



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fifth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, 10th May, 2022

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Table of Contents

Attendance	3 - 4
Prayers	5
Minutes	5 - 6
Papers / Reports	6
Motions	7 - 26
Bills	26 - 32
Adjournment	32 - 44

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Attendance

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 and Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management |
| Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP
(St. George South-East) | - Minister for Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Physical Development, Public Utilities and Energy |
| Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP
(St. Mark) | - Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment |
| Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP
(St. John) | - Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs |
| Honourable Peter David, MP
(Town of St. George) | - Minister for Labour, Agriculture and Lands |
| 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 Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP
(Carriacou and Petite Martinique) | - Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs |
| 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 |

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Attendance

- | | |
|--|---|
| 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 Anthony Boatswain, MP
(St. Patrick West) | - Deputy Speaker |
| Honourable Tobias Clement, MP
(St. George North-East) | - Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition |

ABSENT

(Excuse tendered)

- | | |
|--|---|
| Honourable Delma Thomas, MP
(St. Andrew North-West) | - Minister in the Ministry of Health and Social Security wrf for Hospital Services, and Minister of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment |
|--|---|

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

*Prayers
Minutes*

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:10 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 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 a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday 8th March 2022, be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

**Minutes
Papers / Reports**

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the said Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives, held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday 8th March, 2022 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.
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. I beg to move that the following Paper be laid on the Table:

- The 2021 Annual Report on the Status of the Implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members the Paper is so laid at the Table.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 - Questions.
Item 11 - Urgent Questions Under the Provisions of
Standing Order No. 20 (1) – Notice of
Questions.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: 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 standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS it is provided by section 107 (1) of the Representation of the People's Act Cap. 286A, (hereinafter referred to as "the Act"), that the Governor-General may make regulations generally for giving effect to the provision of the Act;

WHEREAS section 107 (1) (c) provides that the Governor-General may make regulations prescribing the symbols to be used on every ballot paper and the mode of allocation of such symbols to candidates;

WHEREAS section 107 (2) provides that regulations made under the Act is subject to affirmative resolution;

WHEREAS regulations have been made to insert a new symbol to be used on ballot papers under the Representation of the People (Election Symbols) Regulations Cap. 286A;

AND WHEREAS it is now expedient that the Representation of the People (Election Symbols) Amendment Regulations 2022 attached hereto as a schedule to be approved by the House of Representatives;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 107 (2) of the Act, the Representation of the People (Election Symbols) (Amendment) Regulation 2022 is now approved.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members... oh...

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: I'm just wondering if we're reading the same paper, because in the preamble he says, the People's Representation Act Cap. 296 but I have 286 at the beginning. Do you have anything different?

Mr. Speaker: That should be...

Hon. Tobias Clement: 286, I don't... I don't...

Mr. Speaker: 286, 286. So 286 is the correct...

Hon. Tobias Clement: Okay.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Tobias Clemet: He said 296. I just wanted to...

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I support the resolution, I must make a comment on it. We have currently 28 symbols in the schedule to the Act. A candidate or a party can choose from it or request a new symbol but, Mr. Speaker, we came here and TGM that registered as a party requested a new symbol.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

They did not choose from the twenty something and we agreed and we added a new symbol. Now you have a candidate requesting a new symbol to be placed on the ballot paper, in the upcoming election and that's okay. But if you have twenty something symbols already and you keep adding, wouldn't it be better to say that if you are going to contest the election, you should choose one of these symbols? Otherwise we end up with a whole book of symbols you know. So for example if my good friend, the Opposition Leader wants to run as an independent candidate, he will request of the Governor-General, (I'm not saying he's running as an independent candidate you know), I use it as an example. I'm saying if the Opposition Leader wants to run as an independent candidate, he can request a new symbol and not choose from the long list that we have there. You know Grenada I believe might be the easiest place in the world to contest election.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: You're right.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: We have here now, we're approving a new symbol and we would just keep as long as the request comes in, because the Law allows it. So I'm not suggesting any change to the resolution as presented. All I'm doing is making an observation that I think we should deal with, maybe at some time in the future. Because we are going to end up with as I said with the symbol schedule bigger than the Act itself. So, Mr. Speaker, I felt obliged to make these comments.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for St. David. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, since the Member is so inclined as to make those observations of the list of symbols that are there, and probably the Member also want to know my business. But, Mr. Speaker, I may hasten to add, I mean just in this politics, I remember some symbols and there are some symbols there years. But I think individuals should be allowed and given the opportunity to choose their own symbols,

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

because for some symbols that are there and available, it might just bring bad memories for some people. And therefore, I mean, I believe that as it goes on, is it inexhaustible, in terms of symbols? And people would have sentimental values towards some symbols that other people might want to use. And so, I think the process should continue, Mr. Speaker, as is. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you leader of the opposition. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this particular case I support my colleague, the Member for St. David. We have many and we have been in this House and we see time and time again, many symbols coming in never used. It may have sentimental value, I don't know if this one in particular, Mr. Speaker, has the sentimental still value, the osprey bird, power, a symbol of power. Those may have sentimental value and some may have looked down the line and seen power, so they have a symbol of power.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. David is very correct, we have so many of those and we have to come here all the time to give effect to the symbol. And I do believe that the, maybe not cohesion, not through law but maybe if we speak with this, maybe some of them don't know that we have so many symbols, never used. And they may even attach more sentimental values to some of the things that they did not come up with, but are already sitting there. So in time to come, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we can clean this thing up to make just our working be more efficient, in every aspect of the administration of this country. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I recommend this Motion for approval.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

