr. Speaker; enhancing service delivery and occupational health and safety in those facilities, as well.

Nurses' Hostel in Princess Royal, Carriacou

Refurbishment of the Nurses' Hostel, as planned, has started, completed and the smarting of Princess Alice Hospital, to facilitate expanded services, well underway and will go into 2021, as well.

Mechanical upgrades at the General Hospital

Replacement of elevators, approximately $1m was to be completed in November, the first one and then the other one by January, but because of delays from COVID, the first should be completed at the end of December and the other, by then, the first quarter of 2021.

The Isolation Ward at the General Hospital necessitated by the onset of COVID-19, which enhances the ability of the Health Sector to respond to current and future national threats.

Strengthening of International Health Regulations and Compliance

Mr. Speaker, retrofitting of facilities is on-going. In collaboration with PAHO and DIFID to implement the Smart Healthcare, retrofitting of Hillsborough Health Centre, which would incorporate climate change and health into the Health Sector, promoting safety and maintenance and green technologies, and generating renewable energy credits of EC$10,000.00.

Mr. Speaker, ***Laboratory Systems:*** successful coordination of local and donor investments to enhance existing and to introduce new technologies to improve delivery of diagnostic systems. This includes the PCRs, but also we have improved and we are now able to test for dengue, on Island, which was another disease that we had to send samples to CARPHA in Trinidad for and TB, as well.

We have upgraded the services for Chemistry and Serology and other diagnostic services, through the procurement of new equipment, as well as new personnel at our Laboratories at the General Hospital.

Health Service Delivery, Procurement of Equipment and Essential Supplies within the Communities

We have continued to offer, now that we have reopened, specialist services, which are accessible at our subsidiary Hospitals, on a monthly basis: investment in medical technologies and equipment to support services at the community level, like electronic medical records and machines procured at six (6) Health Centres. We provided assistance and support to vulnerable populations and individuals to access care; countless. Outside of what we give, as Parliamentary Representatives, the Ministry of Health, itself as well, gives countless support for medical procedures. Expansion of radiology services, in collaboration with Donor Agencies; CT Scans, Mr. Speaker, on Island. It is here, being implemented now. X-ray machines, on Island, are here, being implemented; upgrading of existing technologies, as well, as Princess Alice.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to speak, too much, of Princess Alice. I am going to leave the majority of Princess Alice for my dear Sister, as she continues to say, that one is near and dear to her.

Mr. Speaker, restructuring the delivery of surgical services at the General Hospital; the appointment of a Theatre Management, to supervise and plan theatre operations; the establishment of surgical teams and the engagement of specialist services for scheduling and executing surgical procedures, on-going and producing its results. The idea here, significantly, is to reduce the time one has to wait for elective surgeries. Mr. Speaker, within human resources, dietary services have been increased, at our General Hospital; one additional Nutritionist to address the increased need for, always, better meals and patient referrals. We appointed [1]PSC appointments for eight (8) Nurses' new positions, which included Oncology and other Nursing Specialists; fourteen (14) new RNs (Registered Nurses) were taken onto staff. Additional Intensivists, to assist with COVID-19; local Air, Nose and Throat Specialists, Ophthalmology and OBGYN Specialists; new laboratory staff to improve human resources; introduction of a Billing Clerk to ensure the payment of all fees, due and owing; training of staff capacity, significantly from COVID-19 and the protocols; the opening of the Phase 2 Conference Room with the commencement of our Nursing Assistant Training Programme, as well as our Midwifery Programme; monthly case presentations, as well, Mr. Speaker, most important, with respect to quality maintenance, at any of our healthcare facilities, which is, in short, pair evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 guidelines have been developed and there is a Manual, printed and distributed for protocols. Development of a Standard Operating Procedures Committee, to review and revise Hospital Protocols; completion of Housekeeping Infection Prevention and Control Protocols, now need to be enforced. Establishment of a Procurement Committee, to help aid and speed up the process of acquiring much needed medical equipment and supplies and on-going right now, revising of Nurses Policy and Procedure Manuals.

Mr. Speaker, we have, on Island, as I have said, the last time we came to this House, I was speaking of procuring it: 128-Slice CT Scanner, on Island, and well on the way for installation. An addition of three (3) portable X-ray machines; one new digital

[1] PSC – Public Service Commission

XR6000 X-ray machine; retrofitting of an eleven (11) bed Isolation Ward Facility; and six (6) new ICU beds; six (6) Recovery Room Patients' Trolleys; two (2) new Obstetrical delivery beds in the Maternity Ward; new C-Arm Imaging equipment for the Orthopaedic Department and the Operating Theatre; new Ophthalmologic microscope for the Operating Theatre. This equipment, so far, has been used for 90% of the Ophthalmologic surgical cases; **(applause)** improvement of our Biohazard Waste Disposal. Mr. Speaker, retrofitting of the Private Ward now has two (2) Isolation Rooms, as well.

Mr. Speaker, in Service Delivery, 98% of babies born, received not just the regular vaccinations, but now also, the Hepatitis vaccination. Mr. Speaker, a significant decrease in maternal mortality, but, Mr. Speaker, one (1) death is too many, so that journey is not over.

Mr. Speaker, increased revenue collection, by an average of 35% per month, outside of the months that we were closed for COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the Gouyave Health Centre, a project that is near and dear to my brother from St. John, that by plans, were supposed to open offering the same services that would have been offered before, but in improved facilities **(applause)** and then quickly wrap up, and my sister from St. Mark, both of them. But with their intervention, and in fact, I am not ashamed to say, they are ganging up on me **(laughter)** and insisting that, that would not be enough, that we have to go further. You would see that we have improved the services on opening and will accelerate that process further, as best, as possible, to meet their demands, which are the requests and demands of their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, in the Budget, there is mention of EC$230,000.00, which is going to be used to renovate our old Paediatric Ward, which will result in a state-of-the-art new Natal Intensive Care Unit, which is extremely essential for our most vulnerable in our society. It has been requested for quite some time and should have started in September of this year. But it is in the Budget for next year, and I look forward working with my sister, to make sure that it happens, and it starts in the first quarter, actually, of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, oxygen is essential to life and for any hospital, essential. It is therefore, fundamental that we proceed with, as you have heard us say, consistently trying to repair and making sure that the existing oxygen plant, operates as best as possible. But it is now time to consider redundancies, and as such, we have EC$1.5m for the procurement and installation of an additional oxygen generating facility, to make sure that we are able to meet the demands for our hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout the nation, Mr. Speaker.

Medical equipment listed here, EC$1.2m, which is going to go throughout our systems, and I am sure we will be ganged up on, and will gladly accept, making sure that Gouyave, St. John, St. Mark Health Centre Polyclinic has. Mr. Speaker, it's due, as well.

Mr. Speaker, dialysis services. We've consistently spoken about, contract signed, facilities being prepared, much needed and has to be implemented in the first quarter of 2021. All the i's are dotted and all the t's are crossed, and we cannot delay this service anymore. Our citizens, who are receiving dialysis, have that right to the service, to access the service. This service, when set up at the General Hospital, will see a significant reduction in the cost of dialysis that is available now in Grenada, a significant reduction. And this is as a result of various public/private initiatives and partnerships that have been formed, to move forward with this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a Commercial Grade Kitchen, for the General Hospital, and most importantly for our Nurses, their own facility for downtime, office and administration for our Nurses at the General Hospital, as well, in the new construction, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a cafeteria, once we move into the new building, retrofitting of a cafeteria, monies have been allocated in the Budget for that, Mr. Speaker. Eighty (80) new beds for the hospitals and twenty-four (24) paediatric beds; drainage system improvements to the General Hospital. As most other places on Island, there is need, always, to address our issues of drainage. Operating Equipment for the Eye Ward, $400,000.00, Mr. Speaker.

Laundry Services

The individuals who provide that yeoman service there, I am sure, will be quite happy to see procurement of two (2) industrial washers and dryers and a fifteen foot (15ft) ironer. And, Mr. Speaker, improvements to the General Hospital, separately from the OECS Health Facility, to improve all of our other Health Centres similarly, to make sure that there are emergency and accessible access for persons with disability, to be able to enter and leave the facility, as conveniently, as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, retrofitting of our Psychiatric Unit; I have said in this House and will say again, the next significant investment after our Phase 2 General Hospital, will be in Mental Health, Rathdune, and therefore, to be able to deal with the overcrowding that continues to occur at Mt. Gay.

Mr. Speaker, Princess Royal Hospital; just to give some information of services provided at the Princess Royal Hospital for the year. I have already said that they are well on the way with their renovations and retrofitting, and the improved facilities, such as X-ray. Princess Royal Hospital, in 2020, saw six hundred and thirty (630) persons and a significant increase from 2019 of four hundred and fifty-three (453). Outpatients as well, a significant increase to four thousand, nine hundred and eighty-eight (4,988) outpatients compared to four thousand, two hundred and thirty (4,230) in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, we have ensured that the relevant Medical Personnel, Doctors, are stationed, on a rotation basis, at Carriacou. And in fact, what we have found is that some may resist going there in the beginning, but then afterwards, when it is time to come back, I am not sure what my sister has done, but most of them are now saying: ***"No, I prefer to stay, that the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique have embraced me, and I have embraced them."***

Mr. Speaker, the Community Nursing Division. I would speak further about them, later on, but to speak specifically, of their accomplishments, for 2020. They finalised a Monitoring and Evaluation Tool for piloting the four (4) Medical Districts; near completion of Community Nursing Procedure Manual for editing and printing in 2021; receipt of major equipment, namely, six (6) electric cardiogram machines placed in all Health Centres; five (5) automatic external Defibrillator machines, placed in all Health

Centres in Grenada; autoclaves and insulation of two (2) Distillers in St. George's Health Centre and L'Esterre Medical Station; receipt of two (2) vaccine refrigerators for Grand Bra Health Centre and Victoria Medical Station. **(Applause)** Community Nursing led to the response to COVID-19 and Contact Tracing and Testing and, Mr. Speaker, I will speak to that in my final wrap-up.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we celebrated World Breastfeeding Day, through media interviews, quizzes and education sessions. A number of Outreach Programmes were held in spite of COVID-19, Vaccination Week, Adolescent Health, Dengue and Men's Health.

The Health Promotion Department

Production and dissemination of printed material on COVID-19, over thirty-eight thousand (38,000) posters, leaflets and flyers were produced and distributed on COVID-19. Reproduction of dengue and respiratory illness to all health facilities, as well, as to members of the public; this was in response to the increased cases and outbreak of dengue throughout the region. Airing of Radio promos on all Radio Stations to facilitate community education was also implemented and continues. Community activities through the provision of technical support and resource materials for Health Fairs and Career Days and conducted a number of Training Sessions on COVID-19 among Youth, Health Professionals, Public Officers and special target Social Development staff, with responsibility for Elderly Homes, Day Cares and other special Homes.

Mr. Speaker, programme areas, in terms of educational materials produced and disseminated: Dengue, two thousand (2,000) leaflets and posters; Gastroenteritis, three thousand (3,000); Influenza, five hundred (500); Hand washing, five hundred (500); Cover Your Cough, five hundred (500); Mental Health, five hundred (500); COVID-19, thirty-seven thousand (37,000).

World Aids Day and other Programmes continue to be supported as well as health promotions and schools initiatives. Educational sessions were held in several

schools in the Western Zone. Sessions were held with parents on coping with families and children in this time of preparation for going back to school.

Online, WhatsApp chats were held with parents of one school in St. David, on general coping with children and going back to school and scheduling and generally supervising schoolwork.

Men's Health, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Department continues to facilitate the Men's Health Initiative of the Ministry of Health. Three (3) sessions were held in the Western District, in particular.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two (2) Community Outreach Programmes were facilitated in St. David, through a 'Walk-About' and holding of discussions and giving out of supportive materials.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Caribbean Wellness Day was observed, with one month of activities. Radio discussions were held, facilitated by Guidance Counsellors from the Ministry of Education. Training Workshops, Grenada Food Based Dietary Guideline, coordinated by Food and Nutrition Council for health workers, Health Promotion Officers, to coordinate and putting together Education and Outreach Plan for the Ministry of Health on the said topic, as well as coordination with FAO and [2]SFP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the National Insurance. National Health Insurance, like any other Insurance, has to be funded from somewhere. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have gone through all of those exercises in 2019 and 2020 was supposed to be our public consultations and first phase implementations. But with the onset of a global pandemic, but in particular the economic effects that it has had, it forces re-evaluation as to how and where the funding would come from.

Traditional sources of funding and I am stressing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 'traditional,' not agreed upon here or by our people, traditional sources of funding for our National Health Insurance, comes from taxes, of various types, in particular, what is referred to as SIN taxes on cigarettes, alcohol and sugar. But other forms of taxes as well, comes from Government subventions, comes from private investment, comes from

[2] SFP – School Feeding Programme

private insurance and re-insurance, comes from tourism. All of these areas in the last year have had significant economic trials and tribulations, and as such the National Health Insurance had to adjust and contemplate. I am not saying this as an excuse for a delay, there is not going to be a delay. When we come out in late December or early January, with a series of public consultations, with the Legislation, that we would have been handed that we put to the public now for discourse, we also need to contemplate, as well, that the world is a different world than it was in 2019, when last we had those public discourses.

As such, we need to think, as a people, on the basket of services that would be provided. Health is even more important on our minds, now more significant on our minds now, coming out of a global pandemic. But, we also have to recognise that economically, many of us are challenged and so have more of a need in some instances, for some form of National Health Insurance, but less of an ability in some instances, to contribute in whatever form, to a National Health Insurance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the work did not stop on National Health Insurance during our lockdown. Most of the technical and legal stakeholders were able to produce and continue to produce the relevant materials that we are now able to move forward with new rounds of public discussion on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the National Insurance Scheme, has usually simply performed on autopilot and does not necessarily get much mention in this House. They have their independent financing and regulations to protect them on that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year, of note, is that this Government gave the nod for the implementation of the increase in retirement age, as well as increased contributions, which are necessary to ensure the longevity and the sustainability of our National Insurance Scheme, one that we have become accustomed to and recognise its benefits and would like to see it grow from strength to strength. As such, because of the aging of our population, it is necessary to implement these steps or measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do recognise that while most of my time in this House is usually occupied with speaking on health matters, and most of my time, for this year, sometimes feel like all of my time for this year, has been spent dealing with our health

threats, COVID-19, in particular. But I am only here, because people put me here, the people of South, St. George, many of whom have written, called and met and given their support and voiced their understanding on the task that I have had, as Minister for Health, and for us all, in the way we have accomplished those goals.

Nonetheless though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite the fact that I have taken the challenge of Minister for Health, in these difficult times, I am still a Parliamentary Representative, and as such, there are still responsibilities there and work that need to be done. So, let me give a small summary of the work that was still able to be accomplished, in 2020, in South St. George, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, seventeen (17) houses were repaired, six (6) whole houses, four (4) completed by our Brigades, three (3) completed by family members, who just needed the material support and nine (9) awaiting the final completion or delivery of final materials. Sixteen (16) persons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, received materials for bathrooms and toilets, and currently, there are eighteen (18) persons employed under the Housing and Bathroom Brigade, collectively. Four hundred and twenty-six (426) households received financial support, SEED, or otherwise.

Throughout the constituency, six (6) bathrooms were done under Special Projects, two (2) concrete drains, two (2) box drains, two (2) slipper drains, concrete pavements and eight (8) more in process, in the areas of Grand Anse Valley, Mont Tout, Cafè, Mt. Hartman, Woodlands, as well as Golf Course and Calliste.

Mr. Deputy Speaker,…

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the notification.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have fifteen (15) more minutes of regular time.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Twenty-nine (29) young men are currently employed under the M-Power and forty (40) persons registered under the new batch of IMANIs.

We have given fifteen (15) individual support for rent, through various sources; ten (10) for eye glasses, through various sources; one (1) person getting support for dialysis and twenty-five (25) individuals for various forms of scans and other medical support, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is still much work to be done, but I want to thank the team at the Constituency Office. They truly stepped up in a time of need, where I could not be at two (2) places at the same time, and they have done and provided yeoman service, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get to the acknowledgements, the thank-yous and the recognition of those who have brought us to here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me start, first and foremost, by singling out three (3) individuals, who have provided yeoman service throughout this year, in particular, in the COVID-19 response and general provision of health services, in Grenada. Those individuals are: Dr. Shawn Charles; Dr. Francis Martin and Dr. George Mitchell. **(Applause)** A couple of things, in common for them all, they have all served as Chief Medical Officers and they have all helped us to be where we are today, because of their sacrifice and their dedication and their patriotism.

Our Community Health Nurses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were the first to respond for COVID-19, and continue to response and adapt as COVID-19 puts new challenges on this nation. The one consistent team, as well, that has been there, in the communities, to meet individuals, coming in, to deal with the first and all of the positive cases, as well, are our Community Nurses, and they need a special recognition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)** As this pandemic evolves and the local challenges have changed, so too have they.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the General Hospital, Dr. Carol Mc Intosh and Tyhiesia Donald… **(applause)** they have kept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Hospital open and the team focused, not just on COVID-19, but on everything else that needed to be done and continues to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Dr. Dolland Noel, who led the clinical response to COVID-19, **(applause)** and the nurses, again, that stepped up, that volunteered to be the front

liners, with the team of Doctors, but who would have been there, 24/7, for those who needed hospitalisation and could not return to their families, for at least fourteen (14) days after that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, former PS, Charlton Henry and new Acting PS, Hannah St. Paul and Camille St. Louis and Roxanne Bhola and Keville Frederick, have also stepped up, above and beyond and helped keep the team at the Ministry together during our lockdown and now, as we open back up, and I believe are worthy of mention, apart from the fact that the entire team of the Ministry of Health and Social Services, [3]CMS, our Drivers, our Brokers, all have stepped up and performed yeoman service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members of the COVID-19 Cabinet Sub-Committee, the current and the previous, also, are responsible for where we are and helping in that decision-making and that guidance, that delegation of various responsibilities in the heat of the initial battle. We used to come to the Conference Room at the back here, that was the Headquarters, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we were able to meet, because it was organised, ably organised by Senator Chester Humphrey and the team here at the Parliament building. I thank you for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Commission Edvin Martin and the entire RGPF team; enforcement was significant. **(Applause)** They put themselves at risk, to help keep us safe and continue in the enforcement and protection of our borders and the enforcement of the new Regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, St. George's University and WINDREF, and in particular, Dr. Charles Mordica, Trevor Noel and Calum Macpherson and Greg Handel, for the supplies, the support, financial, moral and technical support that we have gotten and continue to get from SGU. **(Applause)**

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and in particular Dr. Carissa Etienne, Rufus Ewing and Yitades Gebre and Fiona Anthony, here, who have always been available, any hour of the night, for consultation, for support, for questions, for

[3] CMS – Central Medical Stores

queries and CARPHA, Dr. Joy St. John and her team, always there when we requested anything from them.

When the world had closed and always every nation had closed, or restricted its borders, there were three (3) Governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that came to our rescue, above and beyond: the Republic of Cuba; the People's Republic of China and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. **(Applause)** While they too were dealing with their challenges, they still found ways and means to assist us in ours, in the heat of the battle, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the World Bank, as well, for making emergency funds available to us and communicating directly with the Ministry and assisting us in that application process, to the team in DC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, laboratory services at the General Hospital and those who are continuing to provide yeoman service there. They are the ones that are now working seven (7) days a week, twelve/fourteen (12/14), sometimes longer than that, hours, to make sure that the test results come out on time. Test results for those who are positive, test results for those who are suspected to be positive and test results for those who are simply requesting it for travel; all treated with the same urgency and continue to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, NaDMA. The team at NaDMA joined us from the beginning, as this was seemed to be an emergency, and the team at NaDMA continues at the Airport, and assisting individuals with the need of counselling, etcetera; so, I would like to offer special thank you to them. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Health Desk Team is a new section of the Ministry, one never before fathomed, but a necessity now, because of COVID-19, led ably, by one, Sherrice Phillip-Swan and the rest of her team that also, literally, seemed to be working 24/7 to produce the results.

Our Port Health Officers, who have stepped up at all of our Ports, but in particular one (1) Officer I would like to mention and that is Mr. Derrick Ram, **(applause)** who, after doing Port Health, also goes around with Wardens, to help with enforcement of protocols locally, as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Consulars, our High Commissioners and our Ambassadors, far and wide in our diaspora, to helping with our diaspora and the very unfortunate situation that we found ourselves with, with Grenadians being locked out of their own country, offering support to these individuals, coordinating with us, ways and means for them to get back home. Two (2) individuals, in particular stood out with this, and that is Derrick James in Canada and Keisha Alexander-Grant in the UK. **(Applause)** Unfortunately for them, where there were large numbers of diaspora persons, who couldn't find their way home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Grenada, I would like to particularly thank for enduring and persevering. My Cabinet colleagues, for the support, the understanding, the discourse, the dialogue, the questioning, the concerns, and in particular, I affectionately would like to mention Claris, Peter, Norland, Greg and Dashan.

While we were on lockdown and we needed to frame Legislation, we needed to respond; my Cabinet colleagues, first to frame this new norm, these individuals gave particular support, or extra and additional support, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other members of the Committee that served. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were part of that as well, the countless hours of discussion, debate, trying to understand, trying to evaluate and trying to react as quickly as possible. I want to thank all of the members, and take this opportunity, as you are personally here, to thank you as well, Mr. Boatswain, for your invaluable support.

Mr. Speaker, last, but certainly, not least, my wife Michelle, for being my rock of support, and my children, for supporting me, and continuing to give me the reason to do this. And, Mr. Prime Minister, the faith you have placed in me, the trust that you have maintained in me, continues to drive me to perform. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member for South St. George. It is now 12:30, and I believe it is an appropriate time to take the lunch break. So if we all agree, we can take the break now and return at quarter past one. Is that an appropriate time? Do you need more than that? I do not believe we need more than three quarters of an

hour for lunch, given the timeframe that we operate within. So it is agreed that we return at 1:15. Agreed? **(Members agreed)** We now adjourn for lunch and we return at 1:15.

House adjourned for lunch at 12:30 p.m.

House resumed at 1:30 p.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! His Honour, the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated. I trust that we all enjoyed our lunch and we are now ready to begin. This House is now in session. Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick East.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as proposed by the Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, please permit me as I begin, while it's early, to say thanks, a very brief thank you to all those who would have made this year possible, Mr. Speaker, in these very trying times. To my cabinet colleagues, to the staff at the Prime Minister and the Constituency Offices, to my family, to my people in St. Patrick East Constituency, I say a heartfelt thank you for 2020, wishing them all blessings, only blessings, Mr. Speaker, for 2021.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to share with you today, on the programmes that are within the Prime Minister's Ministry, while he himself will share on the area of ICT on Monday, during his presentation.

Mr. Speaker, the Needy Assistance Programme and the School Voucher Programme, are two (2) of Government's Social Programmes that continue to be high priority, Mr. Speaker, to the Government. These Programmes Mr. Speaker, are able to reduce the levels of poverty that are among the less fortunate in the communities

across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, these programmes are geared towards social assistance that would address urgent societal needs, societal problems that are characterised by high unemployment, especially, Mr Speaker, among our youth and among our women.

Mr. Speaker, these very high levels of poverty can be due to a wide variety of factors, and so, as a Ministry we know that many of our community activities can only enhance and promote improvement in the lives of our people. Mr. Speaker, these programmes are designed to tackle unemployment, promote community involvement, reduce, of course, the poverty and promote school enrolment, because that's some of the things that we support at the Ministry.

Increase in Medical Care

We know that a healthy nation is indeed, a very wealthy nation and so that is an area that we support tremendously.

Mr. Speaker, the Needy Assistance Programme provides support in three (3) broad areas: Social Care; Health Care and Education Services. Education Services include tuition assistance to students who are attending the St. George's University, TAMCC, University of the West Indies and other Caribbean institutions.

Mr. Speaker, another of the Programmes is the School Uniform Assistance and this endeavours to alleviate the financial challenges that are faced by people who are unemployed or low-income. These families, Mr Speaker, are provided with basic uniform essential needs for the students, those who are in Pre-school, Primary School, up to Secondary School. Mr. Speaker, the identification and incorporation of these services under the programme is really specifically designed to address the varying needs that arise at the community level, hence the name of the programme, Social Fund Needy Assistance Programme. And as such, Mr. Speaker, only persons, who are unemployed are given priority or persons who earn a gross monthly income of under one thousand, five hundred dollars ($1,500.00). These are the persons who would be given consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that sometimes persons, you know, there may be issues and instances in which persons who do not fit this criteria, may accidentally get

into the programme, but we have been very vigilant, and we encourage all the Constituency Offices, all the MPs and everyone to pay particular attention to this being one of our main criteria for selecting persons to benefit from our Social Fund Programmes.

Mr. Speaker, another area of responsibility is that of the Special Projects. This programme is intended to provide some form of temporary employment opportunity, through the implementation of small infrastructural projects, such as roads, drains, among others, Mr. Speaker, to provide employment for small contractors, who in turn, will provide job opportunities for persons who are unemployed.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the following are some of the main category of projects that are selected to qualify for assistance throughout the constituencies of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique under this Programme:

- Village Road Repair;
- Repair of walkways, alleys, footpaths, slipper drains, all forms of drain construction, box drains; concrete pavement; minor wall construction;
- Skills training, which must be approved by the National Training Agency (NTA);
- Sporting facilities: improvement of playing fields facilities, playing fields, themselves; and
- Maintenance of Buildings, renovation and improvements of buildings like schools, community centres and of course, churches.

Mr. Speaker, each constituency is assigned one Community or Constituency Brigade that is assigned to do additional work, in conjunction with all the local contractors that are employed to do the various Special Projects throughout the constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you that Government was able to approve five hundred (500) Infrastructure Projects, well, more than five hundred (500) within the various communities, and that is at a value of $7m. And in so doing, from those five hundred plus projects, Mr. Speaker, over three thousand (3,000) jobs would have been created for men and women, all over.

In the coming year, Mr. Speaker, the focus will be on strengthening the means of implementation for a more sustainable development of this project within the Prime Minister's Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of the Needy Assistance at the Ministry, over one thousand, two hundred (1,200) persons received assistance in those three (3) areas mentioned before: Social Care, Health Care and Education Services, at a value of $800,000.00 across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, with each constituency getting its allocation based on the Poverty Assessment Reviews or Reports.

Additionally, in its effort to reduce poverty, Mr. Speaker, Government was able to assist over six thousand (6,000) vulnerable families, with over twelve thousand, five hundred (12,500) students receiving school vouchers in order to promote better quality education, and so alleviate poverty, and that was at a cost of $1.3m, in this year, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, over $600,000.00 was spent on tuition alone for students who attend St. George's University, students who already get a part scholarship of 90%. Our Government is so bent and so intent on assisting and ensuring that everyone gets quality education and so enhance and upgrade themselves. Mr Speaker, we put the other 10%, so many students would be able to complete their tertiary education, get their degrees at St. George's University. What better way to alleviate poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a long term priority of Government is to focus on the alleviation of poverty by extending the social protection efforts, and that would be one of our sustainable goals for 2021.

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency, St. Patrick East, in the area of Needy Assistance, we were able to assist over five hundred (500) persons with medical, tuition, school fees, exam fees, water installation, solar lights and school vouchers. Mr. Speaker, we are very happy to know that in our community where employment is a challenge and poverty alleviation is indeed a great necessity, Mr. Speaker, we were able to assist over five hundred (500) persons in all of these areas of need.

Mr. Speaker, at the constituency, in the area of Special Projects, over seventeen (17) Concrete Roads Projects were completed, slipper drains and box drains included,

and they were constructed throughout the constituency in the villages of River Sallee, Rose Hill, Levera, Mt. Rose, Hermitage, Plains, Morne Fendue, all of those areas, Mr. Speaker, La Fortune, at a value of $260,000.00 and many jobs were created, Mr. Speaker. Over one hundred and fifty (150) temporary jobs were created, as a result. Mr. Speaker, where concrete was not possible this year, 1.8 miles of binding at a value of $312,084.00 was laid throughout the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, there are many projects to be done, that are on-going, that were done, within the constituency, and I want to use this opportunity to share them with you today.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great need in the area of River Sallee, that a shed with a Bath and Toilet Facility be built for the people who attend funerals there and also the youths who play basketball throughout the day, throughout the evenings and nights, because the basketball court is already lighted. Mr. Speaker, this is a great need. It's a very huge community, thousands of people live in that community and as such, when persons go to funerals and go to watch basketball, there is no form of amenities, there are no seats, there's no shelter, there's no toilet facilities. And so, we have considered the request of the community, and in the 2021 Budget we have allocation for materials and for labour. That labour will be provided by our Constituency Brigade, which I have mentioned before, that each constituency has one. And, Mr. Speaker, the value of materials and labour to do this project, inside of River Sallee, very close to the basketball court, to the playing field and to the cemetery, would be at a value of approximately $50,000.00 for labour and material.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that such a project will only enhance the lives of the young people in that community and so encourage them to be more physically active, to live a healthier life and of course, to occupy themselves positively, so that they will be able to be more focused and of course, resist the urge to get into little trouble. Cases here and there happen from time to time, so this is our objective.

Mr. Speaker, similarly, in the area of Rose Hill, there is need for a bathroom and toilet facility for the basketballers, the footballers and the cricketers, as well as the spectators, who use the playing field and come to watch the young people and all the

teams play football, cricket or play basketball on the basketball court. Mr. Speaker, this project is valued at approximately $32,000.00 for labour and materials, to get this task done. This task, as well, will be assisted by our Community Brigade, which is paid through the Prime Minister's Office, or Prime Minister's Ministry, as well as the people, who would actually be using it. So, we would invite the community to be part of this effort, in the building of both of these facilities, to serve the young people, the youths of the future, to serve the people of the community in both River Sallee and in Rose Hill, but, of course, would be led by our Constituency Brigade.

Mr. Speaker, the Rose Hill Community Centre has to be maintained. We take pride and joy in maintaining our Community Centre in Rose Hill and as such we maintain the bathroom facilities, we repair the lights, we clean the walls, paint, you know, all that is needed for that area, Mr. Speaker. And thus far, we have spent $2,300.00, approximately, in such maintenance of the facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you've been to Levera Beach. Levera is one of the most serene and peaceful area. It is one of the areas that, you know, when you sit on the beach, you believe that you're in a place called Hawaii, and it is actually possible; that is the power of Levera.

(Laughter/Inaudible comments by Members)

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, such a lovely spot that overlooks Sugar Loaf, Isle de Ronde, Sandy Island, Diamond Rock, London Bridge, such a wonderful view, Mr. Speaker, has no amenities. There's no drinking water on Levera Beach, there are no bathroom facilities. We recently built a building that can be used for shelter and you know, as a storage locker room for our fishermen, and for the people, like Ocean Spirits, who supervise the Turtles and things there, we've just built a building on the Levera Beach. But, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that such areas are well serviced, and as a constituency, St Patrick's East takes great pride in providing such amenities, not just for the tourists who come. This really will be for the people of Grenada, for the people of St. Patrick, the residents of St. Patrick East, so that you can have a staycation right here, because travelling is no more for the time being.

Mr. Speaker, our Constituency Brigade just recently completed the outer structure for the toilet facility, and they are awaiting the plastic septic tank that will be used, because, Mr. Speaker, we know the whole area is a RAMSAR site, and yes, we cannot build a concrete septic tank, and as such, although we have built on the RAMSAR site, which is allowed, the RAMSAR site is all about managing of the area. It is what you do and how you do it and that is what the nation has to understand. This beautiful part of Grenada is our only RAMSAR site, but you are allowed to build on it, without using concrete and all of those materials. You can use wooden materials. You can use other materials that are environmentally friendly.

Mr. Speaker, we have to exist. Mr. Speaker, I have been to Levera all my life, from the time I was a child, and I can't tell you how we managed in such an environment. You either go back to Bathway or you go home or you go elsewhere, Mr. Speaker. And, so nearly $30,000.00, Mr. Speaker, has already been spent from this year's Budget for the toilet facilities and also for benches, so persons can have a relaxing seat in there. And additionally, we will be building some booths, where our local people can do vending and so provide some form of employment for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Rose Hill, there's a big hole in the middle of the road, and it's been like that for a couple of weeks. I just want to say to the people, thank you for your patience. To the vehicle owners, who were supposed to be passing there and have to make it all the way around, I am just letting you know that we were awaiting the sand for the job. Our Constituency Brigade will be starting that job on Monday, because they've been working on a major wall to prevent flooding and slides for the community in Hermitage. So, they will leave that and come over to fix that hole in the road, and I do thank you, it's been quite a while. Now, the job is very small, so it was not sufficient to hire a contractor to do the job. The materials were less than $1,700.00, and so our Constituency Brigade, which is paid by our Government, will be able to do that job, starting on Monday.

Mr. Speaker, St. Patrick is known as historical St. Patrick. Many people leave the city to come to visit St. Patrick. There is a craze for a place called 'Welcome Stone'. Everyone has been heading for 'Welcome Stone' for the last few years. 'Welcome

Stone' has been there for so long. You know, as kids, we go to 'Welcome Stone' just for the fun of it, for climbing this very steep hill and overlooking the Levera Lake, which is so beautiful, and that is really one of the best spots to view the Levera Lake and all the Islands of Sugar Loaf, Isle de Ronde and Carriacou in the background, and a little piece of Petite Martinique, you may actually see from the 'Welcome Stone.'

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's one big challenge. Locals, visitors, tourists, everyone, get lost on their way to the 'Welcome Stone'. And I want to thank the people of Rose Hill for your patience for all the years of directing the people. And, Mr. Speaker, that is one very good thing of our local people, they give you good instructions. Pass by the mango tree so, take a left when you reach by the… there's a banana tree there with a big one on it and all these kinds of directions. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, this is crazy in 2020 and this is unacceptable for a visitor to be told, when you get to the mango tree, take a left. Now, we may understand and we may be well guided. But, for a visitor to have that as their main source of direction when on vacation, we can really do better than that.

And, so, Mr. Speaker, the people of Rose Hill have been asking, and they've been begging, and they've been saying, it's time we put signs and step up our game, you know. And, so, Mr. Speaker, $15,000.00 will be spent, not just for signs, but for benches and for bins throughout and in most of our sites. The signs are about $5,000. The benches that we'll be building are not just for the Welcome Stone, but for all other areas. So, $15,000.00 has been allocated for the improvement of our historical sites, not just for tourists, but for us, our people in St. Patrick East, for the people of St. Patrick and for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

So, Mr. Speaker, we trust that no one will be lost on their way to the Welcome Stone anymore, because the signs would run through three (3) areas: from Madeys to Cedars onto the Welcome Stone; from Morne Fendue, which is Silk Cotton Junction into Rose Hill, onto the Welcome Stone; from Bathway, up to Rose Hill, up to the Welcome Stone. So, there is no way in which someone should be lost after this project has unfolded. So, we already have the funding for the signs, we have the cheque, just to organise and to have our team put up those signs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Housing, St. Patrick East had an allocation this year, usually it's much more, it's twice times that, but the COVID affected things, in terms of, during the time, when it should have been happening, we missed quite a lot of months, so we utilised $166,162.96 for Housing. And, Mr. Speaker, this was able to help twenty-six (26) persons for this year.

In St. Patrick East, Mr. Speaker, this is just a drop in the bucket. For this year, due to COVID, we are aware we have not served the needs of the people of St. Patrick East where housing is concerned. We usually do better than this, and we look forward to 2021 being a more productive year, in which we can service the great needs of the people. Mr. Speaker, this is twenty-six (26) out of three hundred and fifty (350), so we have all this amount of people still remaining, and that's over three hundred (300), and it increases every day. It is one of our greatest, greatest needs.

Mr. Speaker, we have twelve (12) persons employed in our Housing Brigade, and I want to proudly say that for this year, they were able to repair thirty-two (32) homes. Mr. Speaker, they work very well and very quickly, and I want to commend them for the speed at which they work and we have quite good reviews from the people where they do their work.

I want to implore on the people who are waiting, not to give up on us. We know this is one of your greatest needs, and as a Government, we will endeavour to do all possible to service those needs. Once you see people are getting their homes repaired, it means therefore, that you will be next, just hang in there with us, please. We ask that of you.

Mr. Speaker we have started a Bathroom and Toilet Assistance Programme, and that is through the Ministry of Social Development. And, so far we have thirty-three (33) bathrooms approved, and out of that thirty-three (33), our Bath and Toilet Brigade, the Bathroom Brigade, as they're called, they were able to complete ten (10) bathrooms, so far, Mr. Speaker. This is another great need. It is an indication that our people really want to move out from where they are. The need for that one, I mean, we have so many demands.

But, I just want to say to the people of River Sallee, Rose Hill, Morne Fendue, Levera, Hermitage, Mt. Rose, all the areas, that, we have to focus on three (3) categories, at first, before we get to the other persons. So, we will be focusing on ensuring that elderly persons, who have difficulty in going outside to use their outside toilet facilities are given first preference. People who are sick, with long term illnesses, we also would like to give them preference and of course, people with disability, who find it very difficult to go out many times, down a precipice to go and relieve themselves, it's a challenge for many people. We see situations that are so urgent. And so, Mr. Speaker, at a value of $243,875.15, St. Patrick East was able to provide thirty-three (33) bathrooms. Ten (10) of that was completed already. Many of the people have family members, who can actually do the work for them, and that is great, we encourage that.

Our Bathroom Brigade, Mr. Speaker, we have divided them into two (2) groups, and so they're able to complete two (2) bathrooms per month. They only started in the month of July, and I think that they're working quite well, as well.

Mr. Speaker as a country, we have to encourage our people and we have to educate our people that Government cannot do it all. And so, when this project just started, it was 100% financed by Government. But, for 2020, the decision was taken that the people must contribute something, and so in our area, we ask that they contribute all the blocks, which is valued for at least $1,300.00 and to provide the transportation for the free sand, the free gravel and the free materials that Government pays for. Transportation would cost approximately $600.00/$700.00 based on where they live in the constituency. And, so, Mr. Speaker, the people have to contribute $2,000.00 towards a $16,000.00 bathroom and toilet facility. So, here we have our Government contributing, as much as $14,000.00 towards bathroom and toilet to uplift the lives of Grenadians, people in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned about our Community Brigade before, which is our third Brigade. There are seven (7) workers in that Brigade. They started also, in the month of July, and so far, they have built many walls throughout the community. They have assisted with our Shambo Project, with our irrigation person in laying, well, the person who was welding the pipes, to lay for the Shambo Project. They have assisted with

that. They will be completing the bathroom facility on Levera Beach, and fixing odd things throughout the constituency and they have quite a lot of work to do in the month of January when they come back after Christmas, in the community of River Sallee, Rose Hill and Levera to complete some of our Community Projects.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of the debushing; debushing started in the month of August and it will end this month, in December. Nine (9) fortnights, Mr. Speaker; one hundred and eighty-five (185) gangs. We are proud to say that one thousand, four hundred, (1,400) persons would have gained temporary employment throughout the constituency. Mr. Speaker, to many unemployed persons, such temporary employment really means quite a lot and this cost our Government $614,975.37 from August to December.

I cannot leave here today without mentioning briefly that debushing is one of the most controversial things that we have to be involved in. **(Laughter)** I don't know how we can get this one right. No matter what is done, no matter how it's done, there are always main controversies of who got, who didn't get, and you know, Mr. Speaker, it is a challenge.

Sometimes its genuine mistakes, sometimes it's policy that people don't understand, you know. I just don't know. I just want to say to the staff and the people in the community who are here today, and I just want to commend you for taking the brunt of that stick, for taking it for us. It is not easy and it's one of the things that you are involved in out there. I don't know what to tell you except thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, and hoping that one day we'll get this one right, but it's not easy. And since we went right through, it appeared like someone would have had one (1) fortnight, since in July and would have probably got another, quite at the end, you know, it appears that that person would have gotten twice. But, basically, that is the cycle that we really are accustomed to. Yes. It runs from July to August, or July to September, and it starts back sometime in October onto December. And so if someone got one fortnight in July and they got another one in December, back then, there were no complaints. But right now, because there were more fortnights and everything went right through, there were no breaks. The people really didn't understand that it is the

same, but more or less we just have more people out there. So, see how you can assist with that in helping them to understand why it may appear like someone may have gotten two (2) fortnights.

Mr. Speaker, our Environmental Wardens consist of six (6) persons in a gang, a total of four (4) gangs, with one overall Supervisor. Mr. Speaker, I may have mentioned this here before, that this really, in most constituencies is twenty-four (24) jobs throughout the year, six (6) persons in four (4) gangs, that's twenty-four (24) persons. But, in St. Patrick East, it's always a little different. **(Laughter)** Persons want to be part of these Wardens. The twenty-four (24) jobs we had to stretch it a bit. We now have fifty (50) persons employed throughout the year, as Environmental Wardens. We do it a little differently, because we have great need to create different ways of employment and to share it, as much as possible.

So, Mr. Speaker, we do a six (6) month rotation. But, Mr. Speaker, the word out there is that they want more, more persons want to get in. Mr. Speaker, the demand is so great. They want us to water this thing down to a Debushing Gang of two (2) weeks. I mean, how possible could that be? How possible could that be?

I ask for your understanding, people of St. Patrick East, those of you who are unemployed, to understand that we may be one of the only constituencies on the island, doing the six (6) month rotation. I don't know of others, who are doing it, and yet still you want us to water it down more? That's not the intention of the programme.

This group must work as a team. It will not have the impact that it has now. There is no way possible, we can break this down some more. Six (6) months is all that we can do. And you come to me, week after week, everyone, I mean, apart from the Housing, saying I want to be part of the Wardens, could you put me in next month? And, I have to say, I am sorry, it's filled.

I want people to understand that we are the only constituency doing this, and that is because of the great need for employment, but we cannot go, anymore. I am really sorry. Many were very unhappy with me, when we took this decision. It was a really tough move. But, it's like having five (5) children. You can't feed one only. You've got

to take care of, as much as possible. So, we are taking care of fifty (50) persons throughout the year, and that is really all that we can do. I beg for your understanding.

Mr. Speaker, four hundred and eighty-two (482) households benefitted from the SEED Programme. Students receive monies for transportation; elderlies receive monies that they can use for their elderly care, for their medications. And again, Mr. Speaker, there is a great need by us; more people want to get on. And I know that there are some persons who are on, who, probably should not be on, and so I commend the Ministry of Social Development for doing a review of the programme.

I understand that the SEED Officers, throughout the Island are out there doing that review, and this has to be done, so that the right people can get onto the programme. And I am letting you know in advance, the people of St. Patrick East, that if someone gets removed, it will not be **(laughter)** the MP doesn't really have anything to do with it. Mr. Speaker, that's all I want to say. **(Laughter)** The MP doesn't have anything to do with it. This is the work of the Ministry of Social Development, and the Minister for that would share more on what her Officers are out there doing. And yes, we agreed that there are people out there, who, you know, may have other sources of revenue, their living conditions would have changed. And so, like was mentioned this morning by MP for St Mark, there are times when we have to graduate.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to say that we have twenty-three (23) young men in the M-Power Programme. They are going good. We have had zero (0) dropouts and I want to commend the young men. They have recently completed their Life Skills Programme, and have been out there training in various fields. These young men are guys on the blocks, most of them. They have challenges. They are at risk, and so I want to commend them for sticking to it. Their level of stick-to-itiveness thus far, has been quite impressive. Many of them are there every day in their sessions, and I had only good reviews in that regard. Mr. Speaker, my only concern is that they continue to select the traditional areas.

Mr. Speaker, the world has shut down. This is not business, as usual. I will not call the names of the categories, at risk of being insulting any area. But there are some jobs that will become extinct. Mr. Speaker, and still they continue to select those areas.

There are some areas in which there is a glut in the market, and there's no way in which these young men should be encouraged to select those areas. And I want to say that I am very happy to know that the Ministry of Youth is embarking on an Educational Process and they would be endeavouring to promote ICT within those areas, to make it more relevant for the young people, and I really want to commend the Ministry of Youth for that endeavour. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, these young men have to be relevant. Our young people have to be educated on what the future holds.

We see now that everyone is functioning in post COVID-19. We see the role of ICT; we see the role of technology. We see that it's no way possible to continue business as usual, and so these young men and also young ladies, who are in the IMANI Programme cannot continue along that pathway and expect it to be business as usual.

It means therefore, that we will not be training them to be the citizens of tomorrow, because, when we are gone they're the ones who have to pick up the mantle and run and manage this country. They have to be the future Leaders, and they must be prepared, and we have a task to prepare them.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the same for the IMANI Programme. There are a few programmes that the young ladies are just going into, all of them, going into one course. Mr. Speaker, I trust that the Ministry of Youth would say, well okay, Course 'x' is filled, closed; close it off and redirect these young people. There are areas like Drone Technology that no one up by us selected. It was offered to them, they did not select it, a lot, a lot of areas. I mean, something as Drone Technology is quite exciting, you know. It's like, you know, working your little plane there. It's fun, you know, it's fun, and it would pay you well. And I don't think you need any fancy certificate to go into those areas. And so, Ministry of Youth, you have a task ahead of you, and the Ministry of ICT of course, is very willing to assist in any way possible, so you can reach out to our team anytime, to assist in that regard. And of course, I guess you've got to work with the Ministry of Education as well, to change the mind-set of our young people, and let them realise that there are jobs for the future, jobs for the future, because they are going to

arrive in the future and you will not be employable, and we can't have that. If you have to survive, you must eat a food, so you've got to prepare for that.

Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of St. Patrick East, we have distributed hampers. Over one hundred (100) hampers, Mr Speaker, were distributed during COVID and post-COVID, at a value of $10,000.00, thereabouts. We started an Elderly Care Programme, where, although we couldn't gather our elderly, we were able to provide them with hot lunches, hot soup, Mr. Speaker, at a value of $1,500.00, monthly. But, Mr. Speaker, we've had to cease a little bit, you know, funds ran a little low, and so we are appealing to the people in the community to assist us in that regard, to provide such a service to the elderly. It means a lot to them. So, anyone of you out there, who have contributions that you can give, whether it is in the form of vegetables, whether there's a case of chicken in the fridge that you are not using soon, you know, we welcome all contributions in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, we distributed masks during COVID to the community. We sponsored materials for community groups to produce masks, and we were able to also give to schools. So, Mr. Speaker, a total of seven hundred (700) masks, approximately, was distributed in St. Patrick East, as a result of our sponsorship, our own endeavour to have them made and distributed. That was done at a value of approximately $2,000.00, and that was part of our Social Care Programme, post-COVID.

Mr. Speaker, projects that are awaiting completion, we have the River Sallee School that is being renovated at present, new concrete flooring, new roof, new kitchen area. It's over a hundred and something thousand dollars. I don't know the exact figure. We also have the Grenada Seventh-Day Adventist Comprehensive School… ***(Time Bell Rings)*** …being renovated, as well for $8m.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, is it possible to…

Mr. Speaker: Yes. You can go on. This was a warning.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Thank you, so much. Right. Mr. Speaker, the River Sallee Pre-School, that ceased this year, will continue, $650,000.00, under the BNTF 9th

Cycle. The bids reopened in October. Our $25m St. Patrick Road Project continues on the main and we're very thankful for that, Mr. Speaker. The opening of the Snell Hall Skills Training Programme; our Community Brigade was just there last month, together with some of the workers, who have been interviewed and are awaiting their official appointment now. Mr. Speaker, they were finalising things in the building; that's a $1.2m investment through the Ministry of Youth and Education. Mr. Speaker, we were able to do a great portion of the road, from Rose Hill to Bathway that started when I was quite a young girl. It's about time that project ends. I want to commend the people in the area of Bathway for tolerating all the dust that has been there. Mr. Speaker, we endeavour to do a large portion every year. We are about 60% there and so, over the next two (2) or so years, three (3) years, we hope to complete that road, once and for all. It's been really too long.

Mr. Speaker, the River Sallee Playing Field was lighted at $46,575 and the Hermitage lights would be repaired during this month, or early next month as well as the adjustment of the River Sallee lights that still has to be done, and that is that a value of $10,000.00. The River Sallee Community Centre, Mr. Speaker, continues, $447,000.00.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave here today without speaking of our 18 Hole Golf Course, the Five Star Hotel Room Complex, the Amusement Park, the Mountain Villas, on two hundred and fifty-six acres of land that is unfolding in historical St. Patrick. Mr. Speaker, the Levera Resort will take approximately two (2) years for the first phase to complete. There are many, many phases. The project goes into the billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, one or two billion, and it's being developed by the Singapore Heng Sheng Development Group and, Mr. Speaker on May 18th, 2019, that Group signed an Investment Agreement with the Government of Grenada in Singapore. Mr. Speaker, funny, that was my birthday last year, so I consider this a wonderful birthday gift. I only realised that last night. Great birthday gift, Mr. Speaker, because that is my desire, this is my vision for the people of St. Patrick, that they have brighter days, brighter days for the people of St. Patrick, and this project will definitely cause that. Mr. Speaker, this

project will boost the economic development for all the people of St. Patrick, and I did share that the last time that I was here, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to end by saying that apart from the thousand plus jobs that will be created before and after construction, that will benefit, not only the people of St. Patrick East, but the whole of St. Patrick, or all the neighbouring Parishes, I want to let this nation know, that I am convinced that the developers appreciate the uniqueness of the Levera area, where turtles nest, where birds nest, where the lake is surrounded by unique mangrove species.

The reason I say so, Mr. Speaker is because they have shown commitment, their commitment to respect and protect the environment. They have done so by signing an MOU with Government in which they will safeguard the turtles of Levera, the Levera Lake, the Levera Beach, the birds of Levera, and all the species in Levera, so that, that area can continue to be a more global attraction, Mr. Speaker, to enhance tourism, not just for them, but for all of Grenada. With such a commitment, Mr. Speaker, we expect the Grenada National Resort Hotel, as it is called and its guests to live in tune with the flora and fauna on our beloved Levera Beach.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the developers, the Grenada National Resort Project, in St. Patrick, will be adopting a Community School. And, Mr. Speaker, as part of that thrust, they will support upgrades and repairs to the school that is selected. There are many more local projects that they'll be doing in the community, but this one would require the involvement of all the stakeholders in the area, in the school that was selected.

Mr. Speaker, that qualifying school that is in urgent need of upgrade will be provided with the materials, and the school community will be providing the labour for the upgrade of the school community. So that means, the Ministry of Education, all the stakeholders, the Parents Association, the Constituency Office, that is the school community.

So, Mr. Speaker, we welcome this project here in the north of St. Patrick, for the people of St. Patrick, for the people in the neighbouring Parishes. But, Mr. Speaker, particularly for the people of St. Patrick East, for whom I am honoured to represent, I

want to say to you that this is indeed, a blessing, a blessing for the people in St. Patrick, where there is great need for employment, people who have genuine needs. Mr. Speaker, this will assist in alleviating our poverty up there. This will assist in creating a better life, a better life for the people of St. Patrick.

And so, Mr. Speaker, brighter days, brighter days are coming, and we thank God, and I thank you. I thank my staff and the people in the constituency, who have taken time. It's a long journey down, thank you for coming. But most of all, thank you for working along with me. Thank you for your cooperation. I know it's not always easy. I know sometimes I may not always be easy, but I say thank you. I may not say it often enough, so I am saying it here, publicly, thank you, thank you, thank you. To everyone in the Ministry and to all my colleagues, thank you, and to you too, Mr. Speaker, thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Patrick East. Honourable Representative for St. Andrew South-West.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the privilege to represent the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Cooperatives and my constituency at this Budget Debate and to present to you our accomplishments in 2020 and our plans for 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I must commend the new Minister for Finance and his team for a well put together Budget in these challenging times, under the theme: ***Towards Vision 2035 - Recovery, Transformation and Resilience***.

Mr. Speaker I must thank, also, the Prime Minister, for the opportunity given to me to serve in such a diverse Ministry, a journey, which I began on the 5th of October, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I have used the last few weeks to meet most of the stakeholders, Statutory Bodies, Associations, Organisations, etcetera of the Portfolio under my purview, to get a better understanding of what they do, the challenges they face and how we, the Ministry and stakeholders, could collaborate to achieve our goals and to

develop the sectors to be able to increase our contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Mr. Speaker, although the COVID-19 pandemic is devastating in most of the developed countries, and has been spreading in some of our Caribbean neighbours, Grenada has been able to prevent community spread of the disease and there has been no loss of life. We should therefore, give thanks to the Almighty God for his mercies towards us.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to recognise the hard work of our Ministers, who spearheaded the team and the Health Officials and frontline workers, who, since March of this year, have been diligent to ensure our safety from the virus.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has drastically changed the way this Ministry operates. Every Division of this Ministry had to tailor their operations because of the COVID-19 protocols. The virus has forced us to be innovative, to be creative and to refocus our short and medium term objectives.

Mr. Speaker, Sports. Mr. Speaker, in the area of Sports, the Ministry's previous emphasis of working with the schools in enhancing all sporting disciplines, through training and competition had to be halted for this school year. Instead, the Ministry utilised the time to ensure that its Sports Officers, Coaches and Outreach Officers received additional training virtually, to assist them in performing their duties efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry conducted training for Senior and Junior Coaches in COVID-19 Prevention, in the Sporting Arena, and this training, Mr. Speaker, was conducted by personnel from the Ministry of Health. A session in Code of Ethics was also held for coaches by personnel from the Ministry. Four (4) Training Sessions were held for Sports Outreach Officers, Sports Officers, IMANI trainees, HOPE Apprenticeship personnel in the following areas, just to name a few: Coaches Roles and Responsibilities; Leadership in Sports; Physical Education; Lessons, etcetera. Mr. Speaker, the Training Sessions were conducted during the period May to September, and most of them were virtual. There were some face-to-face sessions, as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry resumed training of its athletes in September, 2020. This is done with the strict adherence to the COVID-19 protocols. The Ministry obtained

approval from the COVID-19 Committee, to conduct those sessions and ensure the coaches were provided with Digital Temperature Machines and sanitisers to be used for the sessions.

Mr. Speaker, a great deal of the training now happens in the communities, since our coaches are unable to do training in the schools. Most of our schools' competitions were cancelled this year, because of COVID-19. We are planning for, Mr. Speaker, and hoping that those competitions would take place in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, despite COVID-19, it is imperative that we continue to identify and nurture our top athletes, so that they would be ready to compete at the regional and international levels, when it is safe to do so. Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason, why the Grenada Athletic Association has organised its half marathon and a series of mini Meets, some of which have already taken place. I must applaud the GAA for its efforts, because the COVID-19 pandemic requires so much more planning, to ensure the Meets are executed in accordance with the stipulated protocols.

Training and competitions are also executed by the Grenada Football Association for footballers in the different categories, to identify and prepare teams for regional and international competitions. Mr. Speaker, I applaud their efforts.

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

Mr. Speaker, part of the Ministry's responsibility is the maintenance of the sporting facilities and playing fields in Grenada. It is not an easy task to maintain two (2) major Stadia facilities, eight (8) minor ones, forty-eight (48) hard courts and eighty-four (84) playing fields. This responsibility, Mr. Speaker, requires the Ministry to have adequate funds and manpower. Mr. Speaker, we try our best, with the limited resources that we have to ensure they are ready for use by Sporting Groups and the

general public. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to pause and I want to speak to the public about the use of these playing fields, because I had the opportunity to visit a lady in the area of Berrotte, and I was very disappointed when I arrived. I looked down from the lady's veranda and I couldn't believe that was a playing field I was looking at. There were vehicular marks, all over the field, tire marks, potholes. I was very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, and I want to really speak out here to the public today, that that is not the way to go. We have to take care of our fields, and we won't be tolerating that kind of behaviour in 2021. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, the Ministry examined a number of its sporting facilities, to assess the work to be done, to bring them to acceptable standards. The Ministry, particularly, wanted to determine how much work that it could accomplish with its limited funds, during the COVID period. The following facilities were upgraded, thus far, Willis Playing Field. A contract to upgrade the field was awarded to Handover Construction Company Limited, at the cost of $160,877.34. 80% of the work has been completed. The Company is presently building french drains around the field and will complete this project by putting topsoil on the field and replanting the grass. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Limes Playing Field; the Playing Field was upgraded by levelling it with topsoil. This was done by DJ Bobcat and Company Limited. I heard the Minister in the South-East, talking about that, the good work that was done. The field is presently being fenced. The drainage of the field is yet to be completed. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development has been requested to construct the drains and the row of concrete bleachers on one side of the Field. The Ministry expects the field to be ready for Community Football competitions early in 2021.

Progress Park, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the installation of cricket practice nets was completed at Progress Park. This means that cricketers in the North of the Island do not have to travel to St. George's to practice in the nets. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, since the installation of the nets, the Ministry has seen an increase in organised training sessions for the young cricketers in the North of the Island, which will strengthen the Ministry's Grassroots and Community Coaching Programmes.

La Sagesse Playing Field

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry had to redo the plumbing for the entire facility, because there was a chronic problem there.

Springs Playing Field

This playing field had a drainage issue. The Ministry has since had work done on the field to rectify the problem.

Vendomme, Grand Bras, Sìmon and Pearls Hard Courts

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry carried out fencing and resurfacing repairs to these hard courts. This would provide venues for conducting sessions for the strengthening of the Community Basketball in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021 the Ministry intends to continue with training for its coaches, as we seek to improve their performance on the job. This Ministry would partner with the Sporting Associations to seek international coaching certifications for the coaches in various Sporting Disciplines.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry also intends to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the various Sporting Associations for the identification of talent for our Elite Programme. There are presently sixty-three (63) athletes between the ages of eighteen (18) and twenty-six (26) in the Elite Programme. They are cricketers, footballers, track and field athletes, who are under the IMANI Programme, but are attached to coaches where they undergo daily training and attend classes to improve their academic standing. Mr. Speaker, the main objective is to assist these young people to secure Sports Scholarships to further their education while they continue to compete.

Mr. Speaker, work will continue on the upgrading of our sporting facilities in 2021. Victoria Park, in Grenville, is one of the facilities we are looking to upgrade and would require major repair work. The upgrade of the Kirani James Athletic Stadium continues. The work is being carried out by the 8-Man technical team from China under the Grenada/China Technical Agreement and the team from the National Stadium Authority.

Mr. Speaker, we are also hoping that the refurbishment of the National Cricket Stadium will begin. The Agreement for the work to be done was executed between the

Government of Grenada and the People's Republic of China in 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Speaker, has prevented the commencement of the work. The lighting of the Cricket Stadium is also one of this Ministry's priorities for 2021.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the Grenada Amateur Swimming Association (GASA) has made good progress towards realisation of the dream of a competitive swimming pool in Grenada. The plan is to locate an Olympic size Swimming Pool in the Queen's Park area adjacent to the National Stadium. Thus far, GASA has submitted a bid to FINA towards the financing of the pool, and was the only Federation within the Americas to be awarded US$250,000.00 towards the umbrella project.

Mr. Speaker, GASA is currently working along with Grenada Olympic Committee towards the execution of the project and has since received a number of bids for the project, while it's currently under review. It is anticipated, Mr. Speaker, that the project will start during the first quarter.

Culture and the Arts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the presence of the pandemic protocols has also forced the Division of Culture to begin to review its previous methodology and operations for the implementation of its plans and programmes. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the financial constraints brought about by the virus has also caused Management to revisit some of the proposed programmes for implementation. It is imperative that the programmes are efficiently implemented and have the maximum effect on the wider cross-section of our clients. Mr. Speaker, based on these factors, the Division of Culture has been engaging the stakeholders, as they design and implement new programmes and innovative methods for the implementation of those programmes.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure the efficient implementation of the programmes, the Division has put together a team of Officers to focus on the smooth roll out. The team will work with Technical Officers and stakeholders to ensure the timely implementation of the proposed Plan of Action. This would include Public Relations, Budgeting, Production and Coordination among all stakeholder partners. The team will be responsible for ensuring that the agreed timelines are met and for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on programmes' progress. This team will also work closely,

with the management and administrative staff in the Ministry to ensure coordination and cohesion.

Music and Dance, Mr. Speaker. One of the functions of the Division of Culture and the Arts is to assist in the development and training in the fields of music, both theoretical and practical and dance. Training has been focused on wind and brass instrumentation, string instrumentation, steel pan, marching drums, calypso and popular traditional dance forms. Mr. Speaker, the focus has not changed, but the methodology for teaching of those Disciplines will be changed from physical classroom sessions to virtual and online teaching sessions.

Mr. Speaker, the process includes the development of Teaching Modules that will be recorded and produced to be distributed on available Government based platforms, or agreed Social Media Platforms for students already involved in programmes and interested new students. Lessons have already been recorded over the last three (3) months and the Division is now finalising and editing and production. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, **Introduction to Audio Production.** Mr. Speaker, the Division has developed an Introductory Programme in Sound Production for audio recording, which is proposed to be introduced at two (2) locations on the Island, Mac Donald's College and the St. Andrew's Anglican Secondary School. Those two (2) locations have Music Labs that were constructed by the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, we have engaged the Ministry of Education for approval of Course Outline and to have it accredited. This programme was previously discussed with and approved by the T.A. Marryshow Community College for implementation as an elective. The facilitator for the programme has been identified and the proposed Contract Agreement drafted, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker this programme is geared to be stated in the new school term and will be offered to students of Secondary Schools in the Parishes where the Studios are located. The course will be covered over a period of thirteen (13) weeks, and the students from the various schools will be taught during one of the three (3) terms, each year. The course is designed for students in either Form (4) or Form (5), and on completion, each student, who has completed the course would receive a certificate, as

accredited by the Ministry of Education. It is hoped that this programme would help in the development of the already lucrative Music Industry, here in Grenada.

Research and Documentation

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the previously mentioned activities, the Division of Culture and the Arts will continue its work in Research and Documentation of Grenada's rich Culture. The goal is the production of programmes and documentaries to be broadcasted on our online platforms. The first broadcast is expected during the second quarter of 2020.

Schools' Orchestra Concert

Mr. Speaker, the Schools' Orchestra Programme plays an integral part in developing the musical skills of the students, in both Primary and Secondary Schools. The Division normally, Mr. Speaker, organise a live concert to display the skills of those students. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the concert will now take the form of a virtual performance to be broadcasted live to various audiences. Mr. Speaker, the Division plans to feature the Strings Section of the Orchestra in a Christmas Production, to be aired during the Christmas Holiday.

Símon Cultural Centre

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has received the draft drawings for the development of the Símon Cultural Centre, and these drawings, Mr. Speaker, were reviewed by the Ministry of Works' Technical Team, and the Architectural Firm is now finalising same. Phase 1 of the facility is being designed to be able to host large outdoor cultural activities and possibly economic enterprises in the field of Culture and the Performing Arts.

Grenada Film Commission

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has begun the process of developing a Policy geared towards making Grenada a film destination for the International Film Market. An Interim Film Commission, Mr. Speaker, has been set up to advise on the development of Policy and to facilitate interested parties, who are currently using Grenada as a shoot destination. A proposed Policy Outline has been submitted to the Ministry of Legal

Affairs, with the hope that a first draft could be produced for discussion with the industry stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot end my presentation on Culture without mentioning the work of the Spicemas Corporation. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the suspension to the Spicemas activities for 2020 that most Grenadians were looking forward to. Carnival 2020 was limited to virtual Carnival City, which generated social media nightly views of fifteen hundred (1,500) and fifteen thousand (15,000) viewers within one (1) week of the event.

Mr. Speaker, despite the negative impact of COVID-19 on the Entertainment Industry, the Corporation continues to work to ensure that Grenada's Spicemas Carnival remains on the forefront of the Global Carnival Network. We are cognisant that there is need for Spicemas to remain in the minds of Carnival lovers, to ensure that future economic and social benefits are realised.

Mr. Speaker, during our downtime, the Corporation spent time working on administrative matters and settling outstanding debts. To date, we have paid over $350,000.00 in outstanding bills, from 2014 – 2018. The outstanding debts stand at $268,420.54. All expenses incurred for Spicemas 2019 have been settled.

Mr. Speaker, while we cannot make a definite call at this time, on the hosting of Spicemas 2021, we have created a Plan of Action for the hosting of Spicemas 2021, to include a blend of virtual and live events hosting for our major shows. We continue to be optimistic, as we assess the COVID-19 situation together with the Ministry of Health, knowing fully well, Mr. Speaker, that when a decision is made, it will be based firstly, on the health and safety of all.

Mr. Speaker, I must place on record the assistance given to the Ministry by the National Lotteries Authority in the support of Sports and Culture in Grenada. And so during the year, Mr. Speaker, NLA has contributed over $600,000.00 to Sports and Culture, and these include assistance to Sporting Associations, students on Sports Scholarships, for upgrading Sporting Facilities to Cultural Organisations and Artistes for Cultural events. Mr. Speaker, the support from NLA has been tremendous and the

Ministry extends sincere appreciation to the Chairman, his Board of Directors and staff for their continued assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity now, to recognise the stakeholders, all the Associations I met with, that continue to make a significant contribution to Sports in Grenada. The GFA, Grenada Olympic Committee, and I can go on and on, Football Association, Cricket Association, Netball, Stadium Authority, Swimming Association, just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I can name all, but I'd like to recognise them, they know who they are. They have done a great job and during this terrible period, they are still working together to ensure that we have sporting activities, not on the scale that we have had before, but at some level, so that our people would enjoy and we will continue with the activities and keep it alive.

I also want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank our Corporate Sector, as well, who has continued to support and have continued to collaborate with us. And also, I want to recognise the Chinese Government for the support, the Republic of China, for the support they have given to the Stadium and other activities and other projects of the Ministry of Sports and Culture. **(Applause)** We at the Ministry are looking forward to your continued support in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I move my attention now, to the Division of Cooperatives. Mr. Speaker, Cooperatives play a pivotal role in Grenada's economy by providing meaningful employment to our citizens, increasing economic activities and contributing to the reduction of poverty in our society.

And to date, Mr. Speaker, the Producers/Service Type Cooperatives employ over ninety (90) people and have assets in excess of $9m. Mr. Speaker, the main role of the Department of Cooperatives is regulatory, and this involves monitoring, supervising, assessing and inspecting all functions of Cooperatives. At present, there are eleven (11) functioning Cooperatives in the Tri-Island State of Grenada, each at varying levels of compliance. The Department of Cooperatives is committed to increasing the number of registered Cooperatives and to ensure that existing ones achieve the requisite level of compliance, in accordance with the Co-operative Societies Act, No. 8 of 2011.

Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Cooperatives achieved the following in 2020: completed twenty (20), **'*Did You Know Trivia'*** *on* GBN; the Programme, 'Cooperative Spotlight' was aired on GBN every Thursday and is scheduled to end in November, 2020, or it has ended; the Division developed a Facebook page to enhance its Social Media presence; five (5) sessions were conducted with Community Groups to create awareness of the functions of the Division; five (5) sensitisation sessions were also conducted with the IMANIs; a Newsletter was produced by the Division and circulated; two (2) training sessions were conducted for members of Cooperatives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, despite repeated efforts to bring Producer/Service Type Cooperatives to an acceptable state of conformity, there are noticeable challenges, which include: lack of, or proper financing reporting; no Annual General meetings; no functional Board of Directors. The Department of Cooperatives is resolute in its quest to expand the Producers/Service Type Cooperatives by registering new entities and properly regulating the operations. Mr. Speaker, this will be a major drive in 2021, while we help to shape some of these Cooperatives back to what they should be, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the following represents the key Priorities of the Division of Cooperatives for 2021: increase the amount of functioning productive Cooperatives; enhance the capacity of staff to assess and train Cooperatives; increase the number of persons employed in Cooperative activities, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, just to mention, the Division of Cooperatives will be moving this week to the Ministry in the Complex.

Mr. Speaker, the positive significance of micro business to overall economic activity is established and will be pursued, enhancing activity in Cooperatives ventures in 2020.

Fisheries Division

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Fisheries development, we have embarked on several initiatives, which will position the sector to attain growth and development, especially in the Export Sector over the short to medium term. Mr. Speaker, the sector did experience challenges during the initial stage of COVID-19 pandemic. However, Mr. Speaker, Government intervened swiftly, to open the Fishing Industry to safeguard the fishers and the sector, in general.

Mr. Speaker, though the fishers had the opportunity to conduct fishing activities, they were however still limited in operating fully. In addition, the closure of various regional and international Ports, to which fish is exported by Grenada, created further hurdles to the sector. However, Mr. Speaker, as of June 2020, the Fish Exporters were able to resume exportation of fish on a limited scale.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that in 2019 fish landings amounted to 4.8 million pounds with a monetary value of $33m. To date, January to September, 2020, total fish landing amounted to 4.3 million pounds at a value of EC$29.7m. Mr. Speaker, Grenada has been exporting mainly Yellowfin Tuna to North America. In 2019, these exports amounted to 1.9 million pounds at a value of EC$23.8m. In 2020, Mr. Speaker, January to September, 2020 exports amounted to 1.1 million pounds at a value of EC$12.8m. Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates that the sector is indeed resilient. The Ministry is certain that the sector can bounce back strongly, by 2021.

Mr. Speaker, under the FAO Climate Change Adaptations Project (CC4Fish), Grenada is carrying out a complete review of the Fishing Vessel Registry. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division, in collaboration with WINDREF, has engaged and completed a series of training for fishermen in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. As a result, several fisherman are now certified Captains to navigate fishing vessels. The training concluded, with a Graduation Ceremony for two hundred and twenty-one (221) fishers on Mainland Grenada, fifty (50) in Carriacou and thirty (30) in Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** (I thought you all were sleeping)

Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division successfully completed its Annual Inspection of at least, five hundred (500) fishing vessels in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite

Martinique. **(Applause)** Inspections were also carried out on vessels in the Recreational and Sporting Fishing Sector, as well.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Fisheries, it is my expressed intention to conduct a thorough review of the structural and operational layout of the Fisheries Division, with a view to ensuring that the Division efficiently facilitates the Fishing Sector in Grenada.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, consultations have commenced with fisher folk and would be on-going to determine the extent of the requirements of the sector, with a view to enhance the sector, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for all the work that the Ministry of Fisheries has to do, the Department of Fisheries has to be reorganised to take on the quality of work that we have to do at that Division.

Mr. Speaker, collaborations with the Private Sector to boost fish exports are welcome. However, the benefits to the fishers and the sector must be significant criteria, enough to foster Government's support. So, we welcome them, but it must be at a certain level. Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Sector is extremely important for food security of the nation, and must be carefully managed, going forward.

Mr. Speaker, ***On-going Activities of the MPA Programme***. Mr. Speaker, the regular Bio-Physical Monitoring Programme continues with heightened vigilance of the appearance for the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease within Coral Reefs. The MPAs-led invasive Lionfish Management Activities continue to be implemented, both within and outside of MPAs, nationally.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Based Coral Nursery Restoration Programme is on-going within several of the designated and proposed MPAs, for example, Moliniere, Beausejour, Sandy Island Oyster Bed, Grand Anse and Gouyave in Grenada. Mr. Speaker, the programme is geared towards enhancing community participation in resource management while restoring degraded reefs within the MPA Network. Mr. Speaker, the following are on-going, externally funded projects:

COAST Insurance

Mr. Speaker, COAST is the world's first Parametric Insurance developed for the Fisheries Sector and is intended to be a catalyst for reducing the risk that both over-

exploitation and the climate change induced natural disaster may pose to food security in the Fisheries Sector and stimulate Policy reforms that promotes sustainable and Climate Smart Fisheries, as well as the coastal resilience. Grenada has renewed the COAST Insurance for the fishing fleet for another additional two (2) year period, 2020 to 2022.

Eco-System Based Adaption (EBA)

Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division is collaborating with the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA) to implement a three-year EBA Project within the Parishes of St John and St. Mark. The Project would employ an EBA approach to Ridge to Reef Management of the coastal resources. A main component of the project, Mr. Speaker, is the establishment of the proposed Gouyave Marine Protected Area. (GoMPA)

Japan International Corporation System (JICS)

Mr. Speaker, two (2) major Grant Aid Project for the Fisheries Sector in Grenada has been provided by the Government and people of Japan. The projects are spearheaded by the Japan International Corporation System (JICS). Mr. Speaker, the projects are valued at US$3.8m. **(Applause)** Project implementation has been delayed due to the COVID pandemic. However, Mr. Speaker, we have resumed the discussions to ensure that the deliveries of the projects will be in early 2021.

The project scope entails, Mr. Speaker, provision of equipment for the sustainable development of the Fisheries Sector. Ice making machines for ice production will be installed in eight (8) Fish Markets throughout Grenada and Carriacou. Other equipment includes pressure washers, refrigerated trucks, platform scales, light towers, floodlights, VHF marine radios, among other equipment. Mr. Speaker, the light towers and floodlights will be strategically placed at Fisheries locations known for pilfering of engines etcetera. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we hope that this will act as a deterrent to reduce the theft of fishers' investment.

Mr. Speaker, the second JICS Project includes equipment for harvesting sargassum offshore and within the coastal areas, especially on the East Coast. The following equipment will be provided under this project to Grenada: excavators; tractors;

boats; trawl nets for collecting sargassum; beach cleaners; machinery for harvesting sargassum on the sea surface and dump trucks.

Mr. Speaker, in addition the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is also partnering with Grenada and other OECS countries to process and purchase for export sargassum seaweed for sale in New Zealand. This is another great opportunity to create jobs for the coastal communities, which will provide financial benefits.

The Nature Conservatory Funding Fisheries Coastal Project (TNC)

Mr. Speaker, another Coastal Project to begin during the first quarter of 2021 on the East Coast of Grenada, Soubise to be precise, is the development of a fisheries facility, to facilitate the securing of commercial fishing boats, locker rooms for storage of equipment; jetty for mooring of approximately twenty (20) boats and the development of a shoreline protection area to mitigate against climate change and its effects. The project is estimated at $900,000.00. Well, that's a start. Mr. Speaker, this area has the potential to develop into a commercial centre and tourist attraction site which can provide benefits to the Coastal Community and surrounding areas. **(Applause)**

Seamoss Aqua-Culture Industry

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the fastest-growing Fishery Industry in Grenada, which provides permanent employment, livelihoods for a significant number of persons and contributes towards foreign exchange earnings. Mr. Speaker, it is worthy to note that the demand for seamoss is greater than the supply. In the USA, being the main importer of seamoss, several exporters are currently involved in the Seamoss Industry with many prospective entrants on the horizon. But, Mr. Speaker, I understand just a few weeks ago, a young man in Grenville spoke to me. He said to me, they are stealing all his seamoss. So, we may have to put a Praedial Larceny document together to protect seamoss in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division is providing technical extension services to seamoss farmers and a series of meetings with the PS responsible for Fisheries is planned in the immediate future, accordingly. Mr. Speaker, discussions within the Ministry have already began to develop Legislation governing seamoss propagation, cultivation, marketing and Praedial Larceny, etcetera.

Grenada Maritime Economy Plan

Mr. Speaker, under the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme, a Marine Economy Plan is being formulated for Grenada. The programme will aim to support seventeen (17) Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Development States (SIDS) in conserving their marine environments and making the most of their maritime resources, to catalyse sustainable economic development.

Mr. Speaker, it is designed to promote growth, innovation, jobs and investment while safeguarding healthy seas and ecosystems, address climate change in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Change Accord.

National Maritime Security Strategy

Mr. Speaker, the Organization of American States (OAS) Secretariat is assisting Grenada and several other Caribbean States with the development of a National Maritime Security Strategy. Mr. Speaker, this plan would include language for a Grenada NMSS to include a Maritime Vision, a Security Environment Assessment, prioritise discussion for maritime risks and threats, strategic maritime objectives and strategic concepts. The strategy would address the following: legal regime governance; maritime domain awareness; international coordination; regional coordination; sustainability and environmental issues; marine resources; climate change, to name a few.

Coastal Master Plan and Marine Spatial Plan

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (CROP) is currently being implemented by the OECS Commission, on behalf of the five (5) Member States including Grenada. The project seeks to strengthen Ocean Governance, as well as Coastal and Maritime Spatial Planning and develop a regional Marine's Spatial Planning Framework for the wider OECS Region.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry leads implementation, nationally, with the Fisheries Division, as its focal point. As part of the project, Coastal and Marine Spatial plans are being developed for Grenada, Dominica, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and the Grenadines…

(Time Bell Rings)

COAST Fish Project

Mr. Speaker, the COAST Fish Project of 2020 to 2024 is another capacity-building Fisheries Project funded by Japan, in collaboration with CRFM, OECS and by extension, CARICOM, for the development and management of Coastal Fisheries Zone Resources.

Mr. Speaker, the COAST Fish Project is another manifestation, which represents Japan's continuous commitment towards Grenada's development within the Fisheries Sector for over a thirty (30) year period. The COAST Fish Project is the second phase of the Caribbean Fisheries Co-Management Project formerly known as CARIFICO, which was a success, Mr. Speaker. Based on the success of that project of 2013 to 2018 and the excellent performance executed by Grenada, the COAST Fish Project was initiated, with an aim to transfer knowledge, experience and good practices of co-managed developed and tested by Grenada, OECS and CARICOM countries. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the delay and commencement of the COAST Fish Project in 2020 was due to COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in Japan imposing a travel ban on Japanese exports leaving the country; hence the reason the project's schedule was delayed, indefinitely. The project includes, Mr. Speaker: proposed MPAs pilot size for development; strengthening MPAs Management Organisations; establishment of zoning of MMA/MPAs and the development of Fisheries Managed Plan for the surrounding areas; establishment of Co-Management Structures and strengthening of Fisheries Regulations; deployment of a Japanese Design Set Net, as an alternative to the Beach Seine Fishery that we use; promote and support measures to improve our fish handling, reducing postharvest losses.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to thank the following stakeholders for their continued collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries: CARICOM; Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the European Union (EU); FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization); GIZ (German International Corporation Agency); GEF (Global Environmental Facility);

Japanese International Corporation Agency; the OECS; UNDP; UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme); UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea); USAID; ECCB (Eastern Caribbean Central Bank) and all our local stakeholders and supporters of the Fishing Industry here in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, before I move to my constituency, I want to take this opportunity to thank my staff at the Ministry for their hard work and dedication. The two (2) new PS's, I want to thank you all, for all your support. It's a pleasure working with you all, to start off with. ***(Laughter)*** So far, so good. You have given me all the support and I am looking forward to working with you in the New Year.

Mr. Speaker, I would now turn my attention to my constituency, St. Andrew South-West. Mr. Speaker, I know I have limited time, so I'll have to go even quicker than I did with my previous presentation.

The year 2020, Mr. Speaker, quite a lot of emphasis again, was placed on infrastructure, because we have a wide network of roads in St. Andrew South-West and half of them are bad. So we have done a lot of work in roads, drains, housing, unemployment and social care. These were the areas that a lot of focus was placed on.

Someone said to me: **"Madam Minister, when you leave office, I believe all the roads in St. Andrew South-West will be built." (Applause)** I told them yes. I told them yes, that is my objective, that is my dream and that's my plan, because I think roads are important. If you can't have something good to walk on, you know that you could be disabled, as well, you could fall. You have farmers going to their farms, they can't get there and a number of persons they want roads. You have to improve your life and roads are important.

The SEED Programme

I want to start off with the SEED Programme, Mr. Speaker. Over four hundred and sixty (460) households are under the SEED Programme in St. Andrew South-West. No placements were done this year. We have over forty (40) households waiting to be placed. Thirty (30) persons have passed away from the St. Andrew South-West Constituency, who were on the SEED Beneficiary Programme, so we have space to put

in the forty (40) that we have hanging. We extend condolences, Mr. Speaker, to all the families, who have lost their loved ones. Thirty (30) is a large number for a Constituency.

Housing

Thirty (30) persons were approved for materials this year. Four (4) persons were given grants. Of the four (4), three (3) were fire victims. Over two hundred and fifty (250) applications are on file, waiting to be selected.

Mr. Speaker, the Golden Years Centre comprise of forty (40) to forty-five (45) seniors. Every Wednesday forty-five (45) elderly persons are brought to the Grand Bras Community Centre where they recreate, they sing, they dance, they do craft, they laugh and they chat. They are given breakfast, lunch and a snack. But due to the COVID-19 protocols, Mr. Speaker, we have had to make changes and instead the lunches were brought to their homes and the doctors and nurses will visit their homes and do their checks.

Mr. Speaker, over thirty-five (35) persons in South-West are under the Homecare Programme, as well. Some of these persons are bedridden and they are given care by the teams of persons.

Debushing

Mr. Speaker, one hundred and ninety-one (191) contracts were given, to date. That is one thousand, three hundred and thirty-seven (1,337) persons receiving a fortnight work. Another fifty-eight (58) persons were employed, as supervisors.

Environmental Wardens

We have had five (5) teams consisting of three (3) men and three (3) women working along the St. Andrew South-West areas, cleaning drains, trimming over-hangings, cutlassing to keep the areas of our community safe, clean and beautiful.

We have one team, as the Beach Wardens consisting of men and women responsible for removing the sargassum seaweed, along the Eastern Coastline, from the Telescope Beach to the Grenville Bus Terminus. We do not have sargassum seaweed now. They are picking up all the garbage that is being thrown out. I am hoping we can push that Act very quickly, so that people could stop throwing garbage

all over the place unnecessarily. Two (2) persons overlook these teams, as supervisors.

Under Education, over twenty-five (25) persons at the SGU, TAMCC and overseas students receive school assistance. Also, a number of students receive assistance in paying CXC Exam fees which amounted to $47,000.00.

To date, we have thirty-two (32) students receiving Transportation Allowance at half cost because of the COVID-19, because we wanted to put in more persons. Two hundred and fifty-three (253) households received help from the School Voucher Programme; approximately, one thousand, one hundred (1,100) students benefitted. Mr. Speaker, a number of students received school bags assistance, as well.

IMANI Trainees

Over two hundred and ninety (290) persons from St. Andrew South-West are placed in the IMANI Programme, from Batch 1 to 6). Thirty-seven (37) more young persons are placed in the Batch 7 and seven (7) persons in the IT Programme, which are assisting schools in our area.

Twenty-two (22) young man are in the M-Power Programme, and I must say that the M-Power programme is doing very well **(applause)**, because I know the young man, who are involved in the programme, these are young men whose lives have turned around, significantly. And I am pleased, because some of them were from unstructured homes and they were not in the best of behaviour. So I am very happy, Mr. Speaker, that these young men were able to turn around their lives and are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, the mask that you see me wearing here, this is made by a young lady in my area, and she's making hundreds of masks. I wouldn't wear them, if they were not done nicely **(applause)**, and she started off in the IMANI Programme. I am so pleased and heartened to see the quality of things that is made by this young lady. She is not only makes masks, but she makes outfits. And, if she can make a mask for me Yolande Bain-Horsford, to wear and an outfit, she passed the test. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Brigades; the House Brigades repaired twelve (12) houses. They have also completed two (2) houses, one (1) for a fire victim and the other a special

case. A total of thirteen (13) toilets and bath will be completed for needy persons in the constituency by the end of the year.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Special Projects... Mr. Speaker, could you just give me a five (5) minutes please? I am not asking for plenty, like the others, only five (5).

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead. Five (5) minutes.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Mr. Speaker, eighteen (18) Special Projects, mainly pavements and drains were done, to date, in the following areas: Richmond, Union, Soubise, Sea Breeze Avenue, St. James, La Digue, Plaisance, Sendall Street, Grand Bras, next to the Gas Station, Ford, Canal Road, the Croft, in Grand Bras, Munich, Mt. St. Ervans and Rivulet Lane, at a cost of $259,273.

Asphalt

Asphalt was done in two (2) areas, Mr. Speaker, Gladstone Road and Salisbury Road.

Medical Assistance

Twenty (20) persons were given assistance with CT Scans, theatre fees, dialysis treatment, medication, ultrasound and x-ray and one airline ticket for medical purposes. Mr. Speaker, medication is currently given to fifteen (15) persons every three (3) months, at a cost of $4,381.60.

Ministry of Works

Mr. Speaker, 420ft. of box drains and 30ft. of slipper drains were done at Upper Capital, St. James, under the Ministry of Works. 2,000ft. of slipper drains at Guapo, St. Andrew, at a total of $284,894.00, in total.

Backyard Gardening

Mr. Speaker, thirty (30) households have received drums and other supplies from the Ministry of Agriculture, to support the St. Andrew South-West Youth Backyard Project. I see one of the young ladies is here. Two (2) of them are here, actually. The youth are encouraging all the young persons to have a backyard garden. I want to commend them, Mr. Speaker, they are doing a fine job.

I also want to commend, Mr. Speaker, a group of young women, single headed households, in Union, St. Andrew. They have set themselves into a Cooperative and they have been trained in drying fruits and confectionary. They are making sweets and so. They're well established. They call themselves 'D Cats,' I believe and I am supporting them 100%. They will be coming out with a bang in the New Year to sell all of these things that they are planning and training for, now at the moment. I think Sister Clarice has a similar group in St. Mark. Mr. Speaker, that's the way to go with the young people. These women are single headed households and they can stay at home, or in an area in their community and do these projects, look after their children, send their children to school, earn some money and not depend totally on the Government. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, four (4) Community Centres are being prepared for refurbishment in 2021. All the bidding and the preparatory work have been done and are being undertaken now. They are the Grand Bras Community Centre, the bottom floor, Harford Village, bottom floor and the La Digue expansion, because we are putting a Computer Lab there, Mr. Speaker, and the Union Community Centre. So, all of the preparatory work has been done on most of them, and we are hoping to roll out these projects early in 2021, Mr. Speaker, if COVID allows us to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a very tough, tough year for the residents of St. Andrew South-West. This pandemic has challenged the residents, Mr. Speaker, to the limit, but, they remain resilient. Persons have lost their jobs, also lost their loved ones, as well. We want to assure you, the people of St. Andrew South-West that you are not alone. We will continue to stand by you and with God's help, we will all get through this together.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your unwavering support. I want to thank the constituency, all the members of the constituency for all the support they have given to me. I want to thank especially, my staff at the office. I see some of them here and in the field, and all those who continue to support me and the development of the constituency for South-West. I love you all and I will continue to work with you all to ensure that South-West reaches the stage that it wants to reach in the future.

I also want to thank my colleagues, who have worked well with me. I want to thank everybody. I want to thank also you, Mr. Speaker, and your staff. I don't think we are coming back here in this House. This is our last, not so? No, we coming back? **(Laughter)** Oh, if so, I'll probably leave the Christmas greetings for later on, Mr. Speaker.

But, I want to take this opportunity to thank you all, the young people, the old people of South-West, all the persons out there who have supported the young people, especially, who have formed themselves into a solid group and are working well to develop the constituency and develop the young people of the constituency. I want to thank you all.

I want to take this opportunity also, to thank my husband. He is always there. Look at him. Sometimes he sits at the back and sometimes he sits across from me. Today, he's sitting across from me. I want to thank him for the support he has given me all over. **(Laughter)** He is right there, every time that I turn around. Thank you all and I wish you well. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-West. You see how generous I am to the ladies of the Parliament? You see how generous I am, Honourable Representative, to the ladies of the Parliament? The men are not so lucky.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: We thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Alright. You're welcome. **(Laughter)** Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. John.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I know you are a firm believer in gender equality, so I am looking for like treatment. **(Laughter/Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2021, and I also would like to take the opportunity to congratulate my colleague and very good friend, the new Minister for Finance for a job well done. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs have a mandate to develop, expand and protect the local Business Sector and to promote the protection of consumer interest and welfare. So, in fulfilment of this mandate, the Ministry has pursued a number of important undertakings during the year, 2020. Chief among them, Mr. Speaker, were the activities in support of business development, with heavy focus on the Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises and also trade facilitation activities.

The Ministry also worked very closely, with relevant stakeholders on activities and initiatives to advance the implementation of the Consumer Protection Act. In this regard, the following major achievements were realised in the year, 2020:

One, the Micro Small and Medium Enterprise, which is referred to as the MSME and I will refer to it from here on as MSME, so that Policy, which seeks to reform and modernise the MSME Sector was completed through the funding in the sum of $58,000.00 from the 11th EDF. The policy and action plans seek to create a competitive business environment across our Tri-Island State. The Ministry has established a Small Business Advisory Committee to lead the implementation of the MSME Policy and Action Plan and that will be beginning in January 2021.

In an effort, Mr. Speaker, to boost export of agro products, a Labelling and Packaging Project was undertaken, through funding from the same EDF. Component one of the project comprise of a workshop, for over twenty (20) agro-processors and they were trained in aspects of proper labelling of the product and packaging and you

want to label it, so that at first glance, you would see what it is about. You don't have to squint and the message is lost, if you don't know how to properly label. And that was done to meet both Regional and International standards.

Under Component 2, there were five (5) local Enterprises and they were the Grenada Chocolate Factory, the Grenada Honey Producers, the Mt. Pure Water Distributer, GRENROP, for the spices, and they were all provided with technical assistance to improve their packaging and labelling to help them to better position their products in the market, so that they could have increased sales.

Number three, Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with the National Celebrations Committee, the 'Made in Grenada Expo, 2020' was held with the aim of promoting locally made products to build public awareness of locally produced goods. There were a total of fifty-five (55) exhibitors from different categories ranging from arts, crafts, jewellery, agro-processing products and fruits and vegetables. They all displayed their produce at the National Independence Day Celebrations in 2020, and we are looking forward to having a bigger one in 2021, hoping that we could get there, and by then we should have a handle on the virus.

Number four, Mr. Speaker, the trade facilitation, and this trade facilitation would be the simplification or the modernisation and harmonisation of the export and import processes, and that was recognised as an important issue for the World Trading Systems.

The TFA, and that is the Trade Facilitation Agreement, makes provision for expediting the movement and the release and clearance of goods including goods in transit. And a couple weeks ago, our Ministry had a meeting with all the importers of the supermarkets and it was in an aim of trying to reduce the time that they would take in clearing their goods. Because, Mr. Speaker, once you have a container or businesses waiting for a container for two (2) days on the Port, there is a significant loss of revenue. So it also sets out measures for effective cooperation between the Customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and also to be Customs compliant. It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk about the strengthening of the Customs Appeal Commission, because under the World Trade Organisation Facilitation Agreement, the Customs Appeal Commission was established to hear and determine matters of dispute brought by traders against decisions made by the Customs and Excise Division. The Customs Appeal Commission is intended to facilitate easier and quicker business process, and will reduce the cost at the borders, because the traders will have an expeditious way to address appeals. Normally, Mr. Speaker, you had to go to the Courts, and if you are familiar, or if you have been a victim of the Grenada Courts system, you would know what we are talking about. So, in this regard, you don't have to depend on the Court, that Appeal Tribunal would hear their complaints and try to resolve it in a timely fashion.

The fifth area, Mr. Speaker, is a CVQ Certification for massage therapists, and this is another area of service that we would like to provide, because it is not one that requires a lot, and we have a lot of talented people here, and I know even in the Tourism Sector that might be a key business opportunity.

So, the National Export Strategy, they have also identified health and wellness, as the key sector to boost Grenada's export of therapy services, contributing to the Development Agenda. So, to this end, twenty (20) massage therapists underwent training, and that was facilitated by the National Training Agency (NTA). So, the participants successfully completed their training in Massage Therapy and they received Level 4 CVQ certification.

Mr. Speaker, I am moving to the **Consumer Affairs**. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that we now have a Consumer Protection Act in place, and that, Mr. Speaker, was finalised on the 21st July, 2020. So, members of the public can now get redress for unfair business practices. And, I would take this opportunity to encourage citizens to call the Consumer Affairs Division to lodge any grievances they have, or if they notice any unfair trading practices.

We have a meeting scheduled for next week, Mr. Speaker, with the Telecommunications Sector, on the provisions of internet bandwidth, because right now we are using a lot of Zoom and other methods for carrying on our businesses and

meetings, and it's very embarrassing, if you're in an important meeting and you lose your audio or your video. So, we're having that meeting in which we will be able to ensure that if you're paying for 5 MHz, you will get 5 MHz and not have your service dropped.

We also plan to meet with the Banks, either later this year, or early in the New Year in regards to the fees that's being charged, because some people are calling us saying that if you write a cheque and you have money in your account, but you just make a mistake on the figure, or the writing of the body, it's a $60.00 charge, and some people are working for $60.00 a day, so this is totally unfair.

The other area, too, again that some small business owners are complaining about is that the banking hours are 8:30 – 2:00, and their working hours are 8:00 – 4:00. So, how can you go and cash your cheque? And, if you put it in the deposit on your account, but usually they still want a few days before it's cleared. So, you have a lot of lost productivity, when you have to give employees time to go and cash a cheque. So, these are other areas that we would be meeting and tackling in the near future.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know with my experience coming from the Private Sector, I pledge to give my full support to the business and also to consumers so that we can achieve more economic growth in 2021.

We also have some priorities for 2021, Mr. Speaker. Our Food Import bill for 2019 was $350m, and that's a very high sum, considering that some people say that if you plant a bottle in Grenada it will grow, so we know that we have very fertile soil, so there is no need to be having to import that high amount of food products.

So, Mr. Speaker, emphasis will be placed on reducing this figure by increasing local production. But, Mr. Speaker, people will have to be educated in understanding the benefits of producing things locally, because it's healthier and also it's cheaper on the pocketbook. So, they can participate by having their backyard gardens. My colleague just talked about, at least, thirty (30) persons in her constituency, having that. I know she was in Agriculture, so I am hoping the new Minister for Agriculture would look at us and give us about forty (40), because we depend on fishing and agriculture in our area, Mr. Speaker, so we would like to see much more.

We also, Mr. Speaker, must reduce that large poultry bill, and again, that was $35m. So, we are looking forward to the operation of the two (2) Poultry Production Plants, to play a major role in reducing the importation of poultry by being able to supply quite a bit of that.

We also had a meeting with Caribbean Agro regarding the high cost of feed to the farmers, because this is one of the problems we are hearing, and they agreed, Mr. Speaker, to come up with a solution. So, they are proposing that if the poultry farmers, or the hawk farmers form a good Cooperative or Association, they will be giving a rebate to all the members that buy feed, so we are hoping that in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, we could have that implemented in the New Year.

We also had a meeting with the MNIB regarding their monopoly on sugar and other things and not to rely heavily on the benefits that they receive from this monopoly, but rather to put the emphasis on finding markets for the farmers' local produce. And, they have agreed to do that, so we are hoping that we would see some benefits there in the future. And that, Mr. Speaker, would help the local farmers to concentrate mostly on production rather than they having to go and look for markets.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry, we would also create an enabling environment by developing an integrated framework for support in both the Productive and Service Sectors. This Agenda will focus on the improvement of the Policy and Regulatory Framework and Support Services to aid promotion drawing on skills and capacities, regionally, and internationally including the Grenadian diaspora, review of the Incentive Regime and supporting improvement in facilitating services and activities for the ease of doing business, because, Mr. Speaker, sometimes there are lots of stumbling blocks, especially for people that are new into the business arena into starting a business. So, we want to make it easier for them to get involved and start a business.

So, additionally, Mr. Speaker, the MSMEs will encourage and give them support to establish e-Commerce Platforms, because we are moving in an era of ICT, and when we see what has happened recently, from the epidemic, that we are depending more and more on technology to carry on our business, so we would be working with them to

provide platforms, to provide online services, or businesses, in areas such as payments, marketing and sales.

This initiative, Mr. Speaker, will help the sector to sustain operations and recover quickly from any problems that we have, any natural disasters. The Ministry will pursue the furtherance of the implementation of Government's consumer protection thrust. In keeping with the mandate of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, Grenada adapted the draft OECS Harmonised Model Legislation and passed the Consumer Protection Act. We did that in 2018, so this Act provides for the promotion and protection of consumer interest in relation to the supply of goods and services, to ensure protection of life, health and the safety of consumers. The Act establishes the Legal Framework for the achievement and maintenance of a Consumer Market that is fair, accessible, efficient, sustainable and responsible. And that Act, as I said, came into effect in July, 2020.

So, Mr. Speaker, another area as I said, we all take for granted that the foods that we consume and our imports are all safe and healthy, and we could do so, that is because we do have the Bureau of Standards and they have received international recognition for the way they handle the testing of all these products.

So, Mr. Speaker, to support the effective implementation of the Consumer Protection Act, the Ministry will support the Grenada Bureau of Standards, which has the mandate to develop, promote and encourage the maintenance of standards in relations to goods, services, processes and practices offered to the Grenadian citizenry; to create the environment, which promotes the provision of quality goods and services on the local consumer market.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will facilitate the efforts of the Bureau to develop its capacity to conduct nutritional analysis and monitor the quality and safety of foods supplied on the domestic market, thereby safeguarding human health and preserving lives. So, the Bureau has already secured funding from the CARICOM Development Fund in the estimated sum of EC$2m, to upgrade it laboratory facilities.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we will support the revision of the Standards Act and formulate supporting regulations to enforce compliance and suppliers with technical relations stipulated by the Grenada Bureau of Standards for various products.

The Ministry, Mr. Speaker, will further protect consumers' social and economic interest by empowering them to make informed decisions in Consumer Affairs related issues through robust education, sensitising and educating them on the various programmes that are available and also when you're using the internet to be very, very careful, because, you know that there are lots of scammers out there and the people that are innocent could fall victims, as well.

It was only last week I got a message from whom I thought it was Samsung, because I just bought a Samsung phone. So, some hacker knew that and they told me that I have to get an app for it and I would get it free. But then afterwards, I considered it, I told them they could keep it and I never heard from them since. **(Laughter)**

So, Mr. Speaker, looking at the time here, I think I am going to move to my constituency, and if I have time I will go back to the Ministry, but I know I have a lot here to talk about for the constituency of St. John.

For the past few months, Mr. Speaker, we have lost a lot of people, who have lost their lives for various reasons including Brother Cuthbert Noel, recently, and we had a ten (10) year old through the use of a bamboo accident. And I am saying, maybe, and I use the word 'maybe', if to say our health facilities were up and running, we might have been able to prevent this. But I say, maybe, I don't know, but I think it was till the next day, they were able to get medical help.

But, we also have some good news, Mr. Speaker. There was a very young girl that a guy that went to St. Rose, his name is Vieondi, he saw her lying face down in the water and he went and he pulled her out, and the manager of the Fish Market in Gouyave, Mr. Joseph, came and administered CPR and so, on her, and after three (3) minutes, she started breathing and she was brought back to life. **(Applause)** So, I want to congratulate both of them for a job well done, and also take the opportunity to ask people, when they see things happen like that, get involved, because we have lost a few people in Concord Waterfalls through drowning accidents, and where people just watch at them, rather than getting involved and doing something.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a vision for the development of St. John, and we are doing that in conjunction with the St. John Development Committee. But, part of the

overall objective, is to ensure that we have, in our Towns, we have proper drainage, proper sidewalks, especially around schools, because it's very difficult, when you have traffic and school children competing for the road, because I think the vehicles, according to the Law, have priority, but at the same time pedestrians supposed to have a way to traverse, so we're looking at that.

We also want to increase the amount of parks and recreation areas. We have already started. Those of you all that pass around Grand Roy going to Gouyave, you will see the job that we are doing and that is being done through Special Projects, on the side there. We have a gentleman that's very creative and he is working with us to develop there and once this is finished we would move on to other areas.

We have done the bleachers in Loretto. Then we have another two (2) to complete in the New Year, in Clozier, and also the basketball court in Gouyave, because, at present, if you go where the present pavilion is, you cannot see any basketball. So, we want to address that, and I heard that Lottery is giving $10,000.00 towards that, the Minister of Sports, so we are looking forward to that. Better late than never. **(Laughter)**

Where the Ticket Booth was by Cuthbert Peters' Park was a very narrow place…

(Sound of glass knocking)

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: I don't think that's the bell, eh?

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, that's not the bell.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: The Minister for Agriculture is trying something out there, Mr. Speaker. He heard about the money for… So, we had upgraded that Ticket Booth, to make it safer so that people could come in, in and out of the Cuthbert Peters' Park. And I want to thank the Ministry of Sports for extending the playing field contract, so we now have a contractor doing Power Park, Mt. Granby and Loretto. Before those playing fields were in very bad shape, so I am very grateful for that.

Our focus, as I said, we are not only looking at developing the infrastructure, sidewalks etcetera, but we are also looking at developing the human resource and also we want to make sure that nobody gets left behind. So, we are working with the various Ministries and we are happy to announce that we have five (5) individuals from St. John, and they completed training in the Business and Management Programme, which is the YUTBIZ Programme, and they graduated in November.

We also have twenty-seven (27) young men currently registered with the M-Power Programme, receiving Life Skills and Technical Training with the prospect of commencing their small businesses upon completion.

There is also a programme that will be starting very soon, for the young men in Gun Battle and Mr. Beharry, I know is working on that, so we are looking forward to see how we could get some people to not go into that lifestyle, to try and get alternative methods of making their livelihood.

We had fifty-six (56) additional youths join the IMANI Programme in October, and we have two (2) National Youth Ambassadors appointed. They are Mr. Elon James and Ms. Sabrina Sanderson. We had two (2) fishermen completed and was certified at the Safety at Sea Training Programme held in Trinidad, and we had sixty (60) fishermen in St. John completing the Captain's Training Course, and we have fifteen (15) young people involved in training in Marine Management.

Mr. Speaker, Housing is always a problem with us, in St. John, but we are tackling it slowly. To this end, we were there with the Grenada Housing Authority and they have started clearing the Lot in Stoney Gut, to put about maybe, twenty (20) Units and it's just a start, and they will be doing ten (10) around Black Bay in the Old Wood area, so we are looking forward to this. And, we are also raising funds locally, so that we can build a Half-Way House, so if anybody lost their home due to fire or whatever disaster, at least we have a place where they could stay until they could get back on their feet. So, we were able, during the hard COVID times, to build seven (7) new houses for people who had no roof and we were able to also help about thirty-six (36) people with repair of their housing facilities.

The other programme, Mr. Speaker, is that of the bathrooms and toilets, because that is very important to us in St. John, because we depend heavily on fishing, so we don't want anything doing down in the ocean. So, we were able to help seventy-three (73) persons with bathrooms and toilets this year, and we know, however, the answer to that would be a Community Sewer System, but in the absence of that, we are grateful that we were able to help that amount of people with their bathrooms and toilets.

During the COVID period, Mr. Speaker, our office remained open all day, and I want to thank the workers that volunteered, that they came in everyday to make sure that we remained opened. So, we had at least four hundred and twenty (420) vulnerable families during the lockdown that had no access to income, at least we helped them with food stuff during that time to keep them going. And we had about thirty-six (36) persons, because although the COVID was a bad thing, at least a good thing came out of it, because we had thirty-six (36) persons employed as sanitisers in the schools, and we also had a few other people employed in contact tracing.

Mr. Speaker, the St. John/St. Mark Health Facility is nearing its completion. The Minister for Health talked about it, but I know I had to mention it, because this is very, very important to us, and I was very happy to hear him say that from day one we could expect a different level of service than what we are experiencing now. So, thank you Member for St. George South. We are looking forward to that.

In terms of Agriculture, we had over fifty (50) farmers from St. John receiving some assistance from the Farm Labour Programme, and I am very grateful for that, and the farmers are also very grateful, because, Mr. Speaker, the labour in Grenada is very high. It is not like in Mexico and so, where it's low. We pay very high here, and if you have to do any farming and have to pay the labour, by the time you harvest you don't have much of a profit, so they were very grateful for that.

We also have the Environmental Wardens. They are doing an excellent job in keeping the drains and the rivers and the beaches clean, and we know, Mr. Speaker, that we were seeing a lot of people dying in St. Vincent and St. Lucia from dengue. We, fortunately, because of the efforts that we have done with those Environmental Wardens, I am happy to say that we have no lives lost from dengue.

And, talking about the other programmes, Mr. Speaker, we help the vulnerable and stuff, but the idea is not to let people be dependent on the hand-out, we want to get them out of poverty. So, I am very happy to say that there is a young man that was on the SEED Programme, from Loretto. I have his name. I know he is Dontae Joseph. I would probably get his name after. But, what I am happy about, Mr. Speaker, is that this guy was on the programme, and then he got himself enrolled in SGU, graduated as a doctor and today he is doing his Medical Internship in the USA. So, we are very, very happy, and it shows that even some of these programmes, the benefits that are there, and to see people coming out of them, we are very grateful.

The other areas, Mr. Speaker, we have done quite a lot of development, and even the extreme rainfall is making it a lot difficult for us, in terms of the erosion. And, the drains that were built before cannot handle the water capacity that we see happening now, and the lack of standards, or enforcement of the standards for drains and culverts is causing a problem, because I notice sometimes you put a nice piece of slipper drain, somebody comes and take a little four-inch piece of PVC, put it their concrete around it, so their car could pass, some rains fall, the leaves block it up, and then what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that the people at the bottom, who are complaining, and they don't call them, they call the MP to come to solve the problem. So, we have concentrated quite a bit on trying to repair, or do those drains. I know that in St. John, we have done quite a number of them.

I am keeping my time, Mr. Speaker, so I am not going to talk about it. I don't want to talk about what is happening in Gouyave, because I always hear, well, you are not saying what is happening in these other areas.

We did some slipper drains and a wall in Paradise, that's in Clozier and also along the Clozier main road, right where the Bull Hill meets the Belvidere Road. We did some drains there, to widen this corner. In Douglaston, we also did some box drains and slipper drains close to Drone Height and in Mt. Granby by the Hosten's, by Crispin, we also did some drains up there. The Loretto area, we did some road rehabilitation there, and also Gouyave Estate, around by Josephine Jones, we also did some roads and footpaths there.

We even went to Bar Bay, close to by Mummy Joy. We did a walkway there for the people, because this is all part of our development, Mr. Speaker, because most of the times you get a little money and all you could do is put up a little house, but you have nothing to do the access road, and then you have a few people there, you have children going to school, people have to go to church in their nice outfits, and we don't want them to be going muddy, so we have concentrated a lot on these little walkways. In most areas, you have a main road, but in the Towns, you might have a side road or a backstreet. But in all the villages, you don't have that luxury. People have to traverse some narrow paths to go up to their home, so we have concentrated on that.

We did the same thing in Florida by Ms. Pearl Douglas, in Mt. Sceney, there, that's an agricultural area, by the Bore Congo Road and behind Shaper School, we did some work there with opening the roads for the farmers. But I heard that this year in the Budget they have the new farm roads, so we're looking forward that we can get a little more help in that sector.

We did some work also in Cotton Bailey, in Woodford. We did the driveway and so in two (2) areas in Brooklyn, close to Jason Lashington. Then, in Mt. Plaisir, Mr. Speaker, we have one main road that goes from Grand Roy to Mt. Plaisir, quite a few miles up and again, there is no side road. Everybody has to go up a little track, so we did quite a number of the (4) feet road there for the residents. We did it in Mt. Plaisir, Grand Roy quite a few of them. Then, in the Gouyave area, we have helped, just above Cuthbert Peters Park, we saw that, that wall was sliding there on the residents, so we were able to do a retaining wall there. We did some footpaths in Hills View, another one in Otley Lane by Ms. Avril's house. By Stoney Gut there, we had a lady that lost her both legs, so we had to do a walkway, so that at least she can use a wheelchair. We did that for her.

We had a very good footballer in Gouyave, named Chickerboy and he has lost a lot of his sight so we were able to help him with a walkway and some railings. Those are people who have made their contribution to the constituency in the days that they could managed and now that they are getting… as they say, once a man and twice a

child, so when you're getting back to the second child stage, it's good that at least the community could look after you, to make sure that your life is comfortable.

We also did the public washrooms by River Lane. There was no access there. You go into the washroom, but you have to come out with your foot dirty, so we were able to put a walkway there, to make sure that even if you go in dirty, you are going to come out clean. Along Central and other areas, Mr. Speaker, we did quite a bit in developing the constituency, I have a whole bunch here. But, the people in St. John, they know and they could see. I was just giving them a little summary.

We have another area that we will like to see develop, Mr. Speaker, that of the Loretto Settlement. That has been going on since 1974/75, so we are hoping that the Minister for Agriculture is listening, so that we could regularise these areas there, so people could get titles for the land. And, I want to take this opportunity to welcome the group from St. John, Mr. Speaker. I was supposed to go later, but I was pushed back one hour, so they had to come down with the bus, so they just come in for my conclusion. But, thank you for being here. It's good to see you.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, is that we noticed that our heritage is being diminished. For instance, we see that the site of the first hotel in Gouyave was demolished, and that was demolished by the owners, but then we have no funds or nothing in place, to really stop it and preserve that. We see the steeple by the old R.C. Church in Gouyave, that's falling apart, right before our very eyes, and we have two (2) Forts. So, it's not only St. George's that has Fort George and Fort Frederick, but we have two (2), but they were allowed to deteriorate. People took away the cannons and so.

We also have the caves in Black Bay, but they were sold to some foreigners and the people dug up the road and planted soursop trees, so there is no access to drive there. So, these are areas that we will like to address in the coming year.

We had a meeting with the St. John's Improvement Committee, to see how they could work with us, because these things, Mr. Speaker, you don't need Government's initiative. It is better when the community gets involved, because when they get involved, they take the politics out of it and it becomes a community venture. So, I am

working with them to see how best they could revitalise all these things. For instance, even the jail where Fédon had the people during the Revolution, that area, in the Belvidere, was sold to some private entity. These things should not be. These things should remain as our heritage.

We have all the brick buildings. There is one in Grand Roy, in Mt. Nesbit, in Gouyave, and they are just falling apart, and they are part of our history. These are the buildings where the Estate used to store things, because back then, communication was by boat, not by road, so those buildings were for storage, and we are seeing them falling apart. So, I am hoping that all these things, we can put a stop to them. We are working with Mr. Jessamy to see how we could best deal with it, so that other generations could come and benefit from it and have the knowledge of what's happening.

(The Member took a drink of water)

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Mr. Speaker, I see that I am doing well on time, and I wouldn't go too long, because I know a lot of people don't want to take a long day.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Take your time.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: The Leader of Government's Business told me to take my time, so I would do that.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this year has been a very hard year for us, in terms of the achievements and stuff, but we did very well, and we are hoping to continue to do so. I see from the Minister for Finance's Budget, it looks very promising. We are hoping that we will get a little more for us with Housing, because we are the only Parish that has never received a Housing Scheme. And, I am saying that again, so hopefully, it would fall on the right ear and that we would see one hopefully, before I depart this Office, at least we could see one starting in St. John.

We are looking at the construction of the old Public Works building, in Gouyave. It has started, but it stopped. But I am hoping that when it starts back, we would have plans. I spoke to the PS in Works to have one Central Government Office in Gouyave because you have… if Social Services put an office, which we would be very grateful for, because before you had to go to Victoria for anything to do with social services. So, we are hoping that Government can have that one facility there, where people can go to for all Government services, and including the Parliamentary Representative's Office in that building, so that it will not look like a Political Office, so people could feel comfortable going into that Government Office to do whatever related Government business. So, we're hoping that it could be a reality in the near future, well, hopefully from next year.

We have lighted most of our playing fields. We just have, maybe, a couple more to light. Another area that we have a serious problem is that of streetlights. Since I become a Representative, I don't think we have even received one or two from GRENLEC. I know that the Member for St. George South-East, while he was in Implementation and Works, he was looking at ordering the solar streetlights. I am hoping that this will be a reality, so that we could start putting some down next year, in St. John, because it is a problem that we have. How could you go seven (7)/eight (8) years without adding to your streetlights stock, Mr. Speaker? So, we are looking at, at least if we could get a few. We have quite a few areas that need streetlights.

The other area that we are working with the St. John's Development Committee is the Black Bay Beach, beautiful, maybe one of its kind in the country. We fixed the bridge, but the land again, was sold to some foreigners and they blocked the road to the beach, and the road is deteriorating because there is no vehicle access. So, we are hoping that we could get that resolved, so we could resume access to that Beach.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that I could finish within the ten (10) minute time.

We have another one, the big beach in Gouyave. What has happened is that the people have lost their recreational area there, because there is no management. The fishermen just pull up their boats anywhere, so we will like to work with them. As I said, that cannot be an effort by the MP, because it's going to look political. But again, I am working with the local group, so that it will be a community effort, so that on the beach area, there will be places where people could do their boats, where people could relax or swim, so that there would not be any conflict between the two.

Another area is the people who are repairing the boats with the fibreglass, and that's not good. I have spoken to the Minister for Lands, to see how we could get a piece, we have identified a piece and I know he is there listening, so that we could designate that area, as a boat repair area, so you could do your fiberglass work and your painting and everything without having to endanger the health of the public.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to keep it within the ten (10) minutes. So, at this point in time, I want to say thanks to the staff in the Ministry of Climate Resilience, where I started earlier this year. And, the PS there was Roxy Hutchinson, who did a very good job with us and all the staff of the Fisheries and Forestry Department, I want to thank them for working with me and the sacrifices that were made, because there is a place where you have some people that work really hard and some people that don't work so hard, and its creating a problem. And, it's an area where you have to make sure that you have enough ice, because if you don't get the ice, it's a problem, so, some people, I want to thank them for the time that they worked with me there.

And, also now, in my new Ministry of Trade, I want to say thanks to all the members of staff. We have the Officers that go out to make sure that people are not victims of Price Gouging, so they go around the Island and make sure that their prices are stable all over. Also, the PS, Secretaries and the Director of Trade, I want to say thanks to them for working with me. Mr. Mahon, in this new Ministry, sometimes, the CARICOM meetings go on all after 9:00 at nights, and we have to sit down in the office there on Zoom. I know it saves on the travel, Mr. Speaker, but if you have a Zoom meeting that starts 8:00 in the morning and you go on to 9:00 at night, it's not easy.

But, it's one of the sacrifices that we have to make for our country, and we are doing that.

Recently, with the CARICOM meetings, we are working with the tariffs and all in a way of trying to keep the cost of living down, because sometimes you have some manufacturers, like recently, they want to start doing condensed milk from Jamaica, and they want us to increase the tariffs, so that condensed milk might be more expensive, so you always have a battle dealing with them.

We now have Belize and Guyana saying that they are making refined White Sugar, because, normally, we were importing White Sugar from out of CARICOM. So, we're working with them to see how we could ensure that the quality is the same as that coming in, rather than having to go ahead and put tariffs now on the people. So, we are working with them on that, and we are still working with Trinidad on the Grenada honey issue, because they are still not buying the honey from Grenada, which is contravening the spirit of CARICOM.

So finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and your staff for a job well done. To the Prime Minister and my colleagues, it has been, as I say, a testing year. I missed seeing them every Monday, because we alternate on Zoom, but at least, we're coping and we're looking forward to when we can all go back and be together.

Also, to the people of St. John, it's a beautiful, beautiful Parish. We have everything, from beaches to mountains, rainforests, and it's a wonderful place. And, I want to thank them for the opportunity for me being here to be their Representative and we look forward to working together.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, we might be here before Christmas, so I will keep my Christmas wishes for then, and thank you for coming down here, the people of St. John. It was, really, good seeing you, so thank you, everybody. Have a good one. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. John. Everybody seems to be wondering what is going to happen before Christmas. Alright. Let me give you a hint. On the 22nd, I will like to see everybody again, before Christmas. So, the

22nd, we would meet here. I can see the Representative for St. Mark feeling very happy about that. Honourable… Who is next to it?

Clerk: They want to take a five (5) minute break, it looks like.

Mr. Speaker: They're not sure who is coming?

(Comments by the Clerk)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, it's a good thing to stretch the legs, so let us take a short adjournment for five (5) minutes.

House adjourned at

House resumed at

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, this Parliament has resumed.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Everybody ready? Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are plunged here into this particular unwanted situation. But before I get into the explanation, I would want to propose the Motion, as it's correct procedurally, and then I would speak on it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we suspend the debate on the Appropriation Motion and to take the other Items on the Paper and after we have taken the other Items, except the Appropriation Bill, which cannot be taken before the completion of the

Motion, then we will return to the debate on the Motion, and then approval of the Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, a Motion has been moved to suspend further debate on the Appropriation Motion now, proceed to the other aspect of the Bill, that is the Motion dealing with the Budget Loan and the Quarantine, and return to the other part of it, at the continuation, on Monday.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are in this position, because the planned activities for today's debate was that the Leader of the Opposition should have commenced from 9:00, and as we assumed that he would have taken his maximum period of two (2) hours, and hence we had distributed the period for the debate, in such a manner that we would have ended about 8:30/9:00 p.m. on both days, so that we do not stress out either the employees of the Parliament, nor Members, themselves.

But, as we are now, we have not had the pleasure of the two (2) hours from the Leader of the Opposition, one of our Members, who is a Minister, and we must continue with Grenada's obligation, he has virtual meetings with International Organizations that will benefit the country, Mr. Speaker, and so we had to agree for him to do his contribution on Monday.

That has placed us, Mr. Speaker, in a gap with the hour and fifteen minutes, plus the two (2) hours from the Leader of the Opposition, and Members do have, Mr. Speaker, their constituents, coming to listen to them, as is customary, and when we have seen for the day, a lot of constituents have come in, at various times. The Member for St. John faced that problem, because his members came, as he said it clearly, was at his conclusion. So, he had to call them, Mr. Speaker, and I think we must give his constituents some credit and compliments, because they rushed and

made sure that they came here, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** so compliments to the Constituents from St. John.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the Member for St. Patrick West, he has his team coming. And at first, he told them, be on time, and then he had to tell them, well, be a little more on time, because he himself, must come up and come up for the fact of two (2) hours, plus an hour and a quarter. So, that has thrown our schedule out of where it is, Mr. Speaker.

And if we leave this component, which we would normally do on the last day of the Budget Debate, which are Bills, then we would be here on Monday, God's willing, until 11:00 and 12:00. But if we remove this and do it today, then we have taken that part out, so we could fall back on schedule on Monday. And, that is why, Mr. Speaker, we have proposed that we suspend the debate, that we would bring the component of the other Motion and Bills in the middle, bring the Members, who would contribute later on, so that their constituents will be here, when they are doing the debate, Mr. Speaker. So, I propose the Motion, Mr. Speaker, for consideration and passage. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Representative for St. George North-West and Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I stand to support the Motion, as moved by the Member for St. George South-East and Leader of Government's Business. It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we have to do this, because in my experience in this Honourable House and Budget Debates, it is the first time this situation has occurred, where we have to suspend the discussion or debate on the Budget and do other business of the House at the Parliament Sitting, and then return, in the same afternoon, the same evening to the Budget Debate. But, I believe it was necessary.

But, I do want to make this point. The Member for St. George North-East must understand that he chose to become Leader of the Opposition, nobody asked him to be. He chose to be Leader of the Opposition. And therefore, he has to understand that

goes with it, a fundamental responsibility, which is a natural process, that when the Minister for Finance presents a Budget, and he likes to talk about precedence and picks up a little piece of precedence and forget the rest. It is traditional almost all over the world, in the Region, under Parliamentary Systems and around, that the Leader of the Opposition, if there is a Leader, has to respond. And the Member also received the Budget papers on the 18th of November, all the documents, which is what guides the preparation of the Opposition's response, and the Finance Committee Report, which is the final document, on the 25th.

If somebody accepts to be the Leader of the Opposition and wants to be, and is telling me that he has, from the 18th of November to the 3rd of December to prepare to meet a fundamental responsibility and he is saying he has to wait for the weekend to respond and therefore puts this whole House, procedures and work out of sync? So, the rest of us have to play catch-up because the Leader of the Opposition refused to meet his responsibility and when he was contacted, that he literally hid from all contacts, so that he forces us in this situation? I think we need to call it out for what it is worth and for what it is, a highly irresponsible act on the part of a Member, who says he wants to be Leader of the Opposition.

Therefore, he must know he must conduct himself responsibly, and therefore, I am in sympathy with my other colleagues and all those who have their people coming to listen to them, they are expected to meet that fundamental responsibility. So, it must reflect on the mind-set of the gentleman, who indeed, wants to be the Leader of the Opposition and accepted that position.

So, I just felt that I had to make that statement. I was going to do it, when I started the debate, but since we had to move the Motion to suspend, I thought it was the most relevant time to do so, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Request to Rearrange the Order Paper
Motions: Resolution for the purpose of section 4 of the Quarantine Act, Chapter 271

Motion approved to suspend further debate on the Budget Debate (The Appropriation Motion).

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Resolution standing in my name, entitled:

RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF SECTION 4 OF THE QUARANTINE ACT, CHAPTER 271

WHEREAS it is provided by section 4 (1) of the Quarantine Act, Chapter 271 (hereinafter referred to, as "the Act"), that the Minister may make regulations, as respect to the whole or any part of Grenada including the ports and coastal waters thereof for preventing:

(a) danger to public health from ships or aircrafts or persons or things therein arriving at any place; and

(b) the spread of infection by means of any ship or aircraft about to leave any place or by means of any person or thing about to leave any place in any ship or aircraft;

AND WHEREAS it is provided in section 4 (3) of the Act that the regulations made under section 4 (1) of the Act shall not have any force or effect until confirmed by resolution of the House of Representatives;

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

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient that the Quarantine COVID-19 (Amendment) No. 2 Regulations, 2020 attached hereto as a schedule be confirmed by the House of Representatives to amend the Quarantine COVID-19 Regulations, 2020;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to the provisions of section 4 (3) of the Act that the Quarantine COVID-19 (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 2020, be now confirmed by the House of Representatives.

Question proposed.

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to, earlier today, and we are all aware, undeniable, un-debatable, is that COVID-19 and the effects of COVID-19, in any and all societies in the world is constantly changing. What we knew or prepared for, or what science knew and prepared for, in early 2020, or in December of 2019, is totally different now to what we are doing. The responses, the reactions that countries, that Governments, that hospitals, medical personnel have had to make, are constantly changing. What people expected in the beginning is most definitely, not what has occurred now, and there is still further to go with this battle.

In the beginning of this pandemic and before it was declared a global pandemic, WHO and Pan American Health Organization, CDC, the European Centre for Disease Control, all said that all Governments needed to do and public health entities needed to do was to step up surveillance at their borders, surveillance, visual. Look for persons who were displaying symptoms and persons who may have had a low to moderate fever and test those or isolate those, depending on their travel history, and that would be it.

So, Grenada, like most other countries, went through costs, significant costs, to step that level of surveillance up, and Grenada, like all other countries in the world, has found that we need to go further, and we have. We now require individuals to quarantine, but to clear that quarantine and even before they board their flight. We need individuals too like most other countries, so we are not varying from the International Law. We need individuals to have a test and that test is an RT PCR test before they board their flight, a certain period of time before they board their flight.

In the beginning, when we put this Policy in place, we said seven (7) days, no older than seven (7) days. When we put that Policy in place, it was an acceptable period of time based on the epidemiological situation in the world, which has since significantly gotten worse. And as such, it is no longer acceptable for us to consider that a person could be exposed to the virus still, wherever they are coming from, for seven (7) days, that we need to reduce that period now to seventy-two (72) hours; so which is three (3) days after they have taken the test, three (3) days after the day they have taken the test, or three (3) days before the date of travel, is now the acceptable period of exposure for pre-travel screening, as it is now being referred to. And this may change as well, Mr. Speaker, because the epidemiological situation is changing. Where the disease has gotten out of control, the percentage of individuals infected and new infections per day, continue to rise, exponentially. So, we may have to revisit this again, like we have had to revisit everything else.

On arrival here, we have found a mechanism, which is to minimise, as always, persons' discomfort and disruption, but maintain the scientific principles to keep our borders safe. So, on arrival we have said and the science says one of two things can be done. You can test individuals, at an acceptable prescribed time, to know whether they are, since their last test, to that date and that should be plus or minus, seven (7) to ten (10) days, or you can just leave everybody in quarantine for fourteen (14) days. Nobody moves, nobody goes anywhere, stay in quarantine for fourteen (14) days, as we have done in the beginning.

In order to find that balance, Grenada has said that we will take a sample from you on day four (4) after your arrival. So you arrive, today is Friday, you have Saturday, Sunday, Monday, on Tuesday, we take a sample from you. The date of quarantine, four (4) days in quarantine, you cannot be in quarantine and travel on the same day. You have a travel day, and then day one is the day after you arrive. Some in the industry have said we should count it by nights, regardless. We test at a fixed time. Take a swab, at a fixed time, and that test takes a fixed time to be delivered, approximately two (2) days, and this system has been working. We have been picking up individuals in quarantine, consistently, and it is accepted.

What we are dealing with here today is not the questioning of the protocols. What we are dealing with here today is the cost. COVID-19 is not in the 2020 Budget of any or all countries in the world, and every single country has had to find the ways and means to do what is absolutely necessary to protect its citizens, to the best of its ability. We have done so.

We have set up an isolation facility. We have new doctors, additional doctors here. We have hired over one hundred (100) wardens to go around and maintain and enforce the protocols. We have trained. We closed our economy, our borders, for a specific time, to make sure that we do not have community spread. We have set rules and procedures for people coming in. We have put in new software now for application. We have gone to a Paperless Entry System. We have GPS device. People have to monitor that back office, as well.

What we have found though, is that, in some cases, this cost is unbearable. The cost of running the Travel Desk and the wardens is approaching $4,000 to $5,000 a month on all of these safety measures and then the cost to test everyone because most persons will opt to be cleared from quarantine as early as possible.

So, we cannot bear much more and still maintain Housing, still maintain Education, still maintain Youth, still maintain all of the other Ministries that we have been able to for the year, and we will not do a deficit Budget either. So, it brings us to where we are today, where we have to say, another in a serious of difficult decisions, but we have to make it, which is that individuals who chose to travel to Grenada or chose to travel out of Grenada to go elsewhere and need a test, will have to pay for that test, because the country cannot bear this cost, gratis. It is just not practical for a Small Developing Country as ours, to do this.

And as such, this Resolution puts into Law what that charge would be, the mechanisms of, we will work out, but to put into Law, because it's a charge for, on behalf of the Government, it must be clearly stated what the amount is. So, the Resolution has put forward that amount in Clause 4, 10, **"for the purposes of these Regulations, the cost of a PCR test is $405.00 Eastern Caribbean Currency or its equivalent in United States Currency,"** which is what we have been charging

individuals, who need it for their own private travel out of Grenada. They haven't changed. We are not adding more to make revenues or to plug. We are bleeding, financially, by maintaining these protocols, to keep us safe. And as such, it is only fair that the traveller pays for it and not all of the taxpayers of Grenada.

The other expenses are still there, and if not insurmountable, very close to insurmountable, but we recognise. We will do what we can, bear what we can, but where it becomes intolerable, we have no choice, but to do what we are doing now, the Resolution requesting that it be put into Law, that the individuals who need that PCR test to clear quarantine, they must pay this first, either before they come to Grenada, on arrival to Grenada, or before they clear quarantine. That mechanism we can work out, for what is the most convenient between the finance, as well as the travellers and options. But, it has to be paid.

So, I put this before this House and as I have said, it has become absolutely necessary. We have held out, as long as we could. We are into the millions in the total. We can do no more, and as such, we have no choice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. George South. Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Resolution, as presented by the Member for St. George South.

Mr. Speaker, the Member has been very clear on the issue at hand, and I do not want to belabour the point, but I just need to add a few things, because I think it is necessary that we understand the situation. Just in case, the Member was very, very clear, and I don't know that there is much more that could be said. But the reality is, we did not budget for that, we did not cater for that, and we do not have the means to sustain what we have been doing.

I well recall that in one of the incidents we had in this country, about seventy-eight (78) persons had contact with one of the individuals who misbehaved, and those

seventy-eight (78) persons had to be tested twice. Seventy-eight (78) by four hundred and five dollars ($405.00) by two (2), and we can do the Math, and that is for one (1) incident, and it has happened more than once, and a number of other persons would have had to be tested, adding to the burden.

Mr. Speaker, the additional costs burdens that had been inflicted on us by COVID is not just for this test. It is for the number of persons, the technical persons, the nurses who have to go and take the sample, that cost has not been factored in. The wardens, who have to go out. The Minister said the number, in excess of what? Sixty (60)/seventy (70) persons?

(Members said one hundred)

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: One hundred (100) persons, who have to go out to do the contact tracing and whatever is required. Physicians were brought in. We had a team of Cubans. We had a team of nurses coming in, and all of those requirements had to be met.

At the Airport, we had to do some infrastructural works, move things around, put some physical structures like what they call the sneeze guards, the sort of plastic, what do you call that one?

Hon. Nickolas Steele: The Prospects.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: The Prospects, to prevent; and I know the Private Sector has had to do it too, but we have had to do quite a lot more. And, also they have had to set aside a room for someone who may come in or might be leaving, and be found to be having symptoms that could be compatible with the disease, they have to find place for that. So, all infrastructural things and the other things, the hand sanitizers, the non-contact, the thermometers, all of these were additional expenses that were not catered for that had to be met.

So, I think it is being very reasonable, when we only put the cost for the test and not for any of the other costs associated with the test, or with the COVID disease itself. And therefore, as we present our Budget, every Member is talking about what they have had in 2020, what their expectations are for their Ministries, what their expectations are for their constituencies. We cannot do a whole lot for our country and for our constituencies and continue to meet that heavy burden of debt. It just is not sustainable. It cannot be done. And while I, in Tourism, I mean, I would have liked it to be otherwise, because I am thinking that they might be a little bit of a backlash. But, the reality is, any how we go, there will be a backlash. If we do not cater for the cost, we will feel it somewhere down the line and very soon, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in supporting the Resolution. I believe it's the right thing to do. I believe that as a Government, we have to take responsible decisions that would keep the country running and not run us down into the ground, so I support the Resolution, wholeheartedly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Mark. Honourable Representative for St. George North-West.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I stand to give full support to the Quarantine Motion, as moved by the Honourable Minister for Health and Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say, that the country as a whole, has given the Minister and the Ministry of Health and the Government, by implication, tremendous credit for having protected us, from since this pandemic hit the entire world. **(Applause)**

It's also fair to say that when we examine what is taking place, right around the world, we are to be proud of where we are, while we still have some infection. But, relatively speaking, we've done very well. And therefore, from the outset, when the COVID Sub-Committee of Cabinet was given the authority, led by the Minister, to protect the country, and after that period was over, an additional COVID Committee was

appointed to take it to the other stage, as we moved towards opening our borders, we must give high commendation to all the members of the team.

And, that's why I believe that the initiative by the Ministry of Health and by the Minister is certainly, one that must be commended again, because it's showing that we have been proactive. As things happen, we do what we have to do to protect this country. And it is clear, with all our good intentions, we cannot assume that people will just listen to us. We have to do everything that we have to do, to protect ourselves and our people. And in the process, as the Minister pointed out, it is costing a lot of money to do what we are doing. And in the face of this, while we have to ask people to make sacrifices, we are now, as the Minister for Finance pointed out in the Budget, we are asking the workers of the country that we have signed agreement to, to defer increases of salary in 2021, because of the financial problem that pandemic has caused us. So, while we are asking workers to forgo legitimate increases that they deserve and we signed to legitimately, we cannot at the same time, having to deal with the pandemic and deal with all the increase in costs, and not ask those who are coming to our shores, whether it's Grenadians returning or visitors, not to make a sacrifice. If we're going to ask our own workers to make a sacrifice, everyone should be joining in that effort of sacrifice. **(Applause)**

So, it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this is very reasonable, and in addition, and I think the Minister pointed out not long ago, the Airlines. When this pandemic hit initially, Mr. Speaker, we were asking the Airlines that they must help us with the Testing Programme, and the Minister for Tourism would remember the Airlines didn't want to hear nothing about that. They said they were not going down that road. And I thought it was strange, that here you are, your business is being threatened, people are literally frightened to travel, to go on a plane, because of possible infection. You know what happens when you are in the air and the secured one space there and the circulation of air, the chances of infections is much higher, than if you are outside. And to refuse, it seems to me that you can be sued. If a man goes in there and can show that he goes into a plane and he's free of any virus, and he gets out and he's tested again, and then realises, he can literally sue the Airlines, so I thought it was strange.

And in speaking to a number of the Airline Executives, I couldn't understand the rationale of it. But it appears that they have now come to their senses, and they all now recognise that it is necessary. In fact, some Airlines have already been putting in place, systems, as the Minister for Tourism has pointed out, to test people before they board, which is, to me, an excellent sign of more cooperation, in dealing with an international problem that none of us were prepared for, originally.

So, I think in all this, it seems to be very clear that we are doing the right thing. And I think more and more, even the question of the charges on persons who deliberately disobey the rules that we have set in place, we have to be heavy with the fines, as we would see in data, as far as the Bill coming up, is concerned.

So, I applaud the efforts again, of the Ministry of Health and the COVID team, who have worked so well for us, in bringing forward this Motion, and therefore I give my solid support, Mr. Speaker, to this initiative on this Motion here today, to protect this country once again. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Members for their support on this Motion. And just to add a little further to this, that this Motion does have, in section 4: **"The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance may waive the application of sub-Regulation 1, in respect to a person, if the Permanent Secretary is satisfied that it would be just and equitable in all circumstances to do so."**

So, if someone is travelling for medical, and has returned, because they had a medical emergency or so, then there is the possibility, under specific circumstances and at the discretion of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance. So, Mr. Speaker, it is there where it is equitable and just. It is not just and equitable to consider… We have had had between twenty-five hundred (2,500) to three thousand (3,000), conservatively, people coming in, every month, since we opened. By that Mathematics, we've spent $4m to $5m on tests alone. That's a small school that we've

forgone. Minister Thomas can tell you how many houses she could build, for people, for that. That's quite likely, half the expenditure of this building, of the Governor-General's residence that we've foregone, Police Stations, that's another Polyclinic in another area of the country, that we have foregone, and we cannot do anymore, Mr. Speaker. So, I thank the Members for their support, and thank you for the opportunity. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. George South. I saw your light on. Sorry. Okay.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading, the Bill for an Act shortly entitled, 2021 Budget Loan Authorisation Bill, 2020. And just to indicate, the first Bill, which is the Appropriation Bill cannot be touched now, because we have not finished the Motion.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. We will leave that out.

Clerk: A Bill to authorise the Minister for Finance to borrow specified amounts of money, from various sources to finance the 2021 Budget, shortly entitled, 2021 Budget Loan Authorisation Bill, 2020.

Bills

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.
Relevant Standing Order suspended.

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

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, this Loan Appropriation Bill follows the customary format of giving the Government Parliamentary approval in order to enter into loans. And, Mr. Speaker, it is for a loan amount of EC$330m, Mr. Speaker. And, the approval is required, Mr. Speaker, for the following reasons: it is to enter or retire loans, bonds and promissory notes; to finance the 2021 Budget, with respect to the following institutions, and it says: "any legitimate institutions." But it is targeting, in particular, Mr. Speaker the International Development Association (IDA). Why? Because we have negotiated, Mr. Speaker, over $169m from institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, etcetera.

We have had a Bill in place, Mr. Speaker, and that is why the $22m that the IMF assisted us with for COVID, remember that, that $22 m we got. St. Lucia got $28m; St. Vincent got some and many countries in the world, got the money. But, for us to accept

it, Mr. Speaker, we have to have Parliamentary approval. So, where did we get the Parliamentary Approval, from Bills like these, Mr. Speaker, that we pass with the Budget every year; the Budget Loan Authorisation Bill. I remember, Mr. Speaker, leading the negotiations for the US$22m, while we were under lockdown.

Before the IMF would have transferred these funds, and they did it, Mr. Speaker, in the shortest space of time, because they were quite aware, and we sent these things up to them, the Loan Appropriation Bill. So, we had space under an existing Loan Appropriation Bill, and so they sent the US$22m, forthwith. Had we not had that, Mr. Speaker, we had to wait until we came into Parliament, when it was sometime in May or June. That was the time that we would have had to wait, pass the Bill, and then we would have gotten this.

But, Mr. Speaker, the US$22m was needed, and before we worked with them and got approval from the Board, Mr. Speaker, the next time, it was in our account in the ECCB, within hours, and then the local bank drew down on it, and then we could have paid a lot for the Minister's for Health expenses out of that $22m. Then we could have gone, Mr. Speaker, into the EC$50m, Supplementary Appropriation Bill. That's where most of it comes from, and that is why we have structured it in this way, for many years, for us to do that.

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, we have the International Development Association from which we have just negotiated again, US$25m, and most of it is to help us with budgetary support, because of all that Minister Steele has spoken about and more, all the wardens that we have to pay, all of this, all of that. Remember, we used most of the $22m in that EC$50m Supplementary Appropriation, to help in the Tourism Sector, to help farmers, to help a lot of other people. Mr. Speaker, we use that already, so we need more. So, $25m has been negotiated and approved, but they would not transfer it, Mr. Speaker, until, because when we use up all the room in the Appropriation Bill that we have remaining, most times we come, Mr. Speaker, for one US$100m, but we had enough space there. We had about a US$30m remaining, so we used that for the 22.

Bills

The IMF is watching, Caribbean Development Bank is watching, World Bank, and they know when that is expended, so we had to do nothing for that. But now, the $25m that we're getting, close to $60m, which should hit our account after the Senate would have met and given approval, within hours, it is into our account, and that is why we could have said in the Budget for 2021, we will finance the Budget from these funds, and these are the funds that you hear us talk about so much, ten (10) years grace. So, for ten (10) years, you pay back nothing. Thirty (30) years to repay, interest rate, 0.75%, Mr. Speaker.

That is why we could boast and say our debt is sustainable, because the creditworthiness is not only to go to the high interest rates people, you know. Oh, they will lend you, quickly. But, when we could command, because of our fiscal prudence and behaviour, when we could command those concessionary loans, Mr. Speaker, that is why we could go on to say. If we take, Mr. Speaker, a $10m loan at 8%, for fifteen (15) or twenty (20) years, that is worse than all the other debts that we take with the concessionary loan, you know. That makes the debt unsustainable. But, when you have these long grace periods…

At one time, I was talking to an Official from the World Bank, and he said he gave us some free financing. And I scratched my head, right around, and I said, free? And, in looking back, I thought, well, we don't have to pay for it. 'Free' means the cost of it. It is virtually free. And so I asked him, why do they use these terms, and he took me through the business, and at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I am seeing that this thing, it reaches down to, as if we have to pay just one thousand dollars ($1,000.00), a month in the year, twenty (20)/thirty (30) years, hence from us. So, that's why it's concessionary loan. And at the point in time, as the Member Boatswain and others will tell you, it comes as if, it's negative financing, because they are getting nothing, the value of the thousand you have to pay them there, is now worth negative monies, and you're so good going ahead, you can't scratch your head. So, it's free loan and it makes it sustainable, Mr. Speaker. So US$25m there targeted under here, Mr. Speaker.

Bills

When we look at the other components of it, the Caribbean Development Bank, now, they've given us a loan to repay a loan. In other words, if our debt to them for this year was US$5m, they tell us, don't pay the $5m, you have to pay it back, you know, but don't give them in cash. They gave us another loan to pay a loan. It means that your cash flow is stable, and then you don't have to go bankrupt.

However, it is another piece that they give you, so they refinance for you. Take this new set of money and pay off what you should pay, the instalments you should pay this year. But, Mr. Speaker, in order to take any loan, we must have Parliament approval, and we have gone out under the GSSI, the G20 Sustainable Initiative, and they're asking us, all countries should go to do the same thing, you either get monies from where you get if from. If it's the same person who lend you, go and get it, so that you do not go bankrupt, because when all the countries in the world go bankrupt, as poor, as we are and undeveloped, we're putting a big strain on those developed countries, too, you know. So, they gave us that. The G20 says, we'll ask all our members to lend you some money in order to finance the amount, the instalment due, in 2020, and some of them for the instalment due in 2021, because every country has great shortfalls.

You heard us say that we had $182m earlier in the year, and we'll close the year at $132m shortfall. We have closed the gap a little bit as the economy starts to take over and return. But before we get anything like that, we must have it in the Bill. Or we have asked certain people, some may be looking well. In fact, we've told them that their sustainable initiative is not working too well. So, they're putting more pressure on the various Developed Countries to say, give the people some monies, so they could pay the instalment for you. But if we could get that money now and we don't have it, then we have to wait for two (2) months and we have to rush to Parliament. By the time we rush to Parliament, another country takes it. We have to be ready.

So, the construct of the loan support that we have here, Mr. Speaker, referred to as the Loan Authorisation Bill, is extremely good for us. And then you say three hundred and thirty (330). Why is it so much? You're going into new loans, so I've told you the areas that we'll go into new loans; that $25m that we're getting from the IDA

and those little pieces. The CDB only gave us about $5m, you know, so it's not a lot. And the G20 countries, the Paris Club, they gave us little or nothing. But we didn't have a lot with them too, a little bit again, $4m/$5m, not a lot from these people. Where most of the funds will go, Mr. Speaker, is in the regional, the RGSM, the Regional Government Stock Market Exchange, that's where we trade our bonds, the Government Bonds for the people in the region, particularly the OECS Region.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, every year we retire it. We say we roll it over. So, we tell the persons, we're going to pay you, so we give him a cheque maybe, without any cash, the same concept. We give him a cheque and he turns back and he gives us a cheque. Nothing leaves the Treasury, but it's recorded that we have paid the millions and we have one of the biggest amounts there, that is over EC$200m there to roll over, Mr. Speaker, so we roll it over. But once we pay off this debt within ninety (90) days, ninety (90) days. But, you pay for it, without cash, and you're taking a loan. You dare not take a next ninety (90) days loan without the permission of the Loan Authorisation Bill. You do that, and the State is not responsible.

So, we're coming here to ask mainly, for roll over. The biggest amount of this thing here, Mr. Speaker, is rollover. And, when we look at the bonds that we have, we sell Government bonds and instruments to people in the Caribbean. And, what we notice now, Mr. Speaker, is that people all outside, you know, United States massive organisations they're taking our bonds, you now. Yes, although it is mainly for our Caribbean people. Our Caribbean people are taking Grenada bonds more than anything else. Anytime you go on the market and you say, we have some bonds to put out, they're going to take it. And when we say we're rolling over, they're coming, and we have to use our skills to say if the ninety (90) day bond is 1.5, and we mustn't get fooled. Ninety (90) days, Member for St. Patrick West, and every ninety (90) days roll over, and the same amount is 1.5, 1.5, 1.5. So, it's not the best compared to IDA. But, it is still good. It is stationary there.

And if you tell them well, I want to pay you off; you might have bonds holding for some people, about $20m, and instead of roll over, you say, let them pay you off. Grenada bond, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, 1.5, well, let me go down to 1 for you.

Would you keep it at 1? And that is how you know when your people respect you in the International Community and in the Regional Community.

So most of these funds, Mr. Speaker, a large amount, over $200m and we never… We have bonds out there with respect to that. And when we roll over that entire $200m, we need the Loan Authorisation Bill here, otherwise, the banks and the people working for them, will say, well, yes, we want to take it over, but where is your authorisation. So, everyone looks, including the IMF and the World Bank, and they know how much we have out there, in T bills and so on, ninety (90) day bills, and then with this we can roll it over. And these things have been rolled over, Mr. Speaker, years and years. It's not a novelty, Governments before. It's rolling over and it is sitting there. All you do is paying interest on it. And that's why when we tell you our debt is sustainable, we know it's sustainable. And if you're not prudent fiscally, and the investors say, I want my money, it means you have to find the money and give it to them. But, they're not saying that. In Grenada's case, every time you want to retire some, they tell you they dropped their rate, they bargain with you. Yes. But, if they only think that you need more money, they will not ask you to retire it, but they'll go up with it, Mr. Speaker.

But, the Loan Authorisation Bill is to allow you to react quickly, to take things on the market. The Caribbean Development Bank, the Eastern Caribbean Development Bank, the Regional Government's Securities Market, (the RGSM) and other companies. So, how many we have there, $200, Mr. Speaker, $260 and the rest, we are looking at the ECCB, who has told Grenada, that you have funds there. All the eight (8) countries have funds there. You know how much they used to lend at, Mr. Speaker? They used to lend at 6.5%. But, because of COVID, they've dropped that to 2%. We must be ready, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have a fiscal buffer there, that's about a little $30m/$40m, to be able to go to the ECCB and say, give me some of these monies, at the 2%. If we see debt and other things that we can do, that's costing us 8 or 9% now, then we can take this and go there.

But, Mr. Speaker, if we don't have that Loan Appropriation Bill, and they ask you, where is your Parliamentary approval? It is there. So, the $330m, the only new pieces

will be, is the beautiful IDA funds that we should grab quickly. But all the rest of it, Mr. Speaker, existing debt, and we would not increase the debt any more than these two (2) lovely pieces that we are prepared to take. And as soon as this Bill is passed, it goes to the Board, in a couple days, and then you see they ship this money down to you. You know what we can do with $65m? And, they tell you it's budgetary support. So, you can take this and retire 6% debts. That is why we are managing it this way, Mr. Speaker, as the Public Finance Management Act requires us to do.

In that component, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by making it abundantly clear that the $330m that we've asked for, it's to take that $25m, that would be new debt. And we recognise, as beautiful as the IDA debts are, we recognise that we have to pay it back. So although Grenada is in a position to always borrow and to get Development Policy credits on loans, we don't go.

I indicated to the International Community, Mr. Speaker, we will do what is right, and what is right for Grenada. In these COVID times, we need it. At any time, we'll need it to retire, more expensive debts. You refer to it as free, so take free debts and retire expensive debts. And the RGSM, we're not increasing those $200+ m) we have in bonds and things for the last five (5) years. You rollover, you rollover, you rollover, you rollover, but we need the permission to roll it over, Mr. Speaker. And with these remarks, Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Bill for its second reading. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give my full support to the Bill, as presented by the Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, COVID has changed the landscape of Grenada and the world, as a whole. We had to meet expenses that were not budgeted in the 2020 Budget in this current year.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that the first quarter of 2020, we exceeded budgetary allocations, what we projected, in the first quarter, that's January to March. Everything

was on stream and then COVID came, we had to lockdown and at the end of June, we were collecting 50% less revenue.

Now, this 2021 Budget has a deficit, which must be financed. A Budget deficit is financed through loans, grants and savings. The Minister is asking for approval for $330m. Given the prudent fiscal management over the years, we know that we can have control over the Debt to GDP Ratio.

In 2013, it was 108%. At the end of 2019, we brought it down to 56%. **(Applause)** It is this space that we have now that we could borrow and bring it to 69% in 2021. Imagine if we were stuck at 108%, and we had to borrow, what situation we would have been in? It is because we were able to manage our finances in such a prudent manner, we are able to bring it down, and now we have a little room, because the ECCB guideline is 60%. We achieved that, even before 2030. The ECCB says by 2030, they want every Member State in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union to keep their Debt to GDP Ratio at 60%. This borrowing would bring it to 69% and once the economy starts picking back up, before 2030 we could see the debt to GDP Ratio reducing again. So the debt sustainability is the key thing, you know, Mr. Speaker, and that is how the IDA resources from the World Bank, that the Minister of Finance mentioned…

You know the first year we got the first US$25m, only Grenada in the Caribbean qualified? Only Grenada, because when they looked at the macro economic targets that we set ourselves and the ability to meet it and the way we managed the country, that is why we're able to get IDA loans, US$25m, forty (40) years, 0.75%. So while it is a debt, yes, but it's very, very concessionary.

The Budget this year, with the gap, the Minister in his Presentation indicated that $172m will come from NTF Grants, so that is a cushion. If we did not have this NTF Grant of $172m, the Minister would have had to come to Parliament for much larger borrowings. It is this cushion of $172m from NTF Grants that makes the borrowing less again, because of prudent fiscal management over the years, **(applause)** that we're reaping the benefits now from, so that is the context in which this is coming.

I heard outside by the Opposition figures, saying because we are hit so hard with COVID, our Debt to GDP Ratio will sky rock over 100%, because you must borrow over $500m and all sorts of numbers they are calling. We are not doing things here by guess. Our books, they can read the IMF Report, the World Bank Report, the CDB Report, ECCB Report, they all are monitoring what is happening and they're all satisfied with Grenada's ability to borrow. And, so this Loan Authorisation Bill will ensure that we can finance the Budget and deliver as we promised to, in the 2021 Budget, and that's why I give my full support to this Bill. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for St. David for his support. I know he has intrinsic knowledge and he has been articulating in many places, so that others, who should already know, may learn, of exactly what is happening, and so that we get the correct information out to our people.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill again, will facilitate us receiving the funds from the IMF. It is not going to increase our debt by more than what we get from the IMF, and a little that we get from the GSSI. So in the vicinity of maybe $25m to $35m, that's the way it's going to increase, but the $330m, the major amount of is to, not retire, but to rollover, so I repeat that. You pay off what you have in the first there, and you borrow again. But to borrow again, you need the sum of it. So, the country must rest assured that the three hundred and $330m Loan Authorisation would not increase the country's debt by $330m. I therefore, commend the Bill for its second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Bills

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question put and agreed to.
House in Committee.
House resumes.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.
Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time and passed.