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

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

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 respects to whole or any part of Grenada including the ports and coastal waters thereof, for preventing:

- (a) danger to public health from ships or aircraft 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 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 23rd day of November 2021, the Minister with responsibility for Health made the Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations, 2021, and on the 30th day of November 2021, the House of Representatives by Resolution confirmed the Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations, 2021;

AND WHEREAS the Public Health situation in Grenada in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic has stabilised, and on the 4th day of April 2022, the Governor-General has revoked the declaration of the emergency proclaimed on the 11th day of January 2021, it is now expedient that the Quarantine (COVID-19) (Repeal) Regulations, 2022 attached hereto as a Schedule, be confirmed by the House of Representatives to repeal the Quarantine (COVID-19) Regulations, 2021;

Motions

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to the provisions of section 4 (3) of the Act, that the Quarantine (COVID-19) (Repeal) Regulations, 2022 be now confirmed by the House of Representatives.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Parliamentary Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is yet another phase as we go through this journey that every nation is taking for the first time. We're on the other side, (we truly do hope) of this pandemic. We are as we have said consistently in the last couple of months, learning to live with COVID, let me be specific again, Mr. Speaker, learning to live with COVID. COVID-19 has not gone away, it is here with us. However by the Grace of God and the progression of the actual virus, the strain in circulation throughout the world and in Grenada is not as deadly as previous, and as such in our constant, constant, constantly striving to find that balance between life and livelihoods, we find that it is appropriate to ease the restrictions. And this last one is to regularise previously easing the Quarantine Act, which would have caused persons coming into Grenada if they were not vaccinated to be placed in quarantine.

So, Mr. Speaker, we still have to keep our guard up but we must find that balance, and we continue to find that balance and this is yet another step. It is our sincere hope, as it is in most governments throughout the world, that we continue moving forward, that we continue to have COVID-19 behind us. But as we are all aware our cases are going up but our hospitalisations are not and as such we continue to seek the blessings of God, but I want to say that we should not take for granted these eases and we should all do what is necessary, which is vaccination, which is wearing our masks wherever we feel that we are at risk, taking the necessary precautions that one will take for all, all of the various diseases or viruses that are transferred or respiratory viruses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Minister for Health. Honourable Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion as presented by the Member for St. George South East. **(Inaudible comments)** How you trying to tie me up? **(Laughter)** South East! Mr. Speaker, as said in the Motion and as we may all recall, that when the Governor-General made the revocation of the proclamation on the 4th of April, at that time this situation with COVID was slightly different. We were perhaps a bit more stable and we expected, we expected that anything like that could happen, that there would be changes. It's still a fluid dynamic situation but we were also very prudently aware that when the circumstances permitted, that we had to loosen up on the protocols, that we had to remove some of the restrictions or all of them as necessary and that we had to allow our nation, our people to live as normal lives as possible and learning to live with COVID. Because there isn't an exact time frame as to when it will be over, there isn't a smooth pathway but we have to manoeuvre according to how the situation presents. And I really must put on record and maybe I have done it already my sincere appreciation for the way this Government and the Ministry of Health and the Ministers and everyone concerned has managed the COVID so effectively to the high appreciation of people worldwide. And I think we as a nation need to tap ourselves on the back for what we have achieved with COVID. **(Applause)** And while we have lost some lives and we mourn that and we will always be saddened by the events around the loss of death, but we could have lost more. The Ministry of Health and the nurses and everybody pitched in to ensure that we minimised the negative impacts of the disease and as they say the morbidity and the mortality which is the death.

So we have done well and we must continue to do so. So there are some changes, the numbers keep going up gradually, but thankfully few hospitalisations, few very seriously ill persons. But what we must remember, even if there's one seriously ill persons or two or three, for the individual who is seriously ill and the family, and the people around that individual, it's like the whole world is seriously ill. And if that person

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

dies, God forbid, then again it is a major lost and therefore since whatever virus it is, whatever strain does have the potential to take life and to cause harm, we must do what is necessary. We as individuals, our Government is doing well, our Ministry is doing well, we have to as individuals take full responsibility for our health and do what is necessary. So I just want to, in support of what the Minister for Health has said, let us take responsibility, let us wear our masks, let us sanitise, let us wash our hands and do whatever is required to ensure that we're safe.