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill, entitled, Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Bills

Clerk: A Bill to amend the Quarantine Act, Cap. 271 shortly entitled, Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, there is a common thread here, as well. It continues to be the recognition that this pandemic is unpredictable and that what we need is the ability to react as quickly as possible when science…

Mr. Speaker: Excuse, Honourable Member, we have not gone to the second reading yet. We had the first reading announced, so do we want to waive anything? Oh, the Clerk did announce the first reading, so it has now read the first time, so you want to move on from there. Right, so we want to suspend the Standing Order, what you want to do?

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always guided. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker: I know.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to have the second reading of…

Mr. Speaker: Now, let us suspend first.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Suspend. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, suspend the Standing Orders.

(Inaudible comments by the Clerk)

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Yes, so the Bill can be taken through all its stages.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, there is a common thread here…

Mr. Speaker: So, so we're going to the second reading now.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Second Reading, you have…

Mr. Speaker: Right so…

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South, you can proceed now, Sir, please.

(Laughter)

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Third time, lucky. Yes, Mr. Speaker. There is still a lot to learn and react to this COVID-19 pandemic. The question is being raised now, of the implementation or distribution of a vaccine, as one instance.

We are unaware, fully, as to how or who will go. We have said and we are maintaining, and, to the best of our knowledge, most of our CARICOM and OECS brothers and sisters are saying the same thing; that we will subscribe to a WHO/Pan-American Health Organization approved vaccination, when that time comes. That as well we have seen here, with the measures that we have put in place for quarantine, is also following prescribed measures that we believe that individuals coming from one country to another would understand and follow. But, we are seeing individuals are not necessarily doing so and that when we first came, we passed Legislation and Regulations, with respect to the fines for what we thought would have been the rare and

possibly not at all, occasion of somebody breaching this. We have found that individuals have breached, blatantly, and we respect the independence of the Courts. But, we have found that based on policies and precedents of the Courts themselves that we have not given them the teeth that they may need for the seriousness of the offence, in terms of the jeopardising.

Mention was made earlier, by my sister from St Mark, that in one (1) breach, seventy-eight (78) individuals had to be quarantined and tested. So, there's not necessarily a correlation between the seriousness of the offence and the penalty that the Law prescribes. So, in the first part of the Amendment here, what we are asking for is a little more weight on the penalty should an individual not follow and do the responsible thing. So we are asking for a change from what it was before, up to $10,000.00 and not more than six (6) months.

And, I am told that the protocols and procedures, with respect to the Judiciary, that they have to take into consideration first offence and whether there were any offences of what character of the individual previously, and must discount regardless of the consequences of that infraction, that's their rules.

So, what we are trying to do is to give them the leeway to assist us, but also, bring to bear, more appropriately, the consequences of the action. So instead of $10,000.00 to move to $25,000.00 and I would welcome if this House would consider more, but just $25,000.00), and instead of six (6) months, up to one (1) year. And in both instances, the wording remains the same, but the figures change. Up to $25,000.00 now and up to one (1) year. And, we believe, based on the same judicial procedures and etcetera, that they would be able to apply close to, if not more, than what we originally were expecting as a penalty. So, that is the first part of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, and it has come from significant public outcry, as well.

The second part of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, gives… unrequested, but necessary, the ability to react faster. This Regulation speaks to what is referred to as affirmative resolution, which means any changes like now, any variations that may be needed to be done very quickly based on change of the science or knowledge or

breaches that we are seeing happening, would need to come before this House and there is a required notice that must be given etcetera.

We're asking that just specific to the Quarantine Regulations, those Clauses speaking specific to the questions that maybe asked, the time etcetera, those specific things, that the Minister may have the power to change that, and then we'd go to negative Legislation, which would be that the House would have the power to negate it.

This disease has shown, and with the breaches, that in order to keep the border safe, it is necessary to contemplate them, because, as I have said previously, and I will repeat again for this purpose, when we first contemplated a COVID-19 Act as a whole, compared to where the world is now, it's worst. The risks from outside are greater and the need to have strong mechanisms in quarantine, even more so, now and by all admissions from the very countries that are experiencing it, it will get worse before it gets better.

So, the number of the individuals coming in may be the same, but the risk of one of them being positive increases before it gets better. So, the ability to adapt in order to keep our border safe specific to quarantine is needed at this point in time, at this stage of the virus and what we are contemplating, and the hope that in future we may consider otherwise. And the reason that it changes now for Quarantine Act that has been in existence for decades before, why do we now need to remove the affirmative part of it? It is simply because global travel, movement of people has changed significantly, compared to when this Quarantine Act was first considered. And we have seen that this virus and the situation in the world is changing much faster than expected.

When this pandemic was declared a global pandemic, and by definition that means that there are cases on every Continent of the world. Not that it is everywhere in the world. It's declared a global pandemic when there are cases in every Continent of the world. Within three (3) days of that, it was here, which is within the notice period for this House to sit if we leave it at affirmative. So we saw it move faster than our legal process allows us to, and that is why, in this instance, and only in this instance, which

speaks specific to COVID-19 Quarantine Regulations, that we are asking for this, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give full support to the second reading of the Bill, as put forward by the Minister for Health and Member for St. George South.

Mr. Speaker, first the increase in penalties, I think that the Nation is up in arms about the penalties and the charges placed on some of the persons, blatantly violating the system. I think they're looking to us, to put more prevention efforts in place.

While we cannot really impose the fine, and while the legal luminaires indicate that no matter how you write the Law, it is the prerogative of the Judiciary to give you up to. But if there is a case where they see it fit that they should give the higher penalty, the bar must be lifted, so that they can so operate, Mr. Speaker. And I've heard many people, people in my constituency, people whom I met and people who… when you listen to on the Shows, Mr. Speaker, on the various Forums, the disgust of the communities, with respect to the actions, you know, of some people. I hear some of us say, particularly the younger folks that, well, it's not killing you, and you know you get sick and you come back. But, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, when the risk runs close to them, you see a different attitude. And raising the level of the penalties should discourage people. And we thought it was local alone, but it seems that local and external citizens all, you know, do things that would require a deterrent. So it has to be done, Mr. Speaker.

And, with respect, Mr. Speaker, to affirmative action, we have been grappling, Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Finance to pay a lot of the expenditure incurred by the works to deal with COVID. But do you know, Mr. Speaker, even if the Member signs the Bill, it must come here. So, it's only after it is gazetted that we can charge persons

for something that is so necessary. And I believe that removal of the affirmative action will allow us to respond, and to respond quickly to an environment that is ever changing.

And so, Mr. Speaker I support the second reading of the Bill in that it will allow us to manage, as we have managed before and to be better able to conduct the affairs of the nation, with respect to health and with respect to the COVID pandemic, Mr. Speaker. I think it is absolutely necessary for speed, because from where we speak, Mr. Speaker, we see a lot of problems, with every time we want to pass something very quickly that could save lives, we have to wait before it comes here, Mr. Speaker.

We have to balance very carefully, the affirmative action, with the risk that is out there. If *per se*, Mr. Speaker, the affirmative action was necessary and it only had to do with the purchase of property, or even perhaps the loss of property, then maybe, you could say, well, we'll keep the affirmative action. But, when it has to deal with lives, Mr. Speaker, we definitely want the Executive, the Minister, the workers in the Ministry of Health to be able to respond, quickly.

Imagine the CMO and all the staff and even all the private doctors telling the Minister for Health, you must do something now. He has to summon Parliament. We will rush, without the notice, but within a space of hours, a lot can happen in Health, Mr. Speaker. If something hits the shore out there, if the Minister can put something in place, forthwith, and get it into Law that we must work, I think we should be able to do that, where Health is concerned, Mr. Speaker. So, I do not expect any problems from, whichever fraternity, Mr. Speaker, in the removal of the affirmative action, in order to allow the Ministry of Health, collectively, because you don't expect the Minister will; Regulations must be passed by the entire Cabinet, you know, Mr. Speaker. So when you have the collective wisdom of the entire Cabinet saying that something should happen, I think we should give some credence and weight to that, and obviously the professionalism we will get from them. So, in this context, Mr. Speaker, I support the second reading of the Bill. **(Applause)**

Sergeant-at-Arms: Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Bills

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for his support and I just want to add that that some may say, well we've gotten this far with COVID-19, why do you need to put this now? Because, Mr. Speaker, as has been said and can be confirmed, optimistic figures are and estimates are that by first quarter to middle of next year, 3% of the global population will receive a vaccine, and that by the end of 2021, 20% of the global population. So, by all estimates of the scientists, COVID-19 is not gone as yet, it's here with us.

Countries like Grenada have grown accustomed to, as we say: "Life with COVID, without deaths with COVID in our own country." We do have to take those additional measures, because we are not, as we have heard some from other countries say, around the corner on this, as yet. If we are, then this Bill is specifically entitled, the COVID-19 Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, and would only have the powers with respect to COVID-19. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that just to add for those, who may question, or make mischief of the timing of this passage of this. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)**

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question put and agreed to.
House in Committee.
House resumes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendments. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.
Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Honourable Members, we revert back to the Motion on the Budget of Estimates and Expenditure. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-East.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 2020 was an extremely difficult year, many sleepless nights, Mr. Speaker, for many of us in the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Speaker, while no one has died in Grenada from the deadly virus, COVID-19, over one million people, worldwide, have already passed. Mr. Speaker, like other sectors, the Education Sector has been seriously affected by; I almost said, Hurricane Ivan, by COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the more I think of this situation is the more I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist David in Psalms 46:1-3 and I quote: ***"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging".***

Mr. Speaker, it is in this spirit, I stand today, to firstly, commend the Minister for Finance for his Budget Presentation and to say, Mr. Speaker, that I give my full support to the 2021 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Mr. Speaker, if you ask me I will say that this is a Budget of hope, in the midst of a crisis. **(Applause)**

Relatedly, Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the significant allocation to Education, $124m, representing 10.2% of the National Budget. In a crisis, Mr. Speaker, I say this is a clear demonstration of a Government who understands the importance of commitment to education.

Mr. Speaker, I will refer to her as your counterpart, Nancy Pelosi, when she said it very well. Pointing to the correlation between education and wealth in the US she noted: ***"Nothing brings more money to the Treasury of the United States than investment in education of the American people."***

Mr. Speaker, research is very clear. It shows that there can be no greater investment in the future of a country than the investment in education, and it's clear that this Government understands that.

Mr. Speaker, in difficult times, we need strong and decisive leadership, and I speak now to the Ministry of Education in the context of all levels of the Education System. Strong and decisive leadership is required at all levels, especially now.

I am also convinced, Mr. Speaker, that this decisive and strong leadership is not just needed for this crisis, but that is what is going to take us through to the Education Reform that we love to speak about. Without that, it will never come. And so, Mr. Speaker, I appeal to all leaders in the Education System, to rise to the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to go back a bit, to March 2020. And it's not my intention to bore you at all, but the pandemic triggered the immediate closure of schools. I was not even prepared for this. It came at a time when we felt that many

things would continue as normal. But, Mr. Speaker, we had to shut our schools down and manage twenty thousand (20,000) students and seventeen hundred (1,700) teachers from home. What a challenge this has been for the management of education in Grenada.

But, Mr. Speaker, immediately, some actions were taken, and I just want to remind us this afternoon. We immediately launched the MSTAR Online Platform, used by many students in preparation for the CSEC Exam, which followed. Twenty-five thousand (25,000) credentials for students and teachers and Administrators were issued. We recorded and we distributed online tutorials for the MSTAR Platform. We created and we uploaded content for students preparing for those exams. A new App was launched and was made available to students without any cost, with twenty thousand (20,000) Practice Questions for CSEC examination.

Mr. Speaker, over sixty (60) educational videos were created and aired on Television Stations, YouTube, major Facebook pages, and these videos were later requested by other countries for their use.

Mr. Speaker, we trained a total of fifteen hundred (1,500) teachers, online. Videos were recorded and aired to assist and support, not just teachers, but parents, as well. The approval and the procurement started for the purchase of over twenty thousand (20,000) devices and eighteen (18) e-books. We partnered with DIGICEL and LIME to secure free data and cell phones to provide to teachers and students, who indicated that they had no devices to communicate or to access information from the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Speaker, we also partnered with those companies to zero rate those Learning Platforms. A list of Platforms was recommended for teachers and students and we got those companies to zero rate these Platforms.

Mr. Speaker, we distributed cleaning supplies and sanitising supplies to all public schools, we didn't anticipate that this was going to happen and we started immediately to distribute supplies. We developed a national time table that catered for multiple students in a home, functioning with one device, at least. We developed, with stakeholders, protocols, approved by the Ministry of Health for the reopening of schools,

whenever that came, and we provided psychosocial support for parents, teachers and students, online, later at the schools. Mr. Speaker, we held on-going consultations with our stakeholders. During this period, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we remember all principals, all teachers, all ancillary staff were paid and paid their salaries on time. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, today I was reminded and I did not even believe it was this long, school remain closed for six (6) months. I did not even realise it was that long. Mr. Speaker, during that period, our marginalised students, our students who were hit hardest, the poor and vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, you know this Government has always been big on closing the gap between the rich and poor, particularly when it comes to education, but they were most hit during that period and we continue to find ways to address this.

But, Mr. Speaker, despite those challenges, despite, you know, how gloomy the picture looked then, we took a bold decision that we were going to allow our students to prepare and to write the CSEC exams. Mr. Speaker, to some, this was the worst decision ever made. To others, we should have waited till 2021. To others, Mr. Speaker, this would never work. But thank God, Mr. Speaker, there were sufficient people, who believed in the plan and were prepared to contribute to make it work with the help of God and it did.

Mr. Speaker, we brought our students back and in total, eventually we hired over three hundred (300) cleaners and about one hundred and fifty (150) monitors, to help create a safe and secure environment for our students. And so, Mr. Speaker, over two thousand, three hundred and two (2,302) students exactly, wrote the exams this year. Mr. Speaker, 77.3% was the overall national pass rate, an improvement compared to 74.54% in 2019, and 70.5 in 2018.

Mr. Speaker, seventeen (17) schools had a pass rate of over 80% compared to eight (8) schools in 2019, and six (6) schools in 2018, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I pause therefore, to specially recognise all of my colleagues for their continued support. I pause to recognise, Mr. Speaker, those principals and teachers and all officials at the Ministry of Education who went beyond the call of duty to help

make this possible. Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone knows if they went beyond the call of duty or not. I shall say no more on this. Mr. Speaker, many worked extremely hard, many sacrificed, many give up nights' sleep. Many abandoned their families to make this possible.

Mr. Speaker, last year, this Ministry was assigned a budget of $121m. Working with many of our partners, we were very fortunate to receive additional support to make it through this crisis, and so I want to recognise specially, today, Mr. Speaker, some of our major partners, Funding Agencies, external; the OECS, CARICOM, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, Basic Needs Trust Fund and UN Agencies UNICEF and UNESCO. Mr. Speaker, they contributed significantly to the success during this period.

Human Resource Management

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate something that I've said before several times, the importance of strengthening our human capital within the Ministry, improving decision-making guided by empirical data. And so, Mr. Speaker, in that context, I wish to say that in 2020, we completed our Corporate Plan, strategic period, 2021 to 2023, with strategic priorities for all Departments; the completion of standardised templates for monitoring, evaluating and implementing and that would increase in 2021; appointment of key personnel, in various critical positions, such as the Head of School Feeding, Researcher in the Planning Unit, Institutional Strengthening Officer, and recently approval for appointment of nine (9) Curriculum Officers. Mr. Speaker, we completed our Staff Care Policy. With a massive staff like we do have, including our teachers and all others in the system, it's very important to be guided by a Staff Care Policy, and so there's been a team sanctioned working extremely hard to support management in that regard. Training and Development was also a major feature in 2020, extremely important for the work that we do. In keeping with the goal, Mr. Speaker, of providing educational opportunities to our young people, ninety-two (92) scholarships, over $20m awarded to Grenadian students in the midst of a crisis. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, not just the amount of monies, not just the amount of scholarships, but, Mr. Speaker, the people, who mainly benefited from these scholarships were the

poor and working-class of our society, going off, and I daresay coming back to make a difference to the landscape of Grenada, economically, socially and otherwise. And, Mr. Speaker, I am so happy for all of these students, who are going off, have gone off and, Mr. Speaker, we are tightening up our policies to give them additional support, ensure they come back, they are bonded to serve their country and serve their country, well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognise all of the countries, all of our partners, who contribute to this programme. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to announce also that the Human Resource Development Unit will be reorganised and restructured in 2021, making it more fit for purpose. Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you say more fit for purpose, some people seek to define this as victimisation. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, if you keep doing the same thing over and over and over, and you're getting the same results, which is not the result that you want, well something has to be wrong. And so, when it comes to the Scholarship Desk, when it comes to Skills Training, Human Resource Development, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work there to do and we must look at reform of that Unit.

Mr. Speaker, improved access to Educational Curriculum through technology, I can almost safely say that this there defined the period that we exist in. But, Mr. Speaker, what is most significant about this time, COVID-19, I call it, is that we are way better prepared than we were, when we experienced the challenge of Hurricane Ivan, as an education system. We are far more resilient and, Mr. Speaker, what a golden opportunity it is now **(applause)** to strengthen our resolve, to build our capacity for any other future disaster that would affect our Education System to the point that we have to shut down our schools. So, we are building back better, as Lieutenant Stichie said in one of his songs: "We're Building Back Better."

Mr. Speaker, there are four (4) pillars, and we always refer to them: Electronic Learning Devices; Training of Teachers; Appropriate Content; and Connectivity. If you're speaking about the technological age, if you're speaking about education, those are the four (4) primary basic pillars.

Mr. Speaker, a fair assessment of what has happened in the region, during this period, would easily conclude that Grenada has been leading, when you consider those

four (4) pillars. But, Mr. Speaker, I add to that, that the region does not seem to expect less of us, because, over and over, they refer to our Prime Minister, as the Champion Voice for ICT in the region, and I don't think they expect less of us. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, how are we doing on those four (4) pillars? And, the region has been looking.

Devices, Pillar No. 1: we have just concluded the distribution to all secondary schools, both teachers and students, and we are almost ready to begin distribution for primary school teachers followed by primary school students.

Pillar No. 2: how are we doing there? Training of teachers, we have trained over fifteen hundred (1,500) teachers, with Certificates at various levels, as it relates to e-Learning, and we are about to roll out Phase 2 to continue building the capacity of our teachers. Some of them said they never even turned on a computer before, so they appreciated the support that they received. And what I love about the support they received, Mr. Speaker, we used teachers to train teachers. So, we use our top IT teachers in our schools, to facilitate those training sessions.

Pillar No. 3 – Content: Mr. Speaker, we have started uploading content on MSTAR, and we now have those eighteen (18) subjects, in terms of our e-books and a suite of Apps on our devices distributed, thus far. Mr. Speaker, a major project has already started as it relates to local e-books for primary school students, as well, and I am happy to say that those books are being designed after the OECS Harmonised Curriculum, and most importantly I believe, people who have a passion for education would be happy to know that they will be culturally relevant to the Grenadian society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a quick comment, as it relates to schoolbooks, that for this school year, we announced that at the secondary level, those e-books would work alongside our regular textbooks, hardcover textbooks that we have, and that process would be for the school year, and the same will happen for the primary schools, as we reduce the purchasing of regular textbooks in our system, and I will speak to that shortly.

The fourth Pillar, Mr. Speaker, therefore, Connectivity. What have we done? Mr. Speaker, through the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister and this Government, prior to COVID-19, high-speed Internet was installed in all of our public and private

schools in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this placed our students at an advantage, especially in a time like this. We additionally purchased one hundred and eleven (111) charging stations that will soon be distributed to our schools, and those charging stations will charge up to thirty-two (32) devices, at a given time, along with the purchase of Mobile Device Management Systems for our various devices.

Mr. Speaker, we went on to add a Help Desk at the Ministry of Education. Thus far, investment as it relates to Technology, as it relates to e-Learning within our system, giving our students the edge in Grenada, Mr. Speaker, $20m dollars investment.

Early Childhood Education

Mr. Speaker, children under five (5) are at the most critical stage of their development, but sadly, Mr. Speaker, when you look at what has just happened, these children would have been significantly hindered in many ways. Children above five (5) may be able to manage a bit, on their own. As they grow older, it increases, in terms of their ability, and, Mr. Speaker, we know in some cases, these children do not have any support at home.

But, I want to specially recognise the staff at the Early Childhood Department, and that is a Department that has been used, as a model throughout the region, the Early Childhood Department of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, parents have made serious efforts, and I want to commend those who have made sacrifices, and those who have not done so well. So, we do have cases where parents have a device and they refuse, that's for their private use, they cannot share it with their children, unfortunately. But, Mr. Speaker, many, many parents were very supportive during this period. So, what did we do in that area? We collaborated with the team, Early Learners' Programme, and we hosted sessions for parents, online. During this period, they engaged over four hundred and eighty (480) parents, in the Early Childhood Section, providing support, particularly, in the area of Literacy. Virtual sessions were held, in terms of keeping our children safe. Approximately three hundred (300) parents, Early Childhood parents participated in

those sessions. Mr. Speaker, the focus was on Child Abuse, Internet Safety and COVID-19 safety, being COVID-19 safe.

Mr. Speaker, training of public pre-school teachers; one hundred and ninety (190) teachers were trained during this period, one hundred and ninety (190) Preschool Teachers. Virtual training for parents, how to help your children at home, those were all facilitated by that Department, and in addition to that one hundred and ninety (190) students benefitted from Special Bags that were presented by the Unit, with support services and also materials for parents to assist their children at home. That category, that age group of students, it's extremely important that we place emphasis there.

Mr. Speaker, the transition, from pre-school to primary, of course, we are going to have challenges there, in terms of readiness, and already, the Department has been working, developing a Policy, developing additional strategies to provide additional support, so that no learner is left behind. That is our goal, that is our mission, our students must not be left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to School Administration and Management and to say that during this year, we have drafted the School Governance and Management Policy, very, very critical, management of our schools, that's key. The recruitment policy, how do we recruit people in the system? Mr. Speaker, every school that I visit, principals, management team complain about the quality of some of the teachers recruit in the system. While we do have some, they are excellent, Mr. Speaker, there are weaknesses in our Recruitment System and so that would receive great attention in the New Year. The Policy has been drafted and we are working on reviewing that.

There has been already some changes, as it relates to improving Performance Appraisal within our schools, and next year, Mr. Speaker, we are moving into the 360 and we are ensuring that Performance Appraisals are of the quality, that it matches performance to what is on paper, because sometimes when you see what is on paper, it's a far cry from what is in reality.

School Inspection

We started School Inspection. Of course, when school shut down, we had to stop. But, very, very critical, the Law requires it. We have not done it for many, many

years and we restarted the inspection of schools, as outlined by the Laws of Grenada. But not just the inspection of our public schools, Mr. Speaker, the Law speaks clearly, of what should happen if any individual desire to open a Learning Institution. But of course, somewhere along the line, I think we lost it and everybody just did whatever they want, when they want, how they want. And I am happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that it appears that the message is out and now people are doing the right thing, which is, you want to open an Educational Facility, you first seek the authorisation of the Ministry. It is inspected, people are comfortable and you go to the Treasury, you make your payment and you get a permit to open a school, and standards are extremely important. We did have a few that did not meet the requirement, Mr. Speaker, but we were able to issue permits to a number of schools.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention Teachers' College as I am on that. And I am sure you recall that I mentioned that this year we did not take a batch of students, meaning teachers, going off to Teachers' College, as students, primarily because, Mr. Speaker, one, the situation now, financially, does not allow us to do that. It means that we were going to be spending over three million dollars ($3 m) to take new people to replace those teachers, as they go to Teachers' College.

And, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, we believe that there is an urgent need to review the Programme at Teachers' College, to make some changes. We've met with the leadership there. They are totally happy that this is going to be done, and we are taking the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing, as some other countries have moved to do already, which is to introduce, officially, Pre-Service Training. So you are trained to be a doctor, you are trained to be a nurse, you're trained to be lawyer, you're train to be almost everything else, except a teacher before you go to the classroom.

So, we want to institutionalise that and to ensure that we can speak of pre-service, as a requirement. But this is very encouraging, Mr. Speaker. Why is it encouraging? Because some young people have already recognised that this is important, and you know what is going to happen? We are going to get teachers, who really do have a passion for teaching, who really want to teach. So I really want to

teach, I am going to pursue a career in teaching, I am going to go through the process of being trained to do that.

And you know what is happening, right now, at the College, Mr. Speaker? There are persons there, who have gone to start the Pre-Service Training in the anticipation that they would be engaged in the Teaching Sector because these people do have a passion, and that is the route we want to go. So, we are going to work with our teachers who are not trained and are in the system. The College has identified a number of ways to facilitate the training of all the remaining teachers in the system and thereafter, Mr. Speaker, it would now become compulsory that you train first and then get into the Training System. And mind you, some of our colleagues in the region are ahead of us, in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use the opportunity to speak about regularisation of Teachers. It has been a well spoken about subject in the media. And just to say, one, that we have completed grouping our teachers based on years of service that of our temporary teachers. We have identified vacancies within the system and we've also identified most of the teachers, who are eligible, Mr. Speaker, and the process is on-going. Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, we consult with all of our principals in that regard, and we are going to be moving this process forward.

I want to also make mention of School Security, another major issue of concern in our Education Sector. We have collected data from most of our schools and we are working with the Royal Grenada Police Force to assess the situation, make necessary recommendation, and then we are going to take action in 2021, based on the conclusions. So I know this is a burning concern, but we want to do it right and we are working with the RGPF, in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke of our pre-schoolers, I spoke of them, as a special group, because of their age. And I want to speak about another special group, which is our Special Needs Students. Mr. Speaker, we are extremely concerned just as we are about our pre-schoolers, about how they are also affected during this period. What we have been doing, Mr. Speaker, we started creating those special videos and to share

with them, to reach them and give the necessary support. And I want to commend all of the officers, who have been working along with that sector.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide various services, our itinerant teachers and all of them still working in that particular sector. But, we have developed a Policy that we want to implement from January 2021.

Mr. Speaker, all of the stakeholders has come together. They have identified the issues, they have looked at strategies and now we want to move into the implementation of this. Meanwhile, we have over twenty (20) teachers, I believe about twenty-two (22) of them, currently being trained at SGU, teachers in the system, currently, being trained in Special Education and we look forward to the completion of this training, so that they can be a further asset to this Unit and the work that we want to do with our Special Needs students.

Mr. Speaker, the Guidance and Counselling Unit have been extremely important to our students during this period, and I believe students are affected just like adults in this crisis. And so, by the end of October, the Department was able to facilitate over six hundred and eighty (680) Guidance Counselling Sessions, helping over one thousand, one hundred and seventy (1,170) clients, virtually, and five hundred and forty-five (545) students in person. Mr. Speaker, that is in addition to the support they provided online, during the crisis.

Mr. Speaker, our School Feeding Programme, another important programme and we have done, in 2020, a thorough assessment of this programme. We have presented to Cabinet, the findings, and we have engaged a Head of the Unit and we are moving aggressively, to address the issues there. Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that this programme is extremely important to our students.

The issue of cooks and other ancillary staff within the system, Mr. Speaker, we are moving to outsource some of these services to improve quality. We are moving to outsource to improve efficiency, and I will not give any details of some of the challenges we have there except to say that we are going to start with a Pilot Project, in the New Year.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of schoolbooks, I want to make mention and reference to the fact that we have done also, a very thorough review and the findings we concluded, Mr. Speaker, that we have to make some drastic adjustments, as it relates to what has been happening. We did not order any books in 2020 and, Mr. Speaker, we did not really need to order. We hear of hoarding all the time, and it also applies to schoolbooks. So, when the team went out into the schools, we were able to find sufficient books in boxes, in cupboards, in every place that we were able to collect and redistribute to schools that did not have and needed.

So, in many cases, Mr. Speaker, I have to confess in this programme, we have spent some monies that we did not have to spend. But, more so, Mr. Speaker, more so, over twenty thousand (20,000) books in the system cannot be used. Some of them are brand new, as we would say, in perfect condition; one, out-dated. So, we know after every how much years, the edition of a book is changed and Miss says: "No, you cannot bring this one, because you have to get the new edition." What happens to that book, in perfect condition? Mr. Speaker, that is why I am in 100% support. When I look at what has been happening, I perfectly support that we can upgrade our edition of our books, e-Learning style, Mr. Speaker, e-Learning style. **(Applause)**

Those twenty-four thousand (24,000) copies, Mr. Speaker, I have not yet spoken about those that were damaged and those that were under houses in the mud. I have seen them myself, going house to house, I have seen them myself, I have even spoken about those. So, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's well justified, the approach that this Ministry is taking in this regard. Not everybody might like the approach. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at what is happening on the ground, you have to confess that we have to do something in many regards.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak very briefly, about curriculum, to say that 2021, and I am saying it here, my team is listening, must be the year of Curriculum Reform. 2021 must be the year of Curriculum Reform. We have to ensure and I am so happy that the OECS has the new HR Strategy that really helps and guides us, as to what do we really want out of a student coming out of our system right now? What are we producing? What are we turning out, after five (5) years in secondary school? What are we turning

out after two (2) years at TAMCC? Mr. Speaker, we have to review and we have to look in its broadest possible sense, of where we are going.

And, so one of the things that we are seriously considering, Mr. Speaker, is a merger between the Curriculum Unit and the Testing and Measurement Unit that has been working so far apart, but needs to be working so closer together, in relation to what we are doing. And, the assessment, Mr. Speaker, will now become the feature, instructional support, so not testing and measuring entirely, because we are not producing students to test them to pass an exam. We want to make sure instructional support becomes the priority and assessing students to ensure that they meet all of those requirements, not just academically, that we are so concerned that they should achieve. Mr. Speaker, this would require us to seriously build capacity within the two (2) Units and we are ready for this. Mr. Speaker, during this period, they have been doing reviews, as it relates to our e-books and working with the team, as it relates to those we are in the process of developing.

Particularly, as we speak about testing and measurement, we all know what happened, as it relates to COVIS-19 and the CPEA, and I want to commend the Unit for the resilience, the work that they had to do to make this possible. But I also want to make an announcement, Mr. Speaker, it is just too much drama over transfer of students. Mr. Speaker, we have to review this and we have to get it right. And so, when you don't have policies, when you don't have things on paper, everybody has an opinion and when everybody has an opinion, then you have a problem. So, Mr. Speaker, we've already started in consultation with our stakeholders, the drafting of a Policy, as it relates to the transition of students from primary school to secondary school. And, inclusive in there would be the very famous topic of transfer of students. Policies are important to guide. If everybody has an opinion and everybody wants to implement their own opinion, then we have a different issue to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on, I want to speak on the subject of school infrastructure. And I have to say this, that we have been blessed, Mr. Speaker, in 2020, as it relates to school infrastructure. And I want to specially recognise the support of my colleague, the new Minister for Finance. Well maybe, if he was the Minister for Finance,

then, if it would have been better, or not better, Mr. Speaker, but extremely supportive, as it relates to the work that we were able to accomplish this year. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my special appreciation to him, as it relates to this.

Mr. Speaker, this year we were able to do a number of school renovations, repairs, expansion and even construction of new schools, so the sanitary block of St. Dominic's RC School, this was actually opened this year. We also had the Brizan/Happy Hill Preschool, and these two schools are going to be merged and now they're going to be the Beausejour Early Childhood Development Centre, Prime Minister, and this was not the Ministry's view. **(Applause)** Parliamentary Representative for St. George's North-West, I want to say how proud I was of the people of the constituency, who came together, collaborated, had their different views, but eventually agreed. Two (2) schools, coming together in a different community into one school, I know that could be a challenge. **(Applause)** I applaud them for the level of maturity that they displayed during this process. That will actually be costing a total of $2.5m, when you merge that together with the Paradise Preschool, which is almost completed, in St. Andrew. Mr. Speaker, the River Sallee Preschool, undergoing some renovations, will continue in the New Year, as well.

Major Projects, in terms of repairs: Presentation Brothers' College, a total of $4.6m; Grenada Seventh Day Adventist Comprehensive, $7.2m; Bishop's College, $10.8m. Mr. Speaker, St. Andrew's Anglican Primary; Grenville and Grenada Christian Academy; I am so happy to say that we have moved from the talking stage. We've moved from the designing stage, and we are heading into the tendering stage for those two (2) new schools, in same location, as it relates to St. Andrew's Anglican, different location, Grenada Christian Academy. St. David's Secondary School, much talk about that, nationally and locally in St. David, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report, we have been able to settle the issue of land for a new school for St. David's Catholic Secondary School, and we are moving now into the design phase for that particular school.

Mr. Speaker, forty-five (45) schools are being repaired at this point, that would run into early next year, under a Special World Bank Programme, and, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that we continue to get the support of the Ministry of Works. School

Maintenance and Repairs, the best thing I can find to describe it is to say it's a major headache, a major headache, and it's an everyday headache, if you consider the number of schools that we have, and so working together with principals and stakeholders is so very important to get this work done, and I thank everyone who has been part of the process.

Mr. Speaker, under Skills Development, and I know that Minister Moses would have made reference to those projects in in the St. Patrick area. I am sure the Representative for St. Patrick West would also make reference to those. But I just want to make the general point to say that in 2021, Mr. Speaker, greater emphasis would be placed in a strategic way, as it relates to Skills Training at the National level, looking at our needs, analysing our needs and training to meet our needs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quickly make mention of Libraries, and to say that we have done an assessment of Libraries, nationally, and we have taken some decisions to provide greater support. Persons at the community level, they are still crying out for support, as it relates to library services, and we have started this process of providing additional support. As a matter of fact, this week, we are going to be providing computers, because, in these modern times, if you have a library and it doesn't have a computer, you are not really ready for 2020. So, next week, we would be handing over some computers to some of our libraries at the community level and this will help to go a long way.

Of course, the St. George's Library is always a hot topic, Mr. Speaker. I said last night at a function, that we are in discussions with someone, who has indicated willingness to give support to this project. It is a major project, millions of dollars. We are not in a position at this time yet, to do the repairs there, but I also want to say that Government has started the discussion of whether or not we continue to provide that service in its current location, and that is also for final decision on that particular matter.

There has been major national concern too, about the archives and materials in there that are considered to some people, very sacred, as important and sacred to them, and we understand. And I know people like Pastor Worme are extremely concerned and I really was happy to note that there has been the start of work, as it

relates to the digitising the archives. A lot has been achieved thus far, and I believe the Phase 2 is what we are looking to go into and, Mr. Speaker, this is so important for so many people. I have been told that some of the materials in there, it is the only copy in the entire world, some of the material that is there, one remaining copy existing, and so it's very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, under Religious Affairs, I want to quickly mention that we have been working very closely with the churches and we continue to do so. In January, we will be rolling out a programme where we are going to be seeking the support of churches to provide greater support as it relates to community development and engaging young people at the community level, and we are going to be working closely with the churches on that particular project. It's not a new project, but it actually was on hold for a couple years, and we are going to restart that project in the New Year.

In addition to that, I want to quickly make mention, Mr. Speaker, of a number of policies, wrapping up on education, a number of policies that we are working on, because we recognise managing a Ministry of this magnitude, policies are extremely important to guide. A lot of things, Mr. Speaker, have gone out the door. It's like the horse ran out of the stable, that's how I can describe it, in the absence of policies. A teacher just got up, gone off and study and then write and tell you, that you have to pay her, and then she gone to study something that is totally out of line with what the Collective Agreement says and she comes back and she says she needs an increase in salary, demands an increase, he or she. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, policies and I'm very particular about policies to guide. In the absence of that, everyone has an opinion. Everyone believes that their opinion is the right opinion and that's danger.

So, Literacy Policies, and these are polices that we have started working on and would be completing very early in the New Year, Literacy Policies, National Sports Policy for schools, National IVET policy, Promotion Acceleration and Retention Policy, Pre-Service and In-Service Policy, Home Education Policy. Mr. Speaker, some people believe that they can home school. The Act gives accommodation, but then, they want to have their own terms of what you should do and what they should do, because the Act doesn't spell it out. Unless we have policies, we are going to have problems.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, Human Resource Development Strategy, Substitute Teacher Policy, if a teacher goes off on Maternity Leave, within two (2) days you should be able to replace that person. It shouldn't be two (2) months passed and you cannot find somebody to put in the person's place. A lot of things, I believe, Mr. Speaker, when we settle on policies, those would guide. And then the Values Based Policies are extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, our Research Agenda in the Ministry and regionally, we have been recognised for this, we have appointed a Research Officer. As a matter of fact, the OECS and CARICOM have recognised Grenada for this, and we have started the research. The first research presentation made and it is amazing the findings, Mr. Speaker. Maybe, at the next Sitting, I will actually speak to that particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, implementation of a fully functional e-Learning Ecosystem at the Primary School level, training of teachers, students, at all levels, as it relates to blended learning, the implementation of EMIS, (Education Management Information System), Enhancement of MSTAR, these are some of the Initiatives for 2021 that we intend to pursue and vigorously so, as I said not just for now, but for the future.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Mr. Speaker, I want to also make mention that schools that have not been serviced this year, that have been listed to be serviced, that we continue even during the vacation period and early into the next year, there should be no need for worry, as it relates to schools' infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, Government Information Service; all I would say on this, two (2) things; one, I want to commend the team at the Government Information Service for their service during the period of COVID-19. In many ways, they have stepped up to the plate, keeping the Nation informed, **(applause)** providing information that is relevant and, Mr. Speaker, they have been going some very long hours, and I want to commend them publicly.

But, while I do so, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that we have a lot more stepping up to do, a lot more stepping up to do. The Government Information Service must be of a standard that represents. And so, Mr. Speaker, we started the process of restructuring that Unit, and very early in the New Year, we are going to be rolling out some new initiatives as it relates to representing that restructuring that I have spoken about and the restructuring for greater efficiency and greater quality. And, we are not just talking information sharing, but education of our society. And I am not talking academics here; I am talking about education, in its broadest sense of the term. I am sure we will all understand the importance of this. I also want to recognise them for the addition of several programmes during this year, and during the crisis, which means the potential is there. So programmes on law, social affairs, agriculture, sports, community development, health, youth and education. Several new programmes have been added, and, Mr. Speaker, we continue to work on those.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by making special reference and recognising, Mr. Speaker, all persons in our Education System, including those persons, who have retired this year, persons who have made valuable contributions, not just to the achievements of the Ministry of Education, but particularly, servicing the needs and all needs here of our students throughout Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I have attempted to use this opportunity to give a thorough explanation accounting for what has happened in the Ministry of Education this year, in the midst of a crisis, in the midst of tremendous challenges. And it will be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, if I did not recognise a few local Organisations: the National Training Agency; National Accreditation Board; other Government Ministries and Departments; FLOW; DIGICEL; RUBIS (Grenada Limited); Peace Corp; Grenada Cooperative League; St. George's University; TAMCC; Republic Bank; Grenada Red Cross.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognise our partners, as it relates to Human Resource Development through scholarships: People's Republic of China, Cuba. I also want to recognise in a special way, St. George's University and all other partners, as it relates to opportunities for our students.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to specially recognise a very supportive team at the Ministry of Education. I have never tried to fool myself, Mr. Speaker, in thinking that every person will be supportive, that every person will catch the vision, that every person will understand the vision. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe that what I have seen over the past year, tells me that there is tremendous hope as we continue to build on the foundation of other Ministers for Education, other retired officers in the Education System, and we continue to do that with great hope.

And, so I want to specially recognise our Permanent Secretaries. I want to specially recognise our Chief Education Officer, our Heads of Departments, as mentioned before, our principals, our schools' managers, our teachers, Denominational Board, Grenada Union of Teachers and all other stakeholders in education.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up, I want to shift and to make two comments as it relates to the T.A. Marryshow Community College. Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that on the next Budget Presentation, if God so spares my life, and I am here, I would want to begin my presentation speaking about the T.A. Marryshow Community College, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, the transformation that is going to take place in that College would be sufficient to begin the presentation.

I want to applaud and commend my colleagues and Prime Minister for the very tough, bold decision that was taken, as it relates to the leadership of the Council, which must have been very, very difficult, that there was a change in the leadership of the Council. I want to recognise the outgoing Chairman for his service. I want to thank him for his dedication during that period. Mr. Speaker, a new Finance Committee was appointed. A new Chairman was appointed, and we cannot look back too much, but it is so important to move forward and the process of prioritising.

Recently, the report was received from the University of the West Indies, Arthur Loc Jack and Minister Mosses worked very hard with that team, in terms of the ground work of preparation for that report and review. Mr. Speaker, the report was received, and we are now analysing and assessing. And, Mr. Speaker, I commit to this House, I commit to the Nation that some major actions will be taken as it relates to reform and

development of the T.A. Marryshow Community College. Major decisions would be taken as it relates to the T.A. Marryshow Community College.

Mr. Speaker, I know I am almost out of what I call the official time, and so if I can sincerely beg your indulgence for an additional ten (10) minutes to quickly report on my constituency.

Mr. Speaker: That will be unofficial time?

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Unofficial. Yes, Sir. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. You have ten (10) minutes in unofficial time.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Very much appreciated. Very much appreciated. I do understand you did not have to do this.

Mr. Speaker, St. Andrew South-East. I am still very humbled, very, very humbled to serve a constituency, Mr. Speaker, with many, many challenges, Mr. Speaker, but a people of determination, great resilience and a people who are passionate about being part of their development.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has affected us significantly. Many people have lost their jobs. Many people have been affected in the Private Sector. But, Mr. Speaker, we continued to work with persons at the constituency level, and will continue to always do so. And so, even when we closed our office, we continued to engage persons through the Internet, the Zoom Platform, as we know it, and we've been able to engage persons through other means, during that period, the COVID-19 lockdown and thereafter.

Mr. Speaker, we've distributed, like many constituencies, hundreds of hampers. But again, Mr. Speaker, I like to specify, targeting, primarily, persons who lost their jobs, targeting senior citizens, particularly those who live alone, and, Mr. Speaker, in homes where there are many children and unemployed head of households.

Mr. Speaker, during this period, we also started a couple new initiatives, particularly targeting students and also the feeding of senior citizens, particularly those

living on their own. And so even during the crisis, Mr. Speaker, we were able to increase some of the projects that we were doing, because we had to discontinue some. So all of those projects, our Resource Centres, where people were coming to get support and assistance, assembling was not possible, so we diverted resources and otherwise into other areas. And so, I believe every village in St. Andrew South-East would have benefitted in some way, from some sort of infrastructural project during this period.

Mr. Speaker, persons, who are vulnerable and in need, we have gone out of the way to provide support whether it's medical support, tuition, transportation support for students, and I have a passion for that. School Vouchers, hundreds of families benefitted from that, connecting electricity, especially in homes where there are children. Mr. Speaker, connecting water; solar lights, in cases where persons feel that they don't have the capacity to pay the bill at the end of the month, we've done the solar lights. Mr. Speaker, house repair, many persons throughout the length and breadth of the constituency, would have benefitted from that programme, but not just the material, support to actually rebuild or repair those homes.

Mr. Speaker, the Bathroom and Toilet Programme, that has been a blessing to a number of families and we continue into the New Year. We've supported schools with their Breakfast Programme throughout the constituency and, Mr. Speaker, the joy of having that Debushing Programme run for the rest of the year, as was clearly articulated by my colleagues this morning; we too, are very appreciative of that in the constituency.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of my passions, which is the development and empowerment of people, we have started a number of initiatives. Unfortunately, COVID affected them, but we've restarted. So, work at our Resource Centres, supporting students with their SBAs, their homework, Information Technology, Computer Literacy, all of those initiatives, thank God, we have been able to restart those, providing services for students in printing materials and all of that, we consider those to be extremely important.

The Small Business Programme and how many persons have benefitted from that, extremely important, and the people of our constituency are very appreciative for all of those initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to land, regularising, ensuring that people have an official document, we have been able to support many families in that regard because, of course, Mr. Speaker, I am sure you well understand what it is for a poor person to be able to own a piece of land. It is still very important.

Mr. Speaker, many of our students are off to China, Cuba, SGU, University of the West Indies, and I am sure this is going to rebound to the economic and social development of the constituency. I am just so excited about this.

Mr. Speaker, the many other programmes of the Government of Grenada, through the Youth Ministry and other Ministries that we have benefitted from, Mr. Speaker, those are extremely important and hence the reason I, very early, pledged my support to the 2021 Budget, because I anticipate they will continue.

Toilet and bathroom upgrade in our constituency is something that is also important to many persons and we have done some serious work during this year, in that regard. Schools' development, we have also done that during the year.

But, looking forward, Mr. Speaker, while all of the initiatives, all of the things we have been doing, in the coming year, there are two (2) particular programmes that I want to make reference to; the Complex in Grenville, and last night I spoke about it at the Constituency Town Hall, extremely important for a number of reasons. But, particularly, I am mentioning, it is really an eyesore, and it is really a concern, the Public Library in Grenville. Just like St. George's, it is a major concern. And I was so happy, when our team of MPs for St. Andrew was able to get the attention of those involved in the drafting that we will not support this project going forward, without a Public Library included in the design, and we are so happy. We are so happy. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the fishermen's locker in Soubise, the lighting of playing fields. We are going to be starting that initiative in January, already. And, Mr. Speaker, I've always spoken about the fact that we have the beach from Crochu to Telescope. We have

started a major Community Tourism Project, including the Mt. Carmel Waterfalls and we are going to be continuing this in 2021, very, very important to us.

Mr. Speaker, finally I just want to make quick mention of the partnership among the three (3) other MPs and myself, for St. Andrew, and how important this is to us. Mr. Speaker, when we campaigned and we said that we were going to work as a team, this was not just something we said for recognition during a campaign, or support during a campaign. We meant every word.

And, Mr. Speaker, this year, we have worked extremely hard together, in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, to ensure that we have documented well, that we have involved persons at the community level, at the Parish level, as it relates to the development of St. Andrew. So the development of a cricket net at Progress Park, the development of a playground for children in St. Andrew. Some persons might wonder well what is the importance and significance of that? Well, if you come from a poor Parish and you're able to hear the voices of people saying to you, parents saying to you, why do we have to go to St. George's to get a playground for our children? Then you understand, it is something that it is needed, as well. So, we invested in that.

Mr. Speaker, Princess Alice Hospital, and I am sure my colleague would speak to that, and we have charged her, you are now in a strategic position, like Esther, to do something and we are going to give her all the support, as MPs of St. Andrew to do something for Princess Alice Hospital, specially. Mr. Speaker, community tourism is also a joint concern, and we are working together.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying, we look forward to 2021 and that partnership that we have started, in the interest of the people of St. Andrew, and, of course, without sounding any bias, at all, I want to say, we are also willing to give support to all the other Parishes in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Laughter)** So, don't find me sounding too bias.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wish you and your team all the best for the New Year, and I am not sure we will have another opportunity; I just want to wish everyone all the best for the Season. May God bless us. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-East, and I believe that we would see again, before Christmas. Don't worry. Keep the 22nd of December as a date. Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After almost eight (8) hours, the brain must be a bit fatigued.

Mr. Speaker: Just give me one sec. Let me just say that we have some refreshments upstairs. So, if you feel very in need of, please. Just ensure that we always have a quorum down here. Thank you.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry about that, Sir.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as presented by the Honourable Minister for Finance and Member of Parliament for St. George South-East.

Mr. Speaker, permit me also, to extend my congratulations to the Honourable Minister for Finance, on his maiden Budget Presentation. Permit me also, to commend the Minister and his staff for a well-prepared and well-presented Budget Statement.

Mr. Speaker, the Government must be commended for a well-chosen Theme for this year's Budget Presentation: ***"Towards Vision 2035: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience."***

Mr. Speaker, this Theme tells us that the short term goals and objectives of our country, as articulated in the 2021 Budget, is yet another step towards achieving the overall long term goals and objectives of our Government, as outlined in the National Sustainable Development Plan, 2020 - 2035, and we all know that the Budget is just a one-year plan.

It tells us also, Mr. Speaker, that the process of recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has begun. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot restore to pre COVID-19 conditions, but we must seek to transform our country and economy to make it more competitive, make it more productive and dynamic, so as to expand opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship in a more sustainable and resilient manner.

Mr. Speaker, as we embark upon this journey of recovery and transformation, I do believe that it is also an appropriate time for us to renew our social compact, with all of our Social Partners, Trade Unions, Private Sector Organisations, NGOs[4], Conference of Churches, even the Rastafarian Community, Political Organisations, among others. This renewed social compact, Mr. Speaker, should incorporate the co-principles of inclusion and co-operation in all of our endeavours. And, Mr. Speaker, we should not see this as an option, but it should be an imperative, because, Mr. Speaker, it is only by working together that we can build back a stronger Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I recall you advising us, as Parliamentarians that we should focus on our constituencies first, before dealing with the Budget, lest we run out of time. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to deal with my constituency and if time permits, I will address a few key issues that I consider to be very critical, with regards to the Budget that was presented.

Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Patrick West will like to register, in a very forceful way, their gratitude to this Government and the personnel from the Ministry of Health and all of the frontline workers, Mr. Speaker, who has worked tirelessly, to ensure that our people remain safe and are protected from this dreadful COVID-19 Virus.

Notwithstanding the few reported positive cases, Mr. Speaker, we remain thankful to Almighty God that there have been no deaths. Let us therefore work collectively and responsively, to ensure our continued safety. Let us observe all of the protocols, Mr. Speaker.

[4] NGOs – Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the major issues facing the people of St. Patrick-West. The main concerns of the people of St. Patrick-West at this time, Mr. Speaker, have been identified, as follows: unemployment, especially among our young people; housing, and here we are looking at the quality and affordability of housing; development of our infrastructure, our roads, sea defences, etcetera; accessibility and availability of health services; development of our sporting facilities and the contentious issue of praedial larceny affecting the Agricultural Sector.

Mr. Speaker, these issues would be addressed under three (3) broad categories: Government's Social Programmes; the Public Sector Investment Programme and Private Sector Initiatives. However, Mr. Speaker, before I can do so, I believe it is quite appropriate that I give some background information, as to the socio-economic conditions that prevailed a year ago and the conditions that are prevailing now, as certainly, Mr. Speaker, they have impacted whatever undertakings that the Government had planned for the various constituencies, inclusive of St. Patrick West. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, there must have been challenges to the Government, in responding to some of the concerns that have been expressed by the residents of the constituency of St. Patrick-West, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just over one (1) year ago, when the 2020 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure were presented, Grenada was at the pinnacle of economic success. Our economy was identified as the best performing economy in the entire OECS, and probably one of the better performing economies in the entire CARICOM. **(Applause)**

This was underscored, Mr. Speaker, by six (6) successive years of positive economic growth, averaging 4%. Unemployment declined, from 28% to under 16% and was on a downward trajectory. All fiscal benchmarks, as identified in our Fiscal Responsibility Legislation were either being achieved or on track to be achieved, to include the primary balance of 6%, as opposed to a target of 3.5%; primary expenditure, less grants, not exceeding the recommended target of 2%, we were within that limit. The Wage Bill was 8.1% of GDP compared to the benchmark of 9%, Mr. Speaker, and the Debt to GDP Ratio was 56%, Mr. Speaker, 1% above the 55% benchmark.

However, the ECCB Benchmark, for Debt to GDP Ratio, Mr. Speaker, is 60%, and that is to be achieved by 2030, so one can appreciate the good performance of our country with regards to the Debt to GDP Ratio in relationship to the overall target established. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that Grenada's Debt to GDP Ratio, pre COVID, was also the best and lowest in the entire OECS, excluding Anguilla, which we should not include, because of the external synthetic debt, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Then came 2020, Mr. Speaker, and with it this novel COVID-19 virus ushering in the worse pandemic to hit our planet in the last one hundred (100) years. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Grenada, like many other countries, went into a lockdown mode. National outturn declined, as many sectors of the economy contracted. Positive growth was transformed into negative growth, averaging almost 11% to 12%. Unemployment increased, as many workers, in the Private Sector, lost their jobs. Government revenues, Mr. Speaker, took a serious nosedive, almost 50% below the projected target. All of the fiscal targets and benchmarks that were identified in the Fiscal Responsibility Laws, Mr. Speaker, became unrealistic. And therefore, Government had to seek a waiver, temporarily so, in order to continue to perform without breaking the Law. We had to go back to Parliament to ask for a waiver of those ceilings.

Mr. Speaker, although most sectors of our economy are now reopened for business, the key sectors of tourism and St. George's University, both combined, accounting for almost 50% of our Gross Domestic Product still remain partially closed, Mr. Speaker. As a result, unemployment remains relatively high and Government's revenues, Mr. Speaker, have been reduced, in 2020, and we project that it would be reduced also, in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, this is a new environment in which we must now exist. This is the new normal, Mr. Speaker. And, until such time, as a vaccine is discovered, tested and tried and made available to all of our citizens, we must continue to exist in this COVID-19 mode, Mr. Speaker.

It is against this background, Mr. Speaker, that I now present an update on developments within the constituency of St. Patrick-West, for the current year, and some projections for 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I would start with some of the Social Programmes of the Government. This Government, Mr. Speaker, must be highly commended for the strong and positive measures taken to cushion the effects of this global pandemic on the poor and vulnerable members of our society. **(Applause)** Not only have all of the Social Programmes been maintained, but also, in some instances, some have been expanded, at a time when Government's revenues have declined significantly, as much as almost 40%, or more. Many are asking, how can Government do this? Two (2) words, Mr. Speaker, 'fiscal discipline', or 'good fiscal management,' Mr. Speaker, is responsible for this. **(Applause)**

Let us look at the Public Assistance Programme, or the SEED. At present, there are three hundred and sixty-seven (367) registered beneficiaries in the SEED Programme, of which one hundred and thirty-seven (137) are elderly and two hundred and thirty-seven (237) needy students, all of whom continue to receive their monthly assistance on time and, in some instances, is delivered at their homes, Mr. Speaker.

With regards to the Needy Assistance, ten (10) persons received various medical assistance, amounting to $8,355.00 for the year. Three hundred and seventy-six (376) students receive 'Back to School' vouchers, to purchase uniforms and other necessities for attending school. Thirty-three (33) students received transportation allowances for attending school, at a cost of $15,565.00. Six (6) students received tuition fees to attend NEWLO and TAMCC, at a cost of $4,552.00. Another four (4) students received assistance for payment of CXC examination fees, at $2,046.00 and ten (10) students received assistance for payment of tuition fees to attend SGU and UWI, at a cost of $19,302.00, Mr. Speaker. Three (3) needy persons received assistance for the payment of their rent, at $4,800.00. The total amount spent on Needy Assistance, excluding Uniform Allowance was $50,687.00, Mr. Speaker.

With regards to Housing, nineteen (19) persons received materials for house repair, amounting to one $116,556.00, while another six (6) are awaiting delivery, at an estimated cost of $47,556.00, Mr. Speaker. The recently established Housing Brigade is proving to be extremely useful in assisting families who cannot afford labour in the building or repair of their homes. To date, Mr. Speaker, the Brigade has built eight (8)

new homes and has undertaken repairs to twelve (12) homes, Mr. Speaker, at a combined estimated cost of $164,413.00, Mr. Speaker. This, Mr. Speaker, is extremely important, because in the past, needy persons received materials, they could not afford the labour costs, and the materials stayed under the house, termites took over or sometimes the materials were sold. But with this Brigade, Mr. Speaker, all materials are put into use.

The Toilet and Bathroom Programme, Mr. Speaker, I consider to be one of the best in terms of Government's Social Programmes, in alleviating poverty, because we know that the number of outside toilets is an indicator of poverty. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, when you have a Government that is focused on assisting our needy people to have indoor toilets and bathrooms, it speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, of how much that Government cares for the poor and needy people in our society, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

To date, Mr. Speaker, the newly established Toilet and Bathroom Brigade has constructed and equipped a total of six (6) bathrooms, from August to now, and a total of eight (8) persons have already received materials for construction of a toilet and bathroom facility, while another two (2) persons have received materials and will provide their own labour. In total, Mr. Speaker, thirty-one (31) applications have already been approved, of which eight (8) have already received materials, at a cost of $43,440.00, and twenty-two (22) are awaiting delivery, at a cost of $161,324.00. In total, Mr. Speaker, fourteen (14) toilets and bathrooms were constructed in 2020, and as I said, Mr. Speaker, the objective is to abolish the use of pit latrines, in our communities.

The Debushing Programme, Mr. Speaker, and I have heard other Members speak of this programme, and I consider it to be one of the better programmes that has been initiated in recent times, not only in terms of the number of fortnights for this period, but also the number of workers, who are able to receive temporary jobs in this programme. Approximately, $638,868.00 were spent on the programme, Mr. Speaker, and approximately one thousand, three hundred and ninety-six (1,396) temporary jobs were created, of which one thousand, three hundred and thirty (1,330) were ordinary workers and contractors and sixty-six (66) of them, Mr. Speaker, were supervisors.

The permanent maintenance gangs, or the road wardens, Mr. Speaker, are also doing a very good job in complementing the work of the Debushing Gangs, when they are not on, because they are on call, throughout the year. And so far, we have four (4) gangs of six (6) persons, that is twenty-four (24) wardens and I can say, Mr. Speaker, they are doing an excellent job, in terms of overhanging, cleaning drains and being ready to respond in case of emergencies, Mr. Speaker. So, this programme is an extremely important one.

The Farm Labour Programme, Mr. Speaker, is a support to the Agriculture Sector. Thirty-two (32) farmers, Mr. Speaker, were beneficiaries of the Seasonal Labour Programme. And for those, who say that the Government is not putting enough into agriculture, they must also include this contribution, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Forty-two (42) farmers have had their lands cleared, with labour provided by this Government, under this programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Special Project Initiative, I consider to be a very important policy initiative of this Government, for building sustainable communities and improving the living conditions through the enhancement of physical environment. For the year, 2020, Mr. Speaker, $259,105.00 was spent on Special Projects, of which $152,000.00 for completed projects; $17,000.00 for projects on-going and $80,000.00 for projects soon to start.

Mr. Speaker, some of these projects include the construction of box drains, we have eleven (11) of those constructed and slipper drains, two (2) retaining walls, two (2) footpaths, renovation of the summer house, what we call 'The House' in the Cemetery, because it is being used for services, for when some people decide not to go to the church, they use the summer house. So, it is important that we have the summer house in a good state.

Mr. Speaker, the New IMANI Programme is Government's flagship programme for youth development. This year, Mr. Speaker, and I know the other constituencies might feel a bit envious about that, fifty-seven (57) new IMANIs were recruited into the programme, in addition to the one hundred and thirty-seven (137) already there. One (1) IMANI graduated from SGU with a Degree in Nursing, while ten (10) graduated from

TAMCC. Many others received their CVQs, while two (2) IMANIs joined the Nursing Programme and one (1) received permanent employment under contract.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good programme for our young people **(applause)** but I must, indeed, say there is need for restructuring, in some aspects, Mr. Speaker. The programme was intended to be what is called a "stop in transit", or transit stop, on their journey to their final destination, either a permanent job or maybe higher education. But to some, Mr. Speaker, it has become a situation where they are stuck in transit, and therefore, I welcome the pronouncement by the new Minister for Youth and Prime Minister that the programme would be restructured, to ensure that they flow through and not get stuck, in transit, for five (5) and six (6) years, Mr. Speaker. That was not the intent of the programme. And therefore, I am looking forward to that restructuring, where the programme would be more effective, in terms of providing opportunities for our young people.

The M-Power Programme, Mr. Speaker, is an extremely important programme where we have our young men, who were on the blocks, now being given the opportunity to be exposed to training opportunities, apprenticeship, to obtain their CVQs, Mr. Speaker, a very important initiative. And so far, we have twenty-three (23) in the programme, who have replaced the twenty-two (22), who graduated before.

But here again, Mr. Speaker, there is one weakness that I would like to see removed. Yes, when they graduate, you give them some tools and you tell them, well, go and get a job. But for some of them, Mr. Speaker, the type of jobs that they would like to get into, just two (2) years training is not enough to qualify them, and they need on-going apprenticeship. For example, someone was trained in Electrical Wiring. No-one will employ such a person to wire their home. And therefore, unless that person could get someone for which they could be an apprentice, it would be difficult for them to get employment. The same thing for plumbing; I will not take someone, who has just come from the programme to do plumbing in my home. And therefore, these are situations, which need addressing and some people are talking about that, that they have the equipment and they cannot do much.

Landscaping, yes, you can go and do a little landscaping, but those technical areas need constant supervision. And assisting them to become apprentices, Mr. Speaker, I think will help that programme in moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to the major projects in the constituency. And I would like to start on a good note by stating that only about two (2) weeks ago, there was a completion ceremony to mark the handing over of the Low Income Chinese Housing in the Villa in Sauteurs. And, Mr. Speaker, it means that seventy (70) additional apartments would now be made available to the people of St. Patrick, Mr. Speaker, on affordable terms; and this, Mr. Speaker, is both a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the housing stock in St. Patrick, Mr. Speaker. And we do express our appreciation to the Government and People of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Speaker, for providing us with these seventy (70) additional Housing Units, and St. Patrick, I must indeed say, was the first to have their Units handed over. And I want to commend the Minister for Housing, and as she indicated to us, she is a St. Patrick citizen, and therefore, St. Patrick should have first preference, Mr. Speaker, so I congratulate you. ***(Laughter)***

Mr. Speaker, Concrete Roads, and here, I must express a little disappointment, in the sense that we have not had one (1) piece of concrete road constructed since 2017, although contracts were awarded for four (4) pieces of roads that were tendered. But up to today, Mr. Speaker, no action has been taken, and the people have been expressing some regrets.

And in one instance, a gentleman, in the Mt. Craven area, Mr. Douglas, gave the Government a piece of land free, so at least they could have access, and that has not been taken up. This is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, and I think the letter the gentleman gave to the Ministry of Works, I am pretty sure, maybe the Minister never saw that yet, where that offer was made, although response was given and nothing has happened, Mr. Speaker, and I am saying, things like that, sometimes we blame the policymakers and maybe, they are not the ones to be blamed.

Mr. Speaker, the only concrete roads, and I must give credit where credit is due, the only concrete roads constructed in St. Patrick West, over the past few years, I want

to identify the piece in Welcome, in Chantimelle, and that was built by a gentleman, in the community, by the name of Mr. Dennis Canning. He used his own funds to build that Welcome road, over $200,000.00, and now he is building another major road, to connect Chantimelle to Mt. Craven. And I would like members from the Ministry of Works to visit that road, Mr. Speaker, a beautiful piece of work. And therefore, I really want to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Dennis Canning for what he is doing for the people of St. Patrick, by providing these roads, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the St. Patrick Road Improvement Project is on-going, and from what I have been told and what I see, $6m have been placed in the 2021 Budget for Phase 2 of this project. And Phase 2, Mr. Speaker, includes works from Grugru Bailey Hill, down to Mt. Fendue, and then from Mt. Rodney, through Mt. Alexander, Prospect, Darvey and down to Chapel, Mr. Speaker.

While I appreciate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that $6m have been allocated, I am questioning whether that $6m could undertake the extent of work in that area. And therefore, I am recommending that we prioritise the developments to take place there. And how I see this working, Mr. Speaker, the road from Grugru Bailey to Mt. Fendue itself, is not that bad, but there are two (2) bridges that need to be repaired or rebuilt, the Bridge in Mt. Rich Centre Road, that has been broken for years, and nothing has been done, and we need to repair that bridge, because the other bridge could collapse at any time, and it means that that entire village would have no transport going through that area, so that bridge, Mr. Speaker. And there is a bridge by a place we call Andy's Bar, where there is a slippage of land, if that could be addressed, I think the people would be satisfied, for the time being.

And, then to move to a lower area, there is a piece of road from Mt. Rodney to the top of Mt. Alexander. It was built out of concert with no BRC or steel and it is now like crix, it's broken up; that should be repaired, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of urgency. And then the Darvey/Prospect Road, which is in a terrible state, should be repaired, because as it stands right now, buses are refusing to travel into that area, and the students, who attend the pre-school, in Non-Pariel or Sauteurs, they have to walk, and it is not easy, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that the people of Darvey and Prospect, they

have exhibited a lot of patience, but something should be done for them, and I am saying that let us use whatever limited resources to address the road in that area. Rather than taking on a project en masse, we can prioritise and do little bits and the people would be satisfied with that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Government Buildings; I welcome the decision by the Government to build, I believe it is an Office Complex in Grenville. I think this is quite innovative, a very good move. However, Mr. Speaker, in Sauteurs, there are six (6) Government buildings that have been abandoned or in various stages of disrepair. This includes the old Revenue and Post Office building in Lower Sauteurs, the old Government Dispensary building, the old Public Works building, the old library building and the old Surgery building. I keep saying old, old, because they are all old and abandoned and termite infested. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, there are five (5) Government Offices and Departments that are occupying rented, private properties, while another (5) Government Departments, Mr. Speaker, renting from the State-owned GIDC.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, following the example of what is taking place in St. Andrew, if these buildings are repaired, we can save a lot of revenue. If these buildings are repaired, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our policy of creating employment through investment, we can generate more jobs. These are some of the issues that we have to address, Mr. Speaker, in these difficult times, if we want to create more employment opportunities, Public Sector Investment, Mr. Speaker, and this one is just waiting to happen.

It would also mean, Mr. Speaker, that we would be making private spaces available to private entrepreneurs, who cannot put down their own building. As it stands right now, Government is crowding out the Private Sector, and this to me, is not good economic policy. And, Mr. Speaker, it could be done without using Central Government funds, because you would have anchor tenants. You don't have to wonder where your rent is coming from, so why not do it through the BOLT or something like that and for the second or the third consecutive Budget now I am saying Government buildings and Government buildings. But those buildings in St. Patrick, in Sauteurs, in particular, Mr.

Speaker, they need to be addressed, and that has been a recurring decimal for the past three (3) or four (4) years.

Mr. Speaker, the Mt. Rodney Sea Defence Project; I am pleased to note that $2m have been included in the Budget for the construction of a sea defence mechanism, to deal with the continued erosion taking place there. That erosion, Mr. Speaker, although I cannot say what is the primary source, but it is of concern to everyone, as the residents, the buildings and the lands, the main road, Mr. Speaker, they are all under threat from the constant erosion taking place there. As far as I am aware, Mr. Speaker, a draft proposal for the construction of a sea defence mechanism has been submitted to the Ministry of Infrastructure for consideration, and therefore, we await the result of that. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, some of the affected residents, we have assisted them with materials to relocate on their private property and others, we will relocate them to the Housing Project in the Villa.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to Feeder Roads/Farm Roads, I am happy to note, and I hope my colleague from St. Mark could back me up on that, that work should start on that project, the Farm Road Project, the Red Mud Project, which is a welcomed project, Mr. Speaker, because for years, the people of Red Mud have been asking for that farm road and bridge. And once that is done, Mr. Speaker, it means access, access to their lands, Mr. Speaker, more agricultural production; that's another contribution to the overall Budget for agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and therefore, this is a welcomed initiative, and I am happy that the people of Red Mud would now have their road and bridge and have access to their lands.

Mr. Speaker, lighting of playing fields; I have been asked to submit a playing field for lighting in the New Year, and for us, in Patrick West, the only playing field that is not yet lighted is the one in Snell Hall, and I have submitted this to the Minister for Infrastructure, and therefore, I am looking forward to having that playing field lighted, sometime in the New Year.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to Fond Recreation Ground, we are highly appreciative of the work done by FIFA and the GFA, in terms of lighting the playing field, as Phase 1 and providing bleachers as Phase 2 because the intention is to have Fond as the

second premier recreation ground. But, it helps if you have bleachers and you have lights, but if the playing surface is no good, Mr. Speaker, it does not help much and therefore, we are looking forward to the third phase. And I believe that FIFA is also prepared to assist again and working with Government to do this, and therefore, I am looking forward to that kind of collaboration between the Government and FIFA for the resurfacing of the field and for other facilities to upgrade that recreation ground.

Other playing fields, Mr. Speaker, I know the people of Red Mud and Darvey have been asking for playing fields, but because of the terrain, it is extremely difficult to identify lands, and therefore, this is still an issue that is problematic and it is difficult to deal with at this time. But we appreciate and we empathise with them for not having a playing field. But I understand the people from Red Mud could use the one down in Bellaire. But those in Darvey, it might be a little more problematic, Mr. Speaker.

Mt. Reuille Estate, Mr. Speaker, again, in this new dispensation, agriculture will be looked upon to play a very important role. And here we have an estate, two hundred and fifty-seven (257) acres, underutilised, heavily subsidised, Mr. Speaker. We cannot, in this new dispensation, continue on such a path. This is a prime facility for significant agricultural production. But, it means undertaking the necessary project to upgrade, to introduce new technologies, Mr. Speaker, on the estate, and look at new crops. But if we continue, in 2021 and 2022 on the same path that we are on now, that contribution from agriculture for expanded growth may not be realised. And therefore, if Government cannot do it on its own, and I am hoping that they can get a good partner, to undertake such a project, Mr. Speaker, because the potential for increased agricultural production is extremely good, but something ought to be done. You just can't neglect it and just continue, as it is right now.

And while we are on this topic, Mr. Speaker, agriculture, praedial larceny is a serious problem, not only for St. Patrick, but the entire country. And again, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that agriculture will be a main driver of growth. But if we cannot deal with this issue of praedial larceny, where you have people thieving people's stuff, you know, you go in people's property and just boldfaced, taking their produce. How

can we speak of an expanded role for agriculture if these issues are not addressed, Mr. Speaker?

I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that there are many things that could be done. I believe that the penalty for praedial larceny is just too mild, Mr. Speaker. We have to increase the penalty. For those who violate the COVID Regulations, the home thing, we are increasing the fees; we have to do something similar for praedial larceny. There are equipment that could be used, surveillance equipment. Why aren't we giving farmers access to those, so at least they could exhibit surveillance over their property, or even use wardens to help identify those thieves, Mr. Speaker. You know, you have people thieving plantains, people thieving fowls, all kinds of fowl thieves in the place. We cannot continue along those lines, Mr. Speaker.

Medical Facilities

Mr. Speaker, three (3) years ago, the Mt. Rich Medical Centre was temporarily closed for repairs, and three (3) years have passed, no repairs. Bush has taken over. At a time, when the whole consciousness about health, a pandemic, Mr. Speaker, now is not the time to have health facilities closed, Mr. Speaker. Now is the time to open health facilities, because closing that facility has created serious inconveniences to the people of Mt. Rich and Snell Hall, especially the older folks who cannot travel all the way to Sauteurs or to Hermitage.

I was happy when I was looking at television a few nights ago when I heard the Minister for Health said that the facility would be repaired and reopened. This is welcomed news, Mr. Speaker. This is the way to go, especially in the present dispensation, where people have become so health-conscious. So I welcome this move, and I am looking forward to having that facility reopened in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Patrick East made mention of the Mt. Rich Furniture Production and Training Project. Again, a very important initiative for employment creation and expanded output, issues that we have to address and I would come to that later when we talk about the potential for growth, but for over a year now, I am not hearing anything, but I heard the Minister said soon something would happen. I

heard that before. And it is a project that is self-financing, because here you have a ready market, over $1m in furniture being imported, plastic furniture from Trinidad. That could be produced locally, so you have a captive market, Mr. Speaker, and it shouldn't take that long.

Again, we have a problem with implementation, Mr. Speaker, and unless we address implementation deficits, we are not going anywhere, Mr. Speaker. With all the nice talk, if we cannot implement what would drive the PSIP, we are not implementing, Mr. Speaker. And again, I am not blaming the policymakers, because if you give a task and you get it and you put it in a drawer and forget it, that's what happens. We are not feeling that consciousness to drive the economy, Mr. Speaker, and yet we are talking about growth. But where would the growth come from? Fifty (50) persons could be employed immediately in that facility, Mr. Speaker, immediate employment. But yet, nothing is happening.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other issues that we need to look at. The Medical Centre, in Sauteurs, by 5:00 o'clock, it's closed. The smallest cut, you have to go all the way to Mirabeau, or go all the way to St. George's, Mr. Speaker, and at times, you cannot even find an ambulance or a driver to take you there. This cannot be right, especially in these times of COVID-19. We must address those issues, Mr. Speaker, in a serious manner. You cannot have a Medical Centre, in the Town of Sauteurs closed by 5:00 o'clock, and you cannot get transport to take you to Mirabeau or St. George's; that's not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, I would stop here with regards to some of those issues. But again, Mr. Speaker, when you look at St. Patrick, the Private Sector, I am pleased and I am extremely happy that this Government has taken the lead to ensure that we have in St. Patrick, what would be one of the largest hotel facilities on the Island. And again, it takes a Government with a vision, in terms of knowing where we are going, to encourage that facility to come to St. Patrick, Mr. Speaker. Five hundred (500) rooms, you are talking about over one thousand (1,000) people to be employed. So, we welcome this move, and I am looking forward to this project, hoping that it would be sustained and not go the route of some projects in the past that stopped and then we

see nothing happened. I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, for the good of the people of St. Patrick and the Northern part of Grenada, that this project will come into fruition.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to some critical issues with regards to the Budget itself. Again, Mr. Speaker, let me say that this is one of the better Budgets being presented, in terms of its focus. It's a Budget, Mr. Speaker, that provides hope for our people. It's a Budget that creates a balance between the need to ensure that the poor and disadvantaged in our society do not fall through the cracks. But at the same time, acknowledges the imperative of economic growth, for the future development of our country, Mr. Speaker. It's a balanced Budget, and I must commend Government for presenting such a Budget at this time.

As a matter of fact, some people say it is an Election Budget. Well, if a Government could present an Election Budget in times of crisis like that, this Government must be there to prepare every Budget, **(applause)** Mr. Speaker, and make every Budget an Election Budget. It means that it is so good, it is so good that it is an Election Budget, when you are two and a half years away from Election. It is good, and people must say it. It is a good Budget. And those, who are critical, you are not feeling the substance in their criticism. But yet they have to criticise, because that is the role of the Opposition, to criticise, but it is a good Budget. I am not saying that there are not little defects in it. But overall, Mr. Speaker, in a context of the situation that we are existing in now, presenting a Budget, where your Budget, this year is a little higher than last year, where you have lost half of your revenue, Mr. Speaker, speak wonders, of the ability of this Government to lead this country in times of crisis, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed, amazing.

I couldn't believe, Mr. Speaker, that a Budget of this nature, could have been presented at this time. I was looking forward to more taxes and cuts here and cuts there. It's not that. No tax increase, Mr. Speaker. Reliance and efficiency in revenue collection and reduction of waste are critical aspects of fiscal management, Mr. Speaker. Government must be commended for an excellent Budget. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, there is a target of 6% growth. Some say it is ambitious, some say it's not achievable. I say it is ambitious. I say it's achievable, Mr. Speaker, because,

you see, I do not know how some of them are looking at the 6% growth. And I listened to some conversations, and you know what they are saying? **"Well, in 2019, the economy was growing by 4%, now, how can you get 6% growth?"** Total lack of understanding of what is happening.

The fact is that, in 2019, when the economy was growing at 4%, yes, we had a certain production level. But there has been a 12% drop this year, so the 6% is from the drop and up. It is not from the top. They are neglecting the fact that we are going down and when you are moving from a smaller base, upwards, the percentage change will look much bigger than if you are falling from top to down, simple addition, Mr. Speaker. If you fall from four hundred 400 units' production to two hundred (200) units, that's a 50% decline in production, you know. But if you are at two hundred (200) units and you move to four hundred (400) units, that is 100% increase, you know. But yet, that would not take you back to the previous level.

So that 6%, Mr. Speaker, would not take you back to the pre-2019 level of production. And therefore, those who think that it is unrealistic simply do not understand the Mathematics there, involved. And I am hearing some people confusing the change in the production and the change in the rate of growth. Those are two (2) different things. You cannot compare the two, Mr. Speaker.

So, from that point of view, I am saying it is not a figure that cannot be achieved, but there are certain conditions that must be realised before you could achieve it. And let me state, Mr. Speaker, this 6%...

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, I need a few minutes more. This 6% should not be an option, you know. It must be an imperative right now, because let me tell you, with a 6% growth, if you do the calculation, based on if you have your debt figure and your GDP figure, a 6% growth will increase your GDP at a rate that is higher than the debt that will be incurred to give you that GDP. So in essence, what you will be getting is a reduction in the Debt to GDP Ratio, as a result of the 6% growth.

(Applause) And because of the reduction in the Debt to GDP Ratio, it means that the country would become even more creditworthy. **(Applause)** It means there'll be access to direct financing, lenders would be more attuned to lend to Grenada, and the capacity to borrow more would be enhanced. So there is, Mr. Speaker, significance in the 6%, because it will… a lower figure may not give you that, but a 6% will give you that, where your denominator will grow at a faster rate than your numerator and overall, give you a reduction in the Debt to GDP Ratio, which will give you access to the kind of financing that you are looking for.

Also, it would drive employment, Mr. Speaker. Once you grow, your employment would grow; your export earnings. Government's revenue would increase, and these are the parameters that we are looking for, Mr. Speaker. We need to enhance Government's revenue, and it can only come from enhanced growth in the economy. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, we have to push, push rigorously, to ensure that we maintain that 6% growth. But, what do we have to do?

If you look at the document, Mr. Speaker, the Minister said to us that the driver of growth would be agriculture, construction, wholesale and retail services that would drive the recovery, while other sectors including tourism and private tertiary education projected to contribute, but maybe lagged, because of what is happening now. So it means, Mr. Speaker, and I have made some of the points, agriculture must, agriculture must be given the attention that I see it is given in the Budget; and for those who say agriculture is just 1.6% of total expenditure, they are wrong. And if we include all of the other expenditures, the investments in agriculture, I am pretty sure that it could drive production to the level that we could move towards this good target, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

The second issue here, Mr. Speaker, is the Public Sector Investment Programme, critical, because the more you invest in your PSIP, the more your growth. And there is a ratio there called the Incremental Capital Rate per Ratio, which posits the relationship between how much you invest and how much you get in output. And once you can create that impact, Mr. Speaker, your output level will increase.

But the key here, Mr. Speaker, and I made mention of it, *en passant,* there must be a significant increase in the implementation rate. As it stands right now, on average, the implementation rate of projects is about 50%. To drive this growth, to achieve this 6% growth, you must bring your implementation rate to a minimum of 70%, Mr. Speaker, billable calculation, because if you're earning 50% of three hundred and twenty something million dollars, what impact will you get? You will not get the kind of impact on your GDP. So, we must implement more projects. The implementation rate must increase and we must move to removing all of the bottlenecks that are holding back implementation. And again, we always like to blame the policymakers. But sometimes it is not the policymakers to be blamed. If you have bureaucracy that is not moving, they don't care whether Monday falls on a Wednesday, where are we going, Mr. Speaker?

So I am saying that implementation and I made certain recommendations, Mr. Speaker, whether the Government would want to take them on, but I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that at this time, in this new dispensation, the Government needs to employ what I call an implementation staff, someone with the capacity, someone with the knowledge of how to implement, someone skilled in project implementation and monitoring, to ensure that we could remove all the bottlenecks that are clogging up the system. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that the technical people are available and trained. I know that the Government took a major step last year, to recruit some technical people in the Ministry of Works; that was positive, but we even need to do more, in order to drive the process, Mr. Speaker, because I am saying, we talk about transformation, and we cannot transform if we remain on the same railroad that we are on right now, Mr. Speaker. Those out-dated procurement practices, maybe we have to look at them as well, and modernise this thing, bring more technology into the process, Mr. Speaker.

The second issue that I want to deal with, Mr. Speaker, is that of the… and very contentious, Employee Compensation or what we call the Wage Bill. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the Budget, and maybe all Budgets, we will see that Employee

Compensation accounts for about 45% of the total Recurrent Expenditure, so you know that this one is sensitive, in terms of any shift, any movement.

But let us look at this, Mr. Speaker. Revenue falls, GDP falls, but you are not seeing any fall in your expenditure, especially the Wage Bill. And in economics, it is an effect we call the 'Ratchet Effect', that it is only moving upwards, but it will not adjust downwards when situations move in the opposite direction. So there is a ratchet, and a ratchet is every time things good, you go up, but you never come down. So, that's a ratchet effect there, Mr. Speaker. Expenditure doesn't move. It is not sensitive to movement in your revenue or your GDP. And this, Mr. Speaker, I think, is a serious challenge to a Government, especially a Government at this time, faced with the situation that we are with now, where they don't have the kind of revenue to do the things that they want to do.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I must echo the call of the Minister for Finance to waive that 4% increase, Mr. Speaker. I think it is reasonable and it is just, in the situation that we are faced with, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, it would call for dialogue, and both sides have to talk. They have to talk, because we know, when it comes to wages, people don't want to bulge on that. But it is really an issue, I believe, that all partners should be sensitive to, especially those who are asking for the 4%, if they could please consider the situation and give it some consideration for the good of the country, at this time, Mr. Speaker.

As it stands now, Mr. Speaker, when you look at wage negotiation, it is quite arbitrary. It is an arbitrary approach. Some just say, well, I want a 10%. The other one says, no, I cannot give you 10%. There is no scientific approach to these things, Mr. Speaker. And again, in a new situation, this COVID is teaching us lots of lessons. This kind of arbitrariness, I don't see it continuing, Mr. Speaker. We cannot continue. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting that we take steps to establish what we call, a National Productivity Council, and use the composite of three (3) key indices to determine wages. You need a Productivity Index, you need a Cost of Living Index, and you need an Employers' Affordability Index.

The Council will have to determine what weight it pays to each. It might sound farfetched now, but this is the kind of scientific approach we have to take, Mr. Speaker, in wage determination…

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Just five (5) more minutes? As of now, the only focus is cost of living. Cost of living went up. What has happened to productivity? And the most important link, Mr. Speaker, to wage is productivity. You must link wage to productivity, otherwise you are not going anywhere. So, I am saying come up with an index that would incorporate those three (3) and then you can use that as the basis for wage determination.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I wanted to talk about the most important one, but time is running, this Airport loan. And again, I am a bit amazed about the approach being taken by some people, with regards to this.

Mr. Speaker: I can give you ten (10) minutes more.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, I see you want to give me about half an hour more. Well, no problem, Mr. Speaker.

(Laughter)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, this Airport loan, I am amazed by some of the criticisms I am hearing about this loan, and it reminds me of a quotation from Albert Einstein, and it says here: ***"People, who haven't done their work, will attack a good idea. Be ready for it. Do your work. Prove the results."***

Mr. Speaker, I can give you twelve (12) reasons why I believe this loan should be supported and the project should be implemented. And again, people have a right to

criticise, that's their right. You can't tell them no. But, I mean, they must have the facts. They must know the basis on which they are making the criticisms.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I see this loan, as one that will improve the safety and security of our travelling public, and to ensure that Grenada maintains its Category 9 ranking, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** You cannot put a price tag on safety, Mr. Speaker. How can you put a price tag on the safety of your travelling people?

I am hearing some people say, well only two (2) or three (3) planes are coming into Grenada. So does that mean because three (3) planes are coming in, you could ignore safety requirements? It is amazing. And the people who are saying that, ask them to travel on an Airport, knowing that it is not safe to land on it. And if something were to happen, Mr. Speaker, they would be the first one to blame Government and say how negligent you are, why didn't you do the work to improve the quality of safety at your Airport?

I am hearing again, well, we cannot afford to pay that loan now. Well, Mr. Speaker, you take a loan now, who says you have to pay it now? The loan is not to be repaid now; it is a loan to be repaid in the future. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, what we have to look at is not the present financial situation of the Airport Authority, or even ultimately, the Government now, to finance the loan, because an investment now is for future benefits. And therefore, you have to look at the projected income, five (5)/ten (10) years from now of the institution that is borrowing and to determine whether it would have the capacity then to be able to repay.

But in the absence of that, Mr. Speaker, how can you come to the determination that you do not have the ability to repay, if you have not seen the financials to determine what the projected earnings of that institution would be, five (5) to ten (10) years from now, because the loan has a five (5) years grace period. But that has not been done. I am pretty sure. And some of them said, well, they haven't seen the financials of the Airport Authority, but yet, they could make a determination that we cannot pay and that would bring up the Debt to GDP Ratio.

But I indicated before, Mr. Speaker, that if we grow the economy by what I said, the Debt to GDP Ratio will not increase commensurate with the loan. It is the growth,

Mr. Speaker, in the GDP that will determine the ability to service the loan, if Government accepts liability for the loan. If the Airport Authority cannot repay the loan, Mr. Speaker, then it is forwarded back to Government.

Again, Mr. Speaker, even without the safety requirement that is so compulsory at this time, you have to look at this loan as a stimulus. It is an economic stimulus, Mr. Speaker. And it is said in times of recession, when the economy is at a low, economic theory and practice tell you that this is the time to invest on capital investment, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** This is the right time, there's no other time, because that is how you can get the economy to rebound by investing.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the terms and conditions of the loan, it's a commercial loan, really. But you are getting a loan to finance a commercial operation, at 2%, five (5) years grace, ten (10) years to repay, Mr. Speaker, a commercial loan, tell me where else you can get it. Tell me, apart from IDA, which is really highly concessional lending for certain reasons, tell me where you can get these terms and conditions.

And what better time now again, Mr. Speaker, things slowed down at the Airport, now is the time to undertake the necessary work. Would you wait until things rebound and the Airport becomes busy and you say, well, let me do the work? The right time is now. And even now, Mr. Speaker, it is better to do it now, because the international financial market is liquid, terms and conditions are good, if you wait for recovery, you may not get the same terms and conditions, Mr. Speaker.

And also take into consideration that the longer you take to implement the project, the costlier it gets, because price would increase. So, what $67m could give you now, five (5) years from now it might give you just half of that, Mr. Speaker, because of the time sensitivity of money. So now is the time to invest, to take advantage of high liquidity, to take advantage of the low level of activities at the Airport and you would reap better returns, Mr. Speaker.

But, what is most significant, you know, Mr. Speaker, while we are saying we should not go through with the project, here we have the World Bank, through IDA, providing $17m in highly concessionary loans, to complement what Government is

borrowing, because they see the importance, Mr. Speaker, of that kind of upgrading. **(Applause)** Can you imagine? World Bank is saying, yes, we are giving you these monies to do your upgrade, because it is necessary, but some of our people are saying, don't do it, it is not necessary. I can't understand that level of thinking, and it is giving you concessionary money, 0.75%, repayable in forty (40) years, ten (10) years grace, and you would turn that down? Mr. Speaker, something is not right. Something cannot be right for people who are saying, don't go through with the project.

And, that loan, I think it is for reason of productivity, to improve the communication system for the various Airports. It is part of a $157m) loan, to be shared between Haiti, St. Lucia, Dominica and Grenada. All the other three (3) countries, they are going forward, but we are saying Grenada should stay backward. Does that make sense?

If St. Lucia has seen it fit to take on that loan, Dominica has seen it fit to take on that loan, why are we saying that Grenada should not take on the loan, Mr. Speaker? It makes no sense. And therefore, I am saying, I fully support the Government's position, in going forward with the loan.

And finally, I am hearing they are saying, what? China will take over. I mean, such outrageous and ridiculous statements, are not even worth any response, Mr. Speaker. Tell me, name me one country, where China has moved in, forcibly, and take over a project in a country. It doesn't happen that way. And, if we look at China, China has given Grenada over $200m in grants **(applause)** over $200m has given Grenada in grants. So they would take over your Airport, because they gave you a loan that you cannot repay for $67m? Does that make sense?

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of buffers to protect Grenada from what they are talking about. First and foremost, the Airport must demonstrate, what you call, its incapacity or inability to repay the loan, and that has not been determined. And once they default, if they default, then it becomes a liability of the Central Government. If Government says, well okay, we are in problems, Government can revert to the creditor and say, let us renegotiate, or let us restructure or whatever. You can restructure a loan with a bilateral lender, but you cannot do it with an international lender, like the World

Bank. So, you have that flexibility to negotiate. So why should they just move in and take over?

And in the event, even if Grenada decides that we can't pay, they have to go to Court. They have to get redress in a Court of Law. No country can just move into your country and take over, so that's an invasion? That can't happen, Mr. Speaker. So, that kind of thing about China take over is total, I don't want to use the word in Parliament, Mr. Speaker.

But, the point is that, we are on the right track, Mr. Speaker, and let us move. The detractors would always come with reasons. Yes, they have a right, but let them have the facts. As Einstein said, ***"Let them come with the facts to prove what they are saying."***

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me take this last five (5) minutes, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, because it would be difficult for me not to acknowledge…

(Member searches his papers)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, I cannot find the page, but off my head, just let me acknowledge and say thanks to my constituents of St. Patrick West, for the confidence they have bestowed in me, for being their Representative for the past number of years. I really appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to their continuing support and cooperation.

To the staff in my Office again, I want to thank them for the assistance they have given me in helping to compile some of the data that I have been using here. I really appreciate that. The staff at the Public Works Department in Sauteurs, the Road Officer, the IMANI Officer, the Supervisor, the Housing Officers, all of these Officers, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thanks, very much, for their co-operation and assistance. I regret many of them cannot be here, because of timing of my presentation.

And to you, Mr. Speaker, and to your staff, I really want to extend my gratitude for the help. Even today, my good friend, the Clerk, has been guiding me, when the House is in recess, how I should proceed. I was walking out this way, he said no, you

have to lead the... ***(Laughter)*** So, I want to thank you for this kind of guidance. I have been here, over twenty (20) years, and I still did not know that. So, I want to thank him for that kind of guidance and supervision, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate it.

To my family, relatives and friends, I say thank you very much for your support, and to everyone. If I do not have the opportunity to address you, again, before Christmas, let me wish everyone, here and abroad…

(Members uttered some comments)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Oh, my Western Corridor colleagues. Oh, yes, yes, yes, my colleagues from the Western Corridor, St. Mark, St. John and St. Patrick-East and they are here, I want to thank them, because we have been working cooperatively, over the past years, and I think we will continue, and we have derived a lot of benefits, synergistic benefits from our cooperation, and I look forward to working with them. And to all my Parliamentary Colleagues, I want to thank you for your cooperation and support.

To the Prime Minister, thank you for your guidance and the kind of visionary leadership that you are providing to this country, in these times, I think Grenada is a better place, with a Leader like the one that we have now, Dr. Mitchell. And I hope that God would bless him to continue to lead our country, through difficult times, as well as times of prosperity. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of this Honourable House until Monday, 7th December, 2020, God's willing, at 9:00 o'clock in the forenoon.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned on Friday, 4th December, 2020 at 8:43 p.m.

Resumption
Attendance

House resumed on Monday, 7th December, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr. Speaker
The Honourable Michael Pierre
in the Chair

Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	-	Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	-	Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	-	Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	-	Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Forestry and Labour
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	-	Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	-	Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	-	Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs

Attendance

Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	- Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, ICT and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and Minister wrf Hospital Services and Community Health Services
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of the Opposition

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

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, let us pray.

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of Gavel)

(The Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Delma Thomas remained standing)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, this Honourable House is now in Session.

(The Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Delma Thomas remained standing rose)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-West.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what can we give to Jehovah, for He has done so much for us as a country? And we should never be side-tracked, Mr. Speaker, we are in a pandemic and when we look at what is

happening in the First World Countries, as Grenadians, we have to give God thanks and praise.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I stand proudly here this morning to support the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue, presented before this Honourable House, last Wednesday, by the Minister for Finance and Member for St. George South-East, Honourable Gregory Bowen. The presentation, Mr. Speaker, comes at the end of one of the most difficult years in modern history, brought upon by the global pandemic. But let the message go out, Mr. Speaker, that we have survived and we are standing strong.

In the most challenging days of the lockdown, this Government, my Government, so ably led by our Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, took, as the Minister for Finance said last Wednesday in his presentation, decisive action to save jobs and protect livelihood. It was not easy, Mr. Speaker, we could have easily…

(The Leader of the Opposition stood)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Delma Thomas, just hold please. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a Point-of-Order.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. What is the Order, Sir?

Hon. Tobias Clement: The rules of the debate in the House, state that during the debate, Members are to present, not read, and the gentle lady from St. Andrew North-East, she's reading the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. I would advise that you, when standing on a Point-of-Order, that you just point out the Order, so that we can get to it. Honourable Delma Thomas.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition could have given me a chance to debate. If after the presentation from our Minister for Finance, he came directly after, then we'll have a debate. Right now, what we're having is presentation. So he gave me that chance where, maybe, I can read. And so, let me continue, Mr. Speaker, because I will not allow the Opposition Leader, to take away from delivering to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Government could have easily given up during the pandemic. When we looked at what was happening, in the First World Countries, people were dying like flies, and we are a Third World Nation. And that is why I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be a part of this New National Party Government, a Government that cares about the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, a Government, in crisis, shows that we can really deliver. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, our faith in God has led us at this point. As the year closes, Mr. Speaker, there are already reports and indications that many of the jobs lost because of the slowdown are beginning to return. With an experienced Captain, we shall navigate the rough seas; we shall keep our people safe.

Mr. Speaker, the character of this Budget reflects the character of this Government, one that shows a bias towards the care of the least among us, first and foremost, and Mr. Speaker, that's what we were mandated to do, as human beings, to care for the less fortunate.

We are very heartened by the measures in the package aimed at looking after the most vulnerable, making sure they do not fall through the cracks. As the Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment and now Hospital and Community Health Services, I am pleased to see the commitment shown in the Budget, to these crucial areas, given the fiscal challenges and given the demand for so many areas we value. Mr. Speaker, I am indeed happy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to continue from where my colleague left off as it relates to the Ministry of Health. But, I want to zero in on Hospital and Community Health Services.

(The Member took a drink of water)

Hon. Delma Thomas: Mr. Speaker, at the last quarter of this year, I was given extra responsibility, a tough area, Hospital and Community Health Services within the Ministry of Health, and everybody knows that health is always a tough area, one is always in the Media. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, when the Prime Minister made that announcement, you know, I wondered whether I should be surprised or not. The Prime Minister did indicate to me that he was looking at that. But in my own troublesome self, I sent him a thesis, giving him all the reasons why I was not suited for that responsibility. I even went so far, Mr. Speaker, to identify somebody who I think will do better among the team. But, Mr. Speaker, here am I with that responsibility, stuck with that responsibility and ready and committed to serve in this tough area.

Mr. Speaker, I recall the day after, my son was taking me to Grenville, and he said: **"You know all eyes are on you now? You cannot play the tail."** And I stood there for a while, and I was speechless by his figure of speech. ***"You cannot play the tail."*** So, I did not say anything, and he continued that all eyes will be on you, you and the Minister for Agriculture. So, Mr. Speaker, I am aware that all eyes will be on me, and that is why in my daily prayer: ***"Where feet may fail, my God has never failed me, and he won't attempt to do it now."*** So I am committed, as the new Minister with responsibility for Hospital and Community Health Services.

Mr. Speaker, when I took up that responsibility, I started by meeting with the management of the hospital and the management of the community health workers, and I had a walk through, Mr. Speaker, in the General Hospital, identifying that it is not business as usual. And to send clearly that it is not business as usual, I spoke to management for us to start with a clean-up campaign of the General Hospital.

And so, Mr. Speaker, Corporate Grenada, M & N Hardware, Francis Mahon, and so I want to place on record, Mr. Speaker, even before I go further, my commendation to Francis Mohan and M & N Hardware **(applause)** for working with us, to ensure that we had a good clean-up of the General Hospital. Not only coming with people, Mr. Speaker, but also providing everything that was needed. The hospital management

identified what was needed, and Mr. Mahon and his company provided all the supplies. And we had constituents, people from across Corporate Grenada, came on board and assisted us with the clean-up campaign.

Mr. Speaker, we did not leave it like that. We realised in the clean-up that we also needed to give a facelift. Mr. Speaker, if you're really talking about healthcare, healthcare is not only when you go to see the doctor, but just the environment. When you're sick, an environment can either lift you or break you. And we believe, Mr. Speaker, that to show that we are serious about healthcare, we also went ahead to provide painting of the external building at the General Hospital. And Mr. Mahon and his team, worked along with other members of Corporate Grenada and opened an account in Sisson's Paint, and there we had forty-five (45) gallons of paint, to paint the hospital, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we must commend Mr. Mahon, we must commend Corporate Grenada, all the people who came on board, to assist us in improving healthcare. We cannot do it alone as a Government, when it comes to healthcare. We have to be able to work along with our Corporate and even our entire population, in terms of improving healthcare. Healthcare is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker. Healthcare should never, never be a political issue, because healthcare affects everyone. It affects all of us family, Mr. Speaker.

After that, Mr. Speaker, our newly Acting Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Hannah St. Paul, in a discussion, at the same time, when we were cleaning the Hospital, she said, ***"Let us look at adopting a Ward,"*** Mr. Speaker, and some members of the management team of the Hospital were present at that time, and they said that's a good idea, and I ran with it, Mr. Speaker. So from the next week, we started looking for donors to adopt a Ward. And the Adopt a Ward is really aimed at providing assistance, assisting Government to making the aesthetic of the building look good. So it's not buying medicine and all that, but it's helping with paint, helping with beds, maybe providing a television on the wall.

Mr. Speaker, and Corporate Grenada once again, came on board, and I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is important to identify and applaud and commend

some of the persons, who came on board. We have Grenville Credit Union, we have Champie Evans, M & N Hardware, Real Protection Security Service, Kimpton Kawana Bay, Royalton, Carol Cove Hotel Development, West Indies Management Companies, Herry Equipment and Trucking, Mt. Cinnamon Resort, Charles and Friends, Friend of Better Healthcare. So, there are some businesses, who do want to use their names; in fact they just want to give their assistance, and so we'll call it, Friends of Healthcare, or Friend of Grenada, Kalico, WPG10, and Elegant Plumbing and Supplies.

Mr. Speaker, we had a launch last week, but after the launch, we had maybe about seven (7) more companies calling different members of the team to say, I am willing to adopt a Ward. I am willing to get on board to assist Grenada in better Healthcare for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, never underestimate that. In a crisis, Mr. Speaker, when businesses are not booming as before, we have people coming on-board, saying that we are willing and ready to assist.

Mr. Speaker, even at that Ceremony, we had Mr. Champie Evans coming up to the mike and said all my friends in business, I will get them to adopt a Ward and be part of the process. That speaks of commitment. It speaks of care and love for one's country. And, Mr. Speaker, we are committed, and we will continue to serve, and we'll continue to do what it takes to improve the state of healthcare in Grenada. We are not going back. We are not looking of what happened in the past, to say well, why now? We are going forward.

I think COVID-19 has shown us that we have to pay more attention to healthcare, as a Government, and as a people, Mr. Speaker, and so we are committed, Mr. Speaker, to doing what it takes. We are committed to working hard. The team, at the Ministry of Health, is committed. And so, Mr. Speaker, we'll work together to improve the services that we provide to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

And while we talk about healthcare and we talk about the effects the pandemic has on our beautiful nation and we talk about the people who are important, Mr. Speaker. You know during that lockdown, during the pandemic, I recall, Mr. Speaker, that I was not in the Ministry of Health, but I was home reflecting on the importance of

our healthcare workers, and I am speaking in general, our doctors, our nurses, our cleaners, our cooks, our ambulance drivers, our lab technicians, and all aspects of healthcare.

While we were home, Mr. Speaker, they were out on the battlefield. Never underestimate that. And Mr. Speaker, when I saw that, I was thinking for myself. During that period, I recall sending the Prime Minister a message, and you know yesterday I tried to see what date was that, and it was almost the end of August, saying to him that we have to look at ways of recognising and rewarding our healthcare workers, and I was not part of health as yet, Mr. Speaker. And his response, at that time, should have made me think. He said, **"I agree, but the new Minister will take on that mandate,"** and I responded naively: **"I also agree,"** not knowing that I will be placed in that chair. But here am I in the chair, Mr. Speaker, and I want the Prime Minister to know that I will be coming to ensure that we provide for our healthcare workers, more recognition, and not only our healthcare workers, because my Social Services people will be here, and they will say, well Minister, we worked hard too, our Counsellors, and so where is our recognition? So we have to recognise those who made the contribution.

But, Mr. Speaker, in coming into the Ministry of Health, I realised that one of the issues so prevalent in speaking to every Department was regularisation. Mostly all of the workers there do not have an active contract. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to them this morning, that, that is on the way. In fact, the Department of Public Administration, recognising the issue in the Ministry of Health, has designated one person from their Department to come down to the Ministry of Health, to work along with us, to ensure that we work on regularising.

If we are asking our healthcare workers to perform, Mr. Speaker, and they are performing so well, then we must, Mr. Speaker, look after their interest. We can't have them on the battlefield, some going for more than eight (8) hours, Mr. Speaker, and then there's no active contract and there's no regularisation. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to our doctors and our nurses and our other workers that regularisation is on its way. We

will be working to improve your condition. We will be working with you and we will be recognizing and rewarding you.

Mr. Speaker, but let me hasten to say, that while we are recognising and rewarding those who have worked hard and those who are outside there, going beyond their call of duty, you know, in every Department, the majority of them are going beyond the call of duty. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot provide reward to everyone across the board. So, we will be providing the reward and the regularisation for those who are performing and performing well. You know, sometimes we have to say it as it is. Sometimes you are afraid, because you're wondering what somebody would say or what the media would pick up and what they will bring when it comes to those particular issues. But, Mr. Speaker, as Minister with responsibility for Hospital and Community Health Services, I will be a champion for my healthcare workers. But, Mr. Speaker, for those of them, who are not pulling their weight, I say to them, you have to get on-board. You have to pull your weight; you have to do what it takes. We have to work together, as healthcare workers. I'm working for you and you're working for the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, to improve healthcare.

So, there are workers, Mr. Speaker, who would with members of staff say, that I am not going to work tomorrow; I have a cruise to attend. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, maybe the mask is a good thing sometimes, you know, because since I came in that particular Ministry, I have been visiting the hospital every weekend, Saturdays and Sundays, with the exception of last weekend, and I have been intermingling with the staff, the hardworking and dedicated staff, at the different Wards, and hearing from them first-hand, what their issues are. And, Mr. Speaker, even while sitting there with the mask on, I am hearing some of the workers say, "I would take as much as I could get now, because they're not giving me my pension."

I agree that all workers should get pension, but you should not be saying that you will take other things, because you're not getting pension. We will champion the fight for you for pension, but you cannot say that because you're not getting pension, then you'll do things, and you'll not work, and you'll not pull your weight, and then you're still

talking about you do not have a contract. Do you expect a contract if you're performing at that level?

So, Mr. Speaker, while we will be working along with our healthcare workers, I want to say to those few, Mr. Speaker, not the majority, but those few, that you have to get on-board with the programme. And if you think that you're not suited for that particular thing, then maybe you ask to be somewhere else. Healthcare is too sensitive and too important to have people with negative attitude on the job, Mr. Speaker. And, so, Mr. Speaker, as well as how I will work to improve the healthcare, I'll ensure, Mr. Speaker, that persons, who believe that they're not suited, will find an alternative place to be. Mr. Speaker, sometimes you have to say it as it is, you can't be afraid of what would be picked up outside there.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked at some priority areas, as it relates to improving healthcare, and one of them is Oncology, and Oncology really has to deal with the treatment of cancer, and our research has shown that cancer is the leading cause of death in Grenada. It means that we have to relook the way we deal with cancer. We can't wait, Mr. Speaker, until people are diagnosed with cancer, so we have to relook our method, Mr. Speaker, and we are looking at something you call REST, R E S T. And, R calls for research, because we really have to identify what is the root cause of all these cancers, breast cancer, cancer of the cervix and all that, and these are preventable diseases, the cervical cancer.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at research. Education must be an integral part of that. We have to educate our people, healthy lifestyles, eat healthy, exercise, less alcohol, smoking and all that, Mr. Speaker. The 'S' calls for screening and early screening, not just screening, but early screening; our regular checks of the breast and other checks, our Pap Smear and men doing their tests also. You know, Mr. Speaker, men are afraid of doctors, and they will feel pain in different areas, and sometimes they do not want to go, and we have an increase in the prostate cancer, because, for some reason, men are concerned about doctors interfering with their manhood. They are frightened. So when they get a pain there, even though it's really serious, they do not want to go to a doctor, Mr. Speaker, because they are frightened. And so, we have to

encourage our men to take care of themselves. We need them. Mr. Speaker, the 'T' calls for treatment. You know, when you're already diagnosed with cancer, then you have to get treatment, and early treatment, too. When you find it early and you deal with it early, then your survival rate is higher.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are presently working to revamp that whole Oncology Department, and in the New Year, we will unroll what we will be doing, as it relates to Oncology and cancer treatment and the revamping. We will look at research and work along with SGU, and there are a number of volunteers, who are already on board, to help us in that regard.

Just last week, Mr. Speaker, we had an interview with an Oncologist, and so we will continue to work, Mr. Speaker. We are also looking at our Cancer Registry, to track patients and the treatment they receive; so all that will be upgraded, Mr. Speaker.

Primary healthcare, Mr. Speaker, and primary healthcare really speaks to the first level of care, which is really most cost effective, and it's easy to achieve, Mr. Speaker. And this is really going to your Community Health Clinics and checking yourself and knowing what is happening with you, Mr. Speaker.

We are also working in restructuring and promoting that primary healthcare among our population, Mr. Speaker, so that our people can utilise our Medical Centres. And so we have seen a number of infrastructural works have been done in those Healthcare Centres, and we will be doing more work as it relates to improving those Community Health Centres across our country, and to ensure that our people can utilise these Health Centres, Mr. Speaker. But not only utilising and seeing the doctors there, we also want to ensure that the doctors stay for four (4) hours in their time, per week, four (4) hours. So, for example, if they have to go to Paraclete on Wednesday, then they spend four (4) hours there, instead of one or one a half hours, so that they can see more patients and more patients can go there instead of going to Mirabeau or even the General Hospital. So, we will be working along, Mr. Speaker, to deal with that aspect of healthcare.

Also, our health promotions, in providing education for our people, our Health Promotion Officers, Mr. Speaker, will be going out into the different communities and

they will intensify the actions within the different communities. In fact, just recently we have hired three (3) persons, as it relates to health promotions, understanding and appreciating that education is a key part in health, in providing healthcare for our people, Mr. Speaker, and so they will be going out in the communities, and this is a crucial time. The Christmas time, Mr. Speaker, is a crucial time, when it comes to healthcare, because, you know, for some reason, we want to eat our lives away, when Christmas comes. We want to drink the most alcohol, eat the most ham and after that, all our hospitals are filled with patients with high blood pressure, diabetes, people with strokes, Mr. Speaker.

We want to say to our people in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, that yes, we want you to enjoy yourself, but let's do everything in moderation. Yes, you can eat a slice of ham, moderation. You can drink a glass of wine, why not, in moderation. You can eat a slice of cake, in moderation, Mr. Speaker, because at the end, after the whole Christmas holiday is over, you want to live a normal life, quality of life. You don't just want to have life, because sometimes you say, well, it is one life you have. But, why would you want to have one life with a stroke, or one life with high blood pressure kicking high, because you just didn't take care of yourself? These are lifestyle diseases that you can take care of.

And so, from the Ministry of Health, we will be promoting those positive lifestyles and those preventative measures, because preventative healthcare is the best healthcare. Yes, people will get sick, they will need the doctor, and they will need treatment, but we want to promote healthy lifestyle. Eat healthy, vegetables and fruits, Mr. Speaker, less smoking, as I said earlier, exercising daily and all these things are important in really promoting a positive lifestyle and promoting better healthcare, and so it's something that we will be promoting, as we move into really dealing with the issue of healthcare at the Ministry of Health, especially, as it relates to Hospital and Community Health Services, working along with our people.

Mr. Speaker, we are also looking at decentralisation of services, and that is important. Everybody cannot just come to St. George's, when you have to do some blood works, or some minor surgery. And therefore, we will be working, early, in 2021

to ensure that both Princess Alice and Princess Royal, they both have some minor surgeries. So, we have already started putting preparation in place for Mirabeau Hospital and a Lab there, so the people be able to do their blood work there and other services at the level of the community.

Mr. Speaker, very soon we will launch this Polyclinic in St. John and so it would not just be a Medical Centre to see a doctor once a week and to come and dress your foot or for antenatal clinic or so. We will have a doctor there, on call, every day, twenty-four (24) hours. We will also have emergency operations there and we will be doing a phased approach, as it relates to Laboratory work and minor surgeries too. **(Applause)** But, it would be phased, Mr. Speaker.

So, St. Mark and St. John, even St. Patrick, you will have a Clinic that you can utilise in 2021. St David, we are not leaving you behind, so you too, in 2021, will be on the list of areas for decentralisation of services, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** We believe in bringing healthcare to the people, Mr. Speaker, out in the community, so that the General Hospital will really be used for emergency and serious cases of health assistance.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government, we are committed to improving the healthcare of our people. And, Mr. Speaker, in coming in, as the new Minister, Mr. Speaker, Government has shown their willingness, they have shown their commitment, and so they have already purchased and number of new equipment for the Surgery Department and for the Paediatric, for Urology for adult and also Urology for Peds, a number of equipment were purchased by the Government, and so we have also hired a Urologist. However, we had some delays in him coming in on the 1st, because of the issue of the lockdown in London. So very soon, we will have a new Urologist, who will be assisting us in those issues. We are not leaving any issue as it relates to healthcare. We are tackling every issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just recently, in November, we had three (3) Surgical Teams. You would recall in the past, what we have is that people having to wait long months and even a whole year to get surgery done. That is a thing of the past. So right now, with major surgeries, less than a month, it should be done.

However, we are facing some challenges now, because of the same COVID. Sometimes we try to procure medication from abroad, and there are delays, because of the COVID, and because they have been held back. But, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at local places that can assist us in procuring and getting those equipment. And so, we also want to thank those local persons, who are assisting us in this regard. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to doing what it takes, as it relates to the Ministry of Health. We are committed to providing quality healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that was much talked about is mental health, and, Mr. Speaker, it is not a secret that mental health is dear to my heart and so, as the Minister with responsibility for that Hospital also, I'll be working very hard. There are many challenges. There's no secret about that also, many challenges, as it relates to mental health and Mt. Gay Mental Hospital, but we have already started, Mr. Speaker.

When we got in, Mr. Speaker, we had some issues identified and we have rushed ahead, right away and got approval. We had to purchase new mattresses and get new linen and all that. We have done that. We have purchased all these things, and we are working. There are lots of infrastructural works that need to be done there, and so we will be doing that. But, Mr. Speaker, mental health is more than just Mt. Gay Mental Hospital. Mental health has to be seen even within the communities and the educational aspects must be very vital, because there is still stigma and discrimination, when it comes to mental health. So, these are things that we have to eradicate. These are things we have to work to get rid of, and to do that we must be in the community, providing the information. But also, teaching families how to deal and treat with families, who have mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, you know, when some families take their loved ones and bring to Mt. Gay, and do not look back, leave them there, mental illness is not with you forever. Sometimes you're sick today, a whole year. My mother is sick, sometimes in April. When she's out, a whole year would pass, till next year April again. And when she's good, she's really good. So, it is the love and the care we have to give to our families and our friends, when they have those issues of mental illness.

Similar too, when they have cancer, the support that is needed is the same support that is needed for mental illness, because they are all illnesses that can happen to any family, and therefore, we must provide that support. We must provide the education.

So, from our standpoint, from the Ministry of Health, we have to be able to sit with families and get counsellors, and that is why there's a budget line in our new Budget for 2021 that speaks to 'psychosocial support,' and 'psychosocial support' will provide counselling, not only for persons in bereavement or persons who have been diagnosed with cancer, but it would also assist families, who have people with mental illness, who need to understand how to cope. It is not always easy to cope, when you have to deal with a family with mental illness, you know. It is a difficult thing. Sometimes you literally have to fight to get them to take their medication, literally have to fight to get them to go for treatment, and therefore, we have to provide that avenue, that education support and that support system, among the population that's having to deal with mental illness, so that they can take care of their family, because I understand, sometimes, you take and you just say, well I can't deal with it anymore.

Mental illness, Mr. Speaker, is a terrible thing, very terrible, because you might see this person good today, tomorrow they'll do weird things, like even take out their clothes, and sometimes it's embarrassing for you, as family members and you believe, well, you don't want that to continue, so you say well, let us leave them up in Mt. Gay, or put them away.

Mr. Speaker, the only people you should try to put away is somebody who is real violent, and who will do crimes that would take lives and all that. But other family members, who really have issues of mental illness, you really have to be there for your families. And so we will work together, Mr. Speaker, from the Ministry, and we will do what it takes.

And, I want to say that this Government is committed, Mr. Speaker. My entire team, they are committed in assisting as it relates to providing assistance to healthcare. And so, when those issues arise and those submissions come to Cabinet, 100% support. **(Applause)** But, I want to say to them that more will be coming. I will be

needing more support. We have to tackle healthcare, Mr. Speaker. This is a sensitive issue. Healthcare cannot wait. Maybe we can wait with one of the projects, the Road Projects, and maybe we can wait with some of the other projects. But we cannot wait, when it comes to healthcare. And therefore, I will be the biggest champion for healthcare, Mr. Speaker, and I will be working along to ensure that we provide quality healthcare for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I know time runs fast. But, Mr. Speaker, I know you will appreciate that even before the time comes to an end, I will need an extra fifteen (15) minutes, because you realise I have two (2) complete Ministries, and I've just finished Health, and I am heading to Social Development, and I cannot forget my constituency. So, I am asking early for the additional fifteen (15) minutes.

Mr. Speaker, Social Development. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry and the Department of Social Development, my Permanent Secretary and everybody within that Ministry, I want to thank them. First of all, when the Prime Minister was going to announce a reshuffle ***(laughter)*** they went into a prayer and fasting mode, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, have you ever heard that before? And I said to them, prepare for anything, because I have been here for so long, so maybe it's time for a change. And, Mr. Speaker, they went into a prayer and fast mode, and then the Prime Minister put off the reshuffle, and they said, you see how prayer works. **(Laughter)** And then again, Mr. Speaker, he came back and all eyes stuck to the television. In fact, I walked into Foodland the last time, and a lady said: ***"You are Ms. Thomas. My Nephew is always speaking about you. You know, he was stuck to the television for the reshuffle, and when he realised that they didn't change you, he took off the television."*** So, Mr. Speaker, it speaks to the love and the care that we have for each other, and the support system, Mr. Speaker.

And so when I got this new responsibility as it relates to Hospital and Community Health Services, they said: **"We have your back and we are here to help."** And so, I want to thank them for that tremendous support that they continue to give me within the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has presented us with several challenges, and you will appreciate that at the Ministry of Social Development, that would be even worse for us, because remember we have vulnerable families to deal with and we have the issue of the pandemic affecting more families, more people losing their jobs, and therefore, my counsellors and my social workers, Mr. Speaker, they had to work overtime. In fact, we activated a twenty-four (24) hour counselling service online, during the COVID, because a lot of people needed support, a lot of people needed assistance.

No one, Mr. Speaker, was prepared to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. We had hurricane come, it goes and then we are able to regroup nicely. But we had lockdown, Mr. Speaker, and so many families needed our assistance and intervention. And so, our counsellors, Mr. Speaker, and our social workers and our Gender-Based Officers, Mr. Speaker, we had lots of issues, Mr. Speaker. Husbands realising that they cannot live with their wives because they have to be in a house for long hours and so we needed to activate and we needed to work overtime. And so, I want to commend the workers within the Ministry for your hard work, your love and your dedication. You have done great work during the period of the pandemic.

And, Mr. Speaker, we do not have enough counsellors, and so I also want to commend Dr. Neil Chiton, Dr. Panchoo and Dr. Bridgeman, who assisted us, even from the US, in providing support online, to persons in quarantine. So we had extra work from the Ministry to do, Mr. Speaker, in terms of providing psychosocial and counselling support, Mr. Speaker, and so thousands of persons needed our support and needed our services, during that particular period. And, so my team had to work with the COVID Committee, to provide counselling for people in quarantine. They had to work with people who were positive for the virus, and so they even had to work out in the community during the lockdown. And with all the other social ills, Mr. Speaker, they had to be working overnight, Mr. Speaker, but we are committed. And we will continue to work as a Ministry to do what it takes to provide all the counselling and psychosocial support to our people, Mr. Speaker.

Within the Budget, we will be able to add two (2) or three (3) new counsellors, within the New Year, because we understand that this is a very important service for the

people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So apart from the health, Health has a budget line for counselling, and then, within the Ministry, we also will be hiring the services of additional counsellors to assist us in those issues.

In terms of crisis intervention, Mr. Speaker, when a family dies or some mother, Mr. Speaker, our Psychosocial Unit has to work overtime, Mr. Speaker, and work to assist even in suicidal prevention. And so they'll work along with the Ministry of Health, as it relates to mental illness. So, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work.

The SEED Unit, Mr. Speaker, and that's another Unit that was very essential during the lockdown, they had to continue to go out in the community, Mr. Speaker. In fact, going out in the community and paying SEED, because of the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and the large gathering and the distancing, a decision was taken so that the SEED Officers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Police Officers and I want to commend the Royal Grenada Police Force, the Ministry of Finance, our SEED Unit and all our SEED Officers, for their dedication during the period of the pandemic, sometimes, even, putting their own lives at risk. There were instances when they were told that this house you went in yesterday, somebody tested positive. But they still, Mr. Speaker, they were committed and they went out into the different villages to pay the SEED, and not just pay SEED, Mr. Speaker.

At a time when Government's revenues were low, my committed Government continued to pay and pay on time, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** This is a committed Government, Mr. Speaker, and so we have to appreciate. Sometimes we do not appreciate what we have. We look at only those negative things and we highlight that this is happening and this isn't happening. But those positive things, Mr. Speaker, that are happening across our country, we have to recognise them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at present, we have recertification, and that recertification is really where we are looking at the people who are receiving SEED, the SEED beneficiaries, because SEED, Mr. Speaker, is really a support for education, empowerment and development. It's a conditional cash transfer, which is meant for a period. You are not supposed to stay on SEED forever. So when your condition and your circumstances have improved, it means that the right thing to do is to come to the SEED Unit and say:

"Now, I have found a job, so you can remove me." But nobody does that, Mr. Speaker, so it means that we have to recertify.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Manual is clear, that even without recertification, if we, from the SEED Unit, the social worker, the counsellor, or the SEED officers identify that this family's life has improved, for example, they found a job, then they have to be removed. So, you don't even have to recertify them. You remove them, and when they come in, then you discuss with them, we understand that you are now a teacher, you're now a police, you're now working, as the warden or whatever, so we had to remove you, because it's part of what you signed on to. It's part of the education process of SEED. We say to you that it is really a support system and as my sister said, when you reach where you can graduate, put on your gown and celebrate. Graduation is a nice thing. So people should not feel in any way, when you have to be removed from the programme, because your condition has improved.

And so at present, recertification is taking place. They have completed St. Patrick. They are working in St. Mark and St. David, to ensure that we look at people's condition to revaluate and see who need to come on, and there are people who need to also get out. So, Mr. Speaker, you're not just taking out people because of political affiliation or so, you're taking out people because their condition has improved and so people will be removed. It's simple like that, but not just removed like that, and you do not know. They will call you and say, **"well look, the recertification shows that we understand that this is the case, and what would happen, at this particular given period."** So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Ministry.

Housing, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to also commend the People's Republic of China for the six hundred and forty-seven (647) units of Low Income Houses to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** A donation, it is not a loan. It's a donation to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, for the vulnerable families, families who need housing assistance from the Government. Our Public Officers can apply, our vulnerable families, those in abusive relationships, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have the criteria for those houses, so you must be working for under thirty-five hundred dollars ($3,500.00), per month. You shouldn't have land, or have a house already, Mr. Speaker. So, there are a number of criteria that you have to satisfy. And there will be a vetting process, because you could apply, you could give us all that we asked for in a paper. But if we do not vet and make sure what you're saying is the truth, because we have experiences in the past, where people applied, gave us false information, so we have to verify, simple like that. So, Mr. Speaker, St. Mark, St. Patrick, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, St. George, St. David, five (5) sites, six hundred and forty-seven (647) units, commendable for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people who will be receiving those Units, to take very good care of them, and we will continue to provide quality housing for our people, Mr. Speaker.

Our Housing Repair Programme continued, even during that period, Mr. Speaker, and a number of needy families received assistance, as it relates to housing. But, Mr. Speaker, even more than that, this Government, Mr. Speaker, that is why I am so happy and pleased to be a part of this Government, you know, this team of men and women here, you know, Mr. Speaker.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that pit latrines must be a thing of the past. Pit latrines cannot continue, Mr. Speaker. And so, we have to work with our people to eradicate pit latrine across our Tri-Island State. It's not going to happen overnight, because it calls for a lot of resources. But, Mr. Speaker, we will be working along with our people. They make some contributions and we assist them.

We also have a Bathroom Brigade, who will assist in labour, because we do not want to give you material and it stays under your house and cement getting hard. So, we will be working to provide assistance for our elderly citizens. So, we are starting with the elderly citizens. But vulnerable mothers, single headed households and low income families can apply for some assistance, not complete assistance. So we will say to them, you can get your sand, gravel and your blocks, and we'll give you some. We will help you provide the labour, or sometimes they say, I have this already, and we will provide assistance, Mr. Speaker.

We are committed, Mr. Speaker, to providing and to improving the life of our people, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we cannot leave them always down at the bottom. We have to look at ways and means to lift up our people and eradication of pit latrines is one of the ways that Government is using to eradicate poverty, within our Tri-Island State. And, in 2021, we'll do more, as it relates to getting rid of pit latrines.

Our Housing Repair Programme continued. Mr. Speaker, our Soft Loan Programme in the Housing Authority of Grenada, where you can access up to $30,000.00, this continues, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to make strides, as it relates to improving the system for juveniles, Mr. Speaker, our young men and young girls, who need our guidance, need our attention. We will continue to do what it takes, Mr. Speaker, and so we have done a number of interventions in 2020. And so we will continue, Mr. Speaker, to strengthen our juvenile system and to provide more programmes, Mr. Speaker, with our developmental partners, to improve the issues, as they relate our juveniles.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government, we are committed to continuing to provide quality service for all our people, everyone, our at-risk men, at-risk girls, our abused boys and our abused girls. We will continue to provide quality services.

Mr. Speaker, Gender and Family Life Education; Mr. Speaker, we continue to work, in terms of eliminating violence against women and girls. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of programmes, Mr. Speaker, by the UN System. So they are involved with ILO and PAHO and a grant of €2,000,000.00 have been allocated for a project implementation that will assist us in eliminating violence against women and girls.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very important project, the Spotlight Initiative, to end violence against women and girls. It is a comprehensive project, aimed at addressing Gender-Based and Family Violence in Grenada. Its six (6) pillars focus on: Law and Policy Reform; Strengthening Institutions; Prevention and Social Norms; Improving Delivery of Quality and Essential Services; Data Collection and Usage and Supporting Civil Society and Women's Movement in Grenada. Mr. Speaker, this is a programme, which already started and is really aimed at eliminating. We have to fight, Mr. Speaker.

We have to champion the call to get rid of all forms of abuse. And our record shows that more women are abused, and so that's why these programmes are aimed at them. But we also have programmes that are aimed at supporting our men.

Just recently, we had the Man Box that provides support to men. And we continue to have intervention at the level of the community with our men to ensure that they can be part of our society. As I always say in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, men are so essential, Mr. Speaker. They are our husbands, they are our fathers, they are our uncles and our cousins, and we just need men, Mr. Speaker. In a home, there is so much a difference, when a man is around and available, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** and so we will continue to work together, Mr. Speaker. So, programmes would not only be centred around women; yes women, because of all the issues, but yes, we have to provide support for our men.

Mr. Speaker, even during the lockdown, we had a number of distributions of food vouchers, Mr. Speaker, and hampers and so our social workers... Mr. Speaker, I think I said that here before, and I will never forget that, that is something that stayed with me. I would never forget Ms. Pitt, Mr. Speaker, her brother died during that period, and she was, the day after, in the community of St. David, walking. When I called her, thinking she was home mourning, she said: **"Minister, I am in St. David, assisting families with hampers."** Mr. Speaker, you see the dedication? That is why we have to commend dedication. You can't keep quiet when somebody is dedicated. And so we have to highlight our dedicated workers. But also, Mr. Speaker, if there are issues, you also highlight those particular issues. So, Mr. Speaker, as a Ministry, we continue to provide all the necessary support, even in life and even in death.

Mr. Speaker, Child Protection Authority. The Child Protection Authority, Mr. Speaker, continues to provide assistance to vulnerable children. And sometimes, you only hear when something negative happens in the News, but you are not seeing the positives of the Child Protection Authority. They too, put themselves at risk, out in the communities, out in the villages. Sometimes they have to hide, Mr. Speaker, because perpetrators are looking for them. And so we have to commend their hard work and their dedication. We appreciate that there are always more work to be done. We also

appreciate that there is room for improvement, but we will continue to work to protect our children. We will continue to work to do what it takes as a Ministry, as a Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Housing Authority continues to work very hard. Mr. Speaker, you know, as I speak about the Housing Authority, during the period of the lockdown when workers were home, they too were able to pay all their workers and pay them on time, even being at home, and so they too, must be commended for that service.

Mr. Speaker, they continued to, apart from the Loan Programme, they are building houses for middle income families, and these families get their loans from the bank. So, Housing Authority do not give you loan of $200,000.00 and $300,000.00. Families get their loan from the bank, and they give the Housing Authority because of the quality of their work and the quality of what they do, many teachers, police officers and nurses, hire the Housing Authority to build their houses. And just recently, Mr. Speaker, we had about eighteen (18) new houses to be built, you know. So, we have to commend...

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon Delma Thomas: …the Housing Authority of Grenada. They continue to produce blocks and all that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I round up on both Ministries, I want to thank my two (2) Acting Permanent Secretaries, Permanent Secretary, Crissy Worme, a humanitarian, a special person, Mr. Speaker, someone who was just born a real social worker. I always say, she's a real social worker, because you always feel the social worker. Although she rose to Acting PS, you always feel the social worker in her.

My new Acting PS, who's in the Ministry of Health, with responsibility for Hospital and Community Health Services, Hannah St. Paul, who loves and has a passion for the area of healthcare, Mr. Speaker. And, so I am dedicated and I am happy, Mr. Speaker, and I am humbled to be working along with these two (2) very important Permanent Secretaries.

My entire management team, within the ministry of Social Development, my new family at the Ministry of Health, with responsibility for Hospital and Community Services, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank every one of them, for welcoming me with open arms, and for committing to work along with me, Mr. Speaker, as we strive to improve lives. Both Ministries have two (2) things in common, improving the lives of ordinary people and improving the lives of Grenadian men and women, who need care, and who need attention, Mr. Speaker. And so I am happy to be a part of this team, Mr. Speaker. I am happy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know in life you have purpose and every one of us is born with a purpose. So our purpose, collectively, is to serve humanity, and we will serve with distinction, Mr. Speaker. And so, you will hear more of what we are doing in 2021, as we unroll new programmes, as it relates to Healthcare and Social Services, Housing and Community Empowerment.

Mr. Speaker, let me move to my constituency, the Constituency of St. Andrew North-West West. Mr. Speaker, their love and appreciation, have lifted me up to who I am today, Mr. Speaker, and I will be forever grateful.

Mr. Speaker, my resolve for service has been strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic. And my commitment remains to the people of St. Andrew North-West, first, and then the whole of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic period, I have seen hurt, I've seen pain, Mr. Speaker. I've seen the resolve, the resilience of our people, Mr. Speaker. And that has given me the determination and the strength to even work harder to serve the people of my beautiful constituency.

And last week, I heard the Member for St. Andrew North-East saying, St. Andrew North-East is the most beautiful. But the whole of Grenada knows that St. Andrew North-West is the most beautiful constituency across the Tri-Island State of Grenada, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt about that. If you look in the room, you can see that. **(Laughter)** They are all here this morning, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them for being there, Mr. Speaker, during the difficult period, Mr. Speaker, the difficult period of lockdown, when all of us were all shaken, Mr. Speaker. There were times, I cried home, because when you see people, Mr. Speaker, first families, who never needed your assistance, were saying that I need your assistance today, Mr. Speaker. And, so it was a difficult period for all of us. But, Mr. Speaker, we are standing and standing stronger, Mr. Speaker.

We had to provide hamper assistance, Mr. Speaker, for needy families during that period, and these hampers were given to families, who either lost their jobs, due to COVID-19 or who had no fixed means of income. So, if you were getting SEED, you were not qualified during that period, because it was limited hampers we had. And we were able to give hampers to many needy families during the period of shutdown.

Mr. Speaker, we also started a soup kitchen, during the crisis period, Mr. Speaker. You know, in a crisis, you look for creative ways to deal with things and to work and to serve your people. And so, we started a soup kitchen, Mr. Speaker, funded by the people of St. Andrew North-West and other partners, other persons. There was Martin Ventour, who saw my soup on my Facebook page, because I would not show who was getting the soup, Mr. Speaker, you know that for a fact. But I showed the bowls of soup, and when he saw that, he got into my inbox and said: **"I want to assist,"** and he sent us some bowls and peas and other stuff from the United States to assist us.

We continue, Mr. Speaker, three (3) days a week, we provide the most vulnerable, elderly citizens, shut-ins within the constituency, with a hot meal, Mr. Speaker. They appreciate that hot meal, Mr. Speaker, and they send me videos sometimes. When my workers go out in the field, they record them with videos saying thank you, and how appreciative they are for this hot meal, Mr. Speaker. And so we'll continue to give a hot meal, three (3) days a week, until we are able to give it, maybe five (5) days a week. We are working towards giving it more days, Mr. Speaker, and so I am happy that we are able to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we know that COVID-19 has created many challenges and so even with the schools, there are challenges, and so I am happy that as a constituency, we were able to give and continue to give masks to the schools within the constituency and

sanitisation. So, I am working along with the three (3) schools, within my constituency, and provide them with sanitisation and with masks, compliment our partners, who live overseas. And so I want to thank them for their support, and we will continue to work along with the schools to provide all the necessary assistance.

Mr. Speaker, while we are at school, you know, we continue to say that education is a key pillar, in terms of development, in terms of eradicating poverty. And so I want to also congratulate the Women's Arm in my constituency, who have been working along with all the schools within the constituency and working along with the teachers in identifying needy families, needy children, who need assistance towards lunch, and so they are presenting the monies on a monthly basis, to ensure that we give assistance to needy families. We'll continue that, Mr. Speaker, in the New Year, because more persons want to come on-board to assist a child to get a better education, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, even during the crisis, we were able to get thirty-seven (37) new jobs for people within the constituency, that's long-term jobs. We are not talking about the several contracts across the constituency in every village. We had eighteen (18) contracts across the constituency. Mr. Speaker, in fact, when the Opposition and others saw all that, they said it's an election year, because of what was happening. But, Mr. Speaker, we understand pain, and we understand the hurting of our people, and these are regular contracts in normal years. It is just that we had a lockdown, so everything seemed to have come to an end.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is laughable to believe that a Party in power, with all the seats, well, fourteen (14), one is out, will give up, Mr. Speaker, or call Election, less than three (3) years. For what, Mr. Speaker, we may ask? There is so much to be done, still within our constituencies. We have made many commitments to the people, within our constituency. I've told Balthazar, I am going to be lighting their playing field during that term of office. If you call election December, then it means that I lied to them, and I will protect my credibility. Whatever we say we would deliver, we deliver, Mr. Speaker. And therefore, those deliveries must take place. There is no reason for not delivering.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have battled that crisis. Mr. Speaker, you know, I think we underestimate, as a Government and as a people, how we were able to handle this crisis. Mr. Speaker, we always have to remember, how we were able to protect our people, Mr. Speaker, during this crisis, continued to pay salaries. We must never, never forget that Mr. Speaker, never. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, are you listening the News, CNN, the mighty United States and Great Britain, BBC News? They can't pay salaries, Mr. Speaker. People are dying like flies, Mr. Speaker. Our own citizens, our brothers and our sisters, who are living on ventilators, are dying out as flies. Mr. Speaker, we were able to contain the virus and we must never lose hope of that, never, never forget that, Mr. Speaker. And, so there's no reason to call an election at this time. We are doing well, Mr. Speaker, serving the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And so, we will continue to serve with distinction, Mr. Speaker. And, as the Parliamentary Representative, I have to continue, Mr. Speaker, to deliver on the promises I made to the people of St. Andrew North-West, in this term.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Delma Thomas: Mr. Speaker, can I get my fifteen (15) minutes, please?

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Proceed. You have fifteen (15) minutes.

Hon. Delma Thomas: So, Mr. Speaker, in St. Andrew North-West, we continue to work. We have the Day Care in Mt. Horne, up and running. We had some delays, because of COVID-19, the lockdown and so, but the children are starting to return. And, it is a state-of-the-art building, in Mt. Horne, my village, where I was raised, Mr. Speaker. And I am happy to be able to serve and bring that facility there for the people of St. Andrew, not only St. Andrew North-West, where they can bring their children, Mr.

Speaker, to look for the opportunities that this Government will be providing, in terms of jobs, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to serve, continue to work along with our people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about that we have started a Resource, Health and Fitness Centre in Saab. But the lockdown has created some slowdown there. We are almost completed there. We have to do the painting, the tiling and the electrical works. And so the Saab Sports Club, within the village, which is a force to be reckoned with in that particular area, they have been mandated to manage that facility and they are also involved in providing voluntary work, so we provided paint, and there is a contractor there, who normally does construction, he would lead in the painting of the facility, so all we provide is the paint.

We believe in community spirit, Mr. Speaker. We have to bring back the community spirit, because every time you try to do something that is community spirit oriented, people ask, where is the taxpayers' money. Taxpayers' money can't do all the things that Government wants to do. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Sports Club, my team in Saab for coming in on board, Mr. Speaker, to assist.

We have an electrician, who is part of the team, who works with GRENLEC, and will assist us in providing the electrical. So, we provide the material, he'll do the work and so we will complete that facility. We already have five (5) pieces of equipment, computers, printers and all that, already stored away. Some are gifts given to us, ready and waiting, Mr. Speaker. We want to make it a real Resource Centre for the people of St. Andrew North-West and by extension, St. Andrew. When we are doing things in St. Andrew, we do not only say one constituency, but we are working as an entire Body. And so whatever is in St. Andrew South-East, we can access, whatever is in St. Andrew North West, they can access also. So we will have a state of the art gym there, because we are promoting healthy lifestyles and we are promoting exercising, Mr. Speaker, so that would be a facility that will be there for the people.

Mr. Speaker, the Government continues. So, apart from all these contracts across the different villages within the constituency, every village, so in Paraclete, we just completed a washroom facility for the playing field there and we will be looking at a

cover pavilion, in 2021, for that playing field, that's where the Paraclete Government school holds their Sports Meeting, and we also have a lot of cricket and football and other games being played there, and so we will be working along with the community, Mr. Speaker. We meet the community and we hear what they are looking to see improve in their communities. And so we have provided the washrooms, and so we have done that.

We are looking to provide a washroom for Mirabeau. They have identified it as something to be done in 2021. But we have just repaired the Mirabeau Community Centre, which will be utilised, Mr. Speaker, by members of the villages. We want to ensure that wherever we have a Community Centre, it is not just a Community Centre locked down for meetings and then opened. But we want to identify plans and programmes to utilise in every Community Centre, and so, even Balthazar will be repaired in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Government continues to provide assistance for needy families and vulnerable families within the Constituency of St. Andrew North-West. So many families received medical assistance, vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker, those who are working for particular salaries; brain scans, medicines and other assistance, they were able to get assistance from the Government of Grenada and we thank the Government of Grenada for assisting families as it relates to health care.

Uniform Assistance, Mr. Speaker, over three hundred (300) needy families got assistance for uniform; need families. Tuition assistance, and tuition we're speaking both at the level of TAMCC and St. George's University. So, Mr. Speaker, more students, after graduating from TAMCC and sometimes even secondary schools, more students from the constituency are now going to get their First Degree, Mr. Speaker, and I applaud that.

I encourage them; in fact, I am always the biggest advocate for better education. You know, in my days I wasn't able to get a scholarship, and so I had to work and then go back to study and then go for election, lose, campaign and that is history, Mr. Speaker. But now, many families are receiving assistance, and so I want to commend, Mr. Speaker, and I will always say that I am proud to be part of a Government that care

for the people, Mr. Speaker, but even more so, care for the vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker, and I am always concerned about vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker. It is not a secret, from where I came from, a vulnerable family, Mr. Speaker. The things I am seeing people having now and still saying vulnerable, I didn't even have that. You know, sometimes by saying it over and over at home, until I think my husband and children get tired hearing me say it, because I want them to understand and appreciate that things don't come easy and I had it hard as a child. And so that is why I am determined to work along with families to improve and to assist in providing education, to improve their whole livelihood, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also provided assistance for paying for CXCs. So there are families, who, when CXC time comes, they can't pay. Government has also assisted them in that regard. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to provide for education, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker twelve (12) families received… The Brigade built twelve (12) bathrooms and toilets for twelve (12) vulnerable families. But, twenty-seven (27) additional families received part assistance, because they had some of the materials. In my constituency, people get their blocks, they get their sand and gravel, and the Brigade will assist some. Some have family members who are involved in construction, and so, we are really seeing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I feel proud, when I walk through a particular village and I realise that I am counting. Because what we have done, Mr. Speaker, we realised that the COVID pandemic has created a void in how we meet our people. And so we have decided from the constituency standpoint, to take the Constituency Office into the villages, to see, Mr. Speaker. You know, there is nothing more important than when you see for yourself, and you feel for yourself, and you know what people are going through, because there are some people, Mr. Speaker, who would never come in a Constituency Office, you know. It might be for political reasons; you might be afraid what people say. And the truth is when you're dealing with human beings, Mr. Speaker… you know, we are our own enemy sometimes, as even workers. Sometimes, you're there, and you see and say, well, this one coming, or whatever. Mr. Speaker,

and I understand that for my own self from where I came from. When you're asking, Mr. Speaker, and we are poor, but we're so proud, and I know how that feels; you know, you're poor, and you don't want people to hear, you're looking around to see who's hearing, and that was me, that's from where I came from, so I understand.

So, I walk through the village, sometimes for myself. I identify, I take down names and I say these families need assistance, and they would say, well no, we went to that family and she said she didn't want NNP thing. I say, but her house needs repairs and we're going to provide the assistance, whether she accepts it or not, because she desperately is in need of care and she's a vulnerable family.

And so we continue to go through the highways and the byways, identifying people who need our assistance and continue to assist them. And when this Budget is over, Mr. Speaker, we will be out again, looking, Mr. Speaker, and working along to see how we can assist needy families, how we can work to improve their living conditions, Mr. Speaker. And so we will continue as a Government, to bring service to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a number of infrastructural works in 2020, and I've identified the bathroom and many roads. We had roads in Balthazar, and we had two scopes of work in Morne Longue. We had in Adelphi, we had in Beauregard, we had in Mirabeau, we had in Saab, we had in Mt. Horne, we had in Dunfermline, we had in Laca Bacay and Paradise and all these places, Mr. Speaker. But there are still infrastructural works to be done.

We also have a Community Brigade that do small works around the constituency. And so, in 2021, we will identify some key areas that need infrastructural work. We have Claboney Road, Mr. Speaker, we are happy, because I think that is something I've been speaking about and bothering the Minister for Finance now, who was then the Minister for Infrastructure. I am always in his ear saying, I want to see Claboney Road get done, and I am happy to say that, that is on its way. They already signed. The contractor was selected, and so we will soon see boots on the ground for the Claboney Road, and so we will work to develop the infrastructure of the road and also look to see how we can make it a better tourist site for St. Andrew and by extension, Grenada.

So, Mr. Speaker, in Byelands, we also have a major road issue, as it relates to consignment. So in 2021, we will look at that as a major project from the Ministry of Works standpoint. We will work along with the Ministry of Works, to see if we can tackle that particular issue.

So, we look at how we can develop the infrastructural condition of St. Andrew North-West. We will look at the whole human aspect, to see how we can encourage more students to go to TAMCC and to go to SGU, and look at ways and means, how, as a community, apart from Government, how we can work together to raise resources to assist our families? You know, I commend the management team, the Executive Branch and all individuals within the constituency, who give willingly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I have made that clear on record, that we are the only constituency that every month workers, people who find jobs, give back, at least, five dollars ($5.00) per month, to assist with the work in the constituency. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them for that dedication, for their hard work and for the support that they have given me, and to say that we are continuing to work hard, that we are committed and we will work together, we will soldier on.

I want to speak to my management team and my constituents, who are here this morning, to say that I love you from the bottom of my heart. You have lifted me up more than anything. Your love, your appreciation and yes, your criticisms sometimes, because, you know sometimes, as human beings you only want to hear what you're doing good. You don't want people to identify that there are areas that need improvements. Mr. Speaker, I thank them for being able to say **"I want to have a few words with you.**" Ms. Reno would always say: **"Minister, I want a five (5) minutes of your time,"** and the five (5) minutes of my time, Mr. Speaker, is to identify areas of improvement she thinks I need to look at. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that very much, because it makes me who I am today, a better person.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also place on record my appreciation to my husband, who has always been there with me, when I took up the new role as Minister with responsibility for Hospital and Health Services. He knows my passion. And you know, Mr. Speaker, nights I have been singing that song: **"Where Feet May Fail,"** and I say to

God, **"You never failed me, and you're not going to do that now, I would not give you the chance to, I will stand and allow you to lead my path."** And I sing night after night. It's the first thing I do in the morning and the last thing I do at night, pray and sing on to God, even harder now, Mr. Speaker, because health is no easy place and in these COVID-19 times.

Social Development too, is no easy place, and then I still have a constituency to deal with. And so, Mr. Speaker, I continue to thank God for that supportive family he has given me, husband, children, sisters, mother, brothers, Mr. Speaker. I thank God for my aunts and uncles and cousins and family and friends, who have supported me, Mr. Speaker.

I thank God for my Fitness Group, my Booth Camp Fitness Group, who has always been there. And you know, when you reach there, there are teachers and nurses and so, and the positive energies, Mr. Speaker. I thank God for them.

I thank God for the Prayer Warriors in the Ministry and in the community. I thank God for those who have been lifting me up in their prayers. And, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to thank God and pray that he will continue to help them and give them the health and strength to be with me, Mr. Speaker, and to assist me.

Mr. Speaker, I want to place on record my second son. Yes, I thank my entire family and I thank my husband for being there and every Saturday I pull him out from his bed, early in the morning, to say we're going to the General Hospital. The General Hospital has become the new liming spot, Mr. Speaker. So, every Saturday and Sunday, I say I want to go to General Hospital, Mr. Speaker. And I have a plan that I would not outline, and I say to him, this is happening when and this is happening that time, and you have to cook the food then, because I am going to be there. Mr. Speaker, you have to be there. You have to feel and see what people are feeling.

Sometimes you just talk and you just identify the negatives. But when you are there on the ground, and you can see and you can feel **(applause)** and you know the hard work and the dedication, you will be committed, Mr. Speaker, to work along with the people, and so I'll continue to work. And I know I have the support of Social

Development. They say: "**Minister, just go. If you need us, call us, we'll be there too."** So, I will be working in the New Year.

But, I want to place on record, Mr. Speaker, my second son. He is my mentor, my biggest motivator, my Campaign Manager, Mr. Speaker, and everything you can think about. He's always there, Mr. Speaker. And I recall that I said to him, "**I think there are some issues,"** he said, **"there are no issues"**. I said, **"I'm not going out because I am having some regular Asthma attacks and all that."** So he said, **"you know, things are not bad as you think. The people love you, but they want to see more of you."** And I think that's where, 'Take the Office to the Community' was born, because of what he said. I was in Balthazar, because he is everywhere. Once he's not in SGU, he's up. Once there's no class, he's in Byelands, he's in Mirabeau, and he's all over the place. So, he said, **"they want to see more of you, they love you, your support is there, let us get out, put on your mask and get out in the community. Don't stay too long, because you might get an Asthma attack, so just spend short hours."** And so he's always there, supporting and guiding, Mr. Speaker, like somebody who knows so much about…

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Delma Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I am wrapping up, so just give me one minute to wrap up.

Mr. Speaker: One (1) more minute.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Yes. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everybody, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues, Mr. Speaker, my St. Andrew team of MPs, of Parliamentary Representatives, I want to thank you for your love, your support, for us being there for one another.

Our Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, who has always been there, Mr. Speaker, and providing extra support. Sometimes a child need some assistance for tuition and the

programme close, and I call and say, in my crying voice, PM, this child needs some assistance, see if you can get somebody to pay in SGU for her, and he's always getting through and assisting. And so I want to thank him for this love and support, the fatherly figure, and it feels like family with the entire team, and so I want to thank everyone. I want to wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and let us work hard in 2021 to serve the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. That's what we were mandated to do, Mr. Speaker. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew, North-West. Leader of the Opposition, I have a team of young people, who came down from Carriacou, I would like to say a word to them. They are my guests, you see. I have my guests from Carriacou, they come from Bishop's College, and so you are welcomed. I am glad to have you in the Houses of Parliament, so you're my guests today. And, I would give you the permission, if you wish to take a notebook and a pen and want to take any little notes and so on; you are privileged to do so. Okay. I am glad to have you.

Shall we proceed? Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, with the awesome responsibility as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, to give my just and due response to the 2021 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget was ably delivered by the Minister for Finance and I do applaud him. Mr. Speaker, as we concluded on Wednesday, I made a request that the same courtesies be granted to me, as was granted to all Opposition Leaders in the past. Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is a deliberate effort on the part of Government, to stifle descent in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I was very satisfied that you made a just ruling on Wednesday of my request. Mr. Speaker, to justify why I should not be given the two (2) days as in the past, from since 1974 to present, the Minister for Finance stood to say that Government wants to spend from the 1st of January. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no truth to that.

Everywhere in the world, Mr. Speaker, we know that no Government can spend on the 1st of January. The 1st of January is a holiday. 2021, Mr. Speaker, the 1st of January is a Friday, so the Government cannot spend on Friday, the Government cannot spend on Saturday, the Government cannot spend on Sunday. Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot even spend on Monday.

For those of us who know the Ministry, know well, that on Monday, what, the 4th of January, 2021, what happens? The Director of Audit takes over and the Board of Survey goes to all Departments to put Government Books in order. So, Monday, Tuesday, maybe Wednesday; and even if, Mr. Speaker, the Government is short on any time in terms of spending, I am sure that the Minister might have heard about Provisional Warrants, or General Warrants, and these can be used. Government spends, when Government wants to spend, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today, as a lover of democracy. I stand here today, as a lover of institutions and the institutions that hold our democracy together. Mr. Speaker, I have heard in many instances, that I would only be able to make a presentation, but the Standing Orders are very clear. You urged me to go home and read the Standing Orders and I did so.

The Standing Orders say that the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition will be given the same time as the Presenter of the Budget. So, if the Presenter speaks for three (3) hours I have three (3) hours. If the Presenter speaks for five (5) minutes, I have two (2) hours, whichever one might be more.

Mr. Speaker, I still believe, as I stand here today, I am the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. Some people would not want to believe that, I know some people say I am looking for work. Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to stand here. And, Mr. Speaker, if I have to stand here in chains, today, I will stand here in chains, and deliver what I have to deliver to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, in order to get me out, before my time is up, you would have to nuke this place.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to do something here today and to be clear, I don't like drama, you know. But, I mean, when the drama comes, I don't start war, Mr. Speaker. We never start war, but when war comes, we will finish it, and I will finish what I start here today, Mr. Speaker.

When I leave this House, one thing I know and we all would have to leave, you know, but I would leave with my self-respect, and the whole of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique is watching, and you know who's watching too, Mr. Speaker? The entire world is watching.

Mr. Speaker, I know you were prepared today, but I am also prepared. This might be the most famous piece of chain in Grenada today.

(The Leader of the Opposition removed a chain from a bag)

(Laughter)

(The Leader of the Opposition chained himself to the Parliament table)

Hon. Tobias Clement: And, to put me out of this House, Mr. Speaker, let the whole world see that even in chains I will deliver what I have to deliver today. And, I don't have the keys, you know, Mr. Speaker. You will have to send for the keys. So, if you have to get me out of here today, I do not even know, if the Orderlies can take me out.