I just want to add one more thing, Mr. Speaker. I have learnt from the Ministry of Health that the childhood vaccination rate has decreased at an appalling rate. So the usual vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella, all of these things that we used to do before and that we were always in the high 90's and highly commended by PAHO and other World Health Organisations, and we had forgotten what these diseases look like, we have forgotten... I'm seeing our children suffering from these things but the reality is that if we do not pick up soon, these things... instead of COVID could become the order of the day. The measles, the mumps, the rubella, all of these things that we had completely eradicated, and I could stand corrected by the Minister or any other, but I haven't heard of any outbreak in a very, very encouragingly long time. And therefore, as we deal with COVID and as we work together and take responsibility we must also take responsibility for the childhood vaccines that have been tried, that have been tested, that have been proven effective and that have saved the lives of our children and saved them suffering. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to indeed support the Motion as presented by the Member. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for St. Mark. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I can recall the last Sitting of Parliament, April 4, when we were here, I did stress that it would be up to the individual, in their own community, in the own homes to take matters in their own hands. The Minister said that probably we are on the other side **(laughter)**, I don't

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

know about the other side, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes I'm just thinking one day at a time. I look at the lockdown in China and at one time we were thinking that with the size of the population they were right there, but we have not yet ended COVID. And I always go back to the history of the Spanish Flu of 1919. And, Mr. Speaker, there could be many machinations of this COVID. Yes it is true that the strain that we have now may not be as deadly, but as the virus continue to learn to manipulate and to change, we must keep our guards up. Yes it is good that all restrictions are lifted and we ought to remind our people in what times we are living.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had the experience, I have a ten year old son, and so everywhere I go, I wear my mask and prescribe to the protocol. In one gathering they asked me why are you wearing mask. I said to them, I have a ten year old son at home to protect. I am vaccinated, wife is vaccinated, everybody at home is vaccinated, but my ten year old son is not vaccinated. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, last week, his class was at home because a few kids in the class tested positive for COVID and to see these poor little things with the stress of COVID and the stress of the parents because just knowing that your child have COVID is probably more painful for the parent than for the child. Last week I got an email from the school that states that the class will resume on Monday but everyone must show a certification of PCR negative test and I asked the question, how are they going to get tested. Some of those parents cannot even at this point in time even afford a test to send back their child. Yesterday the class resumed, my son got tested and only 1/3 of the class showed up and so, Mr. Speaker, I make the point that when you look at the rate of vaccination in our country, is probably one of the lowest in the Caribbean or the OECS there about and we continue to promote vaccination. I am vaccinated with booster too, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage people... and I remember just before the COVID I went down to the Ministry to get the yellow fever vaccination, myself and my entire family.

But, Mr. Speaker, where we are standing now, we ought to be very mindful of the change in time and the change in science of COVID and we cannot say that we are over with COVID. We must appreciate the little gains that we have but we ought to keep our guards up and remind people... remind our neighbours and friends that

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

COVID is still around, it is real, it is still deadly and it is on the rise in Grenada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the Motion as presented by the Leader of Government's Business but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few comments and hence my support is a bit guarded.

Mr. Speaker, I first will like to agree with the Member for St. Mark where she said that when the proclamation was made by the Governor-General, the situation was much better than it is right now because we are looking at some storm clouds gathering. We are hoping that they are not dangerous. Mr. Speaker, this decision to remove the state of emergency cannot be divorced from other major economic and social issues that we are confronted with now and will be confronted with in the future in going forward. And therefore I believe that we have to look at all avenues as to how we can deal with this situation in addition to issues that we have to contend with.

Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves impaled on the horns of a dilemma and it's a situation where whether you move from one to the other you have to look at the repercussions. Mr. Speaker, while we cannot afford to be hostage or make ourselves hostage of this virus, at the same time we cannot afford to make ourselves willing victims as well and hence the dilemma I am referring to. And, Mr. Speaker, what are some of the major social and economic issues we have to contend with which cannot be divorced from this particular thing. And I want to make mention of just one, this whole issue of the pension and the payments that have to be made. Mr. Speaker, it has been said and I have heard it mentioned by the Prime Minister that we are looking at arrears of pension payment of over \$400m that has to be paid out. But even more critical, Mr. Speaker, was when he made the point that in going forward, that is far more to me from an economic prospective, the future liabilities that will be incurred is over \$100. You

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

have to find that money on an on-going basis maybe for the next 10, 20 years. The fundamental question we must ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, how an economy like ours that is so constrained right now will be able to generate such revenue to make those expenditures. And you cannot say that we can rely on taxes. I have been hearing that we can tax this and tax that. We cannot rely on selling assets; I have been hearing that again.

Mr. Speaker, the only sustainable means of generating revenue to meet future liabilities must be a sustained growth in the Grenada economy. A simple calculation will reveal that in order to generate that type of revenue to meet that extra liability imposed by the pension payment in moving forward. Our economy must grow by no less than 5% annually and it must be sustain real growth, not inflationary growth, real growth in the economy of 5% and we have to project that over a minimum of 10 years going forward to give you some semblance as to how you can generate that revenue, that is the only way.

But the figure will go up, Mr. Speaker, because I am looking at what exists now. If we remove the possibility and it is real that the CBI Programme may come to an end sooner than we might believe and that NTF will no longer be a source of funding, that figure will be much higher. We may have to grow the economy by an even higher rate, Mr. Speaker, this is not simple. So for those who have all the fancy ideas that they can do this and they could do that, they have to face that grim reality, how will you grow an economy in excess of 5% annually over the next 12 years.