So, Mr. Speaker, while they were planning…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes Sir. Let me sit.

Mr. Speaker: I understand a lot of drama and grandstanding. I used to be a dramatist myself. I don't know why you came so prepared.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Well, I must.

Mr. Speaker: You see, you were given the opportunity to do your do; that is your privilege, as the Leader of the Opposition. You complained that you had two (2) days to do your preparation, which is not true. You had the same time as every other Parliamentarian had, receiving the documents on the 25th of November, the 25th of November, posted from the Parliament at 9:40 a.m. So, I don't understand the drama and the chain.

This Parliament is not a slave pen. The Parliament is a place of freedom. And you stand to speak, you stand to debate the Budget and I think the world as you said is watching. But the world doesn't want to see a comedian or something like that in the Parliament of this country. The Parliament is bigger than that. **(Applause)** So, if you wish to chain yourself to the Parliament table so that the world can see what the Leader of the Opposition's demeanour is, proceed.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of us might be sitting here today, but, Mr. Speaker, do I get my five (5) minutes back? I do hope so.

Mr. Speaker, some of us may not be in chains physically, but we are in chains, mentally. Mr. Speaker, mental slavery probably, is the deepest scourge that we have today, even here in Grenada. But, as I said before and I am saying again, Mr. Speaker, I will leave with my dignity and respect in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we, in this House, we are saying that we're going green and we have gone so green until we've gone almost green stupid. Mr. Speaker, six hundred plus pages were sent to me via the Internet and I find it very difficult to read. You see, from my standpoint, I have to peruse the entire document. Other people might just peruse their document.

Mr. Speaker, truth be told, the document was sent, and I did try to get some copies of it so that I can sit and read and peruse and underline and so forth. But, it was very difficult then, too. And not only the Budget document, but in all together, Mr. Speaker, it was over one thousand (1,000) pages of document, to sit in front of a

computer and peruse and read. How many of us here could do that today? So, we say that we are not printing no Budget document again. But, Mr. Speaker, when I researched it, Budget documents are printed so that the Members at least, could look at it, and we have some of us here that have difficulties with our eyes.

Mr. Speaker, I must commend, on Wednesday afternoon, I did not get a copy of the Budget Statement, but the Member saw to it that he sent it home to me on Wednesday afternoon, after 4:00, this document.

Mr. Speaker, as I began to peruse the document that night, I realised that the document came without tables or without appendices in the back. So the back portion was missing. I mean, if you have the statement and you have the peruse the document, you must go to the back where the tables are, because the Budget document is about facts and figures and tables and graphs, and the back portion is not here. Look at it here today, Mr. Speaker. They did not send it. It was not copied in its entirety, so it could not be perused.

Mr. Speaker, when I said I was studying the documents, I went back a lot of years, you know. I went back to 2008. I went back to 2009. I went back to 2010. Mr. Speaker, I wish you were in York House in 1994. But, you were not there. You should have seen what took place there. But, Mr. Speaker, if you have an incomplete document, what is it so wrong? When I looked at it, Mr. Speaker, what, fifteen (15) against one (1)? What is it that they are so afraid of? Let me do the people's business. When I stand in this House here, whether free or in chains I stand to give the public due respect for what is going on in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, a wise man once told me, Tobias Clement, you are the 'Keeper of the Flame of our Democracy.' Mr. Speaker, that was said to me in 2013, and I always remember that, and I keep it to heart, that you are the 'Keeper of the Flame of our Democracy,' and I keep that today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you say you don't see no reason why I should be in chains. But, Mr. Speaker, you made several judgements. I think one of them was that I would be given how much time.

Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago, I resigned from the New National Party. Mr. Speaker, I resigned, because I felt there was a creeping dictatorship in this beautiful spice country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, as I begin this response, indeed, I feel pressed on every side, and when I feel pressed on every side, the Word tells me, do not fear, do not dismay. In the Word, Mr. Speaker, it is written, three hundred and sixty-six (366) times: "Do not fear." You could take one for every day of the year, and you could take one for the Leap Year, too.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to the book of Isaiah and Isaiah said to us in Isaiah 43: ***"Fear not for I have redeemed you. I have summoned you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you walk through the rivers, they will not sweep you away. When you walk through the fire, they will not burn you. The flame will not set you ablaze."***

Mr. Speaker, that's the Word. So, Mr. Speaker, as Opposition Leaders in the past, I am fortified and I am comforted by the words of Joshua, which says***: "Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither thou be dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee wheresoever you go."***

Mr. Speaker, I am not afraid and I am not dismayed, and as I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, I stand here regardless of what happens in my life, regardless of what happens in Grenada. I do not take no honour, no praise. You know what I take, Mr. Speaker? As I said, on many occasions, and I am going to say it again: ***"To God be the Glory. Great things He has done."***

Mr. Speaker, as I rise, as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, let me say to the people of St. George North-East, who have granted me their favour on two (2) occasions to serve here even before the established ones. To my family and friends in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I am eternally grateful for the support that you have given to me and I know without you, I would not be able to stand, so I say to God be the glory.

Mr. Speaker, you see, this journey did not start here today. It started a long time ago, in Carriacou. And I must say to the students from Carriacou today, that I do

welcome you in the House. Bishop's College is my Alma Mater. I graduated in 1986 from Bishop's College. I was also a teacher once, at Hillsborough Secondary School. So, I grew up, both in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, so I know the life. So, welcome to this House, and I hope that you will learn something here today, that you stand on principle and you stand for what you believe, come hell or high water.

Mr. Speaker, in a Budget Presentation, you always have restraint. In your family's budget, you always have restraint. And, what is your restraint, Mr. Speaker? Your restraint at home and in Grenada is financial restraint. If you had all the money in the world, you would not even bother to budget, you would just spend. But because you have restraint, you have to budget.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 Budget was made, but the Budget collapsed. The Budget collapsed, not because of financial restraint, you know, but the Budget collapsed, because COVID-19 was the restraint of the Budget. You could throw it out the door. So I would not even go back to those numbers, because everything went mixed up there. All numbers and figures were out of the door, because of COVID-19. It was not financial restraint. No. So I was thinking, Mr. Speaker, in going forward, in the 2021 Budget, the 2021 Budget should reflect a COVID Budget. What do I mean when I say that, Mr. Speaker? It means therefore, that we have to look at where Grenada is today.

When we determine the Budget from start to finish, as if COVID-19 ceased to exist in 2021. Mr. Speaker, putting forward an alternative Budget, it should be a COVID-19 Budget for 2021.

Mr. Speaker, what do I mean when I say that? Mr. Speaker, I look at it and I look at 2021, what do we see? They say that unemployment went up from 15% to 28%. I believe, Mr. Speaker, you could almost double that sometimes, because some people are not even counted, so unemployment is high.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2021 Budget, you should put aside at least $50m to $100m to deal with people. Mr. Speaker, this Budget is not about concrete and building and everything, you know. It is about people, people come first. We must remember that in this House. So, if you put aside at least $50m to $100m, what do you do, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, you will continue to help businesses here in Grenada develop.

I ask the question, Mr. Speaker, during 2020, how many businesses have gone out of business? How many of them have collapsed? Today, Mr. Speaker, how many businesses are on the brink?

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the hotels, but they're some other small businesses that they're gone. The Hotel Sector in itself, we use it, as a cash cow. We take taxes from them over and over. Will we help them to get back on their feet?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister said probably over fourteen thousand (14,000) people are employed in the Hotel Industry. What are we doing for them? Mr. Speaker, all sectors of this population today is hurting and we continue as if it's business as usual. But, it is not business as usual.

Mr. Speaker, we praise God or we just praise ourselves, because we took care of COVID-19 in Grenada. Really? You know, the old people say: "Cross your lips." Mr. Speaker, we are here and we are standing COVID-free because of the mercies of God, because of the mercies of God. Look at what is taking place in the rest of the world. And we have to continue to pray God for his mercies, because by ourselves we cannot do it. I am not taking no praise for COVID-19. I tell people to keep safe. I praise the frontline workers, because they are there.

Mr. Speaker, something happened last week, and I was amazed. When I said that we must do a COVID-19 Budget, we must do a COVID-19 Budget. Canada, the United States, England, Germany. The Canadian Prime Minister, our friend to the North, our big Commonwealth brother got in trouble last week. Why did he really get in trouble, real serious trouble? They announced that Canada would not get the vaccine until September.

Mr. Speaker, when I read that and I listened that, I trembled. I said, if Canada is not getting the vaccine till September, when is Grenada going to get it? Because they did not make reservations with the big companies, so that they could acquire such vaccine. They have the money to pay for it, but the bigger brothers will take care of them and their people first. How are we going to get this vaccine, Mr. Speaker? Are we going to beg for it? What kind of vaccine will we get, Mr. Speaker? Will we depend on hand-out? I mean, if a vaccine comes into Grenada, I would want it to be given to our

people, because I too, would want to take it. I am not telling anybody not to take the vaccine, you know, because, as from a Biology/Chemistry point of view, vaccine works. But you know what I would be careful about, Mr. Speaker? I would want the vaccine to come from a reputable company.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are about thirteen (13) different vaccines being manufactured all over the world. Russia is making their own. China is making their own. India is making their own. Pfizer and Moderna is making their own. AstraZeneca is making their own. But, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Grenada, which one will you take? Maybe we can ask our brothers to the East to send some for us? But, Mr. Speaker, I do trust our western technology. So, there, we have to be careful.

Mr. Speaker, when I say that we should have had a COVID Budget, I have not seen anything in the Budget set aside for the purchase of vaccines or to lift up our people in these times, Mr. Speaker. What about the taxes for our people? Mr. Speaker, will we continue to take all the Corporate Taxes from businesses, while they are barely surviving? Will we continue to take all the Income Tax from our people, while they're barely surviving?

Mr. Speaker, every sector of the population is hurting. Mr. Speaker, we cannot and we will not be able to collect taxes from dead businesses. How are we doing it? But, I see in the books, and I will show you, Mr. Speaker, in the books that we continue as business as usual. Mr. Speaker, everybody is feeling it, and when one feels it in Grenada, all feel it.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers are feeling it. They can't get their products sell as before. The teachers are feeling it, the nurses, the Public Workers are feeling it, the bus drivers and owners are feeling it. The fisher folks are feeling it, the fishermen are feeling it. The police men and women are feeling it. The Hotel workers, Mr. Speaker, the hotel workers are feeling it. Mr. Speaker, the small and large business owners are feeling it.

Mr. Speaker, today, in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, they are overwhelmed with anxiety. I mean, some of them, their blood pressure is right up in their nose hole, because of the anxiety that they're going through to make two (2) ends

meet. They do not know if their businesses will make it throughout next year, if business continues as usual. Mr. Speaker, we have seen what the lockdown has done, and we swear that we not going into another lockdown. But, Mr. Speaker, this Christmas Season, I pray God that everything goes well with us, because if everything does not go well with us and we are still open to the hotspots around the world, it just might be, it just might be, and I pray God that, no, it doesn't happen. That maybe, just maybe, there might be community spread somewhere. I do not pray for that. I do not wish for that.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here to make my presentation on this Budget Debate, and when I think about what should I say, I again, turned to the Word. And I remember when the children for Israel were in captivity in Babylon and the elders send onto Jeremiah and asked him how should they behave in captivity? One false Prophet said two (2) years, and they will go back to Jerusalem. But when Jeremiah came forward, Jeremiah said to them seventy (70) years. So, they wanted to find out how they should behave in that seventy (70) years, and Jeremiah told them, pray for the peace of the city. Pray for the prosperity of the city, because if the city prospers, you also would prosper.

Mr. Speaker, today, I pray for the peace of Grenada. I pray for the prosperity of Grenada, because if Grenada prospers, I will prosper. If Grenada prospers, Mr. Speaker, you would prosper. Despite the difficult circumstances we have to pray for the peace and prosperity of Grenada. This is what I pray for.

Mr. Speaker, what I have done really, is just to put forward an alternative Budget and you will see what I am talking about here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I went back, and honestly, I did went back. This is my first time being in this position. So I went back to the Budget document for 2019. I went back to the Budget document for 2018 and 2017. I went back to all the Opposition Leaders of 2008, 2009, 2011. Well, we did not have any presentation in 2012, because there was no Budget in 2012. We had two (2) in 2013. But when I went back and I perused the 2017, '18 and '19 Budgets, and I looked at the 2020 and the 2021, Mr. Speaker, it's the same Budget, you know.

So, when I am looking there, Mr. Speaker, I said to myself, well, the man behind the Budget really is the former Minister for Finance. My dear brother, through you, Mr. Speaker, just came a few weeks ago and the intensity and the similarity of the Budget, he cannot be so familiar with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Budget it's like saying rice and peas, rice and peas, peas and rice, rice and peas, a recurring decimal. You just have to choose which one. I mean, it's from year to year to year, and sometimes you never get down to the detail of it until you go deep into it.

So, Mr. Speaker, in budgeting here, we say, Mr. Speaker, we're going to 2035, such a beautiful theme: "***Towards Vision 2025: Recovery, Transformation and Resilience*,"** Recovery, Transformation and Resilience. But what I was looking for, Mr. Speaker, I did not find. I was looking for real innovation, an innovative Budget.

When you really think about it, you hear jobs, jobs, jobs, hotels, hotels, hotels. Mr. Speaker, we cannot eat concrete and we cannot eat hotel rooms. I can ask now, who are you going to put in the four thousand (4,000) additional room stocks that you are building? I mean, I love the Americans mantra, they say build it and they will come. So, we will build. But while the grass is growing, the horse is starving. Mr. Speaker, it is not well. It is not well with everybody's soul in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. A lot of people are hurting, and they know that too.

Mr. Speaker, I said already, the Budget document was given without tables and appendices. But, Mr. Speaker, you know, I went down into the Budget and I looked at the provisional revenue for 2020 and 2021. In the Budget document that was sent on the Internet here, Mr. Speaker, and maybe some of you might be able to follow. And I find it amazing, Mr. Speaker, that you put tables in the document, and you know, Mr. Speaker, some of the tables were incomplete. My friend, through you, Mr. Speaker, former Minister for Finance, some of the tables you know I had to add up the figures for myself. In terms of, well, I can say on page (v), you see there are lots of pages and on page (xi), where it says, Mr. Speaker, and this is important, Mr. Speaker, it says here: **"Revenue earners for 2020 and 2021; Inland Revenue Department and Customs and Excise Department."**

In 2020, the Actual Provisional Revenue for the Inland Revenue Department was $276.5m. In 2021, the Actual Provisional Revenue for the Inland Revenue Department is $256.7m, almost a $15m drop in revenue. But, Mr. Speaker, this is what I do not understand. When you go over to the Tax, the Customs and Excise Department, in terms of revenue earnings, in 2020, we had earnings of $313.6m, but in 2021, we see here earnings of $333.9m, an increase of $20m.

But, Mr. Speaker, they are not in a vacuum. You have in the Inland Revenue Department, the revenue falls, and in the Customs and Excise Department, the revenue increased. How is that possible? Can someone tell me? You mean, so we have more activity at the Port and then in Grenada we have less activity? Well, this part maybe I will have to let the economists explain that to me or those who come after me.

Mr. Speaker, I will point out some things in the Budget that would be amiss here. But, Mr. Speaker, as for me I had to go Department by Department, so it was quite a few Departments. But, Mr. Speaker, when we look at Government's expenditure and there are some things that I must touch on. In the tables there, they have the top Government workers, and it's something that we have to look at, the way that we treat our established Civil Service.

Mr. Speaker, I checked on the document, you could go for yourself, there at twenty-six (26) [5]PSs. Some Ministries have two (2), three (3), four (4) PSs. Some Ministries have PSs that you cannot even see. But, Mr. Speaker, even if you can't see them, you have to pay them, you know. It's true.

Mr. Speaker, we say Government is a continuum, and this is where we fall short, every time. So, when we change Government, we come in, and maybe some PSs might have been established by the previous Government, but we do not like them, so we go to the Public Service Commission and we get new PSs. What do we do with those that were there before? We assign them to other places. So, Government now has to pay two (2) sets of PSs.

[5] PSs - Permanent Secretaries

Look, Mr. Speaker, we have two (2) Police Commissioners in Grenada, an acting one and one that we can't find. But, we are paying him, you know. When we came in 2013, we did not like him, so we had him all over the place. He was sitting there at one time, and we have an Acting Commissioner. But, he was assigned to the Post by the Public Service Commission, so we couldn't do anything about it. So even though we do not like him, we have to pay him his salary and we have to pay another PS the salary. So, if we go down that road, Mr. Speaker, we are spending almost an extra million dollars a year, just on PSs you know, PSs that we don't even want.

I believe in Carriacou we might have two (2) PSs. I see one here today, but I don't see the next one. Maybe he is in a building somewhere in Carriacou, on a desk sitting doing nothing.

Mr. Speaker, in 2013, I can always remember that. In 2013, when the NNP Government took office, well, I used to be in and out of the Prime Minister's Ministry and DPS, and one day I couldn't find my way, so I was searching around, because I didn't know where the offices were. When I went into one door in a storeroom, I met a lady sitting on a desk there. So I asked her, what are you doing there? She told she has been there for the last three/four (3/4 years). I say how is that possible? She was recalled from where she was and put on a desk. What did you do during this time? Well, I studied, I was on the internet, I got my Masters. But we cannot treat people like that, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I hate to see people being treated like that. People, Mr. Speaker? This is how we would treat people? Remember, Grenada is a very small place you know, so we say shaka shaka. If you touch my brother, you touch me too.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading from the former Opposition Leader and he was not too far from where I am today, you know. Mr. Speaker, you know he is a gettona, through you, Mr. Speaker, and some of the things that he was saying, it was shocking.

Mr. Speaker, but let me go on to the Ministry and since we're under COVID-19, through you, Mr. Speaker, I would look at the Health first. Mr. Speaker, the great Marcus Garvey says: **"When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, all is lost."**

Mr. Speaker, I look at the Minister for Health today, through you, Mr. Speaker, in his diminished role, as Minister for Health, saved by COVID-19, saved by COVID-19. If COVID-19 didn't come around, maybe we would have been singing a different story through you, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must set example. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Health is the Minister in his seat today, through you. The Minister for Health is like the Surgeon General. You know, I remember going to the Pharmacy, and when you guys go to the Pharmacy you must read well, and sitting in the back over the cashier's head, where they sell the tobacco products it says: ***"The Minister for Health warns that cigarette smoking is dangerous."***

Mr. Speaker, through you maybe he is the only Minister for Health throughout the entire world, where an example is not set, as a chain-smoker. Mr. Speaker, and that is the example I am talking about. Mr. Speaker, we come now and we have two (2) Ministers for Health, as if he could not fulfil his duties as Minister for Health, so my sister now comes hot and sweaty. And when I saw she was made Minister for Health, too, I said: **"Lord, have mercy,"** because I love her, you know. She's one of my cacabawie sisters.

But, Mr. Speaker, the week before, and I usually follow her on the internet and on Facebook, and she was saying, she has made it thus far, because she just survived. I said: **"Lord, I know her difficulties."** And then you come on top of that and put more difficulties on her. Sister, I pray for you.

But, moreover than that, Mr. Speaker, let me give you this one, Mr. Speaker. She took her crew from up St. Andrew and went down to the General Hospital and she decided that she's going to clean up. Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that happened, you know. The shortest Minister for Health ever, when they came in, in 2008, he took his crew and tiled the hospital, you know. Beware! **(Laughter)** Make joke with us.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk health in a serious way in Grenada, and it's something that I have spoken about before. Well, I hope some betterment... I hope that hospital services will be improved, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know something that I talk about under health, the Carlton Home. But I was pleased to hear that one of the banks raised a million dollars and probably the Government might help in order to bring back the Carlton Home. But, Mr. Speaker, the Mt. Gay Institution serves as everything today. Whether you have alcohol problems, whether you have drug problems, whether you have depression problems, whether you have psychological problems, anytime you have a problem with any of these health issues, they're sending you to Mt. Gay.

Mr. Speaker, the statistics tell us in this here country in Grenada, in the Western Hemisphere, we are the number one consumer of alcohol, the number one, and yet we do not have a Treatment Centre for alcoholism in this country. Since 2014, every year we have been hearing about the Carlton Home, the Carlton Home, the Carlton Home. We do not have a Drug Treatment Centre. Mr Speaker, we must do something about it. If we have to bring back this economy, where it's supposed to be, Mr. Speaker, we must do something about our healthcare. Mr. Speaker, I dare not leave healthcare until I've mentioned this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to this issue many, many, many weeks ago. Mr. Speaker, all the rain that fell in Grenada, all the rain that fell in Grenada over the last few months, Mr. Speaker, through you, Perseverance still burns. Mr. Speaker, you know Perseverance is still on fire? Besides COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, I am warning you, that is another natural disaster here in Grenada, it's another disaster. I say natural, man-made. Mr. Speaker, Perseverance still burns, and you know the thing about it? Some of us have to pass through it every day, you know. Some of us work there.

The people of Brizan and Happy Hill and Concord, they feel it all the time, they smell it all the time. But when a dumpsite is on fire, Mr. Speaker, it's not a good thing, you know. When I did the research, the toxic products that comes out of a dumpsite, and we talk about people in Grenada dying of cancer… I would love to see the statistics in a couple years' time of how the people of Brizan, Concord, Cotton Bailey and

Beausejour, especially the people in the surrounding areas. Me, I would be afraid to live around there.

I have not seen anything in the Budget, Mr. Speaker, to extinguish that fire. What I have seen, I have seen the construction of a new dumpsite maybe, and putting technology. But when you do research, we ought to, in the future, get a good place to dump the fire.

Mr. Speaker, if you'll just give me a minute. I need to get the water opened. I think you took the opener. Thank you.

(The Member took a drink of water)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I may have no choice, but to write to the CARICOM Secretariat about this disaster that has been unfolding in Perseverance for almost a year now. But never mind, Mr. Speaker, today, as we speak the world is listening. Thank God for Social Media, the Internet, YouTube, Facebook, Radio, everything is listening.

Mr. Speaker, I move to education. I love education. Mr. Speaker, I begin with a quote from one that you may know. I quote from Mr. Owen Ollivierre, who once told me, and I quote***: "A nation cannot rise above the level of its teachers."*** Wow! ***"A nation cannot rise above the level of its teachers."*** Mr. Speaker, this might seem simple, but it is deep, and it is profound.

My question is, Mr. Speaker, what is the mood, through you, in the Ministry of Education? What is the mood? I wonder, Mr. Speaker, through you, if there was any happiness after the reshuffle like there were in Social Services, that the Minister stayed in Education.

Mr. Speaker, I would raise some red flags today. Mr. Speaker, you know, some of us were raised in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and at one time in our lives, because we came up through the Education System, what you find, the first thing a child wants to be in school when he grows up is a school teacher, and he looked forward to becoming a school teacher.

Nicholas Brathwaite, in a conversation to me, once said: ***"Young Clement, to be a Teacher is a noble thing."*** Mr. Speaker, I believe you too, was part of the Education System and look at you today. You had good teachers. But, Mr. Speaker, in some ways, I should commend the Ministry of Education. I see that we did well at our external exams. But, the question is, did that happen or was that foundation laid with the now Minister for Education, or was that foundation laid with the former Minister for Education? When was that foundation laid?

Mr. Speaker, remember what I just said. **"A Nation cannot rise above the level of its teachers."** Now, Mr. Speaker, what is the mood of hiring of teachers within the Education System? I can ask the question, when last was someone hired to teach in any primary or secondary school that came in there with a Degree? Or when last was someone hired within the primary or secondary school, who came in through the IMANI Programme?

Mr. Speaker, and they're talking, you know. We do not like people, when they come in with their Degree, because they have attitude. But, if you have a Degree and you do not have an attitude, well then, you miss the boat, because you struggled to get it, you sacrificed to get it and you should be proud of it. Mr. Speaker, and they're talking. Through you, Mr. Speaker, we boast about counsellors within the Ministry of Education. But I ask the question, Mr. Speaker, through you, who are the counsellors in the Department or in the Ministry of Education today? Are they qualified counsellors? Or, are they biblical counsellors? Are they the wives of pastors?

Mr. Speaker, we went down that road before, in 2008. When we thought we had the teachers and the youths, we did not have them. When we thought we had the teachers and the youths, we did not have them. Somebody should really take a look at what is going on within the Ministry of Education and the level of satisfaction there. Mr. Speaker, maybe you might be able to stay by the Gas Station and hear the songs and praises of the Ministry of Education, songs and praises in the Ministry of Education. We have to be careful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is something that I must talk about before I leave Education, and it was raised to me and I know it was raised to me a long time, and I dare not leave

here and not talk about it. Mr. Speaker, you were a teacher. I was a teacher too. I taught Math, Chemistry, Science and Biology in Hillsborough Secondary School, and Mr. Speaker, our hearts went out to the children.

You know, I remembered the statistics. In 1994, before I left I brought some Form (4) student to do CXC Math. It was fifteen (15) of them. Thirteen (13) of them passed the Math in Form (4). I remember a couple years before that, I introduced Chemistry to Hillsborough Secondary School. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I am very proud today, because I could stand here and say that one of my first Chemistry students isn't he the Chief Medical Officer at the General Hospital today, Dr. Shawn Charles? What we give to students, we see it later.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I used to give Lessons. All evenings, sometimes, I spent half the night 9:00/10:00 o'clock, Math and Science and never a day did I take a cent from any student. But there is something that crept into our Education System, in the primary schools and in the secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, this must be looked into.

The Government pays the teachers to deliver the syllabus to the students, and part of the syllabus is delivered in the classroom and the parent must pay for the next part outside in evening classes. And then when the question is asked, how come they're giving you this work and you didn't cover it, it's because I did not go to the evening classes. So part of the syllabus, if your child has to get it, they must pay for it in evening classes. Mr. Speaker, since when? That is wrong, and it must be looked into, that you have teachers paid, but they're leaving part of the syllabus behind, for what, $30.00 a week from one child?

You see, Mr. Speaker, I mention this here, and some of that is coming. If I go back to the document, from the Opposition Leader, in 2008, and, Mr. Speaker, I quote. It says: ***"Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you, you know, I was in Government. There were many persons in the Public Sector, particularly in the Ministry of Works, who are working with the Ministry and buying trucks and selling services to the same Ministry. Mr. Speaker, that is fundamentally flawed."*** I love the words: ***'fundamentally flawed." "Some of them were moved, Mr. Speaker, for that reason***

through the Public Service Commission. Mr. Speaker, it is well known that right through, directive was given to the Public Service that this should not happen. You cannot work with the same Ministry, supervise an activity and have your service given at the same time. You're supervising yourself." That was from the former Opposition Leader in 2008, Mr. Speaker, our dear Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Mitchell. So, we have teachers, we're paying them for their service and then they still have to come back and give the service in the evening. This must be looked into, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move now to Agriculture. I love this one, Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the Minister for Agriculture. It used to be Agriculture, Fisheries, Lands and so forth. But, it's just diminished to Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, through you, I wish him well. But, the Capital Budget for Agriculture, this time, is $610,000.00. Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand how we say we're budgeting, and we say the other monies for Agriculture are elsewhere. If you're budgeting, budget. How you could take something for Agriculture and put it in Works? Or you take something for Agriculture and put it in Youth? Agriculture must go to Agriculture, aggregate or non-aggregate budgeting. You must understand that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I too, love agriculture. I am a small farmer. I have my Famer's ID, which is excitement. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Agriculture put on his boots and he's all over the place. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed, last week. He told me I shouldn't say anything, because I waited for him from 9:00 o'clock, but he did not show up. farmers are very, very busy people. When we give them a time, it is a time.

Mr. Speaker, but there is something that I must talk to in agriculture. Mr. Speaker, we talk about developing agriculture, as a Productive Sector. But, Mr. Speaker, you have lands too, and many people may not know it, but probably agriculture is number one on your list now. Maybe when you retire, you will go back to the lands. Mr. Speaker, I visit some places sometimes. One guy in a place said to me, it doesn't matter, who you are, or what you do, at the end of the day, you've got to go back to the land, because that is why God made man. And the first duty he gave him,

he planted a garden and he put man to keep the garden. So, we've got to go back to agriculture.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know going back to agriculture is the most difficult thing in Grenada. Young people want to go, but no Financial Institution will give you any loan to invest in agriculture. They call it, Mr. Speaker, high risk. So, the interest on an agriculture loan is higher than on a commercial loan. You will get a loan easier to buy a vehicle, than to purchase a piece of property. Mr. Speaker, so who would go down that road? You would get a loan easier to buy a piece of land to build house than to purchase property to do agriculture, because you're not getting it.

Mr. Speaker, I see we put some monies into Youth. I say the Government of Grenada should do like a lot of other Governments and invest money in agriculture, so that the youths will be able to purchase property and do agriculture. That's a new budget, a new way of thinking, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will think a lot differently.

Look, we say, in terms of Grenada, we export yellow fin tuna and my friends from Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I am always with them, and they complain. They complain, because they bring in the tuna and on average, they might get $6.00 or $7.00 a pound, which is about $20.00 a kilo, thereon. But, Mr. Speaker, have you ever looked at a can of tuna? In terms of the amount of tuna in the can, how much tuna is in the can? Fifty (50) grams; fifty (50) grams. Twenty (20) by fifty (50) is one (1) kilo. So, it means from a kilo of tuna, you could get twenty (20) cans of tuna. How much for a can of tuna in Grenada today; $3.50. Multiply that by twenty (20), and you will get seventy (70). So, a kilo of tuna in the can is approximately $70.00.

My question is, through you, Mr. Speaker, the Minister might be able to help us there. We're so close to the Chinese. What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is to ask the Chinese to help us invest in a Tuna Canning Factory here in Grenada, so that we can save probably, $50.00 on every can.

The Minister said that one point something million pounds of tuna at a cost of $33m. If that was canned, Mr. Speaker, that would be $132m, the raw materials. But, we are accustomed with raw materials, so we give away the raw materials.

You know what I like, through you, Mr. Speaker. I like and love the Chocolate Factory in St. Mark. I wish we could do some more of that in our country. We must invest in our natural products.

Mr. Speaker, through you, again, the Minister could talk to the Chinese. Ask the Chinese to bring in a Bamboo Industry in Grenada, because what we have now, Mr. Speaker, all over the place you would see it, all over the place is bamboo, bamboo, bamboo. The Chinese are number one in processing bamboo.

You know, Mr. Speaker, today, some of the finest cloths, some of the finest cloth, in the world and clothing in the world is made from bamboo. We could ask them to bring something, so that we could process the bamboo and make cloth, high quality cloth here in Grenada. But no, everything we want to export, export, export.

Mr. Speaker, it is Christmas time. Mr. Speaker, it is Christmas time. I see in the Budget, and there in the Budget, Mr. Speaker, you would see put aside $10,000.00 for cannabis research. I must talk about it, because this is not the first time I would talk about it. I spoke about it in 2014. I spoke about it in 2015.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, maybe when the Minister goes out in the future, he could sing: **"Greetings I bring to you from Jah, sensei, sensei, sensei." (Laughter)**

(A Member asked, what is that)

Hon. Tobias Clement: What is that? Mr. Speaker, Peter Tosh sang: **"To lift up a failing economy, they could plant it."** In his song, again, where he sang: **"We've got to find a solution for this pollution."** And, when he repeated the verse and you listened carefully, one (1) minute and thirty-five (35) seconds, between **"You've got to find a solution to this pollution,"** he wasn't talking about pollution, he was talking about poverty. But between the verses there, you know what he said? If you listen carefully, when you go home you could listen it. He says: **"Grow weed."** Most people didn't pick it up.

In 2014, I stood in this House and I said that it was high time for Grenada to consider the decriminalisation and the legalisation of cannabis. Mr. Speaker, I had to

go back. When I tell you I went back, I really went back, you know. And when I went back, I was amazed that here, in 2016, Dr. Mitchell speaking to me now, and I quote. Listen to Dr. Mitchell: ***"My friend from St. George North East, I heard you talk yesterday about marijuana. He knows marijuana ain't going nowhere with Keith Mitchell. He knows that, so keep it where you going, eh papa."*** That is Dr. Mitchell talking, no marijuana. ***"We have to concentrate on another marijuana in St. George North-East."*** That's what he said. ***"That's the one I want you to concentrate heavily on, the marijuana tree in St. George North East, who is trying to plant himself. This is the one you have to concentrate on. My brothers and sisters, but he is trying to come back. I want to make sure the ground is not fertile for him to grow."*** That was in 2016.

In 2014, Mr. Speaker, he said to me: ***"Not on his watch."*** Well maybe through the Minister for Agriculture, his watch is coming to an end. **(Chuckles)** His watch. I can't believe I saw this in this document, because he prophesied you know, not on his watch. Member for St. George North-East, where are you going with that? Not Keith Mitchell.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, to talk about the decriminalisation and the legalisation of cannabis in Grenada, that was visionary. So, I can tell you now, because of lack of vision the nation perished. Where are we today, in terms of that? We say we're putting $10,000.00 to study it.

St. Vincent went to hell in a hand basket. Canada went to hell in a hand basket. The United States went to hell in a hand basket. I ask the question here. The FDA, Food and Drug Administration in the United States approved some derivative of cannabis for medication, cancer and other things. Will we lock up somebody, if they come in here with medication made from cannabis, which is approved by the US Government?

Mr. Speaker, do you know, and this might be news to a lot of people. The Cannabis Industry in the United States today is an $89b industry, and we're still locking up our people for it, and we're still shooting our brothers and sisters for it, and causing people to go off, over marijuana.

You know something, Mr. Speaker, when I made that call in 2014, it's because I had some friends that I went to school with. They were in Colorado and we established that our Chemistry would serve well. But we give our brothers and sisters a Police record for cannabis and they can't go anywhere. But, the Americans, English and the Canadians are lifting up their people. I hope the time would come, when we would expunge our brothers and sisters records, so that they can be free again.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the Minister for Agriculture and I would urge him fervently and I hope he is listening, to look delicately, into the Marketing Board issue. Mr. Speaker, and I mentioned that in the Finance Committee Meeting a couple weeks ago. We have been here in this House, and from time to time, we have seen Papers laid on the Table. When last have you seen a Paper laid on the Table from the Marketing Board, Mr. Speaker? When last was there a Paper laid on the Table for the Marketing Board? We say the Marketing Board is under investigation. And you know some people told me, don't worry about that, that will be just swept under the rug. It will be just swept under the rug. That is not going anywhere. But, Mr. Speaker, I have issues with the Marketing Board, because farmers are complaining, workers are complaining, the Nation is complaining.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you some truths about the Marketing Board. In 2015/2016, we hired a new manager for the Marketing Board, with bright ideas, very bright ideas. He came to the Marketing Board and says: **"The Marketing Board will be self-sustaining."** So they took on the project in Bon Accord Estate. Many of you may not have heard about the Bon Accord Estate Project. But when they launched that project, Mr. Speaker, in Spice Basket, the Friday evening, from 5:00 to 7:00, that launching was $50,000.00. It left an open bar; Marketing Board had to pay for it.

Mr. Speaker, the CEO, they hired him as the manager, you know, but he made himself CEO, launched that project in Bon Accord Estate, to lease Bon Accord Estate from the proprietor. Marketing Board spent $2.5m on the Bon Accord Estate, Mr. Speaker. They planted five hundred and seventy-five (575) soursop trees, six hundred (600) breadfruit trees, two thousand (2,000) plantain and pineapple trees. They cut them down and they planted it up.

The proprietor moved to take back his Estate from Marketing Board. Why? Marketing Board did not pay the lease. Mr. Speaker, you want to hear the kicker? This is the kicker. When the soursop declared, they went to him and said: ***"Can you sell us the soursop?"*** You know what he said to them? ***"You can't pay us for our soursop. Marketing Board can't pay me for my soursop."***

If we could give every farmer in Grenada $2.5m, things would be nice. But yes, that is what it is, and we're still investigating Marketing Board. I could talk about it you know, Mr. Speaker, because we have not seen, we have not seen a document, an audited document from the Marketing Board, maybe since 2016 or 2015. Where is it? Where is it, Mr. Speaker? And we talk about agriculture in Grenada? The people would know and the people must know.

Mr. Speaker, I move to Foreign Affairs. Let me congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs. But I have a little word of advice for you, through you, Mr. Speaker. My friend, you know, who we are dealing with? A cricketer and he could bowl. So I would tell you, bat in your crease. Mister, bat in your crease. Make sure you bring home all the bacon. Bat in your crease.

Mr. Speaker, I got word from Foreign Affairs too, and I would go back to the same thing here. From 2008, I go back to my friend. Let me go back to 2008, Mr. Speaker, where I would remind the Minister, who is in Government today. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want the Member to understand and to know what he is working with. In Foreign Affairs the question is asked, who is working with Foreign Affairs and providing services to Foreign Affairs, at the same time, managing himself? These are things that you have to deal with. If you're working in Foreign Affairs and you're providing Rental Service, to Foreign Affairs, with high-end vehicles, the Prime Minister says he has a problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, I move to Tourism. Tourism, tourism, tourism. Mr. Speaker, the big issue in tourism now is getting people to come back to Grenada to the hotels. My sister, you are caught between a rock and a hard place. I was looking at some figures, my dear, and this might give you some solace. Last week, they were saying that two (2) out of every three (3) restaurants in Paris will close. Two (2) out of three (3) restaurants

in Paris will close. The Italian Government in their economic diversification, they said, Mr. Speaker, that they lost, through tourism... Tourism in Grenada is joke to these people, you know. The Italian Government lost $2.3 trillion due to tourism. In France, it's almost three point something trillion dollars. So, these people know tourism. And what they have done? They did some diversification and they are now going into new industries, and maybe this is an alternative again. What kind of new industry that we could go in? I see we try to innovate.

But, I speak to tourism and I speak with a heavy heart, because I see from time to time to time, we are being hit: hurricanes, natural disasters, COVID. We do not know where it's coming from. But what we should ask ourselves, what can be more sustainable for the development of Grenada. We say let tourism and agriculture go hand in hand, and I too miss the tourism, because I do have transactions with the hotels.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question is, when, Mr. Speaker, when? When are these people going to come back to Grenada? Can anybody tell me when? We don't know, you know, Mr. Speaker. We just don't know. But, Mr. Speaker, the big issue now in terms of tourism is looking at the Maurice Bishop Airport and the loan, the Maurice Bishop Airport and the loan. But up to now, I cannot really get a handle on the amount, US$63m? When was this loan taken, this year, or next year?

But, Mr. Speaker, if I go back, when I asked who takes the loan, it seems as the Government cannot agree that the Government took the loan. Some people told me it's the Airport that took the loan. But, I've got to go back, Mr. Speaker, and let me go back and I would read for you. It says here: "Resolution for the Purpose of Section (56) of the Public Finance Management Act," 2019 document, Mr. Speaker. November 20th, 2019. It says here:

WHEREAS section 56 of the Public Finance Management Act No. 17 2015, (herein referred to, as "the Act,") provides that no money be raised on the credit of the Government of Grenada except under the authority of this Act, or under the Act of Parliament, or a Resolution of the House of Representatives;

AND WHEREAS section 56 of the Act provides that the Minister for Finance may borrow, when authorised by the Resolution of the House of Representatives, monies on behalf of the Government of Grenada in a form of a legitimate source, on terms and conditions to be agreed on by the creditors;

WHEREAS it is further provided that the amount not exceeds in aggregate the sum specified in the Resolution;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that the Minister for Finance be authorised by the Resolution of the House, to borrow money, on behalf of the Government of Grenada, money not exceeding in aggregate the sum of one hundred million" and it says here Eastern Caribbean Dollars **"for the purpose of financing the 2020 Budget.**

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives hereby authorise the Minister of Finance to borrow on behalf of Grenada, a sum not exceeding in the aggregate the sum of one hundred million Eastern Caribbean dollars for the purpose of financing the Budget."

Mr. Speaker, I like the first part. I like the first part, which says that no entity within Grenada could raise money without the authorisation of this House. $63m, Mr. Speaker, for the Airport, how was it raised? Where was it raised? What are the terms and conditions? You know in this House we're forgetting one thing, and we are forgetting one fundamental thing. Mr. Speaker, you know what you are forgetting? We are servants of the people, you know, not bosses. And if I am your servant, Mr. Speaker, am I not subjected to tell you what I am going to do with your resources? They say it is the first time they are going to the Chinese for a loan and it is a good loan, 2% for how many and how many years, twenty-five (25) years, Mr. Speaker. You know the sad part about it, Mr. Speaker, those of us who take the loan will not be around to pay it, you know. It is our children and our grandchildren.

I ask the question too, at that sum of money, EC$180m, can the Airport Authority sustain such a loan? Mr. Speaker, I would take such a loan, but look at the condition of our country. Look at the infrastructure of our country. And every country now is piling money into their roads and bridges and everything, so that they can stimulate their

economy. How is the Airport going to pay back such loan? That's the question, you know. How is the Airport going to pay back such a loan?

Mr. Speaker, may I enquire as to how much more time I have?

Mr. Speaker: Oh! You have forty-five (45) minutes that is going for the two (2) hours.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Hmmm, really? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If you have to take two (2) hours, then you have forty-five (45) more minutes.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would want the Minister for Tourism to look at the innovative industry, like I said, the Music Industry, the Art Industry, the Film Industry, the Cinema Industry and the Writers' Industry. We can have a lot of new initiatives here in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I must highlight something here today. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can I reveal this here? This is a painting. This is a painting that was done by somebody from St. George North-East, by Mr. Frank, Jameel Frank, a beautiful painting. **(Inaudible comments)** Mr. Speaker, I brought it to exhibit here today. It is a painting of one of our flower girls at Annandale Waterfall. **(Inaudible comments by a Member)** You would like to have it? I know. It costs a lot. **(Laughter)** One of our flower girls at Annandale Waterfall, a beautiful thing to see. Some of the youths might be able to go into painting too. But, Mr. Speaker, in my preparation under Tourism, I felt really sad. I felt really sad, Mr. Speaker, about Annandale Waterfall today.

Mr. Speaker, you remember I asked the question about Annandale Waterfall, and we said that it was leased. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, yes, it is leased. But the story of Annandale Waterfall today is a sad one.

Mr. Speaker, as Paradise Beach is to Carriacou, as Bathway is to St. Patrick, as Grand Anse is to the South of the country, so is Annandale Waterfall to New

Hampshire, Annandale, Vendome and the surrounding areas. You know, Annandale is our beach. On a Saturday and Sunday, that is where we go, because if you have to leave New Hampshire to go to any of the beaches in Grenada, you would have to take two (2) buses. So, the easiest thing to do is to go to Annandale.

The question is now, Mr. Speaker, what is going on at Annandale? We had twenty-six (26) villagers working at Annandale, seven (7) jumpers and nineteen (19) flower girls. When the tourists come, you stand and take a picture with them and you pay one dollar ($1.00). I have taken pictures with them too. But, Mr. Speaker, they're not doing that anymore. The license fees moved from $60.00 to $300.00. The jumpers are not jumping anymore. For them to jump, they have to get a Divers' Licence, US$700.00 in Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, a consultation was held among the villagers in New Hampshire, as to the cost for them to go to the Falls. Mr. Speaker, if you have to go to the Falls now to take a swim, you have to pay $3.00; $3.00 for locals and $5 for foreigners. Mr. Speaker, you know one of the jumpers just started walking up and down. He is in Mt. Gay today. And they said, Mr. Clement, that is what we use to send our children to school. That is what raised my child. They feel pain, Mr. Speaker. That is pain.

And we say we rented it out and we leased it out, so they have to pay to go to their beach, here in this country of ours. And we talk about we love people? You ain't got no love for people. Mr. Speaker, hmmm. Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear. The people said that Gairy tried that in the 70s.

Let us not go down that road. Let us correct those tragedies. Let us investigate and find out. We must do that. These are little people, little people. That's how they make their living. And especially now in the COVID times, we did not do anything to help them, you know. These people, you stand on the side of them and take information, they have no registration of businesses, they do not pay NIS, they just live from hand to mouth every day, and you take away their daily bread, and you feel comfortable with that? But I know they say, so goes New Hampshire, so goes St. George's North East. Let those who have ears, let them hear.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, Physical Planning, Public Utilities and Energy. My brother, my brother, I congratulate you. I say to you, through you, Mr. Speaker, it's been a long time coming, but watch the time. And I will too, Mr. Speaker, pray for him, because he has been given this Ministry in the worst of times. Don't make any bones about it, you know. But the question is, why were you given it now, when a couple years ago, Mr. Speaker, in this same Chamber in 2018, we got up and boast that the Ministry of Finance was the best run Ministry in my thirty something years in the Ministry. Then all just fall down, bloops.

But I noticed a pattern, you know, Mr. Speaker, because he's not the only one that was given the Ministry of Finance. My brother from St. Patrick West was given it at one time, after Ivan. Things were kind of down again, so they gave it up. So, are we going to take the Ministry when it is good, when the juices are flowing? No juices flowing now in the Ministry of Finance, so we don't want to be blamed for anything. So we will hand it over now. Maybe that handing over should have been ten (10) years ago. But we have to be careful.

Now, when you look at it, the Minister, and I know I may rub him wrong, through you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has five (5) Portfolios, on his hand, five (5), you know, so he could do a lot and he could spend a lot of monies. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister was set up. Maybe he was set up to fail, so we can get rid of him, because in his Presentation I heard the Minister said that the only country in the Caribbean that did not see a downturn was Guyana. I wonder why? Anybody can tell me why, Guyana did not see a downturn?

Mr. Speaker, Guyana found oil. But if I can remember in Pearls and in the Stadium, significant amounts of oil and gas found in Grenada waters, and that is just one well, the others have more significant amounts. Through you, Mr. Speaker, where is our oil and gas today? Where is it? Remember last year I said I would like to push my hand in the well and feel it and taste it to know that it is sweet crude. If there is a time we need oil and gas in Grenada, it's today, because we found it. So it just disappeared? The people's natural resources, you know, we say we made some deal with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to develop it and to this and to that and

the other. We found oil before Guyana, you know. Remember that, Mr. Speaker? We found it before Guyana, but yet we are not hearing anything about it. Mr. Speaker, I would want to know.

Mr. Speaker, and this is a big one. The Minister boasts about the CARCIP Project and the Data Centre. Mr. Speaker, it's a good thing that I have friends in the United States, so I can call and I could ask questions and I ask a lot of questions. I remember I had a friend his name was Badam. We graduated together. He was given $120,000.00 Signing Fee to go and work with Cisco Systems and the rest is history. So I had some communication, so I asked about the Data Centre. He said to me: **"Mr. Clement, have you ever heard about Fort Knox?"** I know about Fort Knox. When Gold was Gold, Fort Knox still remained the US Depository of Gold, precious metal. Fort Knox is located in the middle of a Military Base, in the middle of a pasture. One single building, but in that building, you probably have over $2, $3 trillion worth of gold, because that was what was precious. You know today, what they tell me, data is as precious as gold, so it must be protected.

With all the development of Data Centres all over the world, where do they put it? In military bases, military bases. Why so, because you cannot pay for data. You cannot pay for it. So, I was thinking when the Data Centre comes, it will be in the middle of the SSU Campus. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, it is up in Morne Jaloux; it is up in Morne Jaloux. But you know, when they come to put that thing online and the International Community come to grade it and to give it a standard, it will be below the lowest standard. You know what is it, Mr. Speaker? We put a barbed wire fence around it, and we might put one Security Guard. That is not enough to protect our data.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, we put it up in Morne Jaloux. But I was thinking the fibre cable comes in at Point Salines, the fibre is underground, so it will go straight to the Data Centre. Now, to get to the Data Centre in Mt. Jaloux, the fibre is on the telephone pole. The fibre is on the telephone pole, you know. So, one natural disaster, one hurricane, the telephone lines are down and the Data Centre is off. A truck knocks down the telephone pole, the Data Centre is off.

Mr. Speaker, it is not in the right place. The Budget should include… and you know, I believe we had to spend extra monies to get it up to Morne Jaloux. Why? Because through you, Mr. Speaker, it is in the Member's Constituency. Google isn't buying any space there. Amazon isn't buying any space there. Microsoft isn't buying any space there; none of the reputable IT companies. The only space that might be used for that is the Government of Grenada. Even DIGICEL and FLOW may not buy space there, because it is not protected.

Mr. Speaker, they told me a Data Centre must have backup generators, at least two (2), with maybe two thousand (2,000) gallon tanks of fuel to let it work for a week or two. And not only that, it must have auxiliary power. If it was at the SSU Campus, it would have gotten auxiliary power from the Airport or maybe from St. George's University, right there. But, what? You have one Power Plant there to serve the Plant and NaDMA?

Mr. Speaker, to host a Centre like that is an opportunity, you know. It will give you millions of dollars, because they buy space there. All the companies would buy into your Cloud. But they're not going to buy anything in Morne Jaloux. I am not buying anything in Morne Jaloux, so that would be a waste of time. Mr. Speaker, if that is properly utilised, it will make millions of dollars for Grenada. But my question is why is it in Morne Jaloux? Why really? And that is the question that must be asked, you know. Why is the Data Centre in Morne Jaloux? I wonder who has royalties around there? I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, we pass Laws and we talk about praedial larceny and to make sure that people don't steal, and I am talking now about data protection, because you cannot function here now without data. Right now, as we speak the internet is giving problem, because we have a cable burst somewhere.

But, Mr. Speaker, in September there was a lightning storm, and from my vantage point, I had a front row seat. I got up to take off my main switch and so forth and I am looking outside, and I am looking at the Tower. And, Mr. Speaker, I saw when the bolt of lightning hit the Tower and it snaked down the Tower and I saw fire. Well, I know my good friend from St John has interest up there, so I called him and he went up.

Mr. Speaker, we were out of internet for two (2) weeks. Lightning came down the Tower and burnt up everything inside the Tower, everything inside the houses. So, three (3) transformers for GRENLEC had to be replaced and maybe, millions of dollars of equipment had to be replaced. Why? Because they had no protection. And, Mr. Speaker, what is the protection? Every Tower would have a lightning rod, and copper would run down to the ground. You know what happened, Mr. Speaker? They stole the lighting rod, so the Towers were left without any protection. A week without internet in Grenada is millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have to move in a serious way and when I investigated and I understood, you know what they did, Mr. Speaker? What they did, Mr. Speaker, is that they took the copper and they sold it to Perseverance. They took the copper and sold it to Perseverance you know, and that's okay. But that cannot happen in our country, because we must protect our Data.

Mr. Speaker, I look at our system of roads and bridges and so forth. Through you, Mr. Speaker, the former Minister for Finance must know that the Prime Minister now made his name, when he was Minister for Works. From 1984 to 1990, Grenada went and embarked on creating a system of road network and repairing and did all the roads, the eastern main road, the western main road, the central main roads, putting signs and symbols everywhere. Some of them, you could still see the old signs up there, that was from since the 1980s.

But, Mr. Speaker, what do we have today? When last did we invest in the eastern main road, or the western main road, or the central main road? And, in this time, if we have to take a loan, we should take a loan for the construction and reconstruction of Grenada, so that people can say something and make your name. But, Mr. Speaker, this is not done.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Minister for Works, now that you have the purse in your hand, but that doesn't say anything. I would warn you, too, and I would advise you that while you have the purse in your hand, do not leave your constituency undone, because we learnt in 2008, what happened. And, if you're under so much of pressure, it can happen again. You have to keep it for yourself. I cannot keep it for you.

Mr. Speaker, I move to this Ministry here, the Ministry, maybe I should touch everybody a little bit. I have to. Look at my friend, she's laughing. I mean, Mr. Speaker, through you, look at my friend from St. Andrew South-West. She has been made Minister for Sports and Culture. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the lady could hardly move her move. I wonder if she could run a 100 metres.

But, Mr. Speaker, the only thing that I would say to her today, I look at the constituency and I have begged for a long time. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that St. George North-East is the only Constituency, in Grenada, that does not have a field lighted. We do not have, not Vendome, not New Hampshire, not Boca, not Tempe, not Mardigras, not La Mode and we have a lot of fields, you know. I have been begging for the last seven (7) years. All other constituencies have some lights somewhere. I hope through you, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister would grace us and light up our world in St. George's North-East a little bit. I would be eternally grateful to you, Madam.

Mr. Speaker, I dare not leave here and not to look at Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I am going home now. Right, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I don't have much to say. But, to say this, Mr. Speaker, you know, for the first time in Finance Committee Meeting, when they say Carriacou and Petite Martinique, the Member said that she was okay with it. You guys sat for years, with Elvin G. Nimrod, former Minister and he was never okay, because Carriacou and Petite Martinique must get their fair share and he was always asking for a little more, always something. I didn't hear that this time. But I reminded the Minister and I hope there is some diversion to the Budget a little bit, to put a fire truck for the people of Petite Martinique.

I know she spoke to the fact that they spoke with GRENLEC and they will get hydrants. But the truck and the hydrants must work hand-in-hand. Hydrants cannot out fires. I know one Member say that his constituency is in the same boat too. But no Madam, the constituency is not in the same boat as Petite Martinique. You see, Petite Martinique stands by itself. If there is a fire, the fire truck can't cross Carriacou waters to come to Petite Martinique.

You know, a few years ago, I stood and I looked at Miss Benjamin house burned. It was Christmas Eve day, and it just burned, and the heat, nobody could do anything about it.

Mr. Speaker, again, a few years ago I stood and I looked at Miss Calliste house in Paradise burn, down to the ground, and nobody could do anything about it. As a child, I looked at Miss Roberts, Miss Malways, her house burned, and nobody could do anything about it. A fire truck in Petite Martinique is not just a request, you know, it's a safety issue. When it happened, Elvin G. Nimrod brought in a little one with a tank and it served the people well. The truck was removed, they say to be repaired. I am not blaming her for it, it was removed since before she came and it was never replaced. Give us a little hope up there. At least give us some hope that if there is a disaster like a fire, at least somebody could throw a cup of water on it. That is all I was asking for.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I always say part of my education was in Petite Martinique, because I went to Hillsborough Government School. I see my schoolmate sitting in the audience there, too. We went Hillsborough Government School together. And when I look at Hillsborough now, I hope there is something in the Budget for Carriacou and Petite Martinique to enhance the Port of Hillsborough, because it was not only COVID-19 that hit Hillsborough Carriacou, you know, but the removal of the Port. I heard the Minister say that they will do everything in their power to beautify Hillsborough and to paint up the sidewalks, so that Hillsborough will come alive again.

Mr. Speaker, "the city exists because of the Port, and when the Port is gone, the city ceases to exist." So says Alexandria, in Egypt; "When the Port is gone, the city is gone." It can be corrected, it's not too late. I am not asking for one. We can have two.

Mr. Speaker, I am saving the best for last. Office of the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs and Disaster Management. Mr. Speaker, this is the second Super Minister, you know. I call him a Super Minister. He became a Superman, through you, now, Mr. Speaker. But under Minister for Social Security, Mr. Speaker, something concerns me and concerns me a lot.

Policing in Grenada; over this past year, Mr. Speaker, we see a trend start developing. We're shooting from the hip. We're shooting the wrong person. I am running away from you, and you're shooting me still. Mr. Speaker, is this our first course of action now in policing? But, not only that, the policemen are crying out too, because I investigate too, you know. Inspection is coming and the policemen have to put their funds together to buy paint, to paint the place and to repair the place. We have to do better than that. Sometimes we tend to forget the police officers.

Mr. Speaker, in policing, I heard we're moving the Police Headquarters from the Fort and we're moving the Fire Station to the South. But, Mr. Speaker, might I ask, and maybe it is a legitimate question. Is the Fort already leased? I wonder who will own the Fort. That is hallowed sacred grounds. Some of our comrades, brother, died there. I hope it is not leased and go down that way.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I see this in my life. The Prime Minister made himself Minister for Youth, the oldest Minister for Youth in the world. What is he looking for really, the fountain of youth? **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, there are lots of things that I can talk about here today. But, what do we expect from the Prime Minister? So, he now wants to rank with the youths. I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if he comes up here with an earring in his ears **(laughter)** or his pants below his bottom, because he's the Minister for Youth. Mr. Speaker, maybe I can ask him to show me his tattoo; youth. You know what the youth say? Well, he that wet; ah cry. **(Laughter)**

But, Mr. Speaker, why did he take on the Ministry of Youth? You know, through you, Mr. Speaker, I kind of feel sorry. Under the Prime Minister's Ministry, we have Ministers now. The Member, through you, Mr. Speaker, from St. Andrew North-East, St. Patrick East, then we have the Minister for Disaster Management and so forth. And in my humble opinion and in my experience, anytime you pass through that Ministry, you on your way out, you know; Minister for Implementation.

I remember my sister from the South, she passed through. I remember the other Member for St. Patrick, he passed through too; Minister for Implementation. I mean, you've got to be almost frightened anytime you get under his collar. So, if I am the good

lady, I would be very concerned, because I see they have a backup plan now. We're going back to days of old. Ah boy.

Mr. Speaker, as I turn to this Ministry and I look here, it says, and I want to look at Youth especially. We're putting in $40m under Youth. Because, why? We remember the history of 2008, when we lost all the youths. So we decide now we are going to invest in the youths in transformation and in this and that.

Mr. Speaker, if you had tuned into the Zoom, when they were having all those Zoom meetings, you see the youths were up in arms, because they were not satisfied. The youths want to rise too, you know, but when they are kept in those programmes forever and ever, then they start to rebel. But I would say to the youths, take what you're getting. If they are giving you $40,000.00 in unsecured loan, through GDB, take it, and use it wisely, because maybe after that and they do want I have to do, they forget you again. Youths are people, you know, and they want to be just like we are. Mr. Speaker, the nation's youth is our future. But I look at the Administration and how things are done, and sometimes when I speak about some things and the youth are looking and they're watching.

Now, we have a different dispensation here now, and what is the dispensation that we have? You work within the Civil Service, the Public Service Commission sends you home, because you meet the age of retirement, and when you retire nobody wants to go in peace. So, what they do? They give you a contract and you come back around. So, you're in your 60s and your 70s and you're working on contract within the Ministry and then some young person comes out and sweat and labour in some University, still have student loans to pay back, and they can't find a job. But you're getting NIS Pension, you're getting Government's Pension and you still have a contract. And you want the youths to be satisfied in this country? All they are asking for is to be treated fairly. Let us set them up so that they can take control of this nation when we go.

And we have to stop thing with geriatrics getting contract. When it's time for you to go home, go home and give them young people a chance in this country. But, no, young people don't have time. They don't vote, so, we know we're sure on our old

people, because even though they're falling down, they're coming out and give you their support.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a different medium now here in this country. Social Media is working, you know. So, people are getting jittery, and they can't pin us down anymore. I would not even take chances with that, and this is where we are now. What you have to do in this alternative Budget, is to get a real feel of where the Grenadian people are. Get a real feel of where they are, and then you can come and talk to us.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Ministry, Ministry of National Security and Public Administration; Mr. Speaker, one more thing that I would touch on under here, when I speak about the Ministry and I speak about having respect for institutions, this Government has no respect for institutions. This is why I am here today.

Look at Parliament, Mr. Speaker. You are king in your Parliament. You control Parliament; three (3) branches of Government, Parliamentary, the Executive and the Judiciary. Mr. Speaker, I have said it before and I am saying it again. It is wrong, it is wrong, it is wrong to move the Parliamentary Office from under Parliament, and put it under the Prime Minister's Ministry. You know, for years I have been asking, where is the allocation for the Parliamentary Office? The PS in Finance told me two (2) weeks ago, look under 262 and you will see it there, $2.05m. Mr. Speaker, the only reason why this happens and look at how Government operates. You take out the Vote from under Parliament and you put it under your Ministry, so you control the Parliamentary Office. You form a company. In terms of the Laws for Procurement, was it ever sent out to bid? No. It was never sent out to bid. The only reason why that company was formed was to administer the office. You know, I asked the question, I never got the answer in Parliament, you know, Mr. Speaker, I never got the answer.

But, Mr. Speaker, today, I am calling on the Director of Audit to do an investigation into the funding of the Parliamentary Offices. How many, fifteen (15)? No. It might be sixteen (16). It might be sixteen (16) offices, you know. Who's paying for it?

Mr. Speaker, in my calculations one hundred and forty something thousand dollars, every month, is dished out. They told me the proprietor of the business is getting over twenty thousand dollars ($20,000.00) a month to see after the Constituency

Offices and we sit on that in this country of ours, fleecing our nation and our people, and when I talk about it, I cannot talk about it? But I will talk about it today and let the people know.

I would love to see an auditing, an accounting of those finances. It was never given, it was never done, *carte blanche*. One point something million, two point something million dollars, just disappeared. And when you go to the Ministry, you see every Vote, Line Item. How is it done?

But in the Law, Mr. Speaker, all constituencies must be treated the same. It is that way. All of them must be treated the same and given the same exact amount of funds, because no constituency is above the other. That is in the Constitution. That is how it is supposed to be.

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to hear and to see that they're taking the initiative now, maybe to build the GG's residence. Well God bless our nation. But it was this same Government at one time, who complained, when the former Government was paying $14,500.00 for the GG's residence. If you look under the Vote again, you would see the GG's rental now went from $17,300.33 to $18,000.00 a month. Can we pay a mortgage on that? We could pay more than a mortgage.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Why not fix our business? Does it mean that I have ten (10) more minutes?

Mr. Speaker: No. It means that you have five (5) more minutes.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, can I ask for additional time?

Mr. Speaker: You had two (2) hours or the time that the Minister for Finance had.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Speaker: We will stick to the two (2) hours. So try and wrap up in the next five (5) minutes, please.

(Some Members commented)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, everybody else was granted some time. Mr. Speaker, I have all the Ministries to talk about, that is why I was asking for some more time.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that is why the Minister for Finance had an hour and a half…

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker…

Mr. Speaker: …and the Leader of the Opposition has an hour and a half, or two hours whichever is the greater. You got the greater, Sir.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, let me turn to my Constituency, St. George North East. Mr. Speaker, you know we have some new bosses now in St. George North East. I have never seen that before.

Can you believe, Mr. Speaker, that these days some people are behaving in a way? What they are telling our people? I am the boss now. You know, I never said that, because I consider myself a servant of the people. One lady called me about two (2) weeks ago to have a conversation with me. And she said, she called a man today and asked about getting the road by me fixed. Well, she couldn't put it that way, but I will put it that way. When she asked him about getting her road fixed, you know what was his response, Mr. Speaker? You could get your road fixed, but you have to do something for us first, and then we going to do something for you; *quid pro quo*. Do

something for us. And, she said, Mr. Speaker, the white head man had no respect for me. My brother, I am not talking about you.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I end here, I am very concerned about some of the roads in our constituencies, in my constituency, especially. We just did the Marrast Hill and I complained and I complained about the Mt. Parnassus/Tempe Road, and I complained about the Mt. Rush Road. The MP for the Town would know what I am talking about, Mt. Rush. Mr. Speaker, all the big trucks pass there and that road is gone.

Mr. Speaker, when I come down from St. Pauls to come onto Mt. Parnassus Road, I beg, because when you come out on that side road and you have to enter Mt. Parnassus road, you have to sign yourself, and toot your horn and hope that nobody is going to take you out.

I asked for a mirror. They said to me, I cannot get a mirror. I said, well how is it that I cannot get no mirror and I know in Morne Jaloux there is one junction that has four (4) mirrors. The only Junction in Grenada that has four (4) mirrors is in Morne Jaloux, and I am begging for one in Mt. Parnassus to come out of Palm Road, and I cannot get it.

Mr. Speaker, the people of St. George North-East are seeing a time, as they have never seen before. And you know, I hold them dear to my heart, because without them I would not be here. So, as I leave her, Mr. Speaker, today I want to give my eternal praise…

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Tobias Clement: ...and gratitude to these people, and to my family, my wife and my son and to my friends and to my neighbours and those who have kept me over the years. I want to wish them all the best for the Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you and your family, Christ's love and grace for this Christmas. And as I sit here today, Mr. Speaker, and as I hope that we leave this place,

we would leave with our heads up and having our dignity and our respect. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Did you walk with the key for the chain?

(Laughter)

Hon. Tobias Clement: No, I did not. No, Mr. Speaker, I did not.

Mr. Speaker: Oh boy.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I rise, like my colleagues before me, to give my unequivocal support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as presented by the Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, allow me though, to congratulate the Honourable Minister on his debut presentation. Indeed, he delivered so eloquently and with such confidence, one would think that he was the Minister for Finance for the last ten (10) years.

Mr. Speaker, what was presented to us, this nation, is a Budget for all. What was presented to us, Mr. Speaker, is a Budget for the challenging times in which we have found ourselves with the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition captured it all, when he spoke about the plight and issues that persons in this country are now facing.

Mr. Speaker, what was presented to us on Wednesday, is a Budget that takes into consideration every aspect of our lives, our livelihood and the development of this beautiful country. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as the theme says: ***"Towards Vision 2035 - Recovery, Transformation and Resilience."*** Mr. Speaker, without vision there can be no progress, there can be no recovery. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, this Government remains steadfast in its commitment to meet the needs of all the people. With all hands on deck, working together, both Government and people, I am very confident that we, together, shall rise out of the ashes of this dreadful pandemic that has so impacted our daily lives, our livelihoods and our way of life.

We are indeed, Mr. Speaker, a very resilient people, a resilient nation, for we are strong in the Lord and this pandemic will be no exception. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind us all, including the Leader of the Opposition that tough times never last, tough times will eventually become easy times. We are tough, Mr. Speaker, and I know that, together, we will make it. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, and by extension, the Constituency of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And I sat here this morning and I heard all the other Members of Parliament termed their constituency as the best constituency in the State. But I want to go even further this morning, Mr. Speaker, to say that the Constituency of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, as a matter of fact the Islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are the best places in the world. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, before I continue, I really want to take this opportunity to recognise all the persons, all of you, who have journeyed from Carriacou and Petite Martinique to be here this afternoon. The folks from Petite Martinique, I see many of you here, our students from Hillsborough Secondary School and Bishop's College, the Principal of Bishop's College, I really do appreciate all of your presence and your support here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, these two (2) Secondary Schools on Island, Bishop's College and Hillsborough Secondary School, have made and is continuing to make Carriacou and

Petite Martinique very, very proud. They have produced and are producing world-class citizens, not only in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, but throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, in the recent CSEC Examinations, the Hillsborough Secondary School would have placed second overall in the State, just behind PAM, with an average pass rate of 92.3%, with Bishop's College in fourth, with a pass rate, Mr. Speaker, of 90.78%. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to commend and to congratulate all our principals, our teachers, our students for their outstanding and remarkable performance for yet another year. And I say yet another year, Mr. Speaker, because it is not the first time. These two (2) schools have been producing, they have been performing outstanding, when it comes to, not just academics, Mr. Speaker, but in many other areas.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique enjoy a great relationship with all schools, with our principals and our education officials. We have consistently supported their initiatives and work, as it relates to education of our children, and we have consistently supported their call, Mr. Speaker, for better school infrastructure and environment to make same more conducive to learning and teaching.

Most of those calls, Mr. Speaker, have been answered and are being answered. The Ministry of Education, who I must commend, has not only answered those calls by our schools in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, but they have also responded in a very profound manner, for which we are very grateful.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in this year, in a pandemic year, we saw the start of construction of our brand new Bishop's College, after many years of waiting, a project valued, Mr. Speaker, over $10m. **(Applause)**

But, that wasn't all. The Ministry of Education, through its School Rehabilitation Programme, carried out substantial repair work and upgrades to many of our primary schools, pre-primary school and even the Hillsborough Secondary School, Mr. Speaker. We are however, still awaiting work, or construction at our TAMCC Carriacou Campus, whose physical condition, Mr. Speaker, is really deteriorating rapidly before our very

eyes. However, we expect to see preparatory work commence in 2021, having made budgetary allocation in that regard under our Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I must say here that what we envisioned for the TAMCC Carriacou Campus is an inclusion of Skills Training where our young people, our young boys, our young girls can be trained in areas such as Maritime Administration and Yachting. You know, Mr. Speaker, we have presently on Island, two (2) of the largest Marinas in the State, and over the last few weeks or months, we have really witnessed an increase in yachting activities during this year, especially as the Trinidad Borders would have closed as a result of the…

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

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the Trinidad borders being closed, many yachts opted to come to Carriacou for shelter during the hurricane season.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are huge opportunities for our young people, in terms of employment and in terms of our Island, our economic activity, especially tourism related activities that could be lost, if we, as a people, as a Government do not position ourselves to take advantage of these opportunities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would therefore like to see more emphasis on training in critical and relevant areas, such as Maritime and Yachting where opportunities exist for sustainable employment. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this is a Government that I have full confidence in; a Government that has demonstrated time and time again, its love, its recognition that education is such a valuable asset, education is such a tool that can transform our lives and our society. And, I have all confidence, Mr. Speaker, that this is an area that will be seriously addressed in 2021.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government continues to invest very heavily in our Health Sector in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, recognising its responsibility to provide quality and affordable healthcare to all.

As a consequence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, attention, at this present moment, during a pandemic, two (2) of our primary healthcare facilities on Island, that is the Princess Royal Hospital and Hillsborough Clinic are now undergoing, simultaneously, that is, major infrastructural upgrades, remodelling, retrofitting and smarting in the sum of US$1.5m and US$1.8m, respectively.

Upon completion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is our hope that these facilities would be disaster ready, but it will also be equipped with basic equipment and tests, such as X-rays and other diagnostic services, that these services would be able to be performed at these Facilities. The Ministry of Hospital Services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know, has already ordered some of the equipment that would be required, with a promise to continually do so in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, an area of serious concern for the Ministry and for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique is that of what we refer to as 'Patient Transfer', from the Princess Royal Hospital to the General Hospital, especially emergency cases. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have received many suggestions as to how we can solve this issue, ranging from acquiring a Helicopter, a Sea Ambulance, or even a Floating Hospital, among many others. All of these suggestions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are great. However our limited resources at this time, would not permit us to entertain these ideas in 2021, and might I say also, in 2022.

The Ministry however, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will continue to work and has worked closely with the Ministry of Health and with the Princess Royal Hospital to ensure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that no life is lost, no member of our society, or our community is lost, because a sick patient is unable to find $7,500.00 in the case of Osprey, and $2,500.00 in the case of the Airline to travel to Grenada to seek urgent medical attention.

Mr. Speaker, under this Government, under this Administration, our people will not die, because they cannot afford to pay to be transferred to get urgent medical attention to Grenada. This Government, this Administration, will be there as we have always been. **(Applause)**

And as I speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was just last Friday, I believe, while in this Honourable House, I received an urgent phone call from a very distraught father, whose son had to be transferred urgently, from Carriacou to Grenada, to seek medical attention after sustaining life threatening injuries, as the result of a fall. That student, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Kellis Andrew, and he is a student of the Hillsborough Secondary School, a member of the class at Parliament today. So, had it not been for that unfortunate incident, he would have been here at Parliament this morning. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able, in record time, to airlift him to Grenada on Friday, where he was able to undergo major life saving operations, and he is now recovering safely, at the General Hospital. **(Applause)** That is what we do, as a Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is what we do at the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a bigger issue, and I believe that the Minister for Hospital Services has already alluded to that issue in her presentation this morning. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that issue is that if we can only get more services at our healthcare facilities done, if we can be in a position where we can carry out more minor surgeries and operations, that would illuminate the need, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to transfer some patients to Grenada. And so only the most critical patients would therefore have to be transferred.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a lot could be saved, in terms of monetary resources, in terms of headache and inconveniences, and I believe that, that is the way to go. I therefore strongly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, recommend and support the decentralisation of health services, so that Parish Hospitals, such as the Princess Royal Hospital and other Community Clinics can better serve our communities and can better serve our people on Island.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Ministry are also very pleased with the infrastructural development taking place in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, spearheaded by our Public Works Department. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we undertook and we completed some major road projects, throughout the length and breadth of Carriacou, including, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bread Near Road, the Boggles Main Road, the Beausejour Back Road, the Harvey Vale/ Carmoon Road, the Monger Road, among many others.

And, over in Petite Martinique, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, whatever you do in Carriacou you must replicate same in Petite Martinique. Likewise, whatever is done in Grenada must be done in Carriacou and it must also be done in Petite Martinique. So in Petite Martinique, we ensured that they too got their fair share of infrastructural development over there. So, we saw the completion of the Albert Bay retaining wall, the Paradise Road, the Cemetery Road, the Madame Pierre Road and presently we are building a Fish Stall for our fishers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, various lengths of drains and bridges, retaining walls, cross-culverts, whatever you call them, were completed throughout the length and breadth of Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the village of Windward, after many years, that particular village received a welcomed make-over, with the widening and the construction of many lengths of drains and culverts. This is a project, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will continue in 2021, going on to the Jim Pierre/Lapelle area.

Just concluded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the construction of a major drain network and culvert, along the Harvey Vale Port area to rectify that problem that we know existed there, especially when the rain falls. Also, in the Ravine/Windward area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, extensive work is being undertaken there, presently.

Additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just about two (2) weeks ago, we held an important Sod Turning Ceremony, which actually marks the start of completion of the entire Cherry Hill Road, under the Agriculture Feeder Road Project, a Project valued, Mr. Speaker, over $3.1m, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 2021, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having been allocated an increase in the area of our Public Works Division, the People of Carriacou and Petite Martinique can expect much more infrastructural projects throughout the length and breadth of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, including the restart of our Asphalt Paving Project and the construction of many roads and drains.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, at a Town Hall meeting that was held in Petite Martinique, I did declare to the People of Petite Martinique there that 2021 would be the Year of Roads.

And, as it relates to other projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to report, the Hillsborough Tennis Court was recently upgraded and is expected to be further upgraded in 2021.