It means that we have to start now to identify new growth poles. What will be the sourcing of growth in our economy over the next 5 to 10 years? Can we rely on what exist right now or we have to look into new avenues? And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I support the idea that we cannot make ourselves victims of this virus, we have to live with it. As was said, it is endemic, we have to live with it because we have to look at the bigger picture that if we are saying let us contract, let us go into that cocoon again, what are the possibilities, it will be worst. It will be worst, Mr. Speaker, if we have to go into a period of contraction because the virus is here and I will come to that because I am not overlooking what is happening now but we have to have our eyes wide open that if we

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

maintain these restrictions or those.... Even psychologically we will be contracting our economy, we will not be able to generate revenue to meet future commitments and we will be worse off. So in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have to take the step that we have taken in terms of removing those restrictions so at least we can give more breathing space, Mr. Speaker, so our economy could generate that revenue.

Let me state again, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at all possibilities of generating growth in our economy in excess of 5% over the next 5 to 10 years just to meet that additional. And as I said if we remove the prospect of the NTF no longer being a primary source, that figure will be more. So we see how green the picture is. So don't let anybody come and give you no pie in the sky solution to this thing, it is not that simple.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we should not allow the complete removal of the state of emergency being passed by the Parliament to lead us into a false sense of security that everything is good. Everything will be ok, it is not, Mr. Speaker, and I believe members have quoted what is happening in other countries, see what is happening in Shanghai, a city of over 26 million people completely shut down, some people committing suicide because they have been locked up for so long. We see the figures rising in Grenada. As was said it's not as deadly and we should not wait until there is a death to ring the alarm bell. We must be conscious of the fact that this thing is still there, not as deadly but at the same time we have to look at what impact it could have. If more people become sick and have to be hospitalised, it means that the resources that we would need to put into the productive sectors of the economy will have to go into the unproductive sector to improve our healthcare, spend more on healthcare.

It means that Government may have to find additional stimulus packages to help those who may not be able to work or who have lost their jobs. Again we are moving resources; resources that we will need to generate that 5% in growth into areas that will not generate growth in the economy. It means that once people are sick, your productivity levels will fall, output will fall and your revenue potential will also fall so let us not take it lightly, Mr. Speaker. We have to open up but we have to be guarded and

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

do not send the wrong signal, that everything is okay. We know that this thing will spread the more mass social gatherings that we have. I see a number of political meetings, that could be a source, pre carnival activities, I saw something in the Cowpen I couldn't believe it was in Grenada and nobody wearing mask and in other venues, Mr. Speaker, and we are preparing for a big carnival. Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful, and I hope I am getting my message across. We cannot keep the economy closed down because we have to generate that kind of revenue we need in order to sustain ourselves but at the same time if we are not careful we can find ourselves at a more serious situation if we are careless.

Hence the reason why I said, Mr. Speaker, Grenada is now impaled on the horns of a dilemma, either direction you move you have problems. And that is why although we are removing the restriction, I support it because when I look at the cost benefit analysis I think it is more beneficial that we move in the direction in which we are moving now but at the same time I am imploring, Government, social partners that we must demonstrate greater collective responsibility in this regard. We are removing the state of emergency does not mean that we have a licence now to do what we want. We must continue and the message and I am hoping that in so doing we strengthen our educational programme or get the message out there that we must continue to wear our masks. We must continue with sanitisation, Mr. Speaker, vaccination and I was hoping that I would hear a stronger message being associated with the removal of the state of emergency. Yes the Minister did speak to it but I wanted a stronger message. This is not the time to become complacent because we have to open up but it must be, Mr. Speaker, within the confines of being more responsible in our behaviour.

Because is not only the death... you see we wait until someone dies and we panic, well now the thing get bad, sickness is not so... People being sick has implications as well for the resources of our country. And I am saying that in moving forward where we have to generate an additional \$100m to meet that kind of obligation we have to take all the necessary measures now to ensure that we put the economy on a sustainable development path. We have to ensure growth in excess of 5%. Let us start identifying those new growth poles or how we can reenergise what we are doing

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

now, let us not take that simply, Mr. Speaker. It is not now, a state of emergency gone, free abandonment, that will be a tragic mistake for all and will have implication for that major economic responsibility of having to generate finances to meet that kind of liabilities that the pension for public workers would create. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West, thank you. Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am standing to of course support this important Motion. I'm just happy to see your presence here this morning knowing that you had your own health challenges in recent times and that you look like somebody that never had any such challenges. So that's a testimony to the strength of the genes.

So, Mr. Speaker, clearly I think in listening to many of my colleagues on this Motion, the advice is very clear that one cannot afford to drop our guard because we've taken this decision which is a practical one but I think it is important here sometimes we are very good at being critical of each other's short comings and sometimes wrongfully so but we don't give enough credit when things happen. When we have done something that is good and others have in fact done what they're supposed to do. In fact I think that it is being perceived regionally and otherwise that this country has been one of the best in terms of the way it has managed COVID-19. What I call national approach was absolutely crucial; the leadership of the Cabinet Members clearly has to be given high acclaim. But, Mr. Speaker, specifically the Ministers for Health and the Minister for Hospital Services and their staff would have done a yeoman job, continues to do a yeoman job. **(Applause)** The CMO and all the staff members would have come up to the plate, the nursing staff, the doctors working in this environment where their health was also in danger could certainly have to be complimented, have to be given a lot of compliments.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

But, Mr. Speaker, also there are a number of persons who in our own society, the community organisations, people who are advising their family and friends throughout the country to be careful and to not to treat this thing lightly. We established a national committee to advise on the approach. There are members, some don't even wish that their names be called but we have to recognise that national contribution that so many people gave, the time that they gave to help us to deal with this virus because in my view it's something that we should see and continue to appreciate. Yes the issue is that we have not crossed the end line, we certainly have not crossed it but you know what is significant, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to view a serious national poll done by a regional organisation on this whole COVID-19 crisis, that's why I could talk about how Grenada performed relatively speaking.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes because of our partisan political divide, we sometimes don't find anything that we can complement each other on the other side of the political fence but you know I saw a data which says, even people who said I am voting for the opposition of our country, over 50% of them was complementing the Government for its leadership and performance on COVID-19. **(Applause)** I don't think I have ever seen an opposition party as a group giving another political organisation credit on any serious issue over 50%. Some of us have done it but not necessarily as a massive group. So I think we need to realise when something is good we must take note and be able to compliment each other, Mr. Speaker. But as some members quite rightly said what worries me, Mr. Speaker, is that there is that perception that we have crossed the line, we have reached the end of the race. No, because I have seen us like dropping our guards so to speak, not adhering to fundamental methods of protecting ourselves.

In fact in any given situation even if we don't have a crises, we still have to be careful about what you do and the approach to things around you because we have viruses around us all day, all the time but I am worried about the tendency to feel like we have crossed that line and that it's back to business as usual. And I am saying that in the context, I get the report from the Ministry of Health, the Minister sends it out about the percentage of vaccination and I look at the report every day and I'm looking to see a little point one change and in the last few weeks I haven't seen not even a point one.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

33.8, 33.8, 33.8 and I say but what is going on? Not even a movement in a 0.1%. It must worry me because it appears that we're done with this thing but we have not been done with it because it hasn't been done with us.

In fact as we can see it appears that the people who have not yet vaccinated because the virus is around. It may not be as potent as Delta and others before but the fact is that it is still around and with underlying problems that we may have and not being vaccinated we can face serious health problems and that is something that I honestly believe we need to be extremely careful, Mr. Speaker. So I wanted to issue that call again. We have no compulsory wearing of masks and so on but as I have always said, Mr. Speaker, I don't see why a Government has to pass a Law for me to protect my health. Even in the height of it when people was saying we need to do more drastic measures and I said but I don't know that... maybe in an autocratic system you may be able to get away with that as some countries appear to be getting away with it. But you try that here, I don't know you're going to be successful and what you would create in fact is a more dissension and more difficulties and confusion in the society and I am not sure you would achieve the objectives. So in effect what I am saying is we don't need to keep this regulation in place for each of us to be responsible.

The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that some members in his son's school got infected and he has pointed out his concern. Well that is something all of us should be; so it seems to me that we have a fundamental responsibility to vaccinate and to boost. Mr. Speaker, I am vaccinated and I have taken two boosters. I have done the second one and I want to make this point here. It is well known my mom is 99 and hopefully she would make the 100 this year and she is vaccinated and she is boosted, she got COVID and I was quite worried but you know something she is coming on and doing reasonably well. I am quite convinced had she not been vaccinated, it would have been a much different result. So in effect, I am using this point, I don't know if she would be happy for me making this point here today but I am making the point to tell others, if that could help somebody at 99 not to be extremely sick it means that vaccination works. That is the point I want to make. **(Applause)**

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not behind us. This COVID has cost us a lot of pain. It is being responsible for a lot of changes right but it also has been able to do certain things differently and COVID has helped us. In the last few days as Chairman of the OECS, in fact we have another meeting this evening and I said I can't make this one. We have had about four meetings in the last six days at the OECS level and CARICOM. If it was not for COVID we might have been trying to arrange transport to go to all kinds of countries. There is no way we could have had all this amount of meetings if it was not for COVID and forcing us to use the technology which was there long before COVID, but we were not using it effectively.

So I am making this point, we have a serious responsibility to protect ourselves, to protect our children, grandchildren, cousins and family members, our villages, our communities and by implication our country. So the message I want to keep sounding is please let us do what we have to do and protect ourselves as we go forward. And I think it's something that we can't ever ease up on because of the importance of it because we do not want... because if we have a major hospitalisation data coming we might have to come back here and reintroduce all the restrictions. I don't want to do this especially given a certain decision that I have to make soon; I don't want to do it because of the implications. We really need this to move pass any serious issues that would affect our economic situation because people have suffered. At all levels in this society some people have lost their businesses, some people had problems, emotional and psychological problems because they had to deal with this crisis that we are facing where our promoters, our artistes... So I say to people don't ask these guys to come and do no free shows for you. It is not fair; that's almost taking advantage of people because they have suffered and if their livelihood is based on their performances, I mean as much as they might love you and want to help, remember we still had some income, they don't have any. So even if they say to you don't worry, don't worry, you don't worry about what they don't worrying because really they are just trying to be nice. And that is across the board in the society in general. So I am very happy about certain things because I see little stalls all over the place. COVID-19 has helped the use of more local products. As I drive around the country places you never saw little stalls with