Nearing completion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the new wing of the Carriacou Police Station and remedial works to the existing building. Completed is a washroom facility at the Harvey Vale Playing Field. It's a Project that is being funded by BNTF.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another major multi-million dollar project currently under construction at this time, is a state of the art Emergency Operating Centre at Belair, a project that is valued over $3m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, substantial work is being done at the Lauriston Airport, which is presently undergoing major upgrades and expansion at this time. The Airport Authority, as I speak now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is currently looking to remap its airspace and to extend the Runway System, a project that will begin early next year and has been allocated so far, $500,000.00.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these and other projects mentioned here have created and are creating hundreds of jobs for our people. Our local economy is doing well, because of what is happening simply, in our Construction Industry. Jobs are being created, not just in the Construction Industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but also in the procurement of goods and services. And, Mr. Speaker, it is worthy for us to take some time out and to note that all of these multi-million dollar projects and other projects are happening in Carriacou and Petite Martinique during a pandemic. They are happening at a time when Government finances have been severely impacted. It therefore begs the question, Mr. Speaker, can we really imagine and can we therefore imagine what else would have taken place, or what more would have been able to be accomplished had it not been for this dreadful virus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can speak of other major projects that we have not seen a start to in 2020. I can think of, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lighting of the Hillsborough playing field. And this is a project that we believe that will assist, along with the other plans and programmes that we have for the revitalisation of the Town of Hillsborough that will bring back much needed vehicles and people and traffic in the Town of

Hillsborough. This is a project that we have started to look at in earnest, in the early part of 2020, but of course, COVID and other reasons, same had to be halted.

Mr. Speaker, I already mentioned the Lauriston Airport Expansion Project. You know, for the last two (2) or three (3) times I have been here, giving my Budget Presentation, I have always mentioned the NAWASA Expansion Project for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And sadly, we have not yet been able to see much movement, movements that we would have really liked to see happen in 2020. But, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in going forward and with respect to the work that has already been completed, that very soon, in 2021, we will see a commencement to this project.

Mr. Speaker, last year, we also spoke about the construction of our ministerial building, our Ministerial Complex for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Again, we were unable to have any progress or much movement in that regard. And, it is something again, Mr. Speaker, that is very high on the agenda, noting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that budgetary allocations, again, in the 2021 Budget, were made for these projects. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we expect to see real movements in these and other areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of agriculture, the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs continues to give farmers our much needed support, technical support, to the Division of Agriculture. Throughout the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, various technical teams visited from the Line Ministry of Agriculture, from Grenada, to support farmers in many, many areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, as I speak, I can say that we are still without a Vet, attached to the Ministry. And so rendering service to farmers, to citizens, to people alike, who are involved in Animal Husbandry, has been a challenge and it has been really difficult.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have looked and we are looking and we will continue to look to remedy this situation in the early part of 2021, so that farmers can get the necessary support and assistance, as required. I think that was an issue that was recently also raised in our Town Hall meeting, and it's an issue that is important to a lot of people and we will so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, look to address this. And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that farmers should not have to wait, farmers in Carriacou and Petite

Martinique, that is, should not have to wait on a Vet from Grenada to receive this kind of service. I think it's high time that we move pass those kinds and types of situations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of our small farmers benefited from a Food Security Programme of the Ministry, where farmers received agricultural items and implements to assist them, as they do their farming. Items such as wires and black tanks and various other things, Mr. Speaker, were distributed to farmers under the programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very important programme for us, the Food Security Programme, and so, in the 2021 Budget, Mr. Speaker, we saw an increase in allocation, because we believe and we want to ensure that we continue to assist more farmers in more ways. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the farmers in Carriacou were able to benefit directly from under the Farm Labour Support Programme, and this was a programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we had to reintroduce, after a very long time, and so many farmers were very happy to receive that kind and type of assistance in 2020.

It is therefore no surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this year, we have really seen a marked increase in cultivation and production of our locally, organic fresh fruits and vegetables, ground provisions, here, in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, for this year. And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at what is happening at the Limlair Livestock Station, I really cannot help but marvel at the metamorphosis that has taken place there over the last two (2) years. And when I see what is happening there, I am so confident and so happy, because I am even more assured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we as a Government made the right decision to keep this Government Farm under the ownership and control of the Government of Grenada. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture must be seen and operated on a scientific basis. It is a business and so it must be treated as a business. And if we are to encourage, I know we love to talk and we're always talking about agriculture and getting people back to agriculture, especially our young people, and so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we really have to encourage our young people back in agriculture in that area, it must therefore be attractive. It must therefore make sense to them economically, in their pockets. Agriculture over the last few years, or last few decades, has moved on from just a cutlass and a hoe in the hot sun for the entire day. We have progressed and it has

moved on. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to focus on areas of smart agricultural practices, in areas such as Aquaponics and other smart Agriculture practices, where we can make real sense to our young people. It can make real sense for them to get involved. And if we are serious about agriculture, we need to look at the technology and how it can be used to enhance what we do in that particular area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the farmers in Carriacou and Petite Martinique are confronted with many issues, such as viable markets, farm roads, pests, diseases and control management, our adequate water supply, praedial larceny, among other things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the Minister for Agriculture has not yet visited us in Carriacou, and he had agreed to visit before the end of the year and it's our hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to continue to work with the Line Ministry of Agriculture and the Minister for Agriculture to ensure that our farmers in Carriacou and Petite Martinique are not left behind and they are part of the holistic development of our beautiful Tri-Island State.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of youth and youth work and youth development, the Youth Division in the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs has consistently guaranteed the young people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and ensured that they are part and parcel of all of Government Youth Programmes and activities. In addition thereto, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also encouraged and worked with our own Youth Department to fashion creative programmes and ideas to ideally suit our young people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Our youth officers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are out and about in every community, assisting with the establishment of various youth groups and other organisations through which young persons are engaged in social, educational, recreational and other activities geared towards uplifting and encouraging them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the Government Programmes, we have many young persons that have now been enrolled in the IMANI Programme. We have young men in the M-Power Programme. We have persons, who were sent to NEWLO for training. We have persons on the FLY Programme, and we also have persons now completing the YUTBIZ Programme. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it relates to the IMANI Programme, and I know we have been speaking as Government a lot, about the IMANI Programme. We have been speaking about it, and as a Government and as a people we are quite aware of some of the challenges our young people are being confronted with and have to face, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the IMANI Programme.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am extremely very happy with the proposed Transitioning Strategy Programme announced in the Budget Statement, which programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seeks to complement the New IMANI Programme, aimed at transitioning these IMANI trainees into sustainable jobs and opportunities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that is the way to go. I really do welcome this initiative because I believe it is high time that we, as a Government and as a people do something for the IMANI trainees, those who have been languishing for years and in some cases being abused by employers, it is high time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we do something. So, I really welcome this initiative and I look forward to its rollout and fair and equitable adaptation in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, employment among our young people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique is a problem, and it has escalated again, due to the COVID. Many persons are jobless. Many persons are on the breadline. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot put our hands in the air and do nothing. And this is a situation that is not only unique to Carriacou, Petite Martinique or Grenada; it is a situation that is happening around the world. So when I hear people trying to give the impression that it's only the young people in Carriacou or Grenada that are suffering and have issues, it is far from the truth. We look and we see what is happening in the bigger countries, in the countries where monies are being printed and we see what is happening there. We see the ravages. We see what is taking place, what COVID has done and is doing to those countries. We see the impact it has had on their economies. I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that we are still fortunate. We are still fortunate.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we cannot just put our hands up in the air and surrender and give up. We have to find creative ways, creative mechanisms, to ensure that we get our young people back to work, to ensure that we give our young people the

opportunities, to get our young people to be creative and innovative in ways that they can help themselves and their families. And so, Mr. Speaker, we as a Ministry, we have been actively seeking employment opportunities for many of our young persons, in various sectors, especially in the Construction Sector since so much is happening there, at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been working and encouraging our young people desirous of starting small businesses, because we believe that this can create employment opportunities, not just for themselves, but for other persons.

We also believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this can also create the kind of economic activity and enabling environment that we need, for us to forge ahead. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, various small business trainings were conducted and are being conducted, facilitated by the Ministry to assist in this regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many persons have applied successfully to the Grenada Development Bank under its Small Business Loan component and have received funding to assist in the setting up of their small businesses. Many businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have started and many are in the pipeline to start.

Mr. Speaker, access to loans and grants, I must admit is still a major challenge to our people, especially our fisherman. And, Mr. Speaker, our young people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique continue to excel, notwithstanding our challenges, some of which are unique to us, unique because of our geographical address, unique to us, because we are separated by water. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always say that the Constituency of Carriacou and Petite Martinique should not just be seen as a Constituency. It should not just be seen as a Parish, because we have so much more.

Our issues, our needs, our developmental goals and agenda are a little bit different, and so it must cater to suit our needs. And so, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding all these challenges, notwithstanding our issues, we continue to excel and we continue to excel in many areas and sports academics is one of those areas that we have been consistently been excelling in.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just recently, two (2) of our star student athletes, Zain Mc Farlene of Bishop's College and Ahshareah Enoe of Hillsborough Secondary School

have since received and accepted full sports scholarships to institutions in Jamaica. **(Applause)** This is what we are doing in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2021, the Division of Sports in the Ministry, is embarking and will be embarking on a Community Sporting Initiative, a Sporting Programme, across all sporting disciplines, across all communities in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And this programme or project, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to really aimed to get our young people involved in the respective disciplines and to get some of our athletes back to training. This, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is so important, because as we know, we cannot only place emphasis on the academics. We also have to place emphasis on our physical well-being and mind-set. And sports, as we all know is one avenue through which we can gain that.

In terms of sporting infrastructure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to the lighting of the Hillsborough playing field, which I had already mentioned, the Harvey Vale playing field and hard-court is down to receive major upgrade in 2021.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry was very happy and indeed, very happy, to partner and to assist in the establishment in the setting up of a Fitness and Wellness Centre, a Facility, which is called the Kayak Fitness Centre, which is really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Modern and Public Gym and Wellness Facility in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I think the Minister for Social Development and Hospital Services indicated that she intends to do such a programme in her constituency in 2021. So, we are ahead. We have started it. **(Laughter)** Yes, we are ahead.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the objective of this initiative, or this project is simply to promote health, fitness and wellness in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, among all ages. And very soon, I know that the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique would be asking, Minister, when will we be getting our Fitness Centre in Petite Martinique? I won't make any promise here this afternoon, but I can say that it is something that we are looking into. Mr. Deputy Speaker, within two (2) weeks of its official opening last month, over fifty (50) new persons have since registered, and not just registering, but they have paid their registration fee and their gym fees and have started their journey to fitness and wellness.

And, Mr. Speaker, I made the point recently, that it is well known, it is well established that physical activity, physical exercise go a long, long way in the prevention of many diseases that we now suffer from, whether it's stress, whether it's diabetes, whether it's cancer, whether it's whatever, we all know that physical activity and exercise play a major part in the elimination of such diseases. Not only those diseases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but mentally, mentally, as well. Physical exercise is also very important to ensure that we stay sane and that some of us do not go over the edge. Physical exercise is so important.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the investment that the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique made in the Kayak Fitness Canter is an investment in the well-being of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. It's an investment in their health and therefore, it is an investment in their wealth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it was Fidel Castro who once said: **"Where a Gym is opened, a Hospital is closed."** In other words, prevention is always better than cure. And so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our Fitness Centre, and I am very proud of it, and the persons that have been instrumental and involved in this project, because I believe that it can really transform lives. It can save lives, and I think that is something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that should probably be replicated in almost every sector, every hole in our country.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is also now looking at negotiating with the owner of the building where the gym is presently located, to lease the remaining parts of the building to establish a Training Centre for our local boxers. I know that certain persons in this audience here would be very excited and happy to hear that. That area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not only be restricted to boxing, but we also want to get into other areas, such as karate and Taekwondo and yoga and the other sports and so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that can really bring about a change in our physique and in our health, in our mind-set. And, Mr. Speaker, heavy emphasis will be placed on involving our school children into these programmes.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique continue to benefit from all social programmes offered and administered by the Department through the Social Services Department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Department of Social Services, Housing and Community Development, there is a team of hardworking, caring professionals, who have gone beyond their call of duty, and I've seen it myself, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, or during the height of the lockdown, to ensure that the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable in our society were not left behind and they were actually taken care of.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it is SEED, or a SEED recipient, whether it is a victim of domestic violence, or an abused child, or a lonely elderly citizen, or a homeless mother, a fire victim, or just a heart broken man, whatever the social or economic or emotional circumstances that members and citizens and people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are confronted with, this Department is always there to help.

At the Ministry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, we take special pride in helping the less fortunate, the marginalised and the vulnerable among us and to assist them as far as possible in utilising all the available Social Programmes. Therefore, under the Division of Housing, many persons benefitted from our Housing Repair Programme, as well as assistance from our Work Brigade, to really effect those repairs to their homes.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, few houses were also constructed. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make the point here this afternoon, these houses were constructed, not solely on the resources of Government, but these houses were constructed due to a collaborative effort between many stakeholders, our business communities, community members among other persons, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the programme under the Ministry of Housing is not a programme that is designed to build houses. It's not a programme to add on rooms. But, it's really a programme designed to repair houses, hence the name, Housing Repair Assistance Programme.

But what we have found therefore, Mr. Speaker, in our communities, there are persons who really do need a roof over their heads. And what we have done therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to collaborate with other entities, to collaborate with businesses

and the society at large, to build these few houses and homes for our people, and I know most of them are very appreciative of that effort.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, on stream, or almost completed is our Chinese Low Income Housing at Dumfries. And as you can only imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that applications are now pouring in more and more. I believe so far, the last time I counted, we had over three (300) applications. The Minister for Housing and Social Development has already dealt with the application process, the requirement and so. And as we go on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this information will be made available to the public, so that they can know, these are the requirements, this is what would be required, if you have to be successful in owning one of those homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the low income houses at Dumfries is a huge and important milestone for us. It's the first of its kind in Carriacou and of course, the persons who will benefit from these houses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will no doubt, have access to decent and affordable housing accommodation for themselves and their families. Mr. Speaker, we are looking to Phase 2 of that project in 2021, or probably 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to touch on a subject, which my Cacabawee friend, the Leader of the Opposition would have raised here this morning, and that has to do with Petite Martinique and the absence of a fire truck in Petite Martinique. And as you are aware, that was also an issue that was raised at our just recently concluded Town Hall meeting in Petite Martinique.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in fear, just as the Leader of the Opposition, as to what would happen, God forbid, should a fire now breakout or happen on the Island of Petite Martinique. The truth is, is that we have no fire implement. We have no fire truck. He is correct in that there was once a fire implement on Island. It was removed after some years, and was never replaced, that fact is undisputed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, the Prime Minister in the Town Hall meeting alluded to the fact, and I further confirmed it. I have spoken with the Commissioner of Police, myself, and he has informed me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a new fire tender for Petite Martinique has already been purchased for Petite Martinique and we are now awaiting its shipment. **(Applause)**

Along with the fire tender, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fire hydrants, as was indicated in our Finance Committee Meeting, will also be installed in critical areas, in and around Petite Martinique. So, we have not forgotten about Petite Martinique, that was an issue that was always in the foremost of our minds, and this is an issue we will address, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we have been addressing all other issues, for, and on behalf of the people of Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to use this opportunity to raise another issue, on behalf of my constituents and, Mr. Speaker, that is the issue, as it relates to the accommodation for persons travelling to Carriacou from Grenada. At present, Mr. Deputy Speaker, passengers assemble in some cases in the back of each other, on the top of each other, in front of the Fire Station, waiting to board the Osprey Express. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while waiting, if one is waiting to board the Osprey Express and you want to use the washroom facility, you have to leave on one side of the road to go over to the other side of the road at the Police Station, to use the washroom there. You have to ask the police officers there to let you use the bathroom please. Sometimes they give attitude. You have to ask them to use the bathroom, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even when rain is falling, you have to shelter again, at the Police Station. When the sun is shining a little too hot, you have mothers who have just left the hospital with young babies, they again, have to leave on that side and go over to the Fire Station to seek shelter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sad thing is that all of that is happening while right next door there is a functional Terminal building, the old Cruise Ship Terminal, fully equipped, with washroom and seating amenities that is presently being unused. It is locked up. Why can we not use it? Why can't the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique go there and await the Osprey, or whatever means of transportation to get to Carriacou?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just making another special plea for all of us, Government all the agencies and department that are responsible for making this decision, to look into this situation and for us to fix it.

The Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs is prepared to assist in whatever way and to work with all the stakeholders to find a way to make it happen. The people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are demanding better treatment. And, in this regard, I will say that these calls are not without merit. Sometimes, we have to do a little better. And I believe this is one area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we really need to advance. It really doesn't look good. We can do better than that for our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, a small, but yet, important Ministry for this Government. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Legal Affairs in 2020, continued its quest to carry out Government's Legislative Agenda, in line with national priorities and developmental goals.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the year under review, the Ministry of Legal Affairs played and continues to play a crucial and important role in the good governance of our country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have undertaken several initiatives over the past calendar year, aimed at improving the overall performance and operations throughout Government.

Internally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry has moved into a fully functioning, secure e-office, where documents coming in and out of the Ministry are stored electronically, and can be accessible from anywhere at any time. As a result of that innovation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are now able to provide prompt, legal service, in a very quick manner to Government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is coupled with the introduction of new staff at the Ministry, with there being a full time staff, a full time Legal Officer assigned to the Financial Intelligent Unit to deal with legal matters arising in that Unit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in collaborations with other Ministries, the Ministry of Legal Affairs continues to be a key stakeholder in Government's business from negotiating various types of Agreements with Local, Regional and International Organisations, dealing with the day-to-day Legal issues arising within the Public Service and of course, handling the Litigation Portfolio of the Government.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although this year has been an especially challenging one, taxing our limited resources, we have risen to the task and the Ministry of Legal Affairs has shown that it is ready to face the challenges.

During this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were caught in the net of the global pandemic, and together with key stakeholders, we were tasked with implementing Government's Policy in the fight against COVID-19. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Legal Drafters, the Permanent Secretary, we all responded very quickly and swiftly in providing the legal mechanism and framework that was needed and required at the time, to stop and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada, beginning late March, and continuing, I must add.

And therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able to draft and enact the following: The Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Regulations), 2020, and its amending Regulations.

(Time Bell rings)

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that means I have ten (10) minutes before my due time?

Mr. Speaker: You have ten (10) minutes in regular time.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Very well. We were also able, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with, draft and enact the Public COVID-19 Regulations 2020 and its amending Regulations, thereto: the Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations; the Quarantine (COVID-19) (Tests and Time Periods) Order, and recently, Mr. Speaker, the Quarantine (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which was passed in this House on Friday.

Mr. Speaker, I know you may very well recall the COVID-19 Bill. That too, was drafted by us, but as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was never brought to this House of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we continue to work and to provide much needed and timely economic reprieve to our citizens with the passage of various Acts, Statutory Rules and Orders, which included, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the three (3) month suspension of specific taxes through the COVID-19 Tax Relief Act; the temporary reduction of rates of contribution to the National Insurance Scheme, through the National Insurance (Collection of Contributions) (Amendment) Regulations, 2020; the temporary introduction of the unemployment benefits assistance through the National Insurance (Unemployment Assistance Benefit) Regulations, 2020.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no doubt, the work of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, during this time was especially visible to all Grenadians, as the people of this country saw how Laws and Regulations impacted, as well as how it protected them in moments of crisis.

The important lessons, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, reminded us all, of the role the public plays in functioning and fashioning and shaping Rules and Regulations that govern our lives.

During this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over twelve (12) amending Acts, six (6) principal Acts and twenty-four (24) Statutory Rules and Orders were enacted. And apart from those Laws and Regulations governing and regulating the fight against COVID-19, there were other significant work on the drafting side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I make mention of the Consumer Protection Act, 2020, which was amended by the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which was brought into force this year. This is an important Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It codifies various rights and responsibilities of consumers and suppliers. And while this Act was initially passed in 2017 and published in 2018, it entered into force only on the 1st of July, 2020, marking a significant victory for previously disenfranchised customers and consumers under the provision of the Consumer Affairs Tribunal and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and CARICOM Affairs.

Additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of note is the Praedial Larceny (Amendment) Act, 2020, which provides for the classification of soursop, as a specially protected produce and created a licensing regime for farmers to mitigate against incidents against praedial larceny.

The Ministry also did crucial work in other areas and played a significant role, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in advising and reviewing a National Draft Health Insurance Act. It is expected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this soon will go out to the wider public for consultation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also consulted on other important Bills including the Sexual Offenders Registry Bill. I know we have been speaking about this Bill for the longest time, but we have drafted it and we have sent same to the Grenada Bar Association for comment.

This Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a Bill that is aimed at providing protection to the public, especially the most vulnerable in our society including women and children and the elderly. If, Mr. Speaker, and when that Bill is passed, that Bill will create a Registry where persons who would have committed sexual offenses will have their names and information placed, so that the public will be aware of who these persons are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the issues that we are now being confronted with during this consultative process, or consultative phase is whether or not to allow the sentence in Court to make the determination as to whether or not that convicted person should be named on the Register, or whether it should be an automatic something at the end of conviction. It is something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are continuing to discuss among all the relevant stakeholders.

We have also drafted other various amendments: the Criminal Code; the Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act. All those amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really geared to provide more protection for victims, for women, for children against sexual crimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry has also given considerable support to all Ministries of Government and in particular, we have provided clear legal guidance in drafting, vetting and reviewing commercial agreements for those medium and large-scale Government-related projects, which we have heard the Minister for Finance spoke on, in his Budget Speech.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs has also been working closely with the Courts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and new fees for Court filing are expected to be implemented soon, in

accordance with the Supreme Court Fees Act, 2020, recently passed, in this Lower House.

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Speaker is in the Chair.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court Fees Act also provides the legal framework and mechanism to enable the Court System in Grenada to fully function online when the e-litigation Platform is to go live in Grenada.

And so, Mr. Speaker, once this is implemented, all users of the Court Litigation Services will be able to access these services online, filings will be completed online. Payment of Court fees and filing fees will also be done online. Lawyers and clients will be able to access their cases online. Mr. Speaker, already, Court cases have been heard online. With the introduction of the Online Portal, most cases will be able to be dealt with in that particular manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has played and continue to play a critical role in a comprehensive review of the following Regulations and Laws: the Police Promotion Regulations, Mr. Speaker, the Citizens and Immigration Laws. As well, Mr. Speaker, we are currently drafting Legislation to deal with the whole issue of Cannabis/Marijuana on the advice of Cabinet, which will be fully ventilated and discussed, through consultations with all the relevant stakeholders and interest groups before taken to Parliament. Mr. Speaker, we are also scheduled to undertake comprehensive review of the Public Service Regulations.

Mr. Speaker, we do not only speak about inclusion in decision making, we act on it. There is now a designated medium via which the public can make comments on all Bills to be considered by Parliament and the Senate. The Government of Grenada's new website has a designated page on which Bills will be available electronically, together with the existing Legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court Registry faced many challenges during the course of 2020, and like the Judiciary and the Court offices worldwide, it was forced to rethink and re-design its operations. And while the nation embarked on an emergency

lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court Office implemented a system of remote operation permitting documents to be filed during that period. The Courts, Mr. Speaker, have been using technology to conduct virtual meetings and hearings since March of 2020, and will continue to do so in the immediate future.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from Lawyers. I've heart from Litigants. I've heard from the Court Staff, and really they do not want to go back physically, into a classroom. It makes so much sense, it saves so much time and resources for all, and this is something, post COVID, Mr. Speaker, that we will continue to see in the administration of justice.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I therefore, crave and beg your indulgence for ten (10) more minutes.

Mr. Speaker: So granted.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Very well, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recognising the difficulties faced in applying our virtual technology and the conduct of jury trials, an interim solution was implemented to use a large open space for these trials. And these trials include mainly criminal trials and over ten (10) criminal trials have so far, been conducted since August of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, in February of 2020, recognising that the accommodations at the Registry compound were no longer appropriate, due to, of course, structural and other environmental issues, the Supreme Court Registry, the staff, they identified new accommodations, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Works, we were able to retrofit same, so that it is now being used to host most Departments. Most services are now being conducted there, Mr. Speaker. So, as of 24th March, 2020, Mr. Speaker, the staff and the Registry has been accommodated at the Jay McCormick building on Church Street, St. George's.

Mr. Speaker, through the World Bank funded CARCIP Project, the Registry in the last quarter of 2020, we saw the approval of two (2) very important projects, Mr. Speaker. The first was to complete the digitisation of the records in the Deeds and Land Registry and the records of the Probate Department, up to September 2020, and that is important.

For those of us who may have visited the Registry and would have seen some of the physical conditions of some of those log books and other indexes, you would appreciate the magnitude of this project.

The second being, Mr. Speaker, the verification and data entry of these records for the Deeds and Land Registry into existing database. So, after we put it online, after it has been scanned and loaded online, we then need to verify to ensure that it is the correct information; that would be the second phase of that project.

Mr. Speaker, within the first quarter of 2020, the Registry anticipates the full launch of the e-Land Registry, very critical. This project, Mr. Speaker, would allow stakeholders to search and access records, remotely. So everything, Mr. Speaker, is going online. Everything is online. We just sometimes, have to hope and pray that our internet service really pulls through and does not happen frequently, as what happened this morning and throughout the region.

Mr. Speaker, in the year ahead, the Ministry of Legal Affairs would be building and strengthening the massive improvements it has made in its operations. The Human Resource pool would be enhanced and new strategies would continue to be introduced to deal with the modern and legal landscape of our country, because it has no doubt changed and it will no doubt, be changing, as we forge ahead.

Mr. Speaker, it has now been over ten (10) years since the Laws of Grenada have been consolidated, and so a major project in the Ministry would be to undertake the consolidation of our existing Laws in the upcoming New Year.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021, in line with the whole of Government's approach, the Registry intends to conduct a review of all fees and charges, as we have been in the past. Mr. Speaker, it is clear and it's a fact that throughout the years, there have not been any increases in some of the fees that are being charged in the Registry for some

basic services. And at a bare minimum, Mr. Speaker, these fees charged really and ultimately reflect the basic cost of providing that service. And, Mr. Speaker, as we continue into the New Year, 2021, and after holding consultations with various key stakeholders and partners, we will seek to get approval and implementation to change some of these fees, presently being charged at the Supreme Court Registry.

Mr. Speaker, therefore in closing, I want to take this opportunity to thank again, all my Constituents of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, especially, Mr. Speaker, those who have travelled to be here, this morning, and, again, especially, our children from Bishop's College and Hillsborough Secondary School. I really want to thank them for coming.

I really want to thank the team at the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, my Permanent Secretaries, both in the Ministry of Petite Martinique Affairs and in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, my Attorney-General, I see the Registrar, SG, everybody at the Ministry of Legal Affairs. I really want to thank you for your support, your work, dedication to service and everything that you have given over the last few months.

I know it was extremely difficult, but we made it, and I have all confidence that we will continue to make it. The hardworking staff at the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, all of you, I thank you, our P.S, Quamina, the persons from Petite Martinique, I thank you.

The staff at the Parliamentary Office in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I thank you so kindly, because without you most of the things that I boast about today would not have been possible, so I want you.

I want to thank my family, my husband, my two (2) kids for really putting up with me at times. You know, I can be extremely difficult, very difficult, but I really want to thank them, Mr. Speaker, through you, for their understanding and patience, the love and everything that they have done and is doing to ensure that I am standing here this afternoon.

And, to all the people, to my Cabinet Colleagues, to our Prime Minister, for his confidence in me in leading, basically, two (2) separate Islands, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I don't know how I do it, but I think that God has been highly favourable to

me. He has been very kind to me, and I also want to give him all the Honour, all the glory and all the praise.

To my extended family, my mother, siblings, everybody, I just want to thank you, because without you, I would not have been standing here today. It has been rough, but, as I said, we are made for rough things, and at the end of that day, I know that we will all succeed, because we will bring Carriacou and Petite Martinique to the place we all want to see it. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your gracious time. Thanks. Thanks. Thanks. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. At this time, we would adjourn for lunch, but just before we go to lunch, my brothers and sisters, my guests from Carriacou, from Hillsborough Secondary, where were you? Don't tell me now, I will come around to find out what happened to you, because my children and their teacher from Bishop's College came early, but I am looking for Hillsborough and I can't find them. Okay. I will come to find out where you were.

Just, as we about to go for lunch, Leader of the Opposition, would you want to be unchained?

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: So, that we can take lunch? Honourable Members, this Honourable House is now adjourned until 2:30. At 2:30, we will resume.

House adjourns for lunch at 1:40 p.m.

House resumes at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: We don't have a quorum as yet.

(Inaudible comments)

Mr. Speaker: We will adjourn until we have a quorum. What we can say? We'll adjourn until we have a quorum, sit down and when the quorum comes, we will start.

House adjourns at 2:32 p.m., to await the formation of a quorum.

House resumes at 2:35 p.m.

(Sound of Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, we now call the House to order. Our debate would begin. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for the Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to debate the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2021, commonly called the Budget, the 2021 Budget, as presented by the distinguished Minister for Finance, who in my view, presented a Budget reflective of the period. And I want to commend him, commend the workers at the Ministry of Finance for job well done.

Mr. Speaker, these are COVID times, and of course, while we have to always be concerned about the state of the country, we have to be more concerned because of what COVID-19 has presented.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank the people for the Town of St. George, some of whom I see here, for having me here. It's an absolute privilege for me to be representing them over these last few years.

I also want to thank the staff at the Ministry of Agriculture, some of whom are here today, who has made my task all the much easier, because of the support they've given to me. I want to thank the former staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where I spent many years. I want to thank the PS, the Chief of Protocol and all of the Ministry Officials, thank the Diplomats who I worked with in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for their work. But I also want to thank the incoming Permanent Secretary, my dear brother

Morain, and all of his staff for making me have a smooth entry, into what I consider a very important Ministry.

The Ministry of Agriculture is very important, very big and it's been a steep learning curve for me and it's because of them always counselling me and being willing, at all hours of the evening, the night, the morning, to give me advice that I've been able to have what I consider to be a smooth transition.

In COVID times, it has not been easy to conduct business, Mr. Speaker. But certainly, because of the commitment of the staff of the both Ministries, Labour and Agriculture, we've been able to survive.

I am going to cover this afternoon, Labour, Agriculture, Forestry, Lands, and also speak a bit about the Town of St George. I choose to begin with the Ministry, the very important Ministry of Labour. I have the limited time of one (1) hour, so I'll have to be quite brief.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, COVID has had a devastating impact on many workers in this country, but also many workers throughout the world. In fact, when you look at the news, you see North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, everywhere is devastated by COVID.

You know, our old Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop used to say: **"When the North sneeze, we catch the cold,"** and that is exactly what is happening to our economy. We see the impact on tourism. We see the impact on trade. We see the impact on all aspects and all sectors of our economy, not only because of the COVID itself, but because of the impact COVID has had on our most important trading partners, our most important sources of tourism into the Caribbean. And this is not a Grenada phenomenon, certainly, it's a Caribbean phenomenon. It's a Small Island economy phenomenon.

Unemployment has moved from 15%. We have done very well, over the last several years, to bring it down from the 30s to 15, and now it's back up to 28%, as indicated in the address of the Minister for Finance.

Fourteen thousand (14,000) jobs, we are told, have been lost in Grenada, as a result of COVID-19, and that has to do with the impact in tourism, as I said, the impact

in trade etcetera, etcetera. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Grenada and workers in Grenada have been called upon to make sacrifices. The workers in Grenada have been called upon, Mr. Speaker, to step up to the plate. But, importantly, workers in Grenada have seen massive layoffs as I said, amounting to fourteen thousand (14,000) thousand.

And workers have been called upon, as we said to make sacrifices. But both businesses and workers have to make sacrifices, because businesses have been devastated also, Mr. Speaker. As indicated by speakers before me, many small businesses that are unable and do not have the resources to withstand the impact of the decline in the economy, with Government revenues down more than 50%, they have had, in some cases, to shut down, and others have had to scale back on their businesses.

So, both businesses and labour have been impacted negatively, by COVID. That is why in the Ministry of Labour, we are calling on businesses not to use the opportunity of COVID. We do not want either labour or businesses to use COVID as an excuse for anything. And we're asking businesses, while we understand the impact of COVID on them, to do as much as they can, as much as they possibly can, to ensure that workers' lives are not turned to misery. If there can be delayed employment shifts, whatever the employers can do, we urge them to do, to ensure that workers continue to earn a living wage. Businesses must not use the opportunity of COVID to take decisions that they would not otherwise take, except of course, in cases where the economy has so impacted them, that they do not have a choice. But, whatever they choose to do, we urge them to do it, in consultation with workers, and with workers' organisations.

Additionally, we asked the Labour Unions, and the Government has asked the Labour Unions to do everything possible to safeguard the interests of their workers. It means that labour and businesses must work together, to get through this period.

I want to thank the Unions for what they've done, over the years. I think we've only been able to achieve what we've been able to achieve in our economy over the years, because of the cooperation, the tripartite arrangement; because of the social compact we've had with all of these partners, that is the only reason why we've been able to withstand some of the most devastating impacts of COVID-19. I am therefore

urging the Unions, urging everyone in our economy, to continue to work together in order to ensure that the interests of all is secured.

Mr. Speaker, in the current period, we urge Labour Unions to approach their unionism, with cooperation, just as we urge the businesses to move forward with cooperation. More matters are coming before the Ministry. More than ever before, we are finding that the Ministry of Labour has been facing conciliation and mediation requests. As the downturn in the businesses takes place, it's taken its toll on the business and employment, and therefore, they are coming to the Ministry of Labour.

The central issue that we are trying to deal with in the conciliation and mediation, is saving jobs. At the end of the day, our job in the Ministry, as we conciliate, is to save as many jobs as they can, through the mediation process.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Government, which has come to the rescue and come to save jobs. As you know, in the Public Sector, the Government has not laid off and the Government has urged businesses not to do the same. There's been income assistance from the Government. The NIS has just announced another round of help by considering another payment of unemployment assistance, and this at a time when NIS is facing one of its most serious fiscal challenges. The fiscal health of the NIS is being challenged, but they have been able to do this, even as the Scheme is a non-contributory one.

The Government has also sought to create more jobs, Health Wardens, Contact Tracing Schemes, expansion of Environmental Health employment, using the COVID experience in order to find jobs for more Grenadians.

They've continued the Social Programmes, which has impacted on the Labour Force, Social Programmes in Housing, in the Toilet Programme, in the physical infrastructure in the communities. And I know that, Mr. Speaker, because in my own constituency, in fact, we've seen an increase in delivery, not because of more monies, but because of more efficiency, using these Brigades. For example, the Ministry of Housing, the decision to establish a Housing Brigade, ensures that there is no wastage of house material. So, because of spending on the Brigades, which creates

employment, we are now having the houses actually completed. Similarly, with several projects in the constituencies.

The Ministry of Labour, Mr. Speaker, has worked very hard to assist in resolving issues related to disputes between employers and employees, but it has not been easy. There are several cases, where we have to work out severance payments. The case of LIAT is one difficult one and everybody knows it's been very public. In the situation with LIAT, the Ministry of Labour has had to intervene in that, to try to resolve it.

You look at the Airport. You know, at the Airport there were no flights. Therefore, ASG, that Company that operates at the Airport, has had serious challenges. There was a dispute between them and the Unions, and we've been able to assist in resolving that, simply because, both parties have to understand that the workers have needs, the company's survival.

If the company goes under, the bottom-line for the workers is unemployment. So, we have to find some kinds of resolutions. And, again, as the Minister for Labour, I urge the companies to ensure that they do not make decisions that are detrimental to workers, unless the bottom-line says that they must.

Over the last year, Mr. Speaker, we have done several things in the Ministry of Labour. We have had four (4) meetings with the Labour Advisory Board to determine and establish the new Labour Code. We had meetings with the Wages Advisory Committee, to try to seek to establish new Minimum Wages for categories of workers. We have tried to improve the skills capacity in our country, through the Work Permit Regime, and we've done much to enhance that, by getting workers in.

Hopefully, as I said last year, in the future, we'll be able to have persons in Grenada with all of the capacity we need. Well, we'll never be able to reach all capacity, but certainly, that workers in Grenada would learn, through their experience with other persons, who may be more skilled.

We have done much to protect workers' rights. We've had ninety-six (96) conciliations in the Ministry, over the last year, seven (7) done by myself, as the Minister, twenty-seven (27) by the Labour Commissioner, and sixty-two (62) by Labour

Officers. And we expect an uptick in that, as the economy continues along this path, hopefully, until sometime in mid-2021.

We have had thirteen (13) mediated labour disputes, one hundred and thirty (130) complaints settled. Four (4) Agreements were signed this year, St. George's University, Westerhall Estates Limited, National Insurance Scheme and MTV all signed. We had two (2) with TAWU, one (1) with Seamen and Waterfront and one (1) with Commercial and Industrial.

We've had polls conducted. Over this last year, we completed one (1) poll with the managerial staff of First Caribbean International, and issued one (1) Certificate of Recognition for First Caribbean International. Mr. Speaker, we've had extensive training workshops. We have had discussions and seminars for workers throughout the industries.

With respect to programmes for 2021, Mr. Speaker, we hope to finalise the Labour Code, done by the Labour Advisory Board; review and amend the Labour Code to protect workers, parents, who have had to stay at home to take care of families, in the wake of COVID-19.

We continue our meetings with the Wages Advisory Committee. We do more on Occupational Health and Safety, ratify ILO Conventions, established a Labour Market Information System, which is critical. We need to have more information, a more data based approach to the Ministry of Labour, and we're establishing a Labour Market Information System and continuation of the social dialogue among Government, the Grenada Trade Union Council and the Employers' Federation.

We do hope that in the coming year, we know that there are some major issues out there with respect to Government and some employees. We do hope that the approach will be an understanding of the difficult circumstances of COVID and both parties must come to the table, recognising those interests.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue the Employment Promotion and Job Creation. We have the Canadian Seasonal and Agricultural Workers' Programme, and here I want to pay tribute to the one worker, Mr. Horsford, who died in Canada. It was really a tragic incident. I want to extend to his family, as I've done personally, my

deepest condolences. We've done that officially in the Ministry. I want to do it here today, to extend our deepest condolences. It is the first time it has happened, at least under my watch, and I do hope that everything will be fine with the family and the three (3) sons that he has.

We continue along that programme, the workers, despite the fact that we have COVID, we had many workers going out to Canada to work. I think we had over one hundred (100) workers going to Canada to engage in the Seasonal Workers' Programme, and we continue to urge more, what do you call it, more farms to have workers.

You see, Mr. Speaker, it is not us who send the workers to Canada. The farmers in Canada make the request, we provide them with the list of workers that are available, they chose. And I want to say this to the workers who go out there, that at the end of the day, their performance will determine if they go again, or if other Grenadians go. And anybody who jeopardises it, is not only jeopardising their own position, but certainly, jeopardising the position of the future of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, we do know we have challenges in the Ministry of Labour and these challenges call for some serious and urgent attention, something the Government has agreed to do.

First of all, in particular, the area of Industrial Grievance Resolution and Mediation Services, we need to get more staff in on that. We have spoken to the Cabinet about it, and that is on the way, especially with the future before us now with COVID. We need to have more focus on understanding the dynamics of employer/employee relations, rights and duties. We need to do more training in that regard with our staff.

We need to have more emphasis on promotional cooperation and the improvement of the Tripartite Arrangement, what I was speaking of. We need to work together, understanding that we all have a stake in stable industrial relations in the country, and at the same time, the development and workers' rights to be protected in that regard.

We need to pay close attention to Occupational Health and Safety, and early in the New Year, we're getting a new staff member, who will be focused on that, again, particularly in the context of COVID.

I want to thank all of the Unions who have cooperated with us in this difficult time, with respect to the COVID Protocols. The Unions were brought on board quite early, at the Public Workers' Union, for example, was involved in inspecting all Government buildings, the other Unions doing the same, with respect to their approaches to the protocol, and I want to thank all of them for the work they have done and the understanding they've had with respect to COVID and COVID-19.

So, all in all, Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that the environment out there, there must be more cooperation, between workers and businesspersons. We must find ways to resolve these disputes, without threatening jobs. In the event where that is inevitable, it must be done in a way that preserves the rights of the workers and certainly tries to ensure that they have a living wage.

The Government and the Minister for Finance has outlined it. I don't need to repeat all of it, but certainly, the Government has done a lot, expending tons of resources, to ensure that the society and the workers' interest are taken care of. So, Mr. Speaker, that is it, with respect to Labour.

With respect to Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I will look at the achievements and the way forward for Agriculture. COVID-19 again, has had an impact on Agriculture. It has had some negative impacts, but there is one positive impact that stands out in my mind, and that is, it has made all of us, as Lawyers like to say pellucidly aware of the importance of the sector. It has indicated to us, that it holds tremendous potential and it impacts, not only the health of the economy, but the health of the nation. Agriculture is important to our bodies, and it's important to the body of the nation.

But, COVID-19 has also showed us, that we have not adequately, over the years, capitalised on the full potential of the sector. I want to here, pay tribute to the farmers, who have worked hard over many decades, in the development of this country, to everyone involved in the sector. I want to pay tribute to former Ministers of Agriculture, most immediately Sister Yolande Bain-Horsford, for the work they've done, and I want

to pay tribute to all of the workers in the Ministry of Agriculture, who have worked over the years. And I am talking now about the technicians who have worked, over the years.

But, before I go on to that, I forgot to mention in Labour, my two (2); well, a right hand and a left hand, sitting in the audience, Ms. Lima Frederick, who is retiring soon, unfortunately. She's going despite the fact that I have tried to stop it, but I can't really stop it. It's the rules of the game, and my friend Mr. Cyrus. Mr. Cyrus has been the person, you hear me list persons, who are taking care of conciliations in my absence, it is my Labour Commissioner, Cyrus. I want to pay tribute to both of you and to thank you for making it easy. My job as Foreign Minister over the years, took me out of the country, quite often, and without you two, it would have been impossible. And now with Agriculture, which doesn't take me abroad, but takes me inwardly abroad, you've done a tremendous job of helping. So, I want to thank you before I move on to Agriculture. Thank you. God bless you and I look forward to working with you. Lima, we will talk before you go on retirement. But, I hope you do have a wonderful retirement. You deserve every minute of it. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Back to Agriculture; we spend $300m a year importing food, $300m. Imagine what we can do in Healthcare, in Housing, in Agriculture, with $300m. We need to reverse the trend and this has been going on for many, many years. I remember growing up, as a child, in political struggles, as a youngster, talking about the Food Import bill. It is still extremely high, if anything, it is increasing. What can we do to correct this? It is simple what we can do. We can grow more, we can eat more local stuff, we can add more value to the local stuff and we can export more; seems a simple proposition. Grow more, eat more, add more value, export more. If we do that, it is my contention that we can correct the problem that we have of the Food Import bill. But, it sounds easier than it is done, because it requires the Government, Private Sector businesses, consumers, Public Utilities, churches. Just as we said years ago, and I remember this growing up: "*Tourism is Everybody's Business."* You remember that. Well, Agriculture is really everybody's business, including people, who are involved in tourism. Agriculture is everybody's business and it's serious business.

Mr. Speaker, in the Budget Presentation this year, an injection total of $40m has been pumped into the Agricultural Sector. Mr. Speaker, there's an oft recited fallacy, that all that is provisioned for Agriculture, is what you see in an Agricultural Budget. In other words, the monies going to the Ministry is seen as everything. So, for example, last year, we had about $18m, and this year we have just about the same going into the Ministry, that is a fallacy.

Projects that impact Agriculture, very important projects are allocated into the Vote of other Ministries. Let us take an example. My friend from North-East said this morning he doesn't understand it, it should just go to Agriculture. To me, it's simple. I am not sure how complex it is for him to understand, but for me, it's very simple. Look at the Agricultural Feeder Road Programme. The Agricultural Feeder Roads will be constructed by the Ministry of Works, because that is the Ministry designed to build roads. If you give us in Agriculture, I know Mr. Morain or Mr. Kelly Patrick or my brother, Trevor Thompson can't build any roads, so the Ministry of Works has been designated to build roads, roads designated to get into the lands belonging to the farmers. **(Applause)** So, when we say when we say that $40m, yes, $18.6m is going directly to the Ministry, but the Ministry of Agriculture is not Agriculture.

The Ministry of Agriculture has a role, but several other Ministries. Look at SAEP, another programme that is building roads. SAEP is building, and I'll talk about it in a while, about 20 roads, but SAEP is placed in the Ministry of Finance, under Rural Development. So, Rural Development has a part to play in Agriculture, so SAEP, which is building about, right now we have about fourteen (14) roads for next year, and there are more than twenty (20) roads, according to the project, beyond next year that are placed in the Ministry of Finance. So we have to add that if you're looking at investment into Agriculture, add that to the $18.6m that we received directly, to understand Government's injection into the sector.

Now, revenues are down. Revenues are down 50%. Now, if revenues are down 50%, we would expect that expenditure would be down, because if I am earning less every month, I would have to cut back. Instead…. and I want to thank the Ministry of Finance on this. Instead, we've had just about the same amount, as we had last year.

So in fact, we have gone against the trend, which is downward spiral of revenues, to keep the same amount of revenue coming into the Ministry. But it is one thing to receive more funds, but it's quite another thing to manage these funds effectively.

At a time of Government's decline in revenues, I want to thank the Government for expending the same amount on Agriculture, this year. But the fact is, more money does not necessarily mean good use of that money. And that is why in the Ministry of Agriculture, we are saying, that we must realise that in periods like these, we must make more effective use of the resources given to us, in other words, more efficient spending, and I'll go into some of that. We need to ensure that we can do more with less, because it is my view, it is my view, that if we organise and if we work better, if we are more efficient in our spending, if we are more focused, we can attain all the goals we set for ourselves.

In other words, the $18m we receive, plus the other millions that come through SAEP and the Ministry of Infrastructure and others, if we use those monies efficiently, it is my view that we can achieve all that we need to achieve in Agriculture. That is why, that is why, in the Ministry of Agriculture, we've decided to name next year, the 'Year of Organisation and Production.' We must organise better to produce more. We must ensure that we make more efficient use of the resources we have, to produce more. And by doing that, we can reduce the Food Import bill, create more employment, eat healthier, thus reducing the cost of healthcare, improve the conditions of the rural economy and reduce poverty. Increased production, through efficiency of spending, that is the impact it can have on the Grenadian economy.

Now the question arises, what is to be done? What are the main tasks facing us in the Agricultural Sector? Now, I have gone out and listened to farmers. I have spent days, my friend this morning said to me that he saw me in my boots, going around. Yes, it's true. I visited a place named Barrick. I never know where Barrick was. I am sure many of you don't. But when you stand up in Barrick up in St. Patrick, if you look over, you see Mt. St. Catherine right there and I followed farmers and I was amazed that farmers had to walk through some of the most difficult terrain to get their products

out. It's good for my health. I told you agriculture is good for health. I lost couple of pounds.

(Laughter)

(A Member mentioned that it was showing)

Hon. Peter David: Yes. It's showing. Thank you.

(Laughter)

(A Member told the Minister that it helped him to know Grenada)

Hon. Peter David: It got me to know Grenada, exactly, exactly. I went to Barrick, I saw the conditions and I really had a great time with the farmers in Barrick. I went to Windsor Estate, with the guys from the Extension Division, saw the plight of the farmers up at Windsor. I visited Mardigras in St. George, met the farmers at Mardigras. I visited Eden Farms, she does honey in Granville Vale, in the Prime Minister's Constituency, a lovely project, showing the importance of honey making, some of the best honey, not in Grenada, but in the world.

I've had an opportunity to go to all these places and I went to NEFO (North-East Farmers' Organisation). My friend said I got there late, I am not sure, but my friend I did go, to NEFO twice. It's a lovely group of farmers in North-East, St. George's. Once I went to see their bee production, which was done with assistance from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and I also went to see an Irrigation Project. My friend Trevor Thompson was showing them how to do irrigation on a farm in North-East St. George's.

So on all my visits to these places, I was able to see and hear from the farmers, and that is what convinces me that if we organise better, if we organise better, we can solve the problems of Agriculture.

So, what is to be done? First of all, the biggest problem is access to lands; farmers continually speaking about their access to lands. In fact, I am told by one friend of mine involved in agriculture, if we can access much of the lands that used to be under nutmeg cultivation, we can increase nutmeg production by about 20%, just by access to some of these lands that are no longer being accessed because of roads. So, access to lands, take that to mean roads and SAEP as I indicated, they are doing around twenty (20) roads over the next year or two. They have fourteen (14) earmarked for next year. We have the Farm Roads Programme in the Ministry of Works, done by the Company HANOVER. They are going to do eleven (11) roads next year. All of these roads are going to be done in order to access existing farms, existing lands. If we can access these lands, we can increase production and with increased production, we can solve the problems of Agriculture.

But also, there's another way to do it. We have many persons in Grenada who have equipment. On the way to Barrick, I met a massive road project between Hermitage and Rose Hill, and there were equipment on the road. The equipment were there doing the road project and I said to the guys on the road project, let's go up, let me show you some roads I want you to clear on the weekend and they agreed. And we went up to look at the road in Barrick and I brought the farmers up there and they now have an agreement to clear the road, at no cost to the farmers. Of course, the Government might bring in some gravel and some tiff, but the point is, we all have to partner. So, apart from SAEP, apart from the Farm Roads Programme, we can ask. And I also spoke to the guys in other Construction Companies, give back something. You're making money, give back something. Come on the weekends, work with the farmers, let us clear some roads, so that farmers can access their farms. So, the Government is doing a lot in that, and I hope we can cooperate with the farmers to get more done.

Praedial Larceny

Praedial larceny, and I do this for a reason, is like fire to a household. Imagine you have your house for years, you're taking care of everything, and one day you come home and it just burned down, everything gone. We saw the recent example of the

`young man from Windsor. In fact, a couple of weeks before, they stole from him, we were out there. We saw the ginger, in fact, while we were there, we were calculating how much money he was making, everybody was excited. There was this young man, who is dedicated to it, and then all of a sudden, boom, one day some clown comes along and steals his ginger. We have to do something.

I have not gone to a Farmers' Engagement without the emergence of this vexing issue, this vexing issue of praedial larceny. Of course, during the last term of this House, the Government passed the amendment to the Praedial Larceny Act, which raises the penalties to persons engaging in that awful crime, but we have to do more. And the Ministry of Agriculture is now working to implement other parts of the Legislation, because the Legislation does not only speak to sentencing, it speaks to an entire mechanism. It speaks to things that need to be done with the Royal Grenada Police Force in order to get it done. And you see, the problem with praedial larceny is not only the moral issue of theft. When you go to the farms and you meet farmers who are saying to you, that if we do not solve this problem, we will leave production.

Imagine, we met a farmer in Windsor, who said he plant a whole big area of tannia, just about the time to reap, all the tannia gone, similarly with the watermelon. So the fact is, it is not just the moral issue of theft, it is the issue of production and how it's going to affect agriculture going down the road, because the truth is, that there are lots of farmers, who will decide that they're not producing, if they do not benefit from the production.

So, Government has decided to inject in excess of $200,000.00 in an attempt to reduce praedial larceny. We have spoken to farmers, we have spoken to persons, who can assist, to get cameras and drone technology. Get new technology involved in fighting praedial larceny. But, the fact is that praedial larceny is not only caused by the person who is stealing. That person who stole the ginger is not consuming all the ginger, somebody is buying it. And we the society are complicit in that, because we sometimes, pass on the side of the road, and see men selling stuff. I have no problem giving a man a bligh, but if what he is selling there is the labour and the sweat and tears

of a farmer, we have to deal with that, **(applause)** and we, as a society, have to deal with that. We have to see praedial larceny the way the household sees the house.

And, with respect to the Royal Grenada Police Force, well, my brother Lynch is now in the Ministry. My brother Lynch, who is right here before me, and we've had deep conversations on the issue. And we have to find ways to upgrade the mechanism with the Royal Grenada Police Force, because I say, I make the analogy about the fire, to say that the Praedial Larceny Unit must be as effective as the Fire Department, meaning, they must be dedicated to praedial larceny, not doing it on the side. But that is a conversation we must have with the hierarchy of the Royal Grenada Police Force, who has been doing an excellent job. I've spoken to the persons in all of the Districts, and the Praedial Larceny Police Officers are trying their best, but we need to take it more seriously and inject more into that mechanism. So, praedial larceny must be addressed.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is land availability. We can't talk about increase in production, if people want to farm lands, but there is no land available. I want to commend the Ministry, and Minister Bain-Horsford did quite a bit of work on this, the Land Bank Project. Along with the Food and Agricultural Organization, a Land Bank Project was developed, and that will grant access to, well, the concept is to put in lands into the bank and make the lands in the bank available to farmers, who want to produce.

At this stage, it is only with respect to Government lands, we do hope that Private Sector individuals will put their land into the bank, the unused lands, into the Land Bank, so that persons who want to get involved in agriculture can do so.

I want to say that at this stage, sites have been identified. We have sites in Diamond, in St. Mark; La Calome, in St. David; Laura Land, in St. David; Grenville Vale, in St. George's; Loretto, in St. John and Mt. Rose, in St. Patrick. These areas have been identified, and they are working on the framework to operationalise the Land Bank. There was a bit of a setback, as with everything else, during the COVID period, but in 2021, we do expect that the Land Bank will become operational and that persons will be able to access it; extremely important to increase production and extremely important for youth intending to go into agriculture. We have a plan and a policy, as indicated by

the Prime Minister, to have more youth involved in agriculture. Many of them don't own lands, but if we can access lands for them, of course, on terms to be agreed upon, I believe and we all agree that it will lead to increased production.

Another vexing issue out there is the role of the Marketing Board, the MNIB. Again, I've never been to an engagement with the farmers where MNIB doesn't come up. In discussions with them, they have said that the Marketing Board has to play a more integral role in the development of the Agricultural Sector. And I did hold some discussions with Marketing Board. These discussions are continuing and hopefully in the New Year, we will find some way to get it formalised. But, we must reorient the Marketing Board to play a more meaningful role in the sector, with respect to finding markets, with respect to planning, with respect to inputs, that was the original intent of the Marketing Board. The Founding Fathers of the Marketing Board intended it to be a mechanism to assist farmers in developing the Agricultural Sector, not an independent body that is involved in commodity trades, although that was part of the mechanism, at the time, in order to finance Marketing Board.

The view is that farmers must focus on production and not have to be too bothered about whether or not they can find markets. When a farmer has his head to the soil, he must know that the end of the day when these products are good and ready, there is a market for the products. And a farmer cannot go and plough an acre of land and when he comes up and he raises his head, there's no place to sell his products. And that is why the Marketing Board was established, and that is what the Marketing Board should be focused on.

We understand the challenges of the Marketing Board. We understand the difficulties of the Marketing Board, but we must reorient it, and it must be done in collaboration with the farmers, and I will come to the farmers' role in a few minutes. But for this we have to also introduce new technology. We have to have a digital architecture, used by Marketing Board and farmers, where you can forecast demand and supply.

I should be able to stand here and access information, which tells me how much cocoa we need, or how much, use of another product, how much ginger we need for

2021. And if you're overproducing, if everybody who is sitting there is doing ginger, I know we're overproducing, then I need to advise somebody that they're going to sink the market and it's not in their interest. There must be more information, more data, to plan our supply, knowing what the demand is, so that we do not adversely affect pricing, because pricing of agricultural products is a critical problem. I have had farmers tell me that, listen, first time they see people going to the market and other people deciding what they're paying them for their products. In other words, they want to have a say. But, I'll come to the role of the farmers in a few minutes. But we must also develop, with the assistance of Marketing Board, again, an export strategy.

There are a few products that we have an advantage in. We have an advantage in soursop, because of our access to markets that other countries in the Region don't have. We have advantages with nutmeg and cocoa. We have some advantages there. But what I didn't realise, we also have the advantages with sugar apples. I didn't realise sugar apples came under the same category as soursop and custard apple. We have some advantages with seamoss. So, what we have to do is to set up a governance structure, to ensure that we maintain standards with these products, so that we don't jeopardise the market.

The fact is, we need to ensure that when you talk about Grenada's soursop, it's good soursop. When you talk about Grenada sugar apples, you could put your pot on fire, it's good sugar apples. But to do that, we have to set up a governance structure, a governance structure that ensures that any products going out, is of a certain standard. Any products you're selling is of a certain standard, because one bad product going out, or one shipment of bad products could devastate the entire economy. You know, we can lose advantages that we have by doing that. The advantage we have in the soursop, the advantage we have in sugar apples, the advantage we have in any product can be lost, if we do not set up the mechanism to have it done.

And, we have the new products, like I said, the soursop, the sugar apples, the seamoss, those are the new products, and we have the old products, like the nutmeg and the cocoa. But we need to set up the governance structure, to ensure that that is done. We have advantages; we must not lose these advantages.

I also want to talk about some other issues, but I want to pay tribute to the AGRICOM Project, because the AGRICOM Project is a project that brings producers together, I mean, the aggregators, as they call them, the persons, who are doing the agro-processing and the farmers, and I want to commend them for that. I'll come back to that later. And my good friend, my brother, Delsol, I think is in charge of that, the Chief of Planning at the Ministry, to commend them for doing a good product and hopefully, within that structure, we'll get some of these standards arranged.

And that brings me to agro-processing. Everybody says you must do agro-processing; it's a big thing, agro-processing. But, in order to do that, there are a couple of things we need to get done. First of all, we need to get Capital Investments to set up the Agro-Processing Facility. But having set up the Agro-Processing Facility, we need to get the inputs to produce. So, I set up a nice Agro-Processing Facility for processing juices, and then I can't find mangoes, I can't find citrus, so it must be organised.

Another reason why we need to be planning more in the industry, agro-processing will require more planning in the industry. We've spoken, for example, there are some Grenadian Investors, who are willing to purchase the facility at La Sagesse that was owned by Winston Mitchell, and then owned by WINFRESH and now up for sale, because of bankruptcy of WINFRESH. They are prepared to go into it. I've spoken to the Government also of possibly using the CBI Programme to buy it. Now, if you get a facility like that, that facility, initially, had difficulties, because of lack of consistency, regularity of quality and of quantity. So, they had to be importing the inputs, it cost too much, the facility went belly-up.

In order to get agro-processing going, we have to produce more. But we have to produce more quality and more consistently, and again, the farmers are an integral part of that. While the investments can be made by Government or by some other Private Investor, the farmers' production and planning must be an integral part of that.

Another issue we have to deal with is meat importation. As I said a few minutes ago, 38.4% of total food imports is meat. I never realised until I came into this Ministry, how much chicken we eat in Grenada, Mr. Speaker. We eat nearly $40m worth of chicken every year and only 10% of that is produced locally, and there are other

investors coming in that I'll speak about in a moment, and they are establishing huge facilities and they can only produce another 10%. So in other words, despite the investments we have, we still have 80% of chicken we consume are imported.

But, let me speak about livestock generally, for a minute. The Ministry and the Government in 2020, we were supposed to implement the Mirabeau Abattoir Improvement Project, through the CARICOM Development Fund with support from IICA, one of the institutions in the Region that's very supportive of Grenada. But because of the pandemic, that has been put off 2021, but we must focus on reducing. And the reason why the abattoir is important is so that we can add value by some really good cuts and assisting the farmers in the slaughter and cutting up of their product, of their meat.

With respect to goat and sheep production, the Ministry developed the Terms of Reference and procured the services of a consultant, for the development of a Policy and Action Plan for the Livestock Subsector. I want to commend Dr. Cummings and his team in the Ministry, for the work they are doing in the Livestock Sector and to urge them to continue to do that, because I do believe we can do more in the sector. As part of this upgrade we will be developing and upgrading the small ruminants facility, in Laura, St. David, and this has been reprogrammed for 2021.

This year, the Ministry launched the National Inventory and Tagging of Livestock Programme, and this will have effective management of breed stock and the reduction of animal theft. In 2021, we'll continue to expand and strengthen this programme.

Mr. Speaker, we've also engaged with Friends of Grenada in Australia, with respect to one, improving the livestock facility at Laura, but also, to improve the stock of our ruminants. There is a Grenadian and many people may not know this, one Grenadian, who is involved as an investor in Grenada. In fact, I can say his name, Danny Fakhre, who is part owner of Silver Sands. He owns the largest livestock ship, moving livestock from Australia to Lebanon. He has decided to assist us. They have large farms in Australia. They have engaged with Dr. Cummings, who is speaking to them about how to improve the stock of sheep and goats in Grenada, and hopefully, the

Laura facility will be tantamount to a Propagation Plant for sheep and goats, so that we can increase the production.

I know someone, in fact my son, he can't kill enough goats. In fact, Carriacou has become a source of much of these for Grenada now, because the demand is so great. So, with respect to sheep and goats, the Ministry, in the Livestock Division is working on that.

With respect to poultry, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we spend more than $30m a year on that.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, the bell is just a notice for how much more?

Mr. Speaker: You have ten minutes (10) minutes more of regular time, but you can get the fifteen (15) minutes after that.

Hon. Peter David: Half an hour for extra time?

Mr. Speaker: Fifteen (15) minutes after that.

Hon. Peter David: I thought it was half an hour, Mr. Speaker, but that will suffice. With respect to poultry, Mr. Speaker, with support of European Development Fund (EDF), we've developed a Poultry Strategic Plan, and I want to welcome some new investors into poultry. There's the Excellence Farms that is starting in St. Patrick. I like the model they're using. The model is that they are going to produce themselves, maybe fifteen thousand (15,000) birds, every couple of weeks, but they are inviting others to come in, and I think, again, they are a part of the AGRICOM Project that I spoke of earlier. They are inviting chicken producers, persons who grow the birds, to deliver the birds to them, they will slaughter, they will package, they will give you back, if you have your own market, or you can put it into their market stream. That is the kind of

development we need, because we are, in a sense, stuck with small farmers. We do not have the capacity to have twenty/thirty (20-30) large farmers. Therefore, we need a couple of big farmers like Excellence, who will provide the added value component, of course, at a price to the small farmers. So, hopefully that arrangement will work, hopefully, it would see an increase in domestic production and certainly, that has to be combined with a discussion about how we would reduce the price of inputs, particularly, the price of feed. There has to be a discussion on the price of feed. There has to be a discussion on the price of all inputs into poultry, because we cannot continue to consume more than $35m of imported chicken, particularly, bearing in mind, that a lot of the chicken we are eating is chicken that is substandard, because it comes from Brazil, because it comes from all over the world. It's been there for months and months, maybe, and God knows what has been put into it. So, not only is producing local poultry better and healthier for the economy, it is healthier for our bodies.

And, I know, Mr. Speaker, that Grenadians prefer to eat local chicken, if they can get it at a price that is competitive with imported chicken, and that has to be part of the Strategic Plan. I've seen the Poultry Policy, it is a good Policy. For the New Year, we have to sit down, crunch the numbers and ensure that step by step, we can bite away at this huge Food Import bill we have.

Youth in Agriculture

Mr. Speaker, some of us refer to establishing an Agri-Business Initiative, where we can create a framework for cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture, GIDC, Financial Institutions, such as GDB, to ensure young that people coming into the sector, and I am sure the Prime Minister will talk more about it, are able to get land, to get financing and also to get support from the technicians in the Ministry of Agriculture.

We had an experience with a young man in Windsor, who said to me: **"Listen, I have land, I work hard, I went to the bank, I can't get a loan. What do I do?"** That is why we are working with GDB and other Financial Institutions to make financing in the sector much more accessible.

What all of this tells us, that I've just outlined, is that we, at the Ministry of Agriculture, have to upgrade our services. We must upgrade our ability to deliver

services to the farmers. Mr. Speaker, many of our senior staff will retire in the upcoming year, so we have to engage on an aggressive Training Programme for young people coming in and those already in the system.

The Extension Services, a very critical part of our work at the Ministry. I want to commend Mr. Shears, Randolph Shears, he's here; unfortunately, another person who is going to retire. He looks much too young to do that, but I guess he's kept himself well. I want to commend the old officers and the young ones now in training. In fact, there are twenty (20) officers in training with the assistance of the FAO and TAMCC, and they will get Associate Degrees in Extension Services. I want to commend those who put that in training. I want to commend the previous Minister for Agriculture, Yolande Bain-Horsford, for that initiative, along with Mr. Shears and his team. And they're also working to engage the National Training Agency to develop a Training Portfolio, because we need a pool of competent officers.

Another thing that fell under Extension, but it is no longer there, is tractor services. We got complaints, up and down the country, about the availability of equipment to clear the land. In fact, in visiting the Prime Minister's Constituency in Beausejour, that matter was raised by one farmer, who said for the entire year, they were only able to get one person's land cleared, because what the Government did, some time ago, was to remove the equipment from under Government and establish relations with private persons, who would provide the service.

Unfortunately, farmers are still complaining and it is my view that while that process can be continued, we need to review it and maybe find a way to combine both efforts, both from within the Ministry and the Private Sector. But it's something that I will meet with colleagues to speak about, how do we correct it. The fact is, that farmers are complaining that they are unable to find the means by which to plough their lands, and we, as a Ministry must address that. So, that is something that we are going to do in order to serve the farmers' interest.

The Produce Chemist Lab, an extremely important part of the Ministry's work, again, led by Irvin Henry and they're doing quite a bit of good work, Mr. Speaker. When I met with them, they were training persons in agro-processing. They've given

assistance to thirty-six (36) persons to develop Sweet Potato Flour production, using Solar Drying Technology. They're talking about breadfruit preservation. They are talking about Root Crop and Breadfruit Flour production and training to produce these products, targeting youth. We cannot move to agro-processing, if we do not have a well-equipped, well-trained group in the Produce Chemist Lab. Mr. Henry is leading that and we are going to work hard in order to get that done. If we are to move to more agro-processing, that must be dealt with.

The Agronomy Division, another extremely important Division, led by Allison Haynes, and, Mr. Speaker, they have done a tremendous amount of work in all the Propagation Stations, in Mirabeau, in Ashenden, in Maran. They have done work, but, of course, they've had difficulties. This year, for example, they've had difficulties with the Greening. What do you call it? The Citrus Greening, so they've had to stop the production of the citrus plants. Again, in the in the Agronomy Section of the Ministry, we are happy that we have the persons, what we need is the Plan. And, having sat down with them, I think that we'll be able to develop a good Plan.

In soursop, in 2019, Grenada exported 4.5 million pounds of soursop to the United States, at a value about $13m. There are lots of potential there and the potential continues and the demand continue.

At the Mirabeau Propagating Station, we have to upgrade. We have received some assistance from the People's Republic of China. We are going to move to upgrade that Division.

The Land Use Division, led by my brother, Trevor Thompson. They are extremely important. The Land Use Division essentially, maps all of our lands in Grenada, and can tell us what the lands are good for. They also help with Environmental Impact Studies, Suitability Assessments, Crop Suitability and Irrigation Management. In other words, Mr. Speaker, in all of what we are talking about, we have to bring science to bear on agriculture. It is not a matter of a man gets a fork and a cutlass and a boots, and he goes out on a farm, it's the science. And, at that level, it is the Government and the Ministry, in collaboration with our International Partners, who must do that. And the Land Use Policy that has been started, again, the previous

Minister initiated it. It was initiated during her time, or maybe before her time and continued by her. That is now before the Ministry for Legal Affairs, Sister Kindra, to be outlined sometime early in 2021.

We have the Forestry Division; the Forestry Division, led by Anthony Jeremiah. In the Forestry Division, we are going to be looking at National Parks.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, can I be afforded... How much more time do I get?

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

Hon. Peter David: Fifteen (15) more minutes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We start counting in a few minutes?

(Laughter)

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, with respect to Lands and Surveys, led by Seth St. Claire, Trevor Barclay and his team, they have been working to regularise Crown Lands. This year, the Division conducted regularisation work in the five (5) Settlements I referred to earlier; Diamond, La Calome, Laura Land, Grenville Vale, Loretto and Mt. Rose, in St. Patrick, and they're working to regularise these, so as to allow persons to utilise these lands that are just sitting there.

They're also working to strengthen revenue collection. One of the problems with Government's lands is that everybody buys Government's lands, but people hardly pay for Government lands, so the Lands and Surveys Division will be moving to strengthen it. They will seek to review the Surveyors Act, also, in the New Year, to allow us to get more surveyors. That has posed a problem.

I also want to pay tribute, Mr. Speaker, to the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council, led by Lydia Brown. They are reviewing the Food Based Dietary Guidelines; in fact they've done it. They are also doing training on Infant and Young Child Feeding, completed with fifty-five (55) nurses and twenty-six (26) Day Care staff. The role of the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council is to allow us to understand what eating local can do for us. And I want to congratulate them on the work they've done, and to urge Grenadians to eat local, because certainly, eating local is important for all of us.

But one of the important things I want to say, is the need for a Farmers' Organisation. Farmers must organise themselves. And I want to echo the sentiments of my dear brother St. Clair, the Senator for farmers, and I would say no more on this, that they must work, to come together, to demand and to work in the interest of farmers. I want to urge them in doing that. I do not have much more time to cover it. But, certainly, that, for us, is a critical issue.

With respect to Carriacou and Petite Martinique, my sister Kindra, thank you this morning for outlining what the Ministry is doing with Carriacou. I will visit Carriacou shortly, to ensure that it becomes part of my agenda, going forward and to see for myself.

With respect to cannabis, I will just spend one minute on that, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken up and down the country about that. The Government has taken a decision, as indicated by Kindra in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, to move forward on the issue of decriminalisation, or legalisation, based on what Grenada wants.

In 2018, the Prime Minister joined his colleagues in Jamaica, to agree, that we in the region must all address the issue. The Prime Minister himself can speak more about it. But certainly, Grenada is moving in that direction. The Legislation is coming and we are going to be moving in the direction of decriminalisation, legalisation, whatever it is, that the Grenadian people agree on. But, it will certainly be a decision, as CARICOM agreed, based on what we determine to be in our best interest.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the organisations, internationally, FAO, IICA, CARDI, all of the organisations, who have worked with us. I want to thank the workers

in the Ministry, my dear friend, the Permanent Secretary. I want to thank all of those, all of those, who have helped us to move Agriculture forward.

I want to thank Permanent Secretary Morain, Marlon Paul, the SAO, my friend, Mr. Dottin the Head of Research, my brother Delsol. I want to thank Delsol for helping me through a lot of these things that I've been speaking about. He's been available all hours of the night, on the phone. I want to thank him personally, for doing that for me, and I want to thank my Secretary, who is also subject to all kinds of hours and all kinds of harassment from me, in order to get the work done.

And, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, on the issue, the year of organisation and production, in the Ministry of Agriculture, we will set the stage for a new push in agriculture, in the upcoming year.

But before I go, I must thank the people of the Town of St. George, the workers are sitting here. They have been everything to me in the Town of St. George over this last year, as they have been over the last several years. I want to thank them for the support they've given.

At a meeting last week, I was able to outline all of the work we did in the Town of St. George. I don't see a need to go back through all of it. We did it last Tuesday, where I outlined all of the work with respect to COVID, with respect to infrastructure, with respect to walkways and culverts and the Toilet Programme. All of these things were outlined.

But I think most importantly for me, is the fact that the people of the Town of St George continue to give me support, they continue to stand by me. The workers here have worked assiduously. Even in the height of COVID, I was able to rely on them to get food hampers out. Over three hundred (300) food hampers were given out in the Town of St George. They were able to go visit the elderly, and, Mr. Speaker, it is because of that, it is because of that, that I am able to do my work in the Ministry of Agriculture, moving all around the country, because I know, having my back, are these hardworking workers in the Town of St. George.

We have worked with the Preschools; we have worked with fire victims in the area; we have worked to give people land; we have worked on all of the issues that

touch and concern the people. And I want to wish them, and I want to wish you and everybody in here, Mr. Speaker, a wonderful Christmas. It is COVID. It is COVID times. It is covidious times. Please be safe. Please be safe, because COVID has overtaken the world. But, we have an opportunity here, to make sure that we are safeguarded. Enjoy the Christmas. I know you must eat your ham, and you must drink your sorrel, and do all of that. But do it in a way that not only guarantees your own safety, but guarantees the safety of others.

And, to the people of the Town of St. George, to the workers in the Town of St. George, I want to thank you again, for a wonderful year. I wish you a wonderful Christmas. I know you'll be eating some ham and drinking some sorrel, and doing all of that in the next few weeks.

And to all of the students, the kids and the elderly and everybody in the Town of St. George, thank you, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to my colleagues, I wish all of you a wonderful Christmas, and I look forward to pursuing this and agriculture in the New Year. **(Applause)**

My brother, Kelly Patrick, in the Farm Labour Programme, I neglected to mention this, because I rushed through, but we have to talk about upgrading the Farm Labour Programme. I want to thank you for the work you did on the Farm Labour Programme. And, thanks from all of the persons, the four hundred and forty-two (442) persons, who benefited from the Farm Labour Programme. Thank you. May God bless you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for the Town of St. George. You still had five (5) minutes more.

Hon. Peter David: I did?

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: But, it's all right.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: I will use it. I will use it. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the 2021 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as presented by the Minister for Finance to this Honourable House.

I must start off by commending the new Minister for Finance on his Maiden Speech. I was very impressed with the passion in which he presented. **(Applause)**

Special thanks to the Chairman of Cabinet and Prime Minister for placing his confidence in me, and giving me the opportunity to serve in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs, during this difficult period.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the lead Agency responsible for managing Grenada's External Affairs. The Ministry provides leadership to Grenada's Diplomatic Mission overseas, manages and maintains Grenada's Diplomatic Network, including the provision of services to other Agencies represented overseas, and deliver services to Diplomatic and Consular Service.

Mr. Speaker, as a Small Island Developing State, we have limited resources, and therefore, we cannot have Embassies all over the world. What we intend to do therefore, in 2021, is to improve on our Consular Service, by establishing various Consular Missions in various parts of the world, in order to give representation to our people.

Just recently, in the Dominican Republic, we had two (2) fishermen that got stuck there, and because we had representation there, they were able to be taken care of and returned home safely, and that will be the drive of the Ministry. **(Applause)**

The Government has mandated the Ministry to strengthen, enhance and improve the country's relationship. Mr. Speaker, during this COVID-19, our friends stood by us, and I want to express special thanks to them. The People's Republic of China, Mr. Speaker, came to our assistance, the Republic of Venezuela, the Republic of Cuba, they all came to our assistance. **(Applause)**

Now, we must recall that COVID is affecting every Nation in the world, you know. It's not like Hurricane Ivan, we're affected and the others could come to our assistance. In a period where every country is affected, yet they reached out to Grenada and provided assistance and that is because of the bilateral relations we have, the good relations we have with these countries. And in 2021, we'll seek to extend this relation, not only to our traditional friends, but we will look to new friends.

I also want to thank all the Missions serving Grenada. In the People's Republic of China, the Ambassador based there was under tremendous pressure from the students, because COVID, you know, the first outbreak was in China and everybody was panicking, and all of them were calling the Ambassador every day. Some were even requesting to come back home, because this was a period of uncertainty, COVID came and the Ambassador did an excellent job in China. **(Applause)**

The High Commissioner to London reached out to the diaspora in London and other Agencies to ensure that we got PPEs to come to Grenada and other testing equipment. In New York, in Washington, all over the world, where we have representation, they sought to ensure that they mobilised resources and equipment, to help us in this very difficult time.

I also want to, at this time pay tribute to former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Honourable Peter David. He was very instrumental in mobilising resources during this period of time to help us in Grenada. **(Applause)** And I said to him, I'll be relying on him for direction, as I take on my new Portfolio. But, he responded to me that when he first came in 2008, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he met me there, as the Permanent Secretary, and I was giving him the guidance. **(Laughter)**

So, you see how life works, Mr. Speaker? I never thought that one day I'll be the Minister for Foreign Affairs, you know. **(Laughter)** Of course, I never thought I was going to be in politics, in the first case. **(Laughter)**

But, what is God's plan for you is God's plan **(applause)** and no man can stop you, Mr. Speaker, when it's God's plan for you. And that is why God has the NNP Government in Office today. Every time we have a crisis, NNP has to come to the rescue. **(Applause)** Ivan in 2004, now we come with COVID-19. Which better

Government it is to be in power at this time? And the people know that, Mr. Speaker, because we are praying people. The people in my constituency, from the Office Manager Ms. Felix, every day they're praying for me, every day. That's the time I get the most prayers, and I need it, because these are difficult times we are going through. And because God is in control of this Land, we are doing so well, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has, as its main priority for 2021, **'Resource Mobilisation.'** We need to get more from our diaspora; we need to get more from our friendly Governments. We need to get more from International and Regional Institutions. And we could get more, you know, Mr. Speaker. We have to do the work here.

We must know the opportunities that exist and prepare to write proposals to access funds, and that is where the emphasis is going to be, **Resource Mobilisation**, number one and number two is: ***'Expanding Representation throughout the World.'*** And we think, with a combination of these things, we can deliver much more to Grenada.

You see, to the ordinary man, Foreign Affairs is just there to deal with Diplomatic relations. They do not see the amount of resources that are being brought in, you know. So I told my staff, I said to the Permanent Secretary, listen, I like to deal with numbers, so I want you to quantify all the donations that we received, even if it goes to the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Ministry of Tourism, or whatever Ministry, we must quantify them. We got it and at the end of the year, I could come here and stand up, in my Budget presentation and say we have been able to raise $200m for the country. Let us quantify it. Let them know.

Just recently, last week Wednesday, I signed an Agreement with the Government of Japan and the Japanese Grant Aid Programme for US $1.8 m. It's not coming to Foreign Affairs. Foreign Affairs signed it, but it's going, you know, where, to the Fisheries Sector. **(Applause)** And most of it will be used in fighting the sargassum seaweed, that's where it is going to be used for. **(Applause)**

The Minister told me I must look to see if I get some vehicles for her now. I said, yes, that is our aim, Resource Mobilisation. **(Laughter)** At this time, Government

cannot invest money in new vehicles, when we have so many other priorities; for the Hospital, the ambulance. We have US $150,000.00 to purchase the ambulance. The Minister told me she wants the ambulance as soon as possible. I said, well you have the fund there from the Government of South Korea, use the fund. If you don't use it by the end of this year, we can't ask South Korea for more money. So, use it, get the ambulance and we will ask for more. That is what the role Foreign Affairs will play in the coming months, and Carriacou and Petite Martinique will not be left out. They will get their share too. They will get their share, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, Grenada is very active in the UN. We are the Chair of SIDSDOC (Small Island Developing States), Grenada chairs that. Grenada also chairs the Committee of 24 that looks at decolonization. So, we are very active.

In Cuba, I want to make special mention of our Ambassador in Cuba. You know how they're calling her now, Mr. Speaker? Mother Theresa they're calling her, you know, every time they go. **(Laughter/Applause)** And my friend Almando Williams could attest to that. He went there to meet his son. They were housed in the Embassy, you know. Grenadians going to Cuba for medical, the Ambassador is housing them in the Embassy and taking care of them.

(Inaudible comments by some Members)

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Yeah, and the work that she does there, speaks volume, Mr. Speaker, with limited staff, you know. All of our Embassies, the staff is very limited, because we have limited resources, so we can't have big staff like other Member States. But I must say the people that we have appointed are doing a really, really good job and that has shown up again, as I said in COVID-19.

The Ministry's budget is $12.9m, a slight reduction, and that's quite obvious. But, with less, we are prepared to do more. And, that has to be the mantra, because with less, if you are more efficient and you cut down on wastage, you could achieve much more. It's not always more money, you know, Mr. Speaker. You could give more money, more money and get less, you know. So, we are saying we're cutting back, and

we are having a programme where we're going to produce more with less, and that is my message to the entire staff, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have now, the International Business with us, and it's a good mix, you know, Foreign Affairs and International Business. The International Business Portfolio would be developed to focus and get investors coming to Grenada, and improving the Doing Business Ranking.

I have said to the PS, the Doing Business Ranking is not because of the World Bank. It is local for people in Grenada, who want to start business, and we have already started you know. Compete Caribbean is providing assistance to CAIPO, to put the registration of business online. So, in 2021, it will take you a few minutes to register a business, you know. That is the way we going, you know, putting all the services online.

You see, in 2020, there were a number of projects and programme to digitise the economy, to put all the services there, where you can apply, you can pay online. That is where the economy is moving, that is the direction, and an International Business Department will play a key role in this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have Expo 2020, which will be held in Dubai, from October 2021. But for marketing purposes, the name remains Expo 2020, because so much marketing was done, they did not want to change the name to Expo 2021, so it's still Expo 2020. It will be held from October 2021 to March 2022. This International Expo is regarded as one of the largest events in the world. The last Expo, Mr. Speaker, had fifteen million people. This one is expected to be even bigger. And already, manufacturers and other stakeholders, Cultural Artists, in Grenada, have been notified and have indicated interest in travelling to Dubai to take part in Expo 2020. It will give big exposure to Grenada, with all these people coming there to the Expo. Grenada will have a booth, displaying everything Grenadian. We will bring up artists to participate, to show off our Culture, and we'll have a whole Grenada village there, in 2020, in this Expo that will run for 6 months.

Mr. Speaker, the Diaspora, and that was started by the previous Minister. The International Organization for Migration, recently, completed a Study on the Diaspora

Policy for Grenada. We have provided our comments and feedbacks and it will go to Cabinet before the end of the year, for Cabinet endorsement. So we start out January, 2021, Mr. Speaker, with the Diaspora Policy, because we think that the diaspora could do a lot more in the development of our country.

What we talk about the most is the remittances, and that is sort of obvious thing, but we have to go beyond that. And the Policy addresses that and shows the various areas where the diaspora can contribute, and this will be given emphasis. The Office of Diaspora Affairs will be under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it will be staffed with competent people, so that we can really give due focus to the Diaspora Community. As you know it is said that you have more Grenadians living outside of Grenada than in Grenada, so we need to tap into the resources of the diaspora. So the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs will remain steadfast in its role to help develop Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, there are few issues I want to address directly based on comments I've heard on the Budget. The first, and I heard the Opposition say that this is an Election Budget. Well, that's a good way to put it. I like that. **(Laughter)** In an Election Budget they say there would be no increase taxes, so this one has no increase tax. There will be no loss in jobs, this one has no loss in jobs, and there'll be greater increase in Public Sector Expenditure, and they have all these three (3) elements. So, they think, well how with a COVID Budget, and we could have no increase in tax, with a deficit and no job cuts? **(Applause)** So, they say that must be an Election Budget.

I consider that as a real compliment. That's a real compliment to the team, the Minister for Finance and his team, for presenting such a Budget, because all they expected, Mr. Speaker, was a sets of cuts, cuts and cutbacks, and that's the trend we are seeing in the world, you know, because if you are running a business and you're collecting 50% less revenue, the first thing you'll do is cut back the staff If you are spending more than you are earning, you will either cut back on your spending, or increase your revenue. So, they were real puzzled of the Budget, and I am pleased, as I said with this. And, I will show, Mr. Speaker, later on, how the Budget will achieve what it's set out to do, by using the numbers that are there in the Budget.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition complained that he could not study the six hundred and something pages. **(Laughter)** You know, I believe that. I don't believe the Leader of the Opposition studied it too, **(laughter/applause)** because if he did, he would never say that. You know what he said? He said that is too forcing on the eye. **(Laughter)** It's putting pressure on his eye, so he didn't study it. I believe him, that's the truth, and he was honest about that. He said he couldn't read six hundred and something pages. Even though we gave him ten (10) days, he still couldn't read it and finish comprehended it, because if he went through the Budget, Vote by Vote, he will see where the growth will come from.

So, this morning, when he turned to the various Ministries, I said, yes, let me hear how you will address the allocation in the various Votes. He said, I will turn to the Ministry of Sports. The Minister for Sports can't even run a hundred metres, but she's the Minister for Sports. **(Laughter)** And he turned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he said: ***"Minister for Foreign Affairs, bat in your crease."*** **(Laughter)** I wonder if he was still talking about the Budget, you know, because he said: ***"Bat in your crease."*** And he turned to every Ministry and start saying things. I said, my good friend let me down, because he wanted more time. So, if he needed more time, I thought he would look at the figures to show where they can work. But, he didn't need more time to say what he said this morning. **(Laughter/Applause)** I think he got too much time, that's why he said that. **(Laughter)** So, Mr. Speaker, let me address what is in the Budget. You see, I don't want time to run out, because I must spend time on my Constituency, so I have to rush. Mr. Speaker, that's the thing with the one hour, you know, but anyway.

So, the first thing in the Budget, if you say the economy is going to grow, the first question that should be asked is, where is the growth going to come from? And, that's a legitimate question. Yes. Where is the growth going to come from? And the Minister for Finance elucidated on the growth areas. He said it would come from Agriculture and Fisheries, Construction, Wholesale and Retailer Services. It's there in the Budget document, you know. He outlined where the areas of growth is going to come from.

But, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this is the largest PSIP Programme ever announced in seven (7) years. 41.6% of the Capital Budget is allocated to the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, 41.6%.

Now, this Public Sector Investment Programme will create approximately five thousand (5,000) jobs. Now, when you create jobs, that's Government, with the Private Sector jobs, with the hotels that's coming, what you are doing is creating disposable income for people As people have more disposable income and they spend, that is what is meant by Aggregate Demand, you know, Mr. Speaker, Aggregate Demand. You demand more. **(Applause)**

When you demand more and you spend more, Government collect more taxes and the business collect more revenue. That is the model, you know, simple as that, you know. So, the growth will come from the Public Sector Investment Programme, which I said is the largest ever. So, I hear some of the Opposition saying the Budget is the same thing, no difference. They can't see it. I said they did not read it.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: That's right.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: They said they don't see anything different in the Budget. But, their response is the same thing you know, no difference too. Every year, their response is the same thing. **(Laughter)** Same thing they're responding to. So, we'll see an increase in the total demand for goods and services, Mr. Speaker. So, no new taxes; no job loss; no cuts in Social Programmes, that's the first thing Government will do. They did not see that.

I want to turn to the next question of Employee Compensation, lest we forget, because I think, sometimes, we forget very quickly. So, I will refresh your memory, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we came into Office in 2013, the Debt to GDP ratio was 108%. We went through a Structural Adjustment Programme. We had to bring down the Debt to GDP Ratio by under 60%. That was the target, you know. I want you to follow me, Mr. Speaker, on this one. So 108%, the Debt to GDP Ratio.

We went through a Structural Adjustment Programme. We put in place a Fiscal Responsibility Act, where we set Macro-Economic Targets, and that is what we say judge us by. You know, it's only Grenada and Jamaica that have a Fiscal Responsibility Act? You know what some of my colleagues told me? They prefer to put that in a Policy, not in an Act, not in a Law in Parliament that will bind them. But you know the two (2) best performing economies are Jamaica and Grenada, **(applause)** because of the fiscal discipline. You see, when you subject yourself to fiscal discipline, you reap the reward, you know. The IDA resources that the Minister for Finance announced that we're receiving are because of our fiscal performance, nothing else, purely our fiscal performance and our fiscal discipline.

So, when my friend, Almando Williams asked the Prime Minister in the Town Hall Meeting, well, Prime Minister, where are you getting money to run the country? You're collecting 50% less revenue, and you're paying everybody, and you're doing more projects? The Prime Minister's response was because of fiscal discipline. You see, over the years, because we managed the economy, we were able to survive.

It's just like in good times, Mr. Speaker, if you're saving for when the bad times come, then you know at least when the hard times come, you have something put away. It's the same thing, you know, it's the same thing. The Government was able to manage the economy in a way that now COVID struck and we're collecting less revenue, we can still maintain the Workforce and continue to provide all the services that we're providing. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in 2013, that was not the only thing. The NDC Government signed an Agreement with the Union to pay them an increase and they said that the increase will be paid in April, 2013. Follow me, Mr. Speaker. But, they called election in February, you know. So when we came into Office, we had to pay it, you know. As soon, as we came into office, the Debt to GDP Ratio was so high, and yet we had to find money to pay.

So, let me outline the performance of this Government, what we have done to the Public Sector Workers Union, before I come to the point where we are today. And the reason I am the one dealing with it, is because I was the one that led the negotiations

on behalf of the Government on the two (2) occasions, for the increase in the salary and more recently for the 4%.

So, what is the cost? We gave a one-off payment to cover the periods 2013 to 2016, at a cost of $6.9 m. We just came into Office, you know, but we gave that. Then salary negotiations for 2017 to 2020 at a cost of $23.9m. You remember the 3, 3 and 4? Well, the Clerk of Parliament will remember, because he was in the negotiation. He was in the Union then, negotiating, $23.9m.

Then, for the next three (3) years, because you have this cycle of negotiating three (3) year increases, with no scientific basis, you know. I heard the Member for St. Patrick-West alluded to that, no scientific basis. Every three (3) years they come for salary increase, you know. The last increase, when we were negotiating for '20 to '22, we set out a framework. We said, let us use this framework, inflation and growth in the economy. Mr. Speaker, you don't know what? **(Laughter)** We got a request for 30% increase from the Public Worker's Union and TAWU, 30% was their starting point, you know, when we reached at 12%, you know. After we explained this is the framework, this is the basis under which we're going to negotiate they come for 30%. We had settled on 12% increase, Mr. Speaker. So, 2017/2020, we paid out $23.9m; come 2020, under the new Accord $9.6m; 2021, because we signed for a period, $13.2m. We met with the Union, we said, listen, we are collecting less revenue, half the revenue, we are giving a commitment that we would not send home a single worker. We want you to forgo the 4% increase. Well, they decided they do not want to forgo it. We said, okay, we'll defer it. So, we cannot pay in 2021, but we would defer it to a later date, so we will still honour our commitment.

Look at the record, you know, that is why I went back from 2013 to now, to show you how much money we paid out, you know, since we came. So, the people in my constituency asked me, so it's only Public Sector workers this Government care about? Every three (3) years Public Sector workers, they hear, are getting increase. All this money you're paying to Public Sector workers, from 2013 to 2019, $40.6m, this Government paid out you know. **(Applause)**

And, so we come to you, as rational people, because over the six (6) years, you've been getting your increase, so I say to you, well, you know COVID come, you know we have a difficult situation, but we're going to preserve jobs, because all over the Caribbean, what Trade Unions are focusing on now is preservation of jobs, you know. They're not asking any Government for increase. They're saying preserve jobs; that is their mantra, right throughout.

So we said we will defer the payment. When the economy is stabilised, then you will get the 4%. But for 2021, we're presenting a Budget with a deficit. To increase your recurrent expenditure, in the light of a deficit, you will make things worse, because if you borrow to meet recurrent expenditure, all you're doing is digging yourself deeper and deeper into debt, you know, because you're not borrowing for investment that could give you returns, you're borrowing for recurrent expenditure. Just like the household that knows that if they're borrowing it to meet their bills, eventually they'll reach the stage where the bank will have to repossess, because you can't be borrowing to meet the recurrent expenditure. So, we said to them that we will defer it. We accept that we owe you the 4%, it will be deferred and you will get it, when the economy starts coming up again.

So with increase, with respect to the Debt to GDP, I was on a programme before the Budget was presented, and there was an economist on the panel, and he said that Government will have to borrow heavily to finance the Budget and he can bet me that the Debt to GDP Ratio will cross 100%, next year. Yes. He said he wants to bet me that it'll cross it. I said, with the team that is in place that went through a Structural Adjustment, and we learnt how to manage the economy, any amount of money you want to bet, I am taking it. I am not a betting person, but that's the first time we'll take a bet.

The Minister for Finance presented a Budget that says that the increased borrowing will bring the Debt to GDP Ratio to 69%. **(Applause)** But, you know, Mr. Speaker, what is so significant about that? If we did not get the Debt to GDP Ratio down from 108% to 56%, you know what would have happened to us? The fiscal management and the fiscal discipline, if we didn't have it down to 56%?

So, even though the Minister for Finance said it's going up by 13%? Imagine if it was at 100%, what would we have had to bring it to? And in fact, if it was over 100%, who is lending you money? We're only getting this money, because of what we did.

Financial institutions are offering money to Grenada, because of our performance. So it went down to 56%. The borrowings this year would bring it to 69%. The ECCB Benchmark is 60%, and that is by 2030, you know. They say by 2030, members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union should have their debt down to 60%. We got it to 56%, the best performance in the whole of the ECCU. **(Applause)** The best performance in the whole of the ECCU for the last five (5) years to get it down to that level.

So, Mr. Speaker, proper management will see us through this COVID period. We have made cuts, in several areas, but maintained the wages, maintained the same level of the workforce, and we've made cuts in other areas and that is why we will see the growth in the economy. They say that these growths that the Minister predicted there is too ambitious and we will never realise that. Well, they said a lot of things before. They said that we could not get the Debt to GDP Ratio down. They said we cannot get unemployment down. We got it down from 40% to 15%. Because of COVID it is up to 29%, but we will get it back down again, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

You see, what they fail to understand is that you have a team that is multi-talented. When you look at this Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, you have Members with all different skills, you know. And, when you have a strong leader that could give directions to the team and everybody working together in unity, that is where you achieve the progress. **(Applause)**

I see the Opposition Leader resigned. She said stress, because of politics. **(Laughter)** And, I have no reason to doubt that, because politics is a stressful thing, you know. **(Laughter)** So, I don't have stress? **(Laughter)** Ask Ms. Felix the amount of stress I does have, when a Thursday comes. **(Laughter)** Everyone is stressed. But, one year in office talking about stress, one year, you know **(laughter)** in Opposition. You don't even get in office yet. So, they are searching for a Leader now. **(Laughter)** So, they are afraid. So, they're afraid that Election might be called next year without

them having a Leader. That's their real fear, you know, that Election will be called next year and they won't have time select a Leader, and we will get fifteen (15) seats again. But we got fifteen (15) seats twice, when they had the good Leaders. They put up their Leaders, you know, twice with good Leaders. **(Laughter)** They don't have to have no Leader to get fifteen (15) seats. We got fifteen (15) seats, because the people of Grenada are seeing their standard of living improving. We are here to improve the standard of living of our people, you know, Mr. Speaker. Look at those programmes, toilet, bathroom and housing.

We went to a man on a wheel chair, in Content, in St. David. He said he never thought the Government would build bathroom and toilet for him. He thought they would have brought food for him and other things, but not a bathroom and toilet. He couldn't believe. But more importantly, you know, he did not have pipe borne water to his house. But, because we put the bathroom and toilet, now we put the water. **(Laughter/Applause)** So, now he has the water, he has the bathroom and toilet. That is lifting the standard of living of people, and that is what is important. That's how people judge you, you know.

When you talk about education and tuition assistance, and when I come to my constituency, I will go through the details with that. But, I am talking at the macro level, the Policies of the Government. And, we have a Minister for Social Development that has a heart for people, that loves people and is always saying she has to work with the people. **(Applause)** And, she loves to remind the public of where she came from, and in the Budget, she was reminding us again. **(Laughter)**

Minister, we know you have a good heart. We know you do well. We know that these programmes, under you, you will never stand up to see any of these programmes go out the window, because of lack of budgetary means. But, they are saying this Budget only have figures, we are thinking about people. So, who are all these Programmes going to? **(Laughter)**

The programmes we are talking about, bathrooms and toilets, house repair programme, that's not people we're talking about? Scholarship for poor people children; you know how many poor people children from St. David, who go to SGU and

TAMCC, by tuition assistance, that they could not get and all over the Island? So, people we are taking care of, and it is because we're taking care of people, that's why we are so successful. Anytime you put people at the centre of any activity, you must succeed, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

And, so I want to commend this Budget and all the measures that have been announced there not only just talk about economic growth. Yes, the economic growth will come. And, the Member from St. Patrick West did say that in order to get that level of growth, we'll have to increase implementation, and he's correct. **(Applause)** You must increase implementation, you know.

One of the panellists was saying he looked at the figures and we never reached 50% implementation rate. I said yes, but we have corrected that. We put more engineers and technical people in the Ministry of Infrastructure and therefore this year, we will see a higher rate of implementation, because we know what the problem is, you know, and we moved to solve the problem. And therefore, we can achieve what we set out to do, because we are going to get higher implementation rates in the delivery of these programmes.

Just take Special Projects, as one example, throughout the Island. You know how many jobs that created, Mr. Speaker? You know how many jobs that created? When I come to St. David, I will tell you how many jobs that creates, only in St. David. That is one of the areas that I really, really want to commend the Government for, Special Projects, where you could use up to $15,000.00)to build a road, a box drain, fix some culvert or so, throughout the constituency, you know, throughout the Island and create jobs, because each Gang has at least, five (5) persons working in it. So, if you want to know about the real effect of Special Projects, ask the Representative from Carriacou, how well she did in Special Projects. **(Laughter)** She did well, because when you create these Special Projects and give these jobs to these families, they use the money to send their children to school.

And the Debushing Programme; Mr. Speaker, when the Debushing Programme is on, normally I would see an average of forty (40) people in my constituency on a Thursday. You know, when the Debushing Programme in on, I am seeing about ten

(10)? So, people want work to get their money to send their children to school. They don't want to go and depend on Politicians. **(Applause)** Once you have jobs being created, they are not coming. They are not coming, when they come it's because they cannot send their children to school, or their child is graduating and they want money to help pay for the graduation and things like that. But, they like to work and earn their money.

And this year, the Debushing Programme, well, it shocked all of them. Imagine the COVID year, you know, where you're collecting 50% less, you gave the most Debushing Programme, the biggest, largest ever. **(Applause)** They can't believe it still. They're still asking where is the Government getting money to do all this work. But, that's a good question to ask. Where is the Government getting the money? So, we have said to you where the money is coming from.

So, taking in the $330m that the Minister for Finance counts as Loan Authorization, the only reason you do not see this big drop is because $174m will come from NTF grants, to help fund the Capital Projects. If we did not have that, **(applause)** then we would have had to borrow $500m, you know. We have $174m coming from NTF grants. So, when you have the grants; that's money you don't have to pay back. If you did not have the grants, then you have to borrow more. So, we are able to generate this grant resource to help with the Capital Projects. It's on the capital side that you will get the results, not on the recurrent side.

In fact, one person said to me, you're spending all this money on the Public Sector and productivity is so low. We're not getting increased productivity, you know, for the increases that we give. The recent Study on productivity showed that productivity is extremely low. But, you don't need a Study to tell you that. Ask the people, who have to come down from Sauteurs for a Birth Certificate, and they're telling them to come back. You know how much for bus from Sauteurs to St. George's? Why they have to come back? Because the person that has to sign it not there; that can't be a reason for people to spend twenty dollars ($20.00) to come down for a Birth Certificate.

So, what we need to do is improve efficiency in the Public Service, in all areas. You see how now, in the Passport Office you could get a Passport in two (2) days? That is the level of efficiency we are talking about. **(Applause)** That is what people are talking about, all over the Island, how they can go in the Passport Office and get a passport in 2 days, because they have mechanised it, they use digital Passports. **(Applause)** That is what we need to do. Put the things online, you get your thing instantly, and you pay for your services.

We need to increase productivity in order for the economy to keep growing, because it's the growth in the economy that is going to help us overcome this period. And it is the job creation that will help us, as I said, Mr. Speaker. So, that is how we're going to achieve it. There is no science in that, you know. And, if it's science, I would say that we have it correct. We have the science down par, so we know how to do it. This Government has proven itself as the best performing economy in the ECCU, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we're on the right track. This Budget will deliver what it promises. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Business will play its part in ensuring that we contribute to the overall Budget and the development of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the Constituency of St. David. I will recap what happened in 2020, then move on to 2021, and I am going to spend some time on it, that's why I rushed through the Budget part, because I have to talk about the constituency. This is my 7th year representing the constituency, but in my seven (7) years, the last two (2) years I've achieved the most in the constituency, Mr. Speaker, the last two (2) years the last. **(Applause)** And, look at the constituency staff there. They are all there, from the constituency, and they know we have achieved in the last two (2) years.

So, we started out with the playing fields. All throughout St. David, we have large playing fields. The Primary Schools have their Sports there, they have cricket matches there. You know, when I came in, I was surprised to discover there were no toilets in the playing field. St. Joseph's RC School in Pomme Rose has their Sports Meet in Marl Mount, no toilet facility, a simple thing, as putting in toilet facilities? You know, in my

first year, we put five (5) toilet facilities throughout St. David **(applause)** and we started expanding. And then the next thing was to light up Marl Mount Playing Field, expand it and light it up. Now, we have night cricket, night football and all sorts of sports taking place there. **(Applause)**

But, for me, and the constituency staff knows that very well, my biggest achievement, over the last seven (7) years is the number of young people I was able to assist to go to TAMCC and SGU **(Applause)** and other places like China and Cuba. They received scholarships. Just from my little Polling Division, we have two (2) students, now in China and one in Cuba, just in my Polling Division, you know. And throughout St. David, you have young people going on to get their University qualification. And that is what makes me happy, Mr. Speaker, not the amount of roads that we built and the amount of box drains and things. It's the young people that are able to go forward, to get their education, because I know how important that is. I come from a very poor family, and if was not for my education, I won't be here standing today. So, that is why I am placing a lot of emphasis and ensuring that needy students get the opportunity they need to go on to higher education.

So, during the year, in Tuition Assistance fifty-five (55), Mr. Speaker, fifty-five (55) persons from St. David benefited, under Tuition Assistance alone, at a cost of $72,457.00 for St. David. In Medical Assistance, fifteen (15) persons, at a cost of $17,787.00, plus other assistance were given and Needy Assistance, $6,850.00, a total of $97,128.36; Grocery Assistance. In the area of Special Projects, that is what I wanted to turn back to, four hundred and fifty (450) jobs created in Special Projects, at a cost of $817,000.00. **(Applause)** I followed Carriacou's example there. I had a small cost overrun. **(Laughter)** I hope the Minister for Finance doesn't cut back on my budget. **(Laughter)**

In bathrooms and toilets, we were supposed to start in March, but COVID came, so we only started in August, and the numbers I had, at the end of November, we already built seven (7) toilets and bathrooms, at the end of November, and two (2) will be completed in December, so we'll have nine (9). **(Applause)** So, for Christmas, nine (9) families will be going in, having that access.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, we have a list of one hundred and seventy-six (176), you know, yes, that's the list. So we said, based on our budget for next year, if we could build two (2) a month, so that'll be twenty-four (24) for the year and we said that for the next five (5) years, we get rid of that, you know. There'll be no more pit latrines outside, as we call them, you know. That would be gone. People would have pipe borne water. You know how important is bathroom and toilet? **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, imagine the blind man in Après Tout said he could see how this Government is working, you know. **(Applause/Laughter)** That makes such a big difference to him, and that is the impact that this Government is making in all the programmes, geared at lifting the standard of our people, that is where the focus is. So, in Special Projects, we have done well, bathrooms and toilets.

Well, the House Repair, that is something that is in big, big, big demand. We tried to limit it to $6,000.00 per house, and the most important thing, though, is the Housing Brigade. We have no material on the ground lying around there, you know. **(Applause)** When the Minister for Social Development came forward with this, and I have to give her a lot of credit, you know, because she doesn't talk these things, she really comes to Cabinet with programmes to lift people's standard of living. She said, let us have Housing Brigades, so that when they get the material, the Brigade now goes and they build the houses for these people. You know what a big difference that is. We now have no material on the ground. As soon as they drop it, the Housing Brigade goes and they put it up.

I see the Housing Brigade, in Windsor Forest, built a brand new house for a man in one week, you know, one week. It was a one bedroom house, but in one week, a completely new house, put it up for the man. They are doing such a wonderful job, and so with the bathrooms and toilets, we have the bathroom and toilet brigade, so they order the materials, they go on site and they build it for you, everything. If you could afford to contribute the sand or the gravel in anyway, they ask, because, of course, there are some that they will do everything for. But, if you could contribute, we ask them to make a contribution and it is done. And I said, out of the seven (7) that I said

were completed, two (2) got running water, for the first time, because you have to get connection to use it, and they did not even have the connection, so that again, is added.

The Wardens; I have six (6) gangs of six (6), and in the absence of the Debushing Programme, even when the Debushing Programme is on, they do the over-hangings and they maintain the drains, and so all these complaints we had before about no drains and the drains are not maintained, the Environmental Wardens are doing a very good job in maintaining the drains and cutting the over-hangings, and they work right throughout the year.

You know what surprised them, Mr. Speaker. When we had the lockdown, they could not work, so they were home. When the Supervisor told them the Contractor came and collect the money, he said for what? He said, but we didn't work. **(Laughter)** He said yes, but you're home because of COVID and the Government paid all other workers, you have to get paid too. **(Applause)** They were not the only one alone home. The Public Sector workers were home too. The teachers were home. So, why they should not get paid, but the others should get paid and they're home for the same reason? He said, come and collect your money. They got paid. They were surprised, and that made a big difference to them, because, you know, they're not working for much money, so when they get the money, they take care of their family. And so they were wondering, well, it's COVID time, how they're buying groceries, how they're stocking up with thing? That was like Christmas to them, you know, Mr. Speaker, when he told them come and collect their money. And, every Member here, Parliamentary Representative could identify with that.

We distributed over three hundred (300) food hampers, you know, for the people. I called the Minister. Anytime I need help for poor people, I'm calling the Minister for Social Development. So, I called her and said, we have some hampers to deliver, but I need the SEED Officers, I have three (3) SEED Officers in St. David, to go out with me, but they would need a pass. When it was the lockdown, you had to have a pass. Well, I was exempted as the MP, but I needed three (3) of them to go with me. So, I said, could you secure three (3) passes for me for these people to go out with me? You know, Mr. Speaker, in half an hour's time, I got a call from the St. David Police Station

telling me I can come and collect the passes? In half and hour time, you know, after I spoke to the Minister, you know. I went and collect the passes and went around, from house to house, with the SEED Officers, delivering packages, you know, food hampers to the Shut-Ins, to the elderly, to the vulnerable. When you have a Government that is taking care of people like that, people don't forget you, you know, Mr. Speaker.

(Time Bell Rings)

Mr. Speaker: Ten (10) more minutes.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Ten (10) minutes to full time, Mr. Speaker? That's why I wanted to make sure I touched my constituency. I will use the next ten (10) minutes for the Constituency and wrap up, yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Proceed. Proceed.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Okay. Alright. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. So, Mr. Speaker, the IMANI Programme. I've heard a lot of complaints about the IMANI Programme. The IMANI Programme has transformed so many lives of the young people in St. David, so many people. I know it's all over Grenada, Minister, but I am saying St. David. My whole ten (10) minutes is on St. David, so I am focusing on St. David.

But, the best one, the one I like the most, and the Minister Kate Lewis knows that is the M-Power Programme. You know why I like it the most, Mr. Speaker? These are guys from the blocks that we took there, you know. Thirty-five (35) young men from the block you know, and put them in training. I visited them, you know. The Coordinator asked me to come and have a chat with them, and they were so happy and they told me about all their experiences and everything. And before I left they said: **"Minister, we have one suggestion for you. We know Government doesn't have much money now. Tell them to legalise marijuana and they would get a lot of money.**

(Laughter) They wanted to make sure they made that point to me. They said that it would bring in money, it would bring in money. So, the M-Power Programme is the one, because these guys didn't drop out of Secondary School, it was Primary School, you know, and they took them and brought them in a classroom setting and have Life Skills training with them and now they are on job training, they're on job training, you know, in various sites.

And I said to the Coordinator I would like to visit some of the sites where they are. Let me go and chat with them to find out how things going, because I am so proud, I am so happy. These are guys I used to pass all the time on the blocks, and they have settled down in the M-Power Programme. I really want to commend Minister Kate. I know she is a big, big, big believer in this programme.

And I want to congratulate you, Minister, for this outstanding job that you've been doing in the FLY Programme. The first time I heard the word, I asked, why you're calling it FLY? **(Laughter)** And then she explained what the acronym meant, Fostering Level Headed Youths, is that the correct name? Yes. I have it correct.

So, these programmes are all geared at enhancing the skills of our young people. So, we will be producing people with skills in various areas and have their competency level. They're doing NVQ and CVQ. It's what they are graduating with, you know, Mr. Speaker, so they'll be qualified for the job market. So, when you hear they're talking about this programme about we're wasting money, we're not wasting money. These are the people of the future and if we train them and we give them skills, then we are securing our further, because we want to live in a safe environment, Mr. Speaker. So, that's the future, that's where we have to focus our attention, Mr. Speaker. So, all these are programmes that are geared towards the development of our people.

The Preschool in Windsor Forest; the parents came to me. They have a nice Preschool there, a number of kids attending, and they said: **"Minister, we need a little repair on the school, the windows, in particular, the doors and something done to be done to the roof."** And, I went to Minister Bowen, well, he was the Minister for Works at the time, and he said: ***"Okay, I will send somebody to do the scope of***

work, and send me some names, you know, let us bid." Minister Bowen, if you see how the school looking nice, now. The parents are so happy. You moved so quickly, and I want to thank you very much for that assistance. **(Applause)**

Then under the BNTF Programme, the St. Dominic's RC School, the toilet and bathroom facilities, they're all damaged, seriously damaged. The parents were complaining, the students complained. We submitted a proposal to BNTF, earlier this year. The Minister for Education was there for the handing over ceremony. Lovely bathroom and toilet facilities upgrade at St. Dominic's RC School.

Two (2) years ago, we opened the Vincennes Pre-school. But, Mr. Speaker, as you go around, you hear Members of the Opposition saying they can't see what is happening in St. David. But, regardless of what you do, they won't see it. But, I am happy that the majority of people are seeing it, and that's all you want, for the majority of people to see what is being done. So, that is the activities that we had in St. David, the major activities in St. David.

So, the year 2021, what we can look forward to. At the moment, we have no fire truck based in St. David, and for years we had nothing. But, I am pleased to report that in 2021, we will get a brand new fire truck based in St. David. **(Applause)** Based right in the Police Station, in St. David would be a fire truck for the area.

We have an Ambulance based in St. David, but the Ambulance Driver is from St. Andrew. Why is that so? Because six (6) young men from St. David was interviewed, when they told them what the salary was, all of them walked out. None of them took the job. When the Minister brought that in Cabinet, I remember the Chairman of Cabinet said, well, you don't want serious people? Hire them on a Contract for Service and pay them well, and you will get a good driver. And so from next month, from the 2nd January, you will see a St. David's driver, driving the Ambulance. **(Applause)**

I come now to the Six Senses Hotel construction, which, all of a sudden; you know, I did not know we had so many environmentalists in Grenada, **(laughter)**, because when there was no project I never heard about a project they were doing on their own, you know. I have never heard an Environmental Group in St. David, took on a project, to say that they will clean up the river or clean the beach, but a new project

coming to St. David to build a hotel and the Environmental Group start up. Well, you will damage the environment, you will damage the beach. You will damage everything.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me say to this House that last week, the road down to the site has started and that the project will commence, in full swing, in January, full swing in January. **(Applause)** Thirty-two (32) acres of land, bought, from a private person, you know, for those, who are saying it is Government lands. I won't call the name of the private person. But, thirty-two (32) acres of land bought from a private person.

The hotel will be built on ten (10) acres, you know. So, the other twenty-two (22) acres that they decide to develop on the grounds, to put all sorts of Parks and everything inside it, you know. Out of the thirty-two (32), only ten (10) they're using for the hotel to preserve the environment.

On the beach, already they will start bringing in the facilities there. They are going to put up bleachers, have nice access road, have toilet facilities for people coming and use the beach. But, what you are hearing is that they will prevent them from using the beach. It is not in their interest to prevent anyone from using the beach. That is not the first hotel they have built. They built one in St. Kitts and one in Dominica. The one in Dominica, the whole village was incorporated, and they have the same plan for Grenada.

The Developers have already told me when their workers come from January, they would like them to live in St. David. So, if I know of any houses for rent, let them know, because they're going to have their people based right there and they want to use workers right from St. David to give jobs, to create jobs in St. David and develop the surrounding areas for the people of St. David. Six Senses Hotel, you know, coming into St. David. I think that is the thing that is puzzling them, you know. How we could get a Six Senses Hotel to come to St. David, a big brand named hotel?

During the construction phase, three hundred (300) jobs will be created and two hundred (200) permanent jobs thereafter, **(applause)** and they will be training the people in St. David for the job, you know. They're doing their own training, because Six Senses have a certain standard they have to maintain, so they will be training. They will be training the people of St. David. And, if they can't get enough from St. David, my

friend from the Town of St. George has already told me that he will like to have a few workers from the Town. I said, well it's time people from Town come up to St. David and work, because our people are always going down. **(Laughter)** So, you see what development could cause? We're developing it, so you don't have to come down. The same thing with St. Patrick, when they get their hotel, the people in St. Patrick will be provided with jobs right there, right there for the people. They do not have to pay bus to travel all the way down to St. George's South. How much does it cost for bus?

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Oliver Joseph: $10.00 one way, so that's $20.00/$25.00. So, just two (2) minutes and I'll wrap up. **(Laughter)**

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

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Oh! **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, thank you for your generosity.

Mr. Speaker: I'm not being generous.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Well, you didn't ask for that, you know. So, Mr. Speaker, what is going to reduce the unemployment rate in the constituencies, is when people could find jobs right there, you know. In St. Patrick why you think the unemployment rate went up, because people were refusing to pay $25.00 a day to come down and work in Town for $50.00. They find, well that didn't any sense. They could work in St. Patrick for that, but not to pay $25.00 to come down. If they get $50.00 in St. Patrick, they are fine. So, you will see employment decreasing in the Constituency of St. David, like in St. Patrick, when you get these big hotels that would provide the jobs, because people will be earning money right there, and that will have a lot of spin off effect, you know, Mr. Speaker.

When the hotel comes, the tourists would want to go in restaurants nearby and bars and everything like that. And a lot of investors are expressing interest in coming right in La Sagesse to set up business for two (2) reasons. Why? One, two hundred and twenty-five (225) Housing Units in Corinth, at an average of three (3) persons moving into them, and then the hotel activity, so they want place close by, right around there.

One investor is thinking about building a Mall, where he could provide all these things. When he provides the Mall, he will create jobs right there. **(Applause)** You see all the spin-off effects we are talking about? And yet you have a few people, who are saying about that is where they used to go and hold crabs, you know, and the hotel is coming there and will prevent them. I said, give me the list of all the people, who come and hold crab, and I'll give them a job, so they don't have to go and look for no crab now. **(Applause)** You have a big US$40m project coming and you're talking about you used to go there and hold crab, and you can't get anything there. So, we have to be serious about the development of Grenada.

And one thing I admire this Government for, when we have a project, we do all the analysis. We do the Environmental Impact Assessment and make sure we cover all the grounds and we execute. We have heard all the complaints about Port Louis, about the Cruise Ship Terminal and everything. Look at it today. All the so-called environmentalists that were making all these predictions, what happened today? Grenada is developed, and so St. David is poised to take off.

The construction of the hotel will last for two (2) years before opening. In two (2) years' time, 2023, a brand new Six Senses Hotel will be opened in St. David. We are changing it. We do not have a Town. But, if we have a Six Senses Hotel, we have a Mall, and we have shops for people, that's okay. The banks will come, too.

When I came into office in St. David, there were no Teller Machines, none whatsoever, you know. I negotiated with the Credit Union and the banks. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have one Teller Machine located right opposite the Police Station there and before Christmas, we are having another Teller Machine in Westerhall in the new

Gas Station. **(Applause)** We are having two (2) Teller Machines in St. David. All these things are coming to St. David in 2021.

The lighting of the La Sagesse Playing Field, I know I spoke about that. The people listening will say, well I'm tired talk about it. I am pleased to report that the contract has now been awarded, and that the lighting of La Sagesse Playing Field will take place in 2020. **(Applause)**

When I met with the youths in Windsor Forest, in their Fundraiser, they said to me, **"Minister, we want a basketball court."** Well, I was a little bit disappointed, because when I asked them about cricket, none of them played cricket, **(laughter)**, but they wanted a basketball court. So, I said, okay, where do you want the court? And, they took me and showed me the site where the Community Centre was, when it was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan and the walls had deteriorated. So, they said they wanted the basketball court right there. I approached the Chinese Government, the Ambassador, and we were speaking and he said, he wanted to do something for the Constituency of St. David. I said, well, the young people of Windsor Forest asked me for a basketball court. He said yes, that's a good project, submit it to me, before he leaves, he will ensure that the incoming Ambassador follows up on it. You know what happened, Mr. Speaker, soon after? A local Chinese Firm was contacted to do the design and they will build it, they told me in the first quarter of 2021, **(applause)** and that will be a basketball court with lights you know, Mr. Speaker. A basketball court with lights, they are going to be building it in the first quarter, so La Sagesse will be lighted up.

In Laura Playing Field, the Teachers in St. Dominic's RC School usually have their Sports there, so they said: **"Minister, why don't you build some bleachers for us?"** I don't like the idea about bleachers. In fact, I just don't like the name, because it means you are sitting down in the sun there and bleach. I said, no, we will build you something smaller, but we'll cover it. So, they can expect in 2021, the Laura pasture, to get their bleachers that they requested, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

The construction of the Bailey's Bacolet, La Pastora Road; when the Minister announced that it was down, and there was an Opening Ceremony for the six (6) roads,

or was it six (6) roads, or fourteen (14), how much roads. I said: "**Minister, I am having my own Opening Ceremony for this road, you know, because you know how long I promised the people the road,"** and now it is down, money has been allocated and the La Pastora Road coming, I am having my own Opening Ceremony, **(applause)** when we are starting the road, because that is an important road, Mr. Speaker.

I want to turn now to the two hundred and twenty-five (225) Housing Units. So, this, we should be handing over by February, between the first quarter. It's painted. Since they started painting it, Mr. Speaker, I don't know when last you drove through there. Anytime you drive through, you must stop by the school, Corinth school and look up there. Well you know, the request for housing has grown exponentially, you know, two hundred and twenty-five (225) Units. Minister for Housing saw the list. We passed one thousand (1,000) now, you know. We passed one thousand (1,000). But of course, you know we have to scrutinise the list carefully. The Minister announced the criteria that need to be met. But I am so happy that early in the first quarter of 2021, we will be able to hand over two hundred and twenty-five (225) Housing Units, compliments the People's Republic of China. **(Applause)**

So, the People's Republic of China, and I have to mention something on the Airport loan, because I find too many people talking about it, without having facts. You have a Government that has donated, in grant funding, over $200m, in grant funding, you know. The Cricket Stadium, Athletic Stadium, one thousand (1,000) houses, six hundred and forty-seven (647) is the last part of the thousand (1,000). They gave you grant money, you don't have to pay back. You take a loan of US$67m, fifteen (15) years to pay years to pay, five (5) years grace period, 2% interest rate, and they are saying that China would take over the Airport? But, what but what the Airport. **(Laughter)** They can't be serious.

I wonder if these people get into office, if they would ever approach the People's Republic of China for a loan. Well, they would have to go somewhere else, because they can't. You're going to say that about a Government that giving over $200m in grant money, and you get a concessionary loan to extend the Airport?

Mr. Speaker, well, you travel a lot. I was on a Jet Blue flight. I had to sit there, because an American Airline flight was coming in. I had to sit there until it park up to move out. That's international standard Airport? All that will be gone when we do the expansion of the Airport, and what better time to do the expansion? They say it's COVID, and we didn't get money. Well, you have five (5) years grace period, so do it now. **(Applause)** Now, we should do the expansion now. When you do it now, so when COVID is over, and the vaccine is coming out before Christmas, so when we get the vaccine and people could travel, we will recover even faster. So now is the time to do the expansion, so that the Airport will be able to repay the loan that's given to them, because they're very profitable. But, we need to upgrade it to that level. So, you see for people without vision, everything looks impossible, you know, everything looks difficult, because they have no vision. But, when you have a visionary Government in place and know the way forward and work towards it, that is where you are going to see development. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to thank the staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Secretary, the PNR, all the people in PNR and Protocols, for a job well done, and for their support and their pledge of continued support.

Most of all to my constituency staff, the hardworking staff in the Constituency Office and the Field Officers, for all their hard work that they have put in 2020, despite COVID. They risked their lives going out and visit people and drop out food parcel and visit, despite the presence of COVID. My heart goes out to you. I know you wish well. I know you mean well, and I want ask for your continued support, because without you I cannot manage alone, because St. David is such an extensive, vast constituency. Without your support, it's not possible to do it, so I look forward for your continued support in 2021. I want to thank you very much and wish you all the best. You have made the time to sit here to listen to me today. So many of you have come down, I am very pleased about that.

I told the Speaker I wanted to extend Season Greetings. He told me to leave it for the 22nd. I find the 22nd is real close to Christmas, you know. But, anyway, the Speaker said we have to come back on the 22nd to extend Season's Greetings, so I will

save the Season's Greetings for the 22nd. So, just let me wish you all the best. I am very pleased with the hard work that you've done and ask for your continued support. And, to you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for your generosity of time. I say thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. David. Honourable Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is said that it is very difficult to come to speak, in some organisations, when you have some nice music playing, it's hard to speak after people have been entertained. And, I must say, Mr. Speaker, this was a practical, thoughtful, incisive presentation by the Member of St. David and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I think he excellently presented. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, when I came in today, because I was doing a number of major meetings this morning, I was told about someone, who was chained in Parliament, **(laughter)** so I was coming here, because, as Father of the House, I always have a key to unlock any chain. But, it looked like the person busted the chain, when they saw the Father of the House might be here. So, Mr. Speaker, I thought you would have done a better job in making sure our friend, the Leader of the Opposition stayed with us and unchained himself until the entire process is completed.

But, Mr. Speaker, as someone who has been in this House and, indeed, the Father of the House, for thirty-six (36) years, the conventions of this House is well-known, historically, so, and I think we have lost something, because the person, who decided to accept the position of Leader of the Opposition, literally, abdicated his responsibility to do what the convention says should happen.

The Leader of Government's Business in the House, the Minister for Finance presented the Budget, so I stand here to give my full support to a thorough and well thought-out presentation by the Minister for Finance. It was not surprising to me, of the excellence of his presentation. But, the normal practice is that the Leader of the Opposition responds to the presentation, that is the practice. And, the Hansard, Mr.

Speaker, would show that it is probably the first time in this House; in fact, when I was in Opposition, as the lone Member of my Party, in Opposition, there was another Party in Opposition to the Government of the day, that was '90 to '95. And, after the first Budget Presentation, the Leader of the Opposition then, in response to the Budget, asked me, in other words, he designated me to respond, on her behalf. But, it meant that the Opposition Leader did what she had to do, which was respond, because the practice is simple.

When the Leader of the Opposition responds, for example, what happened here in this House today and Monday, yesterday, the Minister for Tourism would have already spoken, the Minister for Health would have already spoken and the various Ministers.

The Leader of the Opposition made some erroneous statements on those Ministries. They had no time, no opportunity. That is why, when I came in and I saw what was happening, I said well, it means that we are doing presentations from now onwards, because it was only the final few Ministers would have an opportunity.

If the Member for St. David had spoken before, he could not have enlightened the House and the Nation. The Nation has been enlightened by the presentation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. So, we all would have received a level of education, the children and persons listening this debate; in fact, it is a debate after. But, before that, it was a presentation by the Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, a presentation from the Minister for Social Services, and it is unfair to the Minister for Education, because such an important Ministry she should have had an opportunity for a challenge and to be able to respond, accordingly. So, the Hansard will record that the Member abdicated his fundamental responsibility.

And, the sad thing, Mr. Speaker, the Member received the Budget Papers on the 18th of November. I remember receiving Budget papers, in '91, on a Saturday, when I was having a drink in a Rum Shop, for a Finance Committee on Monday, the entire document. I had to stop the drink, go home and get myself cleared and beat the midnight oil and prepare for Monday, that's what happens, that's your responsibility.

So, the document was presented on the 18th, on the 25th, the final document was presented. You mean to tell me you have the 18th to when the Budget is presented on the 2nd, that is literally fourteen (14) days. And, what is sad, when you listen to the Member today, it didn't appear that the Member went through the document at all. There was absolutely response to the Budget.

I felt a bit sorry for the Member, because he already chained himself, and a man in chains is not supposed to be beaten, but he put himself there. So, I could not understand. What I understood, from some of the comments made, the Member for Sports can't run, and he made a very, what I considered to be an unfortunate statement, to say the Minister for Health is a chain smoker. This is unfortunate, that's an attack on somebody. The Minister should have a right to be back here to reply to this, because that goes in the Hansard. I don't think the Member understands the significance of the words used in this House.

He said that I am the oldest Minister for Youth. I wanted him to be here and ask the audience, who looks younger, me or him? **(Applause/Laughter)** You know, it is sad, Mr. Speaker, but that's the way it is. I heard some powerful words, that's the way it is? That is the way it is.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also want just to point out a few things, because I think it's important for the record to be cleared before I go into my sections of the Ministries and comments on the Budget that I heard from other Members.

The Member said that the Government cannot spend money on the 1st of January. Where is that coming from? So, if you have a debt to pay that comes due on the 1st, you won't pay it, by electronic means, or whatever means? The Member says he teaches. I hope he is not teaching children those things. He said in 1993, I was the keeper of the flame of our democracy. And then he went on to say, he resigned a year ago, because of a creeping dictatorship. Mr. Speaker, I can't let this go. You know, I like the Member, so I don't like to have the opportunity to expose his weaknesses. But, since he said that he resigned, because of a creeping dictatorship, I have no choice, but to say something that I never said.

This Member, after the Election in 2018, during the campaign, made a statement publicly, that he doesn't want to be a Member of Cabinet, because they cannot pay him; that was a public statement. In fact, his opponent, in St. George's North-East, made a parade over that statement. I called him and I said that was an unfortunate statement, because you're giving the impression that you're in this thing for money. He doesn't want to be in Cabinet, because we cannot pay him the salary he is getting from the St. George's University. So, the Election is over and I decided the composition of the Cabinet, so he was not chosen, because he already said he is never interested. But, there were other reasons I would not have done it.

The Member called me, Mr. Speaker, that's why he would never come and sit down, when I am speaking, after he made this statement. He said to me, he wants to talk to me. I said fine. He comes in, sat at Mt. Royal in my office and he said he is concerned that he is not given an opportunity to be in the Cabinet. So, I said and I thought you said you were not interested. He said he is now interested. I said, why are you interested? He said to me, and the Nation must hear this, because, it is clear he really has a deep ego.

He said to me that I am getting ready to leave Government and that he feels he should be one of the persons considered to replace me as Prime Minister. **(Laughter)** You heard me, Mr. Speaker? And, if he goes into Cabinet, his position for possible Prime Ministership is enhanced. Mr. Speaker, I was in shock, because I never thought the Member had such ambition. But, as I said to him then, well, every Member in Cabinet should aspire to be Prime Minister, if you're looking to be the best. So, I can't say that he was wrong to be, but I didn't get the impression that he had an interest.

So, I said to him, well, I can't put you in the Cabinet now, for other reasons, because the discipline that I have seen, you have to demonstrate to give me that confidence. So I said to him, I don't have confidence in your behaviour right now, to put you in Cabinet, but give a year, work and show me that you have changed some of your approaches to be going off on your own instead of being a Member of the team.

The next thing the Member goes and says, he was telling people that I said to him that I have no confidence in him, which is not what I said. So, I just want this to be

clear, because the Member is out there making statements, which are unfortunate. And as I said, you noticed I have never said a word. This was in 2018, but he provided an opportunity today and he calls me a dictator. Why would a man who wants to be in Cabinet, wants to come in and work with a creeping dictator in the Cabinet of a dictator? You would run from him.

So, I make the point and I said to him before he left, when he finally decided he would not stay, I said: "Toby remember this, check the history. For thirty-six (36) years of my leadership, I have been in NNP Government, and for the twenty (20) odd years, as Prime Minister, a number of persons have left, crossed me and left Government, check where all of them are today. I said to him, and not one left on the basis that they had problems about the policies of Government, or my so-called dictatorship. They all left, because they wanted something that I refused to give them and they became sour. And, I said when the fox can't get the grapes, he said it's sour. ***(Laughter)*** So, he is following in the same footsteps of every single one. In fact, there were a couple cases where somebody was told their contract will not be renewed, based on their behavioural pattern, and five (5) years later, the person sent a resignation letter, so it is recorded that he resigned. He did not resign, he was fired.

In other words, not one of them, not one of them, Mr. Speaker, has ever left, because I asked them to do something wrong, and there are lots of them who left. Today, where are all of those? Let history speak for itself, Mr. Speaker, that's why I am making this point today. I am sorry for the brother, because I believe he served us and he won the seat in North-East, with clearly the support of the Party, and I don't wish him any harm. In fact, when I was asked after he left, I said I wish him the best and I still wish him the best, but he must not come in here and make statements attacking people, personally, when he knows, as the old people say: "If you have glass windows, don't throw stones."

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to add some points, and just make a few other comments. The Member said that we should not be building all these hotels stuff, we should be providing more money for Social Programmes. He said we should create about $100m in Social Programmes, just spend money. Then, he says we must reduce taxes. We

must reduce Income Tax. We must give more relief to workers. We must help the Busmen. We must help the this and we must…, and spend $100m; that's his formula for going forward. Nothing about how you will build the economy, how do you gain resources, as the Member for St. David, who clearly articulated about how the economy runs, how money is obtained, how a country is able to move forward, when it invest money in the capital stocks.

I heard someone said, well, why are we creating some traffic lights, spending $2m on traffic lights? Why don't we give the teachers? You know, sometimes I hear people talking and they call them economists. I wonder what kind of economist they are.

Mr. Speaker, you are told, as the Member for St. Patrick West articulated, so well; you are told, always, spend less on bureaucracy, spend less on outlays, on salaries and invest your money in capital stocks. When people give you money, like IDA money, spend it on increase in salaries and you're not getting anything more. You better make sure and allow them to see that you're spending it on building your Capital stocks, thereby generating resources in the Productive Sectors of the Economy; that is how a country runs. So, to tell someone, don't spend it on productive activities, don't create opportunities for Capital Development Programmes, but just give more money to people. This is a sad statement. So, I just know for the record, Mr. Speaker, I felt it was necessary that I had to make a statement on this.

He said, also, and I want to just finish that portion first, before I go into my stuff, that he mentioned about the Perseverance Dump and that nothing has been done. A lot of work has been done. This is an aged old problem and he is talking about my constituency; in fact Brizan is the village I was born, so all my family members are there. So clearly, whatever happens to them, happens to me and they know it. But, a lot of work has been done, and the Ministry of Environment, in fact, has a project, which would be funded by the Caribbean Development Bank to close the Dump, but I was not waiting on this.

I called three (3) weeks ago to the President of the Bank and I said to him: "Brother Warren, I have a serious situation that we're facing and I don't want the

summer period to come, again, because it's reduced now, so I want an urgent grant support, emergency support to deal with this thing now, before the project that you have to close it, completely and he said, send it immediately. That proposal is going to the Bank. The Ministry of Finance and the Minister and his team is completing the proposal.

The Minister for the Environment got the facts together, presented it to us and it is going to the Bank, so we expect to get technical support to deal with the fire and the problem before they actually close. So, there are three (3) projects there, now, and they will be, the one to deal with the fire, then the one to close the Dump and they are building a new site there. So, if the brother had even asked, Mr. Speaker, a question, we would be able to tell him that. But, he feels he is coming here to expose somebody. I don't know who he is exposing, but himself.

He said also and gave a whole story about marijuana that I told him. I have said that many times. I don't know why he is making this statement. I have said on several occasions. If you had asked me three (3) years ago, I would say not me. There are many Leaders around the world, who took positions on issues, based on their feelings, how they felt. And I was one, who told you openly, I would not have supported four (4) years ago, the issue of marijuana, but the world is changing. All of us have to change, all of us. So, I have admitted that, so I don't know that he was making a statement here today, as if it was some revealing statement about my honesty, because I was honest enough to admit, and I have said it on several Face-to-Face Programmes. And I don't know a human being, who, in twenty (20) years would not have said something, sometime, during that period, that he has not changed, as long as you are honest enough to admit it.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to add something on this. The fact is, every drug has its consequences. So, even if you're moving to deal with marijuana, you have to have the conditions set, and I know the Minister for Agriculture has spoken to that. It's not just a free for all. There's also, even cigarette, that's a drug and it's a dangerous one too. So, you just don't say use cigarette.

In fact, we're passing Laws now that deal with non-smoking in several areas now. No one would allow somebody to come into their car, as they used to do years ago and just take a cigarette, light it and start smoking in your car. Even the use of alcohol, we have to be careful. We have seen a lot of people misuse it. It is not an illegal drug, but it is a dangerous drug, if misused. So, in the process of dealing with it, you cannot just say, let us just legalise marijuana, decriminalise, as the Member for the Town of St. George and Minister for Agriculture has consistently said. But we have to point to our young people, don't take that as a license to just destroy yourself, don't do it. It might look popular to say, just do it. Popularity doesn't always work, Mr. Speaker. We were not put here, just to make people like us, everybody like you. We are put here to make decisions in the best interest of the country, as a whole. That's why I respect the Member for St. David. He is not afraid to take on tough issues and that's leadership. Leadership cries out for taking a stand, sometimes, on popular issues. When this is done and your conscience is clear, you could go to sleep, you don't have to worry.

Mr. Speaker, I will never forget and I always tell my colleagues, don't do what you believe everybody wants to hear, that doesn't work. Do what you know is right. Mr. Speaker, I will never forget and I repeat that incident, in 1985, when I imported stone. I could never forget that, the whole country was against me, the whole country, everywhere I go, 'stone, stone'. **(Laughter)** You would have thought, that was the end of me. I always give the joke. I went home, after being called stone all over the place. I went home and when I reached home, my little son, then he was about seven (7) years, he called me 'Stone.' I said: "Stop that." ***(Laughter)*** I said: "I'm getting enough outside there. I can't take it here, again." He never called me Stone, again.

Within two (2) years, Mr. Speaker, the same people that were cursing me for the stones were praising me as the hardest working Minister in Government, in two (2) years' time. **(Applause)** In other words, do what's inside and what you believe is right, don't play games; and if you're wrong, admit it quickly, apologise and move on. Don't play games.

Mr. Speaker, the Member also mentioned the MNIB, and we agree. I think this MNIB has lost its way. The Founding Fathers of the MNIB never intended for MNIB to be competing with Private Sector institutions for anything. It was meant to be a Marketing Board. It is no longer a Marketing Board, marketing what? The people you are marketing for, right now, the farmers, are afraid of you. Does that make any sense?

The Minister for Agriculture, we spoke and members of the team, we have to seriously look at where we're going with the Marketing Board. We cannot fool ourselves. We are spinning top in mud. We just had to find millions of dollars to build up Marketing Board on another situation. Farmers are hardly taking their produce there, unless they have no alternative. So clearly, if we are serious, that's only one true statement the Leader of the Opposition said, and I want to compliment him for that, but that's true; so, we have to find a way.

He talked about the investigation. Yes, the Integrity Commission, they are investigating. It is said that when things are under legal activity, it's *sub judice*, so we cannot go interfering. I clearly give full support for a total investigation of the Marketing Board, and I know actions have been taken by the Integrity Commission, so we allow it to take its course. I just find the wheels of Justice go too slowly, in our country, that's a fact. But, the Judiciary is said to be independent and therefore, we can't force the Judiciary to act the way we want it, but that's the nature.

But, I want to assure the country that we are not easing on any area of wrongdoing, or perceived wrongdoing. We will not stop doing what we have to do. So, I wish that the Integrity Commission continues to push ahead with that area of investigation, so that the country will have some serious answers, not long from now.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a period of a pandemic, and I think a lot of our Members spoke about this. But you know, I want us to remember that this is not a joke we are dealing with. I watched that television last night, California, thirty-three million people, locked down. Those of you who know California and the kind of vibrancy of activity, the restaurants, the hotels, the this, the that, you cannot believe that California is locked down, completely, for this Christmas, you know. We better thank God. And that's why… the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should apologise to the

Ministry of Health and the Minister for Health for attacking them for what they have done. The COVID Committee that we have set up, we were ahead of the game, in the region, Mr. Speaker, that's a fact. **(Applause)** We sensed what was happening, and it was not we alone, the team. We had about four (4) Members of the Cabinet on that first Advisory Committee; the Minister for Agriculture now, the Minister for Tourism, the Minister for Health and Minister Cox was there too, and the Minister for Education. Five (5) of them were on that Committee, together with the President of the Senate, Dr. George and the CMO and others. These people worked their tails off. They helped to protect us and the Minister was the Leader of the team. Instead of giving him credit, he trashed the Minister today. It is not fair and the Member must... That's not a joke. It's not a joke.

Watch what is happening. Thousands of people are dying in America. People are making joke with this thing. Around the President, almost everybody is infected. We want that here? I don't want to see one Member of the team of the NNP under infection. I don't want it. So, all of us have to be in this fight, together.

So, I just want, for all the members of the Regional Advisory Committee and those who are now doing their work, friends, my colleagues, we have to give them all the credit for protecting us up to this good time. **(Applause)** We are sticking with the protocols. It's not easy. It is not easy. I know how hard it is, you know.

I remember the incident in St. Patrick with all the Jab Jab. I felt sorry, but I didn't take it personally, some thought it was so, because it was some implication of popularity. I didn't take it that way. We are asking people that never had to sit at home for months inside a house. You can't go to the playing field; you can't go to school and meet your friends; you can't go on the beach; you can't pitch marble; you can't play anything. I don't know what I would have done at twelve (12) years and thirteen (13) years. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. So, where could I go? I think they were all smart to do it, because we called, the Bishop called, a lot of us called, they didn't listen. But, you were seeing it all over the world. Leaders were calling and people were ignoring the calls; that doesn't make it right.

But, again, I remember the Member of St. Patrick spoke, passionately, St. Patrick West about the incident. The Member for St. David, again, demonstrated pure leadership, spoke about it and he wasn't cursing anybody, but he was talking about what is right, what is good for the country, what is good for all of us; that is how we have to move, Mr. Speaker. Game playing at a leadership level is a dangerous thing. Only the truth will set us free. Only the truth will set us free.

Mr. Speaker, in Tourism, as I said, the Minister spoke and gave a whole list of activities in Tourism. And, Mr. Speaker, she spoke, she initiated and she must get a lot of credit for what is happening at Annandale. **(Applause)** You know, I could not believe, instead of giving the Minister credit for transforming a place, unfortunately, the Member chose to attack and said we gave away Annandale Falls.

Several people in New Hampshire are now working and more will be working when the season is over. The two (2) young Grenadians, we should feel proud of them **(applause)** for investing their money and promoting this countries beauty, enhancing the beauty of Annandale. I say to the Minister, give them Grand Etang too, because what we have in Grand Etang is a joke. Government doesn't run these things well. We have to be honest. My Grandfather, my family, grew up in New Hampshire. The Member does not know New Hampshire. I lived in New Hampshire. I grew up around New Hampshire. The Member does not know what is happening in New Hampshire. He doesn't be there, but he is talking about the people have lost jobs and all sorts of things. This place is enhanced. I went there, Mr. Speaker, and I was so impressed. I wish we can see this, and this is what the Ministry of Youth is trying to do now. We want to empower our young people, young Grenadians with initiative, ideas, give them the help, the support, so that they can create opportunities.

I go to countries and I see the nonsense people are paying to go and watch. We have all the beauty here, but we are not using it. Government controlling the sites, I say let us give young Grenadians an opportunity. Give them the tools, the training, the opportunity to beautify those sites and make this place proud **(applause)** that's how I see it. We need a lot more like them, so we should be praising these young Grenadians; so, Minister, keep going. You are getting 100% support. Let them say

we're giving away and we're selling. We're selling Annandale Falls? How could you sell a Fall? How could you sell a Fall? I will like to know. But, that's the nature of cheap politics, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of dialysis in the Ministry of Health, the Minister talked about this. I am concerned, because I know the extent of problems that we have in health in this country. I have seen people go down, die slowly in front of me, from my own constituency and outside. It worries me. I have seen issues of cancer eating away at the Nation.

But, I make this point, we must have dialysis. But, I caution that we need to partner with the Private Sector. Any attempt by Government by itself to run a Dialysis Centre, we're going to get in trouble. I worry about that. We will not have the funding to support, and there is a mindset in our own country, when Government is running something, nobody wants to pay. So, I worry about that. If we send that message, we are going to end up in trouble and those who need it the most, the poor and the vulnerable are the ones that going to suffer.

We should be subsidising, strongly, the dialysis services for those who cannot afford and who need Government support, and we have a lot of them in our constituencies. But those of us who can afford to pay for it, must pay for it. It can't be free for everybody. So, I am looking forward to that. I am giving the Ministry all the support, but I am only cautioning that we need to make sure that the Private Sector is involved and there is some stakeholder ownership, generally speaking, in this exercise.

NHI clearly, is another important national issue that we must invest in and we're moving forward with this. A National Health Insurance is so important, in every sense of the word. But, we have to be careful, because I don't know, at this point in time, in this pandemic time that we could put too much additional pressure on the Workforce, especially the Workforce, when we say everybody might have to pay something. It might be difficult how we structure it. So, that is a debate, both at the Cabinet and the county that we have to hold. We have to find innovative ways in which we can finance this, but I really believe that's a service that we must have, because it is extremely important indeed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this point. I listened to the Member for St. Patrick West, in his presentation, and I want to give him some serious credit. He made some telling points that I think I want to elaborate a bit on, and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member for St. David elaborated on one.

The fact is, implementation deficit is a big problem and the Minister for Works enhanced now, knows that that's an area that we must improve on, because if we have the resources that is given to us and available, if we have the system in place and if we have the local counterpart through the grant support we have, and the foreign element in it, there should be no reason why we shouldn't do better, if we have the personnel. So we have to invest in the personnel, so the addition of many engineers and management personnel. And I am saying, it seems to me, that there is a Professional Body, who had offered services to be the implementation grouping and my own view is that we need their services. And I think we need to move on this, because in the end, the money we will pay them to get it done, the level of productive capacity that would be developed financially would far outweigh what we would have spent.

So, my view is that we need, is it the PWC group? **(A Member indicated yes)** Yes, the Price Waterhouse Group, my feeling is that we need to move Minister, as aggressively as possible and get them on board. We will invest and we will save ourselves a lot of problems. We will create a lot more jobs and the end product will be increased productivity in our country. So, I compliment the Member for St. Patrick West in making this a major point of his presentation.

He also made the point about productivity index. This is something that we have to recognise. It is always popular to say, let us put more money here, let us give this and give that. I heard a popular story that every time there is a problem, we need more people, we need more money, we need more this. If the structure is not there and if the management personnel isn't there, you could put any amount of money, it's going right down the drain. So, sometimes it is improvement in the management system. Maybe you need additional personnel, maybe you need additional money, but those by themselves, without the management system in place to control what's happening, we aren't going anywhere. And I know for a fact, after being around in the system for thirty-

six (36) years, I know for a fact that we do have a serious problem of productivity within the Public Sector. We cannot doubt this.

And I ask my brothers and sisters in the Trade Union Movement, let us join, together, it's our children and grandchildren's future we're dealing with. And I think it is important for us to come to terms with these things, because it's not always just to say give them more money, give them more money. Yes. But, it's the end product that we are looking at, Mr. Speaker.

I make the point and again, I have to piggyback on what the Minister for Foreign Affairs said, because he made some telling points on the question of soft monies. We have, in this country, because of the way we managed ourselves, in the last seven (7) years, we have got more IDA funding than any other country in the Caribbean. **(Applause)** And you know what IDA funding is, Mr. Speaker? I must repeat it. It is a forty (40) years loan, ten (10) years grace, .75% interest. What could be softer than this? The latest one, we should get US$25m soon. Who else is getting this?

Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank decided that the Monetary Council to make some funding available, based on the GDP of countries, soft money, at 2%, to make it available so the Public and Private Sector can use it.

Mr. Speaker, only two (2) countries in the Region, that has not touched their share yet, St. Kitts and Grenada. We are the only two (2) countries that have not accepted those loans yet, because if you take it, that's on your debt. It means that we're managing ourselves, reasonably well. So, it's still available, but I heard a wire that some countries might be coming to us and say: "Give us a little piece of what you have." But, I have not heard anybody yet. So, I know some countries have to help others. They used up their share and are in such dire need, they want it. And since we have the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the same EC dollar, we can't afford anyone to go down, because it means that all of us will suffer. So, it may mean that we may have to do likewise, but I have not had that request directly yet.

But, the key thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we are benefitting from the way we have managed this country. The fact that we have not bloated the Public Service, we are

creating Contract for Services and paying people appropriately, for work to be done, I think this is what we have to do and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker, because this is where we have to head.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out a few things in the case of education to make a point. The Minister did not get an opportunity to respond to comments made on Education, which was unfair. But I do want to make this point to appeal to my brothers and sisters in the Teachers' Union, as far as I am concerned, we have no big disputes. We have no big disputes. We understand what is happening with the teachers in general. We have to accept the fact that even in pandemic times, many of them made a lot of sacrifice to help our students while they were home. The caring was there. I can't say every teacher, but a lot of them did it. So collectively, when the results of the examination came out, we did well, Mr. Speaker, so we have to give them a lot of compliment for this. **(Applause)**

So, the Government and the Teachers' Union should not be in any conflict. There is an issue, but there is an issue and there are some principles involved. The fact is, the teachers know, the leadership knows that they called a strike, literally, an illegal strike, and that is a fact. They know that the right of workers to withdraw their labour is sacrosanct. But when you withdraw your labour, it's also sacrosanct that the employer cannot pay you if you deliberately withdraw your labour and that's obvious. So, don't imply that Government is wicked. That is not the right word.

But I am just making the point to my friends that we have never said that we will never repay anything. We have never said that, if that's a way of solving a problem going forward. But, there must be a solution, that's all we said and this is not the time to come to ask for this in a pandemic, when we know people were home for months and were getting paid, that's all we're saying. So, I don't want us to be seen, as fighting or anything. I understand where they are coming from and I am sympathetic to the statements, not agreeing with it, but sympathetic. So I just want us to be careful, Mr. Speaker, in going forward, and I think I needed to say this. As I said, sometimes, you don't always want to say things that are just popular, but things that are necessary to be said.

Mr. Speaker, on the major projects; the Public Sector Programme, the Member for St. David spoke a lot on those and the need for us to get it done, what the Private Sector wants. That is what will drive the economy, the major Private Sector projects, Six Senses in St. David; that Levera Project in St. Patrick will bring a major boost to the North of the country, in every sense.

The Mt. Hartman Projects, all these projects have literally started already, you know, Mr. Speaker. It's the first time we're seeing this. Guys in the Region are wondering what we're doing to attract these people. They want to know what we are doing. I know a certain Government called a certain friend of mine and asked, can we get that investor that we have in Grenada to come to their country, a certain investor? I am not calling names, because they recognise. You know one of the reasons people are coming? The stability of the country, one; the way we are managing our affairs, and you see that control of the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, that's a major plus for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** So, we're going to be seeing jobs, and all these investors are talking almost the same language. They want to train young people, so the Ministry of Youth, we have to get our act together, myself and the Minister. A lot of young people will be trained in various aspects to prepare them for when the projects are open. **(Applause)** Some people are saying, why build hotels? Now is the time for the hotels to be built, people are not foolish, now is the time. **(Applause)**

The Hotel Industry will in fact, recover, significantly, by 2022, the end of it, or 2023. So, if you have a project that will be constructed and takes two (2) and three (3) years, this is the ideal time to start. They are asking why? The investors are spending their money. They are creating jobs, thousands of jobs and you're questioning it, why we are building hotels? Government is not spending money on the hotels. Investors are building and creating jobs, and we concerned about it, Mr. Speaker?

So, I am convinced that we are on the right track with these projects, and a lot of opportunities. And every one of them said they want to contract farmers, to build local produce for them, because it is in their interest to eat what is local. Many of the foreign stuff have a lot of chemicals to make them to be eatable, by the time of two (2), three (3) and four (4) weeks, so they want things that are grown here. But we have to get our act

together, so they want to contract farmers, Mr. Speaker. All these hotels want to contract farmers to be able to produce local foods for them. So, it is helping all of us, Mr. Speaker, and, therefore, I am excited.

The investor for Silver Sands, they now have three (3) small hotel activities that they are going to be starting. Two (2) will be started in 2021. The Beach House will be started and the expansion of Mt. Cinnamon, they are going to be doing that too, and then Rivera also, later on. These are all projects of major investors that are interested in this country, Mr. Speaker. So, I am optimistic, Mr. Speaker, very optimistic of what will happen and what will take place in this country, in the coming period, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Fisheries. The fact is, I think we have stated the Minster and her team started working on the need for the restructuring of the Fisheries Unit. We all know that we need to do this. The Fishermen are crying out that we need to do some serious restructuring and that's one of our major tasks. I met with some fishermen recently, in the Grand Mal area, one of the major areas in my constituency and the complaints are there, and all around the country there are complaints. So we have to be more transparent, as far as that industry is concerned, because there are enormous opportunities there, and we need to nurture it and use the leadership that we have and bring in additional persons to help restructure the Department and provide better service for the fishermen as a whole.