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

all kinds of agricultural products around the streets in the country and apparently they're staying there for good. So people are doing reasonably well and all this is sending the right message.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this because I am very happy that we are able to do this today and to pass this Motion because I think we have gone through enough and we continue to go through enough. As much as we can do to ease up the psychological problems that people are faced with, I think we ought to do it. And we are doing and that's why I am so proud of this team, Mr. Speaker. I think we all understand when we have power, power should be used in a way to understand what people are facing, power is one thing but you can use power irresponsibly to feel that I can do this and I can do that because I am this and I am that but if you don't understand the feelings of the people upon whom you are using the power, the power would become limited and also one day it will become more of an embarrassment more than anything else and all of us in this responsibility know that one day sooner than later we have to depart this scene and be an ordinary citizen and face the consequences of some of the actions that we have taken in leadership. Mr. Speaker, therefore I give my full support to this Motion. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recognise and commend all the contributions made, they are all pertinent and relevant. The take away, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to work collectively to get the correct solution and it cannot be a legislative matter only. Our citizens must recognise where we came from, where we have arrived at because of the collective responsibility taken by everyone. There are periods before that when we were facing stark disaster, economic disaster, whether we were pushed or whether we recognised and made our correct decision, we came out from one position into a position where we can sustain ourselves and that was because all units, all organisations, the entire country worked together. And we need not be reminded of the period, Mr. Speaker.

Now we're faced by another situation where we're removing the restrictions but we must collectively continue to work together to do what we have to do without being

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Motions

forced to do so. Because we have learned from one situation before and if we continue to build on this because of this situation we will be able to take care of other situations that are facing us, one of which the Member for St. Patrick West elucidated on quite eloquently.

So, Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to make some comment with respect to some of the economic metrics that he mentioned that we must attain and to indicate to him and to the nation, Mr. Speaker, that the World Bank and the IMF have agreed to provide technical assistance to model how we must go forward; the economic metrics. And they have done an analysis of Anguilla and Grenada and surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, it has shown that Ivan nearly 20 years ago we have not recovered. Far from recovering, Mr. Speaker, they are proposing that we augment all the regulations and all the activities that we have put in place to grow, not grow as we should because we could not have done that. Now we're faced with two or three economic shocks, I need not remind the people it is a pandemic and now with that fiscal liability that is facing us because of the pension court ruling.

So, Mr. Speaker, we must and this came out of the debate here while we spoke about the pandemic, we must work collectively together. We cannot push regulations only, we cannot push results of court action only, we all must collectively work, give and take otherwise the Ivan that we have not recovered from although we were climbing with all the economic shocks facing us, we will now sink. We were climbing, we will not even reach a plateau, it will be an immediate decline and so I just ask all of us, Mr. Speaker, as we recognise and commend this Motion for its second reading that we just started on a course that will require astute and strong leadership both economically and elsewhere and in order to get people together... that's the leadership, management of people and leadership so that they can stay along the correct path, Mr. Speaker, and this is of extreme importance.

And I am happy to note that all the Members here recognise this from the support given to this Motion. I therefore recommend this Motion, Mr. Speaker, for approval.

(Applause)

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

***Motions
Bills***

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 15 - Bills.

Mr. Speaker: 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 National Disaster Management Bill.

Clerk: A Bill to provide for comprehensive disaster management and for related matters shortly entitled, Disaster Management Bill, 2022.

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 stages at this sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

Question

proposed.

Bills

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: The aim of the Bill in particular, Mr. Speaker, is to inform the Law regarding Disaster Management to better reflect the goals and principles of a comprehensive disaster management system and the internationally agreed best practices respecting disaster management. It is to provide a comprehensive mechanism for disaster management in Grenada. To do so, Mr. Speaker, the Bill will repeal the National Disaster Agency Powers Act, Chapter 203A, the current legal framework that we have, Mr. Speaker, related to disaster management and so many of the terms in this Bill will not be new. Their construct though will be different and the requirement will be vastly different, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill will formerly establish the National Disaster Management Agency (NaDMA) with legal personality and it will provide for other matters related to disaster management in Grenada, Mr. Speaker. So we will repeal the existing Bill. That is why it is not an amendment because it is a comprehensive framework, Mr. Speaker. And management of disaster, we have learnt, we are accustomed to storms and hurricanes and sea surges, Mr. Speaker, but the first time we got great experience in a pandemic. And this reminds us again, Mr. Speaker, in 2016 when we were discussing the Fiscal Responsibility Laws and when we sat across the table from the World Bank and the IMF and we were looking at what can cause great shocks, we know about Ivan, we know about Janet so hurricanes, storms, floods, we know about all of those but the new kid on the block was the pandemic and we said yes it will cause a problem so we put it in. Never expecting, Mr. Speaker, that it would struck us so significantly. Close by we hear about volcanoes and other disasters so all these were listed.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard about the financial crisis so that was taken care of. You might say well the pension ruling might fit into this but all of those, Mr. Speaker, they reflected in what we call here best practices for disaster management because all of those, whether you want to refer to it as a direct disaster or not it will have economic repercussions. And so, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the natural disaster, the Bill provides for Part I and Part II, the normal parts that we will see in Bills but Part II in particular.

Bills

Clauses 5 to 13 make provisions for the establishment for the National Emergency Advisory Council. We know about that in particular, Mr. Speaker, establishment of the key stakeholders so you would have the National Advisory Council and you have the key stakeholders. This organisation... this component is not a legal person, it has not been a legal person but when we come to NADMA, all of us know about NADMA. NADMA was not a legal person; it was something similar to the Advisory Council in legal construct. Part 3 which is the National Disaster Management Agency which is Clauses 14 to 17, let us look at what it says, Mr. Speaker, it was not there under the first Act that we used to operate under. It says **“there is hereby thereby established an agency to be called the National Disaster Management Agency”**, this is not said about the council; the council is an advisory body. **“The agency is a body corporate”**, a legal person, **“to which section 49 of the Interpretation and General Provision Act CAP 153 applies...”** and what most of us use for a body corporate and a legal person, you can sue and be sued. All the other things are only peripheral of what this legal person can do; you could not have done that with NADMA before.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are taking the best practices. When we hear about FEMA and all these places on the other, if we go look, they are a person you know, they have their own body, they have their own rights, they have their own responsibility, they have the president visit to other countries in the world. The Prime Minister will visit but they are separate legal bodies in their respective jurisdiction, this is one of the main differences between this Act. And why? Because it is best practice, Mr. Speaker.

What we have to do now in the Ministry of Finance is what we call climate change targeted financing. In other words you have to set up and show all the monies that you have spent on climate change from 2023 budget. So if we cleaned all the drains to deal with the climate change we have to isolate the sums of money that we spent on drain cleaning when the climate change flood come, the drain must run and show that as a list so at the end of the day we will have \$100m spent on climate change. The same, Mr. Speaker, it is a national disaster, we have to do this under this Bill because we have to use best practices. It may not be there now but as soon as it is implemented worldwide then NADMA will have to do what they have to do in order to

Bills

work with the Ministry of Finance, Infrastructure in particular, Tourism in particular to get a lot of things done.

Why Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, now we have to have to have resilient buildings. So NADMA must state in its roles, not only must the Ministry of Infrastructure do it but NADMA must ensure that all our infrastructure meets a specific standard. So all of those things are being placed in this Bill, Mr. Speaker. So we will hear a lot of similar names that we heard before but the nation must know that they now have significant responsibilities and they have the necessary authority to do certain things, to see how we're working in order to build resilience in our country and to prevent natural disasters, Mr. Speaker. Well you can't prevent it but you could mitigate it, you could prevent the damage that it can do by having certain things in place, Mr. Speaker.

"Clause 20 provides for direction to be given to the coordinator...", you heard about coordinator but this particular Bill **"...provides for direction to the coordinator in relation to the policy to be followed in the exercise of functions and duties imposed on the coordinator."** So there is a whole section on the coordinator explaining more what he has to do and this has now made it mandatory.

"Clause 21 provides for the preparation of the national comprehensive disaster management plan and other plans that will support disaster mitigation." Before it may have been done, it may have been mentioned but now it is mandatory in Law, the many things he/she has to do; again very strict. The National Emergency Operation Centre, this is now placed there. We may have done things before because you can see the reason for doing it but now it is mandatory, how would that centre operate? We do have a modern centre, one in Carriacou, one in Grenada... two modern centres, so they will be functioning under the best practicing. Not only in Grenada, worldwide. What role should they play if another pandemic rise or even if this pandemic resurfaces at a greater height, this would be there. It would be the Ministry of Health plus so it is not only the cyclone and the environment and the climate but they have their role to play and so we will be better managing all the situation, Mr. Speaker, within our country.

Bills

“Part VIII in the Bill contains Clauses 53 to 56 and provides for the national multi-hazard alert system.” We knew about it, something that is coming across here from Kick 'em Jenny, yes it was there and we worked it but now we know what we must do, the time frame we must give people notice of and the sort of equipment and things we should be monitoring. It is there now, it will affect our budget. So as we pass this, the consequence therefore is to increase the spending in the area of disaster management. The Member for St. Patrick West did indicate the economic fallout of a lot of these things but we have to do these things, Mr. Speaker, irrespective of the other burdens that the State will face. So you say pay this one and leave disaster alone, no and that is where the World Bank and the IMF will come in because they will help us in order to maintain sustainability to put the priority areas. So in other words you must spend on this. Thereafter you seek all those different loans as the Member was mentioning about raising revenues to do the other things. What they are basically saying, we cannot survive if we don't do these things but you have a limited pie. How do you do the rest? That's where you need the astute leadership backed by knowledge and experiential learning; these things cannot be done from the textbook, Mr. Speaker. When we see what we are facing in the future alluded to again by the Member for St. Patrick West, we have to be extremely concerned. The responsibility is on us to ensure that Grenada continues along the path and one thing is added to our task; getting us back from a state from Ivan, something we thought passed 20 years ago. If we had no Ivan we would have been here, with Ivan and with nothing done we would be there, with Ivan and with the work and the leadership of this Administration we are there in between but we not where we should have been. And that has been affecting the magnitude of the growth. The Member mentioned about 5% to 6% drastically greater than that if we have to tackle the problems before us. I make this point to show that the Disaster Management Agency is something that we must safeguard and we must ensure that we have the financing for it, Mr. Speaker.