At the Ministry of Culture, Mr. Speaker, we already announced that the Carriacou Carnival will not be held this year, because we cannot take the chance. We have not made a final decision yet. We have to consult with our stakeholders about Carnival 2021 Spicemas. In other words, we are not saying that we are cancelling anything yet, because we have to discuss with our people. But, we are not sure, because we cannot say that we would have available vaccines to vaccinate most of our people. Although the Minster for Health, only a while ago, brought in a document for me and the Minster for Finance, we had to sign on to, which is preparation for being able to get a major vaccine operation in the Islands of the OECS and the region, as a whole.

I want to say that I heard that if certain countries cannot get, we can't get. We are united in the region. There are several initiatives led by the CARICOM Region and

OECS, to make sure when the vaccine becomes available that we will get our share, so no one needs to be worried. We are doing all that we can to ensure that our people will have vaccines, as soon as possible. But we cannot say it's going to be in April, May, or February. We can't say this, but we are doing all we can.

And I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, when it comes and if the experts' medical advice says it is safe, that I will take mine. And I would do what some leaders are doing, do it publicly, so that people understand that it is safe, because I know the kind of argument that is taking place internationally. Some people might be frightened that this thing is not safe, because you're hearing so much from people that are supposed to be responsible that it might frighten ordinary persons. But, I am glad to see people like former President Obama, former President Bush and former President Clinton, joining together and say they will do it publicly, too, and that's a good sign. Leadership must lead and people will definitely understand that this is where we have to go.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few things on some areas of my Ministry, the Department of ICT. Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 experience has thought us that Information and Communication Technology can no longer be considered simply as an engine for sustainable economic development, but as a new pillar of economic growth and serious social transformation. Rising from the economic downturn brought about by COVID-19, would definitely require our country, Mr. Speaker, to improve its productivity and competitiveness in key sectors, by adapting to the digital arena. The COVID-19 offers us, Mr. Speaker, a unique opportunity for our country to unlock new pathways for economic growth, job creation and the delivery of public services.

The Government of Grenada therefore, in partnership with St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia invested in the delivery of high speed, state-of-the-art Fibre Broadband Network across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique under the Caribbean Regional Communication Infrastructure Project (CARCIP).

Mr. Speaker, currently, all schools in the Tri-Island State of Grenada is connected with this Fibre Network. This enabled the Tablets Programme for students to be implemented successfully. In other words, when people were clamouring years ago,

that we should get tablets, tablets and no connectivity means nothing. It would have just created a problem to misuse tablets for the wrong things.

We can then have Community Centres, Mr. Speaker, connected and to use free. So, in other words, we can go at the community level now and increase the use of technology in educating and providing services for our people throughout all parts of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, the funding for the Digital Governance for Resilient Project (DG4R) is a $15m project. Grenada was the first country that got this, Mr. Speaker.

Public records, such as Lands, Deeds, Birth and Death, Marriage Certificates, Government Contracts, Government Directives, Museum and Public Library Records, Intellectual Property, Blueprints and Judicial Record will all be digitised. In other words, we are moving to the technological age.

Mr. Speaker, work has already begun and will continue in 2021. The procurement of computer equipment and accessories for digitisation of records is on the way already. A building has been secured to be used as the Scanning Centre. A schedule for the transfer or files from the Supreme Court for scanning, has been prepared and the staffing arrangements for the Scanning Centre has been arranged. Mr. Speaker, all that is showing that we are moving fast to the digital age.

Mr. Speaker, vendors, small and medium shops will be encouraged to apply for grants under the CARCIP Programme, to build websites and to install Electronic Card Processing Machines to accept payments for debit and credit cards. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we are moving into the technological age, faster than many, many persons.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I need to say that the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project will target youth and disadvantaged populations through the development of Professional Certification and employment of Ready Skills Programme. So they are going to be used also, to empower our young people with the training and the skills necessary, to deal with the modern technological age of services. Mr. Speaker, I just need to find out how much time I have left.

Mr. Speaker: One (1) hour.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: One (1) hour. The Department of Public Administration, Mr. Speaker, that's an area, Mr. Speaker, that is, as you know, is critical for the functioning of Government. Over the years, Government has spent enormous amount of money on the Public Sector. We have not always got what we really want, but the Department is doing all that it can now, with the support of our international friends, to modernise our Public Sector as best as possible. So, the Department remains committed therefore, to driving an ambitious agenda to modernise the operations of the Public Service. Its vision is to build an innovated, adaptable and resilient Public Service; that is the only way to go, Mr. Speaker.

It would promote digital transformation for the Public Service by leveraging technology to work smarter and build resilience across all institutions. This is the way to go in the 21st Century, Mr. Speaker. It would help education, it will help agriculture, it will help tourism; all aspects of life in our country would be helped, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just need to deal a little bit with the issue of National Security and Home Affairs. Notice some members of our Security Forces are here. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, one of the reasons people come to this country is because they feel it is safe. Our Police Force, over the years, has shown itself to be one of the most respected in the Caribbean Region. It is not perfect. It is not perfect, but it has, in fact, done this country proud, in a general sense, Mr. Speaker. And I want to compliment the leadership of the Force, the Commissioner of Police, for his leadership in the last few years, for leading the Force to modernise its operations. It's not an easy task to build confidence within the elements of the Force and to ensure that some of the weaknesses that exist can be dealt with effectively.

Mr. Speaker, many of the Departments of the Force over the years, whether it is the Carriacou Police Station, the Police Station in St. George's, many of those, the one in Grand Roy, Mr. Speaker. Over the years, we have spent enormous amounts of money. The one in St. Andrew, we have spent millions of dollars. It appears now that we have to move that Police Station, because the more money we spend, it deteriorates quickly. So, obviously, that one and the Gouyave Police Station, it appears that we will

not be able to continue to use there. That place appears, because of the sea and the problems related, we are not able to continue this.

But, Mr. Speaker, with the advent of COVID-19, the RGPF has reviewed its operations, in many areas. Despite the circumstances crime has contracted for all major crime categories except for house breaking and stealing, two (2) new Fire Units, Mr. Speaker, were added to the National Fire Fighting fleet. And I want to make this point, three (3) years ago, Mr. Speaker, we hardly had any Fire fighting Units in our country, we had, probably one (1) or two (2). Because of the work of the Government and the Police Force, today, the only Parish right now that does not have a Fire Unit is St. David, and the Member for St. David pointed that out. But I do want to mention, while a Fire Unit is now on its way, there is a problem, Member for St. David, of housing the Fire-fighters. And there is a building, close by, that used to be used by Social Services, they are now saying that that would be useful for them. So, we will have to look at that immediately, because you don't want the Fire Tenders to come and we don't have the place to put the Police Officers, because they have to be there to respond. That's the only one and Petite Martinique, the Fire Tender is coming. The one that is in St. Mark is a smaller one. It will go to Petite Martinique and the new one coming will in fact, go to St. Mark. So, in a few months, every single Parish including Carriacou now, would have two (2), one in Carriacou and one in Petite Martinique, and I think that's where we are moving. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, there is another issue. There is nothing that says that fire fighting has to be an arm of the Police Force. In many countries fire fighting is an independent Unit. They have connections with the Police Force, but not necessarily with them. Similarly, Immigration, there is nothing that says... I believe we have one of the best Immigration Departments in the Caribbean, I honestly believe so. **(Applause)** With the leadership there and the members on that team, I really believe that. But, to me, there is no reason why an Immigration Officer has to be a Police Officer. Their functions are distinct, and it seems to me that is one area we have to look at, going forward, Mr. Speaker, as we modernise Government's operations, as a whole.

And similarly, you look at the Customs and Inland Revenue. Why can't we have a Revenue Generating Authority? Instead of having Customs by itself and Inland Revenue by itself, one Revenue Generating Authority, with leadership and clearly, lines of authority, as their actions are sometimes different.

Mr. Speaker, technical strengthening of the Digital Forensic Unit has been completed, with the addition of specialised equipment that will improve the efficacy of that Unit. Other achievements in 2020 are as follows, Mr. Speaker: re-boosting moral and recognising Officers. For the first time in the history of the RGPF, a Medal and Ribbon System was implemented to recognise Officers for good conduct and long service. This is so important, Mr. Speaker, because people are doing well; not all our Police Officers are functioning the way we want, but those who are performing, we must recognise them, and that gives incentive to others to be able to improve on what they are doing. And that is one of the things I keep saying about our Public Service. You know, if people don't feel there is a reward for competence and production, they will never improve.

As we have now, Mr. Speaker, no matter what is the level of service, when we give increases, everybody get the same thing. What sort of system that rewards those who are performing and those who are not performing the same amount? That system would kill incentive for productivity, because if I am working hard and this other person isn't working and when the time comes for pay he gets the same as I do, I might decide, let me do like him. Similarly, the person that's not performing will say: ***"Well, I have no incentive to improve."*** So, the system is hurting itself. And I hope and pray, it may not happen while I am in Government, but, maybe when I am outside of Government, I will be a strong advocate for such a system. And I believe our Trade Union Movement has to move in that direction, because leadership, as I said before, is not about just getting people to like you. It's about doing what is right, because in the final analysis, everyone will benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Infrastructure Development and Welfare

Mr. Speaker, repairs and expansion of the Carriacou Police Station were initiated. Repairs also commenced on the accommodation of the building at the Coast

Guard Base. The work was done by the Artisanal Unit, within the Force, which is also a good complement to the Force. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the members of the Force initiated themselves, a team of workers. When they get material support, they go to help to fix, so we don't always have to contract workers to pay for services in repairs of Police Stations around the country.

Mr. Speaker, Legislation is now almost there, ready to go to Parliament, for a new Police Promotion Regulation. I think everyone knows, over the years, there's always been a problem with promotion. Whenever promotion comes around, you have serious problems within the Force, because everyone feels that he or she should be promoted.

I don't ever get involved in promotion, but I know in the end, I am still getting the blame, because I don't interfere with the promotion. But that Regulation would be in place and it would mean, not just members of the Force assessing themselves, but there would be outside persons joining with members of the Force, on the question of promotion, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned before, the technology would also be done, Mr. Speaker, so that's another area of opportunities for the Force, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind down my presentation, I want to take a look, now, at the area of youth activities. Mr. Speaker, I am clear that we have done a lot of excellent work with our young people. I am clear. I am clear that we have helped a lot of young people with their lives and improving their lives. I am clear of this. **(Applause)** But, Mr. Speaker, like everything else, we cannot sit down. We cannot sit down, because we know there are weaknesses in the programme.

We know, it's a fact, that a lot of young people come into the IMANI Programme for two (2) years and five (5) years, seven (7) years they are in IMANI, getting the same salary and some of them are doing excellent work. That we hope, Mr. Speaker, with the action that we are going to be taking, will end in 2021. The work that we would be embarking on, where we would be giving Service Providers Contracts to hire these young persons to provide services, at various Sectors of Government, as they have been doing, but pay them appropriately for those services, not pay them IMANI wages for work that is way above what an IMANI is supposed to be doing, that's the plan. In

several areas, there are going to be actions taken. So, the assessment of placement for all IMANIs and the areas of work and responsibilities have already been undertaken. They have listed all IMANIs. They know where all of them are working and the years of service have been also analysed and undertaken.

So, when that is done, Mr. Speaker, the level of competence of the Supervisory Services, also would be analysed and whatever is necessary, because I am quite clear that some of the Supervisory Services were not appropriate sufficiently for the level of IMANIs that we have in several places. So, we have to add more Supervisors, to ensure that we can supervise appropriately, while they are there, providing the training and opportunities and building skills, so by the time two (2) years come, there should be a plan of exit from the programme. So those who are there, we will do whatever we have to do, to give them the opportunity for a more secured future, so they can have a security not where some of them are. Some of them are working at the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, providing excellent services, sometimes more than some of the workers, who are full time and not being paid appropriately, that cannot be fair. So, Mr. Speaker, we will be moving aggressively.

So, Service Providers will be provided in the area of Tourism. So, why can't some of them, Mr. Speaker, be given some of the sites that we have? Train them appropriately, to take and provide a service at a particular site, whether it's St. David, whether it's St. Patrick, St. George, wherever. Some of these people are bright and capable. We don't give them that support to expand their horizon sufficiently.

In Agriculture, the young people, who adapt to the technology, they could be using the apps and the technology to provide services to Agriculture, to Tourism, to various areas of service of Government. A young lady came to me, recently. She said: ***"Look, I have a plan of action for using the security for the Praedial Larceny."*** And, she told me some of the security that they have, and she said she approached the Minister for Agriculture already and I was so impressed.

By looking at this, they are ready to provide services, because they are saying, you're doing a lot, the Police will do its own, but the technology has to be used also to complement the work of the Police Force. And of course, the people, the community

also, must be heavily involved in the whole question of providing support to deal with that vexing problem called Praedial Larceny, because there is no way, Mr. Speaker. It is just not fair, when you listen to the women and men in the Agricultural Sector and they tell you they almost give up, because people watch them labour and they just go and reap the rewards of those hardworking persons, and we have to do something, whatever we have to do. So the Minister for Agriculture and the team, all of us, together, have to join with this, in dealing with that enormous problem that we face.

Mr. Speaker, as I move to conclude this presentation here today, I want to make this point. I am given the opportunity by the people of North-West, St. George's. Mr. Deputy Speaker…

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

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: …for thirty-six (36) years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's an honour. I never expected that I would have lasted that long in this. As one Member said that politics is a very stressful business, some people come in and after one (1) year, they say they can't take it. If they had to go through what I had to go through, they call pressure? In 1990, 2006, 2007, briefcase, all kinds of stuff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If they had to go through what I went through, where would they have been? I don't know where they would have been. Stress? In Opposition, there isn't any stress there. It is just you have a good Government doing good work, so you have to deal with that, that's all you have to deal with.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud of the programmes we have implemented, whether it's house repair, the SEED Programme, providing support for students, scholarships, tuition assistance, transportation allowance, Mr. Deputy Speaker; transportation allowance, that's not a joke. I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will never forget being in Opposition and a lady came to me to ask for some help for two (2) students, one was going to St. Rose and one was going to Boca and she did not have any money. So I asked, how do they go to school? She said, one goes to school today and the other one goes tomorrow. I said, no, no, no, that can't happen, because it

means that child is being deprived. Every day he or she misses, that's trouble. So I got two (2) of my friends in the business community and they provided transport on a regular basis. The lady could never forget that. Those children are big children now, working, and they would never forget that. But I am making the point that these programmes are absolutely essential. We have not touched any of those programmes. Anything, we have expanded them, in this COVID period. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these wardens that we have given the opportunity to clean the different drains and streets, they have empowered people in the community and have made our environment much better than it was before. They are doing excellent work, and we are proud of this programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)**

The Brigade, and that's what true. There were times we gave materials, people come, they want materials. When they come for materials, the materials either stayed on the ground, for a whole length of time, or some people sell it after a time or it rotted, all kinds of stuff. We said to them, when you're giving material, make sure that the plan of action is already in place to use the materials to build. And we said look, the Brigade can't work for everybody. Those persons that have families, sons, daughters, grandchildren, grandparents that can help you, don't wait for Government. You have a responsibility to help your elders. So, the Brigade would help and go to persons who are not able to help themselves or do not have the necessary family structure that can be able to help them. But, they are doing excellent work throughout the entire country. I am proud of those. I don't want to necessarily list those that are working in my constituency. It is well-known, they are doing excellent work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during this period of COVID, we started in July, with the road work. Normally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we start this programme around October/November. We said no. Some of us were getting salaries right through the pandemic. These people were home. They were the most marginalised in the country. They had to survive on food baskets and all sorts of things and some of these people are proud. When they come to you, they don't even want to look at you, because they are not accustomed asking you for anything. And you see it in the United States; lines

of cars for food in the United States. What this pandemic has done to people, it has reduced you; so I know a lot of these people needed that support.

We decided, in Government, the Cabinet decided, we were not going to start in September/October, we are starting in July and we were going right up to the week before Christmas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)** And I know all of us have felt some relief, because less people coming to us now than they used to come before and that in itself, is a good sign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a modern Pre-primary School being built. I am proud of this, because that is being built in an area in Beausejour, and at the top there is the Housing Scheme going on, one hundred and twenty-one (121) units. That of course, would be a major plus for the community, and clearly, it can't just be the people in the community. There are people in St. George's, who may need a house or a unit in preference to some persons in my own constituency. And I told them over and over, there are needs, and not just because you know the Prime Minister or you know the Member of Parliament, or the Minister concerned that you will get it. It has to be based on the needs, so that's why we decided the whole objective must be set. All the conditions for receiving a Unit must be set, so everyone will know this is the condition and don't expect me to break the condition and give you because I know you. So, I am looking forward to that programme finishing next year and the giving of these houses to people who need it, badly.

But, the Pre-primary school, that bypass road, opposite the Medical Station is also being done, and I am proud of that too. That Mt. Kumar Road that former Minister for Works and I spoke about, and that is close to New Hampshire. Right now, we have serious problems with the road in Mt. Moritz, because no matter what we tell the big trucks, they are still passing on that road, and it's getting worse every day, and it's so narrow. So, it's obvious that we need to have an alternative.

So, Mt. Kuma Road, if you reach the Bridge in Beausejour, and you make a left, as you just pass the Bridge in Grenville Vale, you don't have to go New Hampshire. There is that road, Mt. Kumar, that used to be a very good road, years ago. My parents told me the same thing. And it is literally passable, but there is a bridge there that is

broken. We are moving aggressively to fix that road, so someone can pass there and reach Beaulieu very quickly and end up in St. George's, in a quick time. So if that is a possibility and we're looking at it, and I see it's already placed in the Budget, in the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Finance, and hopefully that work is going to make a big difference for the people in that community up there.

I mentioned the Perseverance already, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also wanted to say this, that Moliniere problem we have, I had major headache in the constituency, in the sense that in one length, the Moliniere road went, and then we had the major problem at Perseverance, and they were two (2) major headaches for me. And that Moliniere road happened just around the pandemic, so you could imagine the problem when the consultants were chosen, because you can't just go and start to do work like this. So, the consultants' work is on-going. I expect that that should be finished soon, and hopefully, with the money given for the Western Main Road, a good portion of it would be used in that area. So, when the report is finished, we will have to decide whether it's going to be a new bypass road or whether we can use the same thing. Evidence so far, looks as if we may have to use an alternative route. But I tell the people have patience, we won't forget the fact that this is absolutely necessary.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to end on this. After listening to all the Members of this House, I feel extremely proud listening to the presentations of all the Members, the team of the New National Party. I feel proud. You know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I feel, to some extent, I had a part to play, and I am proud of the fact that this period of my service, as I prepare myself for the end of my period of service in Government, I feel proud of what I am seeing of the leadership, the potential in this team, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have no doubt about this. I want to be out to watch it operate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I feel proud, because I listened to them. I listened to the views and that's why I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in good hands. I am confident that the New National Party will continue to grow from strength to strength and will continue to bring the kind of leadership and direction that this country deserves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, I want to take this opportunity to thank all my constituents, the team at my office in Beausejour. We have been doing Zooming Sessions and doing some social distancing, small sessions. We will continue to do that.

But, I want to thank the members of the team at the Prime Minister's Ministry, the PSs, the DPA, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Youth, together with the Minister for Youth and the Minister responsible for many programmes within the Prime Minister's Office. I want to thank all of them for their efforts, in continuing to bring services to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

So, therefore, on this note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank all of the Members of the team, the Houses of Parliament, the Officers, for your cooperation and support. And if we don't meet, I don't know if we are meeting, if we don't meet after the 22nd of December, then, I want to wish you all a very happy, peaceful and safe Christmas. No parties, no parties, no parties. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Member for St. George North-West for his presentation. I now invite the Member for St. George South-East, Minister for Finance to do the wrapping up.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I rise to wrap up the debate on the Budget, I take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues for their support and the encouragement given to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the Budget Presentation on Wednesday and throughout the period of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition is not here, very unfortunate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I saw the Member chained himself to the Table, and said that he does not have the key, I expected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at least, he would have been here to listen to the contribution made, very sound and potent contributions, Mr. Speaker, but he performed the act of Houdini, he escaped

without the key. **(Laughter)** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he is listening and trying to learn, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Prime Minister articulated very clearly, on many of the wordings, many of the points that he had erroneously made, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I heard him mention and mixing up General Warrants with a Virement Warrant, I realised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he needed Members like the Member for St. David, the Prime Minister, myself and others, to enlighten him on the workings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the Government and of Government Services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the General Warrant must be signed by the Minister, as you already know, and by a particular time. And as the Prime Minister indicated, when you have to pay, you have to pay.

The New Year, 2021, must be opened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by a particular time, and we have been working with the Clerk and his team to ensure that we meet that deadline, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I knew…

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Speaker is in the Chair.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I knew. I had an insight into what will transpire. That is why, Mr. Speaker, on the same day of the reading of the Budget, I undertook to give the Leader of the Opposition a copy of the document I had. Other Members did not see that copy, Mr. Speaker, nor had they received the bounded copy from the Printery. But, I got my Driver to drop the copy for the Leader of the Opposition, after it was read in Parliament.

He said, Mr. Speaker, that the document did not have the tables behind it, Mr. Speaker. But, six (6) six documents were laid in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, for public consumption and all the data, Mr Speaker, are in that document. In fact, I am even looking at one now, to respond to some of the comments made, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things I did not like, Mr. Speaker, at all, yes, the Standing Orders indicated that we must not bring into disrepute the Governor-General or other members of the Royal Family, or persons in the 'Other Place'. But, Mr. Speaker, I disliked, in totality, when he mentioned that in this House, it was fifteen/one (15/1), which means

the Speaker and all the Members on 'This Side' make fifteen (15), and he is against it, Mr. Speaker. He is the only one against. That, Mr. Speaker, I dislike. He should not bring the Speaker into disrepute.

Mr. Speaker, I have attended many conversations with you, and I know that you stand on principle. I may advance certain things, and you may say no, and it stays there. I will never say that it is fourteen/two (14/2); never, Mr. Speaker. It would not enter my mind neither would I articulate it here, Mr. Speaker. And I believe the gentleman should have stayed around, Mr. Speaker, so that he can learn. Maybe he'll not make the mistake, again.

But, the Prime Minister indicated and spoke on the issue of not doing expansive capital work, and simply putting $50m to $100m there, for people to be given out. So, I would not repeat that, Mr. Speaker.

What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that he said there was no allocation for the purchase of vaccine, and the Prime Minister indicated. But, I want to expand, Mr. Speaker, on the COVAX Facility for the OECS and the wider Caribbean. Only a while ago, I signed with the Minister for Health the COVAX Facility, which will give 3% of Grenada's need, as a grant, and other countries in the region must put co-financing. Grenada must not, Mr. Speaker. That is because the International Community and this is, in part, funded by the World Bank, recognise how we have worked in the past, and be prudent, financially, Mr. Speaker. And all of this, Mr. Speaker, is simply to say, continue in the way that you have been going, Mr. Speaker.

Not only this, Mr. Speaker, there is the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (the PEFF), US$942,857.00 to be given as a grant to the Government and People of Grenada for the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and it is expected that we use this towards the acquisition of vaccines, Mr. Speaker. And on top of this, Mr. Speaker, if that's insufficient, they are in a position and they have agreed to finance more, Mr. Speaker. So, all of those have been in the pipeline for vaccines, Mr. Speaker.

And the Member went on to ask, why there are certain projects, relating to agriculture, not under Agriculture. Again, the Member should be aware of this, Mr. Speaker, that there are lots of projects that would relate to a particular Ministry, but

because that particular Ministry does not have the structure to carry out the project, you will see it is placed under the Ministries where you do have the important construct for this.

For example, the Farm Roads, does the Ministry of Agriculture have the wherewithal, the engineers, the designs, everything that must be done? No. So, the Ministry of Infrastructure will undertake the management of this project, all for the benefit of the Ministry of Agriculture. So, for everything, every Ministry needs financial projects, but it's the Ministry of Finance that has the wherewithal to conduct these projects, and so, you will find them under the Ministry of Finance.

The Ministry of Health will undertake health projects, but it will be pertinent to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education does not have the doctors, they don't have the nurses, they don't have the health professionals, the public health specialists, so the Ministry of Health will work to deliver that project for the benefit of education. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a Government of Grenada, full stop. You have various Ministries, equipped to do various tasks. And you have your internal customer and your external customer, so one Ministry will be a customer for another Ministry, so we perform and deliver to you. It was unfortunate, again, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Leader of the Opposition going along this line. The Prime Minister articulated very clearly on the cannabis situation.

But I want to speak now, Mr. Speaker, about Tourism and the Airport and the project, not in the context of which it was elaborated on before, but in the context where the Leader of the Opposition came up with a resolution and waved and read, and said in 2019, a Resolution was passed authorising the Minister for Finance to borrow EC$100m, but, the loan that he is hearing about is US$65m, way above the $100m. What he is insinuating, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister for Finance did not have the authority to enter into the Loan Agreement, because what Parliament passed in 2019 was only for $100m, so why are you borrowing more than the EC$100m?

But, Mr. Speaker, the Member was in the House on that day, and what he read from, as how many of us will do, is what was presented. And I heard the Prime Minister making that statement very clearly, you know. When a Cabinet submission comes is

not what comes, you know, is what leaves, it's what the Cabinet decides. So, he read something that came to the Parliament, and the Nation, in watching Parliament, will see when we correct in Committee Stage, Bills and so forth. So, what the Press will see on the Order Paper and on the Bills coming to Cabinet, what they must look for is: "I Assent." The Governor-General, is what he or she assents to. And let me tell you, let me read to you, Mr. Speaker, in that same Bill that came out, what left this Honourable House.

"An act to authorise the Minister for Finance to borrow from various sources, an amount of One Hundred Million United States Dollars (US $100,000,000)…", two hundred and seventy million EC dollars, which far exceeds the value of the loan. And this sum could be used for authority to borrow different tranches, from different organisations, Mr. Speaker. And this is Act No. 11 of 2019, the 17th December, 2019.

So if, Mr. Speaker, this was not corrected here today, believe that the New National Party Administration, and worst yet the then Minister for Finance, for whom has a target, you know, Mr. Speaker, a 303 target, so everything here. So, if we were not able to correct that today, you will hear on the Radio Programmes, he borrowed, yes, and he did not get the authority of the Government, Mr. Speaker.

But, let us just look at Act No. 11 of 2019, and it is the Budget Loan Authorisation Act and he read what came to Parliament. What came to Parliament was EC$100m, yes, Mr. Speaker, but he was here when it was changed to US$100m and that's what went out, Mr. Speaker. We have to be very careful, Mr. Speaker. I would not say that my good friend was malicious. I wouldn't even impute motive, Mr. Speaker. It is for the public and the Members to judge, Mr. Speaker.

Another important point he made, Mr. Speaker, important, because of its inaccuracy, is that Guyana is the only country that did not contract. He never said they did not contract. Poor people, Mr. Speaker, in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia it contracted, it did not go under, but it dropped. So, he must read again, Mr. Speaker, what the Budget Speech said. But, more so, he said, Mr. Speaker, Grenada found oil before Guyana, and so we must find the oil and become rich, as Guyana. But, Mr. Speaker, I

have articulated before, Guyana commenced its exploration way before, in the 1970s. In 1991, the big conglomerates really took focus and they knew what was there, long before 1991. They were telling you how much oil was in the ground before 2000.

Mr. Speaker, we commenced our exploration towards the production stage in 2017. Why? Because when we left Office in 2008, there was a license for the investors to do the same thing that they did in 2007, but they were prevented. So, they had to come back and start from scratch again in 2014, they had to raise the financing, and in 2017, Mr. Speaker, and through '18, they conducted the first drilling of the first well, Mr. Speaker.

And what was found, it was gas, Mr. Speaker; gas that was found, an abundance of gas, not oil. And if you listen and read, you will hear that you can monetise oil at a much quicker rate, than you can monetise gas. Oil is in more demand. Oil brings a better return.

We worked with Trinidad and Tobago and he said we boasted about having an arrangement. But, Mr. Speaker, it was the Minister for Energy in Trinidad and Tobago, who made the announcement, and I keep saying had it been Gregory Bowen or the Prime Minister, you would have heard blatant lie. But, the Minister for Trinidad and Tobago said that they're willing to buy everything that we can produce.

2018 gone, 2019, the price of oil and the gas started to go down, significantly, and the Member for St. David always report on the negative price of oil. Why? Because you cannot get sale, so you extract the oil from the ground, and you got to put it somewhere to store and pay the people to store it. So, it's better you leave it in the ground, Mr. Speaker, and that's what they have been doing, since it started falling at the end of 2018 and '19. And then COVID came, Mr. Speaker, and you know what happened, it fell, tremendously. So what we are doing in Grenada, Mr. Speaker, is to get the investor to get monies into the system. And I have participated in discussions and the first thing the Big Four will say, is it oil? No. Well, you've got to wait.

Mr. Speaker, one of the Big Fours visited the Prime Minister and myself and he indicated that they will return. But when we saw the price of oil starting to down, we know, Mr. Speaker, it will take a while. And when the price of oil and gas start to go

back up, then, Mr. Speaker, they will come up. But, we are working feverishly, to get the second and third well drilled, not for oil again. We like to say the term "oil and gas," yes, but remember, oil is up in this bracket and gas is there. Don't you see it, Mr. Speaker, when they show you a platform, you see big flames burning, they're burning the gas, and they're selling the oil. That's where we are, Mr. Speaker.

And, the company spent US$158m to reach that far, and they were just about to get another $200m to do the second and third well, when the price started to go down. No Banker would allow you, no Financer, even those with money, like Shell or Mocoh and the others, they ceased. They leave the oil in the ground for the time being and they'll get back to it, Mr. Speaker.

But, just to say that Guyana started since 1991. Oh, they did preliminary things before, but in 1991 they started to know exactly what is there and know that they will extract what is there, Mr. Speaker. We stated in 2017. I don't, say again, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman is malicious. We are just giving the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Then, he indicated too again, Mr. Speaker, that PMO, the Prime Minister's Ministry, about leasing of the Port. Again, Mr. Speaker, these things should not be said in this Honourable Place, with no facts. They remind me, Mr. Speaker, of a certain person, you know, but I can't say that in this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said this, I would really like to make some comments, along the line that many of it have been spoken to before, but in a different light. With respect to the implementation rate, which we all agree on, Mr. Speaker, while I was Minister for Infrastructure, and the Prime Minister is well aware, we sought, feverishly, and we went a long way in securing financing for the personnel. We got local engineers we went from about two (2) to about seven (7), Mr. Speaker, that improved the situation, tremendously.

But, in the areas of procurement, in the areas of monitoring and evaluating ebony, we were short, Mr. Speaker. So, we approached the World Bank, who went to the Government of Canada and we secured US$200,000.00 to be used in fifty-six (56) weeks, to get people, Mr. Speaker, to able to assist us. Then, the COVID hit. The

persons could not come to Grenada anymore, so we had to change the scope of the project, so that they could stay in Canada and do services, virtually.

Then we changed, again, to get Caribbean people, and here we are at this stage, Mr. Speaker, to get the necessary resources. And we know that by the beginning of 2021, we should have a cadre of at least ten (10) persons, working with our seven (7) engineers, and we want to get three (3) more, and that's where we see the programme and the implementation rate, going forward, Mr. Speaker.

And again, when we employ these external consultants like Price Water House Coopers, who have been showing tremendous interest, putting all together, then the personnel... It is the personnel that we're missing, Mr. Speaker, that will throw us a long way in ensuring that we meet this massive Implementation Programme that we have. Because, Mr. Speaker, we must provide for a large Public Sector Investment Programme, so that the jobs can come, in the Construction Sector, even in the Transformation Sector, as indicated in the Budget, ICT and in other enabling places. The M & E (Monitoring and Evaluation) will help us proceed all along in these ways, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just to indicate that in the Inland Revenue Division, we will be getting the necessary staff to ensure that we collect, because that was articulated in the Budget Debate. We must collect the back tax. We are not increasing taxes, but we want to ensure that we have an expanded base, and that we collect the arrears, Mr. Speaker, and that will be our prime focus for next year.

Enforcement

We are deliberate in detecting and deterring potential non-compliance, ensuring that penalties and sanctions are enforced, accordingly. So, we are asking all persons, who should pay tax, be prepared to do so, Mr. Speaker. We will develop a comprehensive strategy for improving compliance among the large and medium tax payers. With immediate effect, the IRD will contact all professionals, accountants, lawyers, engineers, real estate agents, who have arrears, so that they can make payment of their Annual Licence and wipe out their arrears. These measures, along with other low hanging fruits, will be the area of focus in the first quarter, Mr. Speaker.

Upon request, IRD will review existing payment arrangements, to make them flexible in catering to the cash flow challenges that businesses may have due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The measure will ensure that businesses are not forced out of operation, due to the servicing of their tax obligations. We want businesses to thrive and grow. Better business performance will aid in improved revenue collection, Mr. Speaker.

The Customs and Excise Division

The Grenada Customs and Excise Division, aim to conduct activities to improve revenue security collection and support legitimate trade, by robustly continuing to work to address border security risks, introduction and implementation of enforcement techniques, modernised procedure and processes to meet client expectation for trade facilitation and traveller processing.

Mr. Speaker, for this purpose, the Customs and Excise Division will focus on the delivery of initiatives, promoting more facilitation, better revenue security, then maximise revenue collection, Mr. Speaker, improve the enforcement of the Customs Laws Regulation Provision restriction, and we have just passed Regulation to give the Tax Administration, the right, Mr. Speaker.

Remember, in this Honourable House, we say that you can pay, if you want to call it a ticket, so we wouldn't waste your time in Court. You come up, you agree you made an error, you made a mistake, you pay and this will encourage us to collect. If you refuse, just like in the traffic, then you go before the Judge, and the penalty there, you know, sometimes, would be three (3) and four (4) times stiffer, Mr. Speaker.

The sharing of knowledge and best practice with key stakeholders, such as the Brokers' Association, the Carrier Agents, Consumer Authorities and general public to share information on Customs Mission, Procedures, Policies and Initiatives, with the intention of fostering voluntary compliance and self-monitoring. So, we want people to comply, Mr. Speaker. All of us are in the same boat, and so all of us should try to get out of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have had erroneous statements about growth of 18% in GDP next year, and this should be corrected, 18%, Mr. Speaker? The monetary value of all

our goods and services produced in Grenada, the GDP, in 2020, as estimated by the Ministry of Finance, is $2,211bm, real GDP at market prices.

This represents an economic contraction of 12.2%, Mr. Speaker, when compared to the monetary value of all goods and services in 2019, which totalled $2,517bm, the same real GDP at market prices. And for 2021, Mr. Speaker, it is $2,346bm, representing a 6% increase, over the estimated value in 2020.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, it is said that you can't make that growth. But, when we look at, Mr. Speaker, where we're coming from, the base or the denominator is not 2.5% anymore. That base is 2.2%, and therefore, you grow. But your growth, you'll still be under 2019. So you were here, you fell there, but you came back; once you come up, there is a growth. We're not saying that you're going to reach where you were. And I think they are understanding now, Mr. Speaker. But because the Budget was so well put together, they have nothing much to say, and so they're trying, Mr. Speaker, to infuse doubt in the minds of the people.

The economic contraction estimated in 2020 is underpinned by broad-based declines across economic sectors. Acutely so, in Tourism, a 60% drop in 2020; Construction, 18.5%; Agriculture, 13.1%; Wholesale and Retail, 12.2% and Private Tertiary Education, 7.5%, just to cite a few, Mr. Speaker.

In 2021, the Ministry of Finance projects a rebound in growth, in some key sectors, including Construction to 17.1%; Tourism, 10%; Wholesale and Retail, 8.6%; Private Tertiary Education, 6.1% and Agriculture, 2.8%. The Ministry has explained the assumptions for its projection in its 2020 Economic Review and Medium-Term Outlook Report. Mr. Speaker, this was one of the documents we laid on the Table, and any of the economists could lay their hands on it, Mr. Speaker. I believe they have done so. But, having read it and having seen the constructive analysis, they must lay it aside and put their own handle on it, Mr. Speaker. The projected 6% growth in 2021 has been questioned by some of them in the general public, some of them who should be trained economists, Mr. Speaker, as being unrealistic and unachievable. It is most unfortunate that some trained persons, Mr. Speaker, will exhibit such basic misunderstanding. And

we are calling it misunderstanding, a wilful misunderstanding, Mr. Speaker, of how the GDP statistics are completed, Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry wishes to educate the public on what is termed in Economics, Base Effects, which is an abnormally high or low percentage change, following an abnormally high or low nominal value.

In the context of the 2021 projection, the 6% growth seems high only because it is following an abnormally large contraction decline. It is noteworthy that the value of GDP projected in 2021 is below the value since 2017, not only 2019. It is below 2017, '18 and '19, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr Speaker, I will turn my attention now to Utilities. And I want to start with the National Water and Sewerage Authority (NAWASA), Mr. Speaker. We have said here before that the Government continues to pay all its bills. As a matter of fact, this is why the economy has been ticking so much, because Government is meeting its commitment to NAWASA, to the Telecoms Company and to GRENLEC, Mr. Speaker.

And with what we're paying NAWASA, they're doing construction projects. We are not talking about G-CREWS and the others, the $125m. We are talking about the monies that they get internally, and they say time and time again, they could use all Government monies for those projects, Mr. Speaker.

Construction continues at NAWASA new Headquarters. This is a $9m investment. It is 95% completed and the building should be occupied before year end. All of this, the financing, although they did borrow from the NIS, but the financing was made possible because Government was paying its bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Community of Blaize, in the Parish of St. Andrew, benefitted from an injection of over $800,000 by the laying of seven thousand, five hundred and eighty-three feet (7,583 ft.) feet of pipeline from Upper St John, Carrier. The residents, who previously saw days without no pipe borne water reach their home, can now look forward to opening their taps and receiving a constant supply of water.

$125,000 in the rehabilitation of the Dry River Water Treatment Plant, which was converted into a Storage Facility. It is expected that this project will improve the water

supply to residents of Tuileries, Pleasance in the Parish of St Andrew, during the Dry Season.

$300,000 spent on completing a new Water Treatment Plant in Radix, for the community. NAWASA spent $100,000 on the upgrade and transmission and distribution service in the following areas:

St. Andrew

- Byelands - replacement and upgrade of mains.
- Mirabeau - replacement and upgrade of mains.

A lot of work, Mr. Speaker, in St. Andrew.

St. David

- Bailles Bacolet - replacement and upgrade of mains.

St. George

- La Borie - replacement and upgrade of mains.
- Radix - replacement and upgrade of mains.

Mr. Speaker, the collaborative efforts of NAWASA and the Basic Needs Trust Fund, working together, they placed $700,000; $400,000 from NAWASA, and $300,000 from the BNTF for the upgrade of the Munich Treatment Plant in St. Andrew, a fifty thousand (50,000) gallon storage tank, Mr. Speaker.

NAWASA broke ground on the $3.2m project in Carriacou. This, Mr. Speaker, is of extreme importance. A new Reverse Osmosis Plant shall also be constructed in Windward. In addition, fifteen thousand, seven hundred and sixty-seven feet (15,767 ft.) of pipeline shall be laid, from Six Roads to Tyrell Bay. Six hundred and ninety-one (691) domestic households and seventy-three (73) non-domestic consumers shall benefit from the expansion of the said Distribution Network. So, it's not only the rains now in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, it is Osmosis, a Reverse Osmosis Desalination Plant, Mr. Speaker.

NAWASA intends to continue a Strategic Expansion and Development Plans, to this end, and has allocated $16m. This year, they spent $13.5, and next year they plan to spend $16m from local revenues. $9m is budgeted for Waste Water Investment,

including improvement at the La Calome and Soubise Housing School Project. The Sewer System there, Mr. Speaker, Waste Water, $9m is planned to be spent there next year.

NAWASA intends to improve the Water Distribution Network in St. David and St. George South-East by investing $1m in the Les Advocate Water Treatment Plant and storage. And, Mr. Speaker, they have bought the lands and they'll be doing a new facility there, to ensure that the people down in the low areas will get the water. And although it's lower, Mr. Speaker, over the period, and even in the Rainy Season there is still a struggle for water there. So, the mains and all of these will be replaced, Mr. Speaker. So, NAWASA is going with guns, Mr. Speaker.

Improvement to the Transmission and Distribution Network shall continue to be a major focus of NAWASA in 2021. NAWASA intends to lay over forty-six thousand feet (46,000 ft.) of pipeline, Island wide, to the tune of $1.3m. And again, I want to repeat, Mr. Speaker, that this was possible only because Government is creditworthy and Government has been paying its bill.

Mr. Speaker, **Gravel, Concrete and Emulsion Production Corporation**; the global pandemic of 2020 significantly impacted the business of the Corporation. The lockdown from the period March 26, 2020 through May 18, 2020, contributed to missed sale revenue of approximately $2.6m. The current run rate for revenue is at 75.9%, and it is projected to increase to 78% at the end of December. So, that's a 22% shortfall.

Despite these challenges, however, Mr. Speaker, the Corporation was able to achieve the following:

- They purchased a 330 Caterpillar Excavator for $799,000.
- They refurbished a 966 Loader for $130,000. And, there was a time, Mr. Speaker, when they had none of these, and they had to borrow and rent and borrow and rent, and they were spending more. So we got them, Mr. Speaker, to, at least, invest in their own, and that would be theirs.
- Repairs to the concrete pump at $140,640.
- Purchase of another concrete pump, $881,634.

Gravel and Concrete was just sitting there, and all the Private Sector, oh, of course, we are glad for the Private Sector, was just moving and getting all the jobs. But, they have a staff to pay, Mr. Speaker, so we got them to move on, to ensure that things worked out.

- The purchase of a Welding Plant for the garage. They didn't even have a Welding Plant, Mr. Speaker, to work on things themselves, yet they have a garage.

The projection for 2021 is the purchase of a Block Plant of US$1,811,000, a tall order, Mr. Speaker; the purchase of an additional Loader to service the Black Gravel location, US$235,000; purchase of an additional truck for the Mining Department at US$158,000; refurbishing of a Cement Shed, at US$30,000.00 and overhaul of the Batching Plant, US$40,000.

Now, when we come to these figures, Gravel and Concrete must invest in these and in many more, Mr. Speaker. We have not been talking about the Plant at Telescope yet, that's a significant sum. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we are still open to a Public/Private/Partnership. And we know that three (3) people have shown interest, and we allow the analysis to be done, to ensure that the persons who can come, they can invest in the figures we call there, the millions and millions, and we know that Gravel and Concrete needs over EC$25m in order to get it in shape for the large construction projects, the wide expansive construction PSIP that will be undertaken. Not only the PSIP, Mr. Speaker, the Private Sector, when they come and they want to do things, then we must be able to supply. So, it is not only Government that we'll be holding back, we'll be holding back the Private Sector, and that is why we want the PPP to materialise in the shortest possible time, Mr. Speaker. And we said we have three (3). We will be analysing and we do hope and feel that one will come on board, very soon, Mr. Speaker.

The National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

Mr. Speaker, the fees collected amounted to EC$11,072,440.76. And what I want to point out to them, Mr. Speaker, is the role that they play in assisting the general

public. We hear about many projects from the USF (Universal Service Fund) and you never hear them boast or cry.

We just launched one, Mr Speaker, with Police. It's emergency telecommunication, where the Police, NaDMA and the others, in time of a crisis, they will be able to contact each other and contact the vital areas, to ensure that we recover, in the shortest possible time. That is a significant amount they have put in, Mr. Speaker, and they're not indicating that they alone should be there, or they have no beef. There's a Board, who manages it and they manage it quite well, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the funds come from LIME, FLOW, DIGICEL, AIsleCom, and you never hear any one of them saying that the 3% or 4% that they put in, that they must manage it. I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the NTRC and the other Bodies, the Telecommunication providers, for participating in this USF Fund, Mr. Speaker. And just to give us an idea: the provision of local hosting space at the Durex Data Centre, that's one of the projects; upgrade to provide links to the Grenada Internet Exchange Point. They have an exchange point at their office, in Grand Anse. On-going GD domain extension and DYNADOT, that is if you want to use the .gd, you've got to pay for it, it's a resource. So, they're managing it, they may contract a provider, they're managing it, Mr. Speaker, and so it brings in revenue. The wireless mesh to schools; this is something that they are ensured in education, that every school here will be connected, and it goes a little further than what CARCIP will do. And, this wireless mesh to schools, Mr. Speaker, this project cost $3,339,766. It's the ICT equipment to NEWLO and a lot of other schools, Mr. Speaker.

The Plans for 2021, the promulgation of the EC Bill with its associated Regulations and the Electronic Communication Bill (EC Bill) will provide for quality of service. In other words, when you take an Internet plan from any of the Providers, and it says it will give you 50 megabytes, it must give you 50 megabits for 95% of the time. If it goes under, the Provider will be punished, in the sense that their rate could be reduced by the NTRC. So, quality of service will be critical here.

Another critical issue, Mr. Speaker, is the development of Internet Exchange Point for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Right now, under CARCIP, we ran an

undersea cable to Carriacou, but there is still radio connection to Petite Martinique. All of this would be looked at, Mr. Speaker.

Review of the FM Broadcasting Service, with a view to rationalising the number of Stations. Right now, Mr. Speaker, we have over thirty (30) stations; all of them, I don't know, some don't pay the $2,000 and we have a lot of it from the communities. We have asked the Religious Communities, time and time again, to get together and use just four (4) or five (5) Stations and put your particular time on it. But, some Stations are not active and when you go behind them for payment, then it becomes a little ticklish in a sense, but the NTRC must collect their monies.

And safeguarding the interest of the telecommunications consumer by instituting measures to ensure that Providers for telecommunications service improve; so you must not only stay there, you must improve your quality. So if you give it 95% of the time, you'll go up to 96% of the time, then you go to 99% of the time. We know it's difficult to reach 100%, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the **Public Utilities Regulatory Commission;** in 2016, the Government took a decision to reconfigure the Legal and Institutional Framework. So, it is now the PURC that should be setting rates. It is now the PURC that will be granting licence, no longer the Utility, GRENLEC.

We have encouraged people to buy Solar Plants to put on their home. But there is a difficulty, because they cannot connect into the System. So, they'll run their lines and if they need from GRENLEC they will not get. There are those who are there under different conditions and paying a significant sum for their connection, in the sense that you buy your Plant and you put it on your house, it generates electricity, you must give all the electricity to GRENLEC, and they pay you a price, around 0.31) it was. Then, they take all of your generation, put theirs together with it and sell it back to you at a dollar. The PURC will now dictate how much they pay.

First, it's only the difference that they should charge you for. If it goes into their line and you put forty (40) into the line and you use a hundred (100), then they should only be charging you for sixty (60) and the PURC will determine how much that they'll charge you for sixty (60), Mr. Speaker.

What has happened, over the years, Mr. Speaker, as we indicated in the Budget Debate, we're supposed to have 20%, at least by 2020, of our Utilities generation by renewable energies. You know how much it is, Mr. Speaker? In terms of capacity, it is 6% from which the public put 3% and GRENLEC would have 3%. But because it is intermittent and goes on only for the day, it accounts for only 1.5%, when we have committed it to be 20%, Mr. Speaker. That is why I see other countries, you know, getting so many things from IRENA, because they're meeting their commitment and we are not meeting it.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the $125m we got from the Green Climate Fund was because we indicated we'll meet that commitment of 20% by 2020, now, we don't have it. So, how could we go, again?

We talk about the Smart Climate City, where they want us put $300m into Grenada. But, we must quickly buck up, Mr. Speaker, to show that we're moving close to that 20 margin. And right now we have committed again, to 40% of the emission now, that's the carbon emission. But since electricity and transport are responsible for 70% of the emission, it means you have to go in and target those, and now we want to put 30% renewables by 2030, that's our target, in order to meet the 40% and 20% in transport. That, Mr. Speaker, is a tall order. It means that we must start to import vehicles into Grenada, that will be using renewable energy, e-vehicles. And we know that we have a programme going on now in the Transport Sector and a Study is going on to see how we can do it. E-vehicles are normally more expensive, but at the end of the day, they pay off, Mr. Speaker.

So, we have the draft Regulation and Rules of Procedure for applying for a licence. The draft Regulation and Tariffs Setting Methodology, so we have it in there now and we'll be able to bring it into full effect very soon. What we do have, Mr. Speaker, is a constant confrontation that, you know, we must get out off, because, as soon as the PURC tries to do something, there is a Court case. And as soon as people try to link and go to join the thing, no, and they say the regulations are not there, go back to the Government etcetera.

Streetlight, Mr. Speaker, is something that many constituents are asking for, and the quantity has reduced tremendously from the Company. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, will be rectified. The draft Generation Expansion Planning and Competitive Procurement Regulation; Generation Licence; draft Grenada Electricity Grid Code; draft Grenada Electricity Sector Grid Code; Transmission and distribution and the draft Grenada Electricity Grid Supply Code.

All of these, Mr. Speaker, they're there in draft form. So, what the Law requires us to do, the Law requires us to go out and consult, and we consulted with everybody. And lo and behold, then the Utility will say, well, you did not draft this together with us, and there is always a tug of war and tangale that we should really ensure that we get out of, Mr. Speaker.

So, in 2021, we should be in the position to issue licence to everybody with their solar panel generation on their building; conduct initial review of tariff, in fact the tariff review is now on-going and we should be able to implement those Tariff Review come 2021, Mr. Speaker, and we'll be able to licence Operators. In other words, you could come in and build a 1 megawatt Plant, and we'll be able to licence you for it now. If somebody comes in… and we have proposals for up to 10 megawatts Solar Plant, but again, it's a fight, Mr. Speaker. All of those things should be behind us very soon, Mr. Speaker. So, the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission, they are working and I want to commend them in this environment that they have done a lot. Nothing deterred them, Mr. Speaker, and they went forward with it.

The Grenada Postal Corporation, Mr. Speaker, many people said that we sold it, Mr. Speaker. But what we did is we paid off the workers right, so that someone coming in to participate in a PPP will not meet that burden before them. And the monies were advanced by the World Bank, who agrees that these institutions should become PPP, Mr. Speaker.

The Official Project Agreement, that is a project between the Universal Service Fund and the Postal Corporation, that was signed, Mr. Speaker, for $396,000.00. That was signed earlier and it will help the Postal Corporation put in IT and financial

programmes and so forth, so that they can run in a well organised manner, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Disaster Risk Management Project that put in all that is necessary, so that the Postal Corporation can recover in the shortest possible time after a disaster. Now with the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, you hear people are not getting the mail that they should. But we knew long before, that mail was emails and not the normal hard mail. So, what the Postal Corporation is trying to do is to expand on their e-purchasing and so forth. You know, you can purchase something, go to the Postal Corporation, they'll get it down to you here and you'll go to the Postal Office and collect it, Mr. Speaker. So, it increased online shopping.

They will continue to roll out the project that I mentioned before and one critical and important project, Mr. Speaker, is the Address System. If you go to Trinidad and Tobago, or you go to New York, you have 1701 Johnson Avenue etcetera, etcetera, and that can be pinpointed by GPS and we are moving into this stage. Because Postal Corporation does not have the financial resources, then we could not have embarked up on it before. But, we're working with the Universal Service Fund and with Providers, to ensure that every house in Grenada is given a GPS coordinate and that coordinate will be translated into, maybe a Street and a number. So, after that coordinate, you might have Bogles, for instance. But what is of critical importance is that number that you will have with the physical address. They can pick you up, up to two (2) inches, Mr. Speaker, on GPS, and know exactly where you are. So, the Postman will go out and that will help you with an address, so that if you buy items online, the people can find you. They don't have to go to Mr. Smith and say, where does Jane live? The exact location will be there and that will assist the Postal Corporation in moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

They approved the Financial Accounting System and increased revenue stream. All in all again, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to get private partners. Two (2) people showed interest. But again, the Post is not to them, as lucrative as the other. So, we told them, they'll get all their facilities and they must take it over and expand on it. We passed, in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, a Law indicating that Post can involve

in any legitimate business. So the private person must run the Post, but at the same time, they could run Banks, they could run a Parts Shop, they could run anything that would supplement the Post in doing so. And this is one of the reasons why we've had two (2) persons attracted so far. But they have not given any proposal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity now, to say how pleased I am with the camaraderie and the operation in the Ministry of Finance. We know in the Ministry of Infrastructure that we work hard. In fact, only last night the Permanent Secretary and an engineer came out after 9:00, so that we can save US$1m grant. We had to send a document off last night and they were there, so we are accustomed to this, Mr. Speaker.

But also in the Ministry of Finance, they are accustomed to working long and hard hours. So, it is nice to see this movement of hardworking culture from where I came and from where I am now, Mr. Speaker, and I want to compliment both sides, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Finance. **(Applause)** And because they now have the highest allocation, Mr. Speaker, because of our expansive Capital Programme, we know that the relations will be good.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to pilot a Programme whereby the various Ministries will follow and know immediately where they are going, performance management, with respect to their expenditure and how close they are to it. And the Accountant General, in the Ministry of Finance, has invoked a certain component of the programme there that was dormant, so that we can do that. So it's no longer the Minister for Finance, you know, coming in angry and say, well, you've exhausted your Vote; you have bills there that have passed your allocation. The Ministry should know. And we will keep in close contact, Mr. Speaker, with those Ministries, so that we follow this, particularly in this COVID time, when we must watch expenditure.

Our Division, Mr. Speaker, the Division of Procurement will be working in concert, with the Ministry of Implementation, the Whole-of-Government Approach, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, every worker, in every Ministry comes and must do his or her part, the Secretary, those who will be bringing the documents in, the engineers, the Administration, we have to work together.

And we realise that in the Procurement Division, when we're going for a project there are lots of bottlenecks. So we have sat and analysed the bottlenecks, and we're going, Mr. Speaker, to pass Legislation that will ensure that all of these are cleared up and that the Division has its ample authority to do what we do.

But, we recognise, Mr. Speaker, part of the problem too, is the procurement rules of the international organisations. For example, if they say that you need thirty (30) days to put something out, you have to put it out in thirty (30) days, you know, when it could have been done in fifteen (15 days). And if they say you need sixty (60) days to do something, it has to be out there for sixty (60) days, when it could have be done in forty (40) or forty-five (45) days. And these are the rules. So, we start from this backdrop for external projects and we ourselves are short in human resource, that we are about to correct, and so you see where the problem lies, Mr. Speaker. So, all in all, we are moving to correct all of those, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll now turn my attention to the constituency, and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone, everybody in the constituency and everyone who support.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to St. David, I don't want to say much at all. All the programmes that he mentioned, every constituency has, and if we look at the bathrooms and toilets, that I would not elucidate more on, it's just an extremely important project, both for health sanitisation and for just lifting the esteem and the quality of life for our people, Mr. Speaker. We had twenty-one (21) approved and five (5) is now under construction. None has been completed as yet, Mr. Speaker.

The IMANI Programme, we have forty-two (42) persons out of an allocation of forty-five (45), and we intend to get the next three (3). A lot of people have been clamouring, and so, we'll send them to the Ministry of Youth for the interview, Mr. Speaker.

But the M-Power, Mr. Speaker, is of critical importance. We started with seventeen (17) and we have thirteen (13). But, these thirteen (13), Mr. Speaker, have persevered. They're undertaking projects to help the less fortunate in the community. And every day I look around, they are active, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Only Saturday gone, we had a recognition for them, Mr. Speaker, and I think they are very happy and enthusiastic. They'll be moving now into the soft skills and we are working with them. So, we know that youth will play its part, but we, at the community level, will also want to work with them to ensure that they get all the opportunities necessary to grow, Mr. Speaker.

The SEED Programme, both the elderly and the children, two hundred and forty (240) persons are receiving assistance in the constituency. The Housing Programme, this year alone, Mr. Speaker, eighty-seven (87) applied, only twenty-seven (27) was approved, and in the constituency, no one gets more than $5,000 because of the limited amount that we have to play with. That does not mean that the constituency does not, on its own, go out and try to raise funds and so. Sometimes, we can help three (3) and four (4) persons by going out to the business community, by we, ourselves, putting out there, Mr. Speaker.

We gave out two hundred (200) hampers during the COVID time, six (6) stoves with gas, and it is always said that in the Parish of St. George, nobody needs anything. But I could tell you, when you look around at some of the persons, and I want to compliment our people at the Constituency Office for going to find those, and we gave them the stove and the gas, so that they can, again, lift their quality of life and feel better, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Funeral Assistance

The Minister has indicated that in this tight COVID times, that they should reduce on the quantum allocated. But, sixteen (16) people, for the year, received Funeral Assistance, making a total of five hundred and sixty-six (566) persons, Mr. Speaker, receiving assistance in this area of personal support.

In Special Projects, $343,000 was spent. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, I can't say $800,000, so I have to say $343,350 was spent in the constituency on the norm as usual, concrete pavement, concrete steps, concrete slabs, grails, retaining walls and materials for the vulnerable persons, Mr. Speaker. Some handrails and steps were also placed for elderly, for them to be able to access the buildings, Mr. Speaker.

The IMANI and the M-Power, we have spoken about them already.

Debushing

Debushing, Mr. Speaker, as throughout the country, we know the COVID-19 has thrown and displaced a lot of workers, fourteen thousand (14,000) people, Island-wide, and so we maintained half of the crew, as most of us did, the normal pattern, and we went through the entire period. I think the last fortnight started today. And so, Mr. Speaker, we try to ensure that everybody got a touch, and it has helped tremendously, together with the Environmental Wardens, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

I know the Member for St. John has asked whether we cannot graduate everything into Environmental Wardens, well, we will be getting there, Mr. Speaker. In other words, what we're saying is that you may have, maybe just eight (8) permanent crews working throughout the year, doing the debushing, the drainage, etcetera. But that will occur, when we will move the other persons, the needy persons out of the Debushing Programme, and they will be getting some form of employment, Mr. Speaker.

The Needy Assistance - Tuition for SGU and TAMCC

Mr. Speaker, we could never have enough in that area. But again, I want to commend the office staff. They always led. Last year, they did fundraising and the number of persons who went in for schoolbooks and uniform etcetera, we gave a similar amount, just by raising funds. This year, we can't raise the funds, it's COVID. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? The staff in the office and supporters from the constituency they came and they took out of their pockets and you know they don't work for much, and they gave $40, $50, **(applause)** etcetera, so that we can help the needy people, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank and compliment the staff and the supporters for making this possible, Mr. Speaker.

Work was done, Mr. Speaker, in Hope Vale, La Borie, Petersfield, Calivigny, St. Paul's, Marian, Richmond Hill and Lowther's Lane, Mr. Speaker, and a significant amount of personal contacts were made.

Mr. Speaker, it's COVID time, and I want to commend the persons, the Field Officers, who go out there. We always tell them be careful, and they are being careful. So, when they go ten (10) times, I will pass just once or twice. And I want to take this

opportunity, as others have done, to remind our people, that we must follow the protocols, wear the mask and keep the distancing. It makes it easier for us to interact.

Mr. Speaker, the La Borie main road, in 2008, it was done, down to Hope Vale. As we know Hope Vale is one of our agricultural areas. It has not lost its ability to produce since the PRG time. And so, the La Borie road leads into Hope Vale. And in 2018, we commenced that project, poles were moved, so that the roads could have been dealt with. But that was stopped, Mr. Speaker; that did not materialise.

I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is now back on the cards, and the La Borie road will be done under the Farm Programme, Phase 3. **(Applause)** The small piece at St. Paul's, this will be done, as part of the St. David roads that will come through, from Westerhall. So from the Police Station, just down to the Morne Delice, this will also be done, Mr. Speaker. And the people have been clamouring. The road is in disrepair, and it will be done again, Mr. Speaker, as part of the farm roads that lead to St. David, Mr. Speaker.

The Small Business Development Fund

We had sixty-eight (68) applicants, but only nineteen (19) was approved, which means, Mr. Speaker, we will continue, and we had a Golden Programme, where we went out and educated the people, how to apply and how to prepare loans, Mr. Speaker. And I am sure that we would like to continue with this. And we're looking now to GDB to continue with this, Mr. Speaker, because nineteen (19) from sixty-eight (68), you have others saying, well, this is not for me etcetera, etcetera.

So, I would want to encourage GDB and the Small Business Development Fund that everyone who fails, that we don't just leave them by the wayside, that we should go back, work with the constituency and go back to them, so that you may get another nineteen (19), even though it takes another six (6) months, etcetera, because this is what drops the spirit of entrepreneurship, and it is of extreme importance.

But, we are very happy that nineteen (19) did receive, Mr. Speaker, and it was in the area of Fishing, Light Manufacturing, Services and Retail, $268,155, Mr. Speaker, in loans approved in these areas. **(Applause)** And everything counts, Mr. Speaker, because every one of these nineteen (19) people will have at least one (1) or two (2), so

that's jobs by nineteen (19) by three (3), fifty-seven (57) persons will be employed and employed by themselves.

What we must do, Mr. Speaker, is we must go out and look at the products that they are making and buy, buy. In every constituency, we should do that and get the people and the neighbours to buy. This will encourage us tremendously in the areas that we are moving, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also got glasses for our young persons, and I saw the miracle brought by glasses for a young man. He was referred to, as the duncest. He didn't know anything, at all, because, Mr. Speaker, he couldn't see. When the parent… and we found out what happened to him, we used the programme to give him glasses. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, he became sharp, moving through the system, passing the Common Entrance and moving on. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I tell everyone who comes for glasses; make sure you give it to your children first. You may need it, but make sure you give it to your children first, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Medication, a vital importance and what hurts, Mr. Speaker, is when you visit and you ask, what is going on. Well, they did not buy the medication, because they're sick, and they did not have the funds to do it. And when you look at them, Mr. Speaker, they're not asking, or begging in a bad way, they need it. So we were only able to give ten (10) persons, but these were 10 people in total distress, Mr. Speaker. And I am very happy that we in the constituency could really move and assist these persons.

They cannot get it at the Government Pharmacy. They have to go to buy it. It is extremely expensive, and when you ask, well why didn't you come before? Well, I know you are a good person, you know, but the figure was a lot. And sometimes it runs into the thousands, and we ask, how do these people survive? So, we've made it our duty, Mr. Speaker, to go out to look for these people, who will not come in, because they feel it's too much of a burden and help them. And we're not helping them only again, Mr. Speaker, from the Government Programme, and I want to commend, not only the staff at the Constituency Office, but the people of the constituency. You just tell them we are doing this for Mr. John, you know, you don't have to publicise it. No, no, we won't publicise it. But, you put a fundraiser there and you have all these things you say it

wouldn't sell, between 8 and 10, Mr. Speaker, it sold, because they know what it is being used for, and then they'll come quietly and say, is she coming on well? And we'll say, yes, and they say I can see that, I saw her by the Pharmacy for the first time in six (6) years, so all the time she was suffering. And so when we work, we must work for the people. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, you know the best thing to a conscientious Politician? It's to watch your handiwork and somebody comes back and say thank you, I have benefitted. That is the best feeling you could get, Mr. Speaker, the best feeling. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the lady from St. Andrew, maybe she watches me. So, if I go out and abroad and I come out and I say well, what did you do with my money? Well I gave John and Peter? I say, why? You think I don't see you? I hear when they come, and I know they're in need, so I gave them. I say hooray, great, continue the good works, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, on the Farm Labour, three (3) gangs of eight (8) persons, that made a remarkable difference during the COVID time, Mr. Speaker. Only twenty-four (24), but they were young men, doing nothing. And, we told them, when you get the resource, bring it home. Help Mummy and help the brothers and sisters, and they did exactly that, Mr. Speaker. They completed twenty (20) farms and when we went to ask the farmers how they behaved, they said beautifully, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** They did cutlassing, they did weeding, they did forking, to a great standard, Mr. Speaker. And that is why we will always be looking out for them, and trying to get them to improve themselves, either in the Small Business Programme, or get into the IMANI Programme, or get into any training, that will help them to go from strength to strength. So, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be working along with these young men, and seeing, you know, their attitude, and seeing how they perform on the farms.

You see, Mr. Speaker, as indicated by many of us before, it is this New National Party leadership that we allot. And when we talk about disaster, Mr. Speaker, disaster is not only from the elements or from the Geology, earthquakes, and so forth, disaster is broad, health, data, etcetera.

And that is why, again, I was so displeased when the Leader of the Opposition indicated that I took the Data Centre and put it in Morne Jaloux. Let me give you a history, Mr. Speaker. This place, the Parliament Building was one area. GIDC was another area. The Police SSU, by the Airport, that was another area, Mr. Speaker. These areas were worked by a consultant. The consultant said the risk at the SSU, is not Fort Knox, you know, Fort Knox, maybe, is an Army place. The risk of flooding, because you must do a risk analysis, we moved it from the SSU. The GIDC place was too small. Here they say it was totally unacceptable, to put a Centre here where you have the Hierarchy of the Government. You must separate these two (2), because losing the Centre in itself is a disaster. And then he indicated, Mr. Speaker, that the lines run above the ground. But, Mr. Speaker, to lose your data, they don't have to go to the lines, they just have to get into the Internet, virtually, and they could destroy you. So your security, your cyber security is of critical importance. Yes, if you look at a hurricane and so forth, you're concerned about the running things on the line, but that's not the biggest concern. It is the cyber security, Mr. Speaker, and every one of these places, was totally removed by the consultant.

It said Morne Jaloux, because, one, it is close to an area, an Emergency Centre, but besides it is above the level. In fact, they even modelled, Mr. Speaker, what will happen if Kick-em-Jenny comes, and you don't want to lose the data. I cannot tell you, here, what will happen to the data. And he indicated the Data Centre, and he thinks the Data Centre is for LIME and FLOW and others to come to buy space. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not the Cloud. This is a Data Centre for the Government of Grenada, so that Finance could go in and see exactly what is happening in Social Services, all the data would be stayed there for years. We can do analyses, Time-variant analyses on how things go up and down, in order to predict how we should go forward, how we should manage performance. It is not, as he was thinking about it. You'll see no other persons being there.

Mr. Speaker, if we take LIME and DIGICEL storage and put it there, who is going to pay for that risk? In fact, they would not put it there, and we want to ensure ourselves that things are there. We don't want a lot of people to be there, so that Internet coming

from this one and from that one and from that one, and now you have the wireless connection into one, you know. So, if your system is there, and this one is here, now we're using Bluetooth. There are lots of developments in that area, you know. It could co-wireless into your System. Yes. All we have to do is to get the so-called password to enter, you know and we could contaminate the whole system, and then we pay FLOW billions, as we know data is expensive. No. This is a Data Centre for the Government of Grenada and its work, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker…

(Time Bell Rings)

Mr. Speaker: Ten (10) more minutes.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity now, to thank the staff of the Ministry of Works, Infrastructure, as I just left them. And I know that the present Minister would be happy to perform there. They have good attitude and, Mr. Speaker, it's not only the Permanent Secretary, you know, right down. Sometimes I go there and I note when they are having the concerns with the Union out there. But I say, first and foremost, the staff is the staff of the employer, and so you must try your utmost to look after them. And while I would not be able to do a lot of things, I engage them, from the smallest to the highest. And the same principle we operate on, internal customers and external customers. And, they're the interface, because they meet a lot of people outside there, and they must portray a good picture of the Ministry.

I want to thank them for all the support that they have given me, while I was there, for quite a while, Mr. Speaker, and I know that they will continue to do our Nation proud. Thank you to the staff of the Ministry of Infrastructure. **(Applause)**

To the staff of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker, the hierarchy of the staff, I was well accustomed to, the Permanent Secretary at the time, the Deputy PS, I helped.

I know Kerry Pierre, for quite a while, and many of the others, and many of them remembered me, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, the then Permanent Secretary, Timothy Antoine, when we were facing, Mr. Speaker, the paying of Public Servants left by the former Regime, and we had $41m to find it, and the Prime Minister called on me and I worked with the Permanent Secretary, Timothy Antoine and the others, Mr. Speaker. And up to today, it is a marvel how NNP just get in and you are faced with that. How did you pay the back pay? So since that time, and even before, Mr. Speaker; in fact, since I was in GRENLEC I had a close relationship with the Ministry of Finance, and I definitely want to thank them.

I see the same thing, as in the Ministry of Works, people and they're late, working assiduously. When I visited downstairs, Mr. Speaker, and you could see the smallest one, didn't know the Minister was visiting, you could see them pouring over their documents, working. I did not see anyone idle. In fact, it's not for me at this point in time, it is for the Supervisors to say who are idling. And that is where a lot of institutions break down, right, when the Supervisors would not do their managerial work. If the person is doing well, push them along. But if they are not doing well, give them a touch, a slap on their hand to make them improve. And you cannot tell me, Mr. Speaker, that you will have somebody there for fifteen (15) years, and then you come and tell me, they're not performing. I can't accept that. So, why you won't tell them that they're not performing?

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, as certain persons in Gravel and Concrete it was, a battery was missing, and they came to me, as Minister. Oh, so, so, so, John took the battery. I said, yes, you agree, well let's go home and we will make John pay for it. Don't call my name, you know, Chief. Don't call my name. You want the man say I made him lose his work. Immediately I said, well, I can't do nothing. But, you want me to do something? But, I can't do anything about him, unless you come to bear witness before the Union and other places. Well, John didn't take any battery again, you know. Done. I am saying that the Supervisors must do their work. First, you correct and move the person forward, because you're doing that person an injustice, because they leave

there and they may be fired and they won't get anything elsewhere. So, let us do our work.

The Ministry of Finance

I see the same attitude there, and I want to thank you for your support, for the short while I've been there, in the preparation of the Budget, as I indicated, and to the staff here in Parliament. It's late nights, as we work together, to get things going, Mr. Speaker. And, we'll work together, so that we can get the Assent and the General Warrant signed in time, so that we can have 2021 opened from the first day, so that funds can flow.

Again, we are moving, we are moving away from this, and I want to thank the Accountant General for that. You know we have a situation, Mr. Speaker, far gone where, you do have, in the first week, two weeks, we still pushing things together. No. Well, the Vote isn't open yet. No. If we have to store something in a cache and work alongside for the last two (2) weeks, it can be done in the year, so that when you open up on that first day, you can pay. You might say I am not doing any expenditure, but now because you cannot pay and not ready to pay. This is what is on our hands to do, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues for their support in my new role, as I've thanked them many times, and we've worked very closely together in my former role, but they have all supported me. Thank you for echoing your sentiments that you have done for me.

And I want to thank the Prime Minister, again, for continuing to be there. You know, people say we go back a long way. But you know what some of them say, they'll come to me and say well, the Prime Minister is doing something, you know, I could say well yes. You know. And, I'll say, how come I know? Yes, you know, but you won't say. I'll say, but I wouldn't say, but you are still coming back, well, don't come back. Don't come back. And, I think that we go back a long way.

I want to thank him for the leadership that he has displayed with the team, as we move forward. And this time, Mr. Speaker, in fact Ivan I could have seen more fear on

some of the Members, but not now, Mr. Speaker. I think everybody is there, pushing forward and we will come out of it, Mr. Speaker, victorious. **(Applause)**

I want to thank my constituents, Mr. Speaker. Without them, I wouldn't be here, none of us will be here. So, I want to thank them for their support and I want to ask them to wear the mask and keep the distancing, and it makes it easy for everyone to cooperate and coordinate, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all of them.

I want to thank the office staff, again. This year in particular, when I see many of them who are just working for a little bit coming out. You think it's a $5.00, Mr. Speaker? No. $50.00 and so forth, and they gave it, because they knew what we did last year and we know that there are others in a worst situation than them, and they put forward. I want to thank them, Mr. Speaker, for the encouragement. **(Applause)**

And as usual, I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, my family for their support. Mr. Speaker, St. Andrew… **(Chuckles)** I want to thank them for all their support, every one of them, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I go and come, forget birthdays, don't know when birthday comes, all these sorts of things, and I am still forgiven, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, there was a certain birthday close by, but when they look at me coming on Friday, reaching home after 9:00/10:00, I could see, well, okay, you are forgiven. So, I want to thank my family for putting up with me, Mr. Speaker, as I continue to serve this Nation. I want to thank the staff in the Ministry and on your instruction, Mr. Speaker, we will be back here. But, I want to thank all of us and exhort us to keep safe until we see here God's willing on the 22nd, or whatever time it will be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you everyone. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Finance. Be careful about this forgetting birthdays.

(Laughter)

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Bills (Recommitted)

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business and Minister for Finance.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Appropriation (2021) Bill, 2020.

Clerk: A Bill 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 ($1,232,670,049.00) to the service of the State of Grenada for the period January 1st to December 31st, 2021, shortly entitled, Appropriation (2021) Bill, 2020.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.
Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question proposed.

Bills (Recommitted)

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is really to put into context, as required, the Motion that we have just finished debating, two (2) days on the Motion. And everything that was said in the Motion is relevant to the Bill.

In the Motion, we debated and passed the sum so specified in the Bill, and as such, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that any Member will say anything, although it is their prerogative in debating the Bill. But, we have just debated the Motion, and everything pertaining to it. So, I recommend the Bill for its second reading.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, do we have any debate on it? No?

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question put and agreed to.
House in Committee.
House resume.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition. **(Laughter)** Oh, sorry, why did I put you there? Honourable Leader of Government's Business and Minister for Finance.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I move the Adjournment, I'll wait on you to call. I don't know if you have any comments.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Let me say, Honourable Members, that I am very happy with the whole reading and the Budget that has passed. I was concerned. Where are we going to find the money? What are we going to do? I was concerned, honestly.

But after listening to the Budget, I am very hopeful, and I know that we can do it. This Government can do it. And I want to thank you for your deportment here today. I must say that I have been patient with my dear brother who came freely, but decided to put himself in chains. I am thankful that he kept the chain in that part of his body. I did not get the keys, but the keys were safe in the arms of someone, who would open for him.

Comments by the Speaker
Adjournment

We would meet again, and so we will have a better time, when we meet, before the end of this year. That's all I am going to say for now. Honourable Members… did I hear the Minister for Finance and Leader of Government's Business?

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Is there anybody who wishes to speak on the Adjournment?

(Members answered in the negative)

(Laughter)

Question put and agreed to.
House adjourned *sine die* at 8:03 p.m.

(Sound of Gavel)

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