The other sections of the Bill are very clear. We have section IX, **“Clause comprises 57 and 58 and deals with miscellaneous matters”** as done with any Bill. There is the repeal, we must repeal, Mr. Speaker, the Disaster Management Authority

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Bills

Bill and one of these sections does so. As such, Mr. Speaker, I propose this Bill and I again want to repeat its importance. Just as we have liabilities to meet we must meet the cost of this liability otherwise we would not be here. So I recommend this Bill, Mr. Speaker, for its second reading. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. Do we have...
Leader of Government's Business you were standing?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for their understanding. I know they have read the Bill and I know that we have been discussing where we have been for quite a while so I thank them for their tacit support and so I recommend the Bill for its second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Part by Part.

Question proposed.

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 amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

**Bills
Adjournment**

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 16 - Public Business.

Item 17 - Request for leave to move the adjournment of the House on matters of Urgent public importance.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of this Honourable House, *sine die*.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that I should stand here at this point in time to make, well, I can say it might be my last statement because the man has something to do and he can do it at any time. **(Laughter)** But, Mr. Speaker, I would tell the man as Jesus Christ told one of his disciples, whatever you have to do, do it quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stand in this House and not speak to the reality of what is going on now in this country, that is the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. I am not blaming anyone inside here but with the advent of COVID itself that has been a disaster for a lot of people. You know, Mr. Speaker, it hit me when I went to buy a little bun in the shop, it used to be \$0.50 and the lady said to me you know the price changed, the price is now \$1.00. But when you look at the cost of everything else, Mr. Speaker, you look at that cost in terms of the wheat product. Mr. Speaker and people are talking about the runaway prices of goods and services in Grenada, the farmers are complaining. Mr. Speaker, the feed for the chickens the price of the chickens itself but the same price they are getting for the raw material in terms of the chicken when they sell it to the different food chains. Mr. Speaker, the price of agriculture products... Mr. Speaker, you know a bag of fertiliser before COVID used to be sixty something, seventy something dollars, today it is one hundred and thirty something dollars for the same bag. I mean my heart goes out. I see Marketing Board get a few bags that might be able to supply to the farmers, the Minister for Agriculture, the farmers do appreciate that but not only the price of the agriculture goods. Farmers will tell you that they go to sell their products and the prices that they get for it are still the same yet the cost of production increased. The fishermen are complaining, Mr. Speaker, the mothers and fathers at home, the price of all the goods in the shop have increased. And so this is something that we must take into consideration in our calculation and for some people it is a real disaster.

Mr. Speaker, we have our Ministers here and this is the second time, the last Sitting of Parliament no Ministerial Statement. This Sitting of Parliament, no Ministerial Statement, is this a Government at work? It should be, but then again sometimes we are afraid to talk in case we might make a gaffe or something. Don't be afraid because

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

again we go back to the times we are living in. We are at the edge and anything could happen at any time, so we are guarded.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is true that constitutionally an election should be in the making anytime soon but our papa here... I didn't say papa God this time just papa, have it in his hand to make that determination. But still when that time comes everybody must be prepared and everybody must be ready. I know they send out fillers to find out what I am doing. **(Laughter)** What I am doing, Mr. Speaker, is my business. If I stand in this House or if I don't stand in this House, the Almighty will determine that. Because sometimes we can never tell you know, we walk out of this place here and we may not walk in back because that is the power of the God who we are dealing with. So again I say all by the mercies of God whether you are prepared or not.

But, Mr. Speaker, within our society we are looking at what is taking place. We had a demonstration last week and I was asked about it and I said to them let the investigation first take place before we come to any conclusion. That is the disaster between the Coast Guard and the small boat. But, Mr. Speaker, moreover than that we should look at the way we do business in Grenada especially with Marine Laws. And when I heard that it came close to home because I say my heart goes out the family and friends of that young man who have lost his life. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, it came home to me that a few years ago in 1986, I lost my grandfather, boat accident, two boats collided. In 1998 I lost my cousin in a speedboat accident in Petite Martinique again, ran into the back of another boat, accident. I lost other friends and family by boat accident. Mr. Speaker, I believe in this country we ought to strengthen regulations for marine activity especially boats that are anchored or boats that are moving in the night, they should be well lighted so that people can see and recognise that they are there. And so this is why I did not come to any major conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, again, I was asked if I'm going to get involved in the judgment that is handed down by the Court in terms of pension and gratuity and I was thinking, I said the leadership of this country with his political powers and his political astuteness he would do the right thing and the Court judgment will be honoured. And I do believe that the Court Judgment will be honoured but **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker, you know, I go back

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

to my politics of youthful young days and, Mr. Speaker, I have been involved in the politics a long time. I used to be good friends with Herbert Blaize and one of the few times I looked at him and felt sorry for him was when he had to pay the teachers the back pay. And I remember in 1989 before he passed the last thing that he did was to, I believe, sell the majority of shares in Cable and Wireless to pay the back pay. I looked at him and he looked at me and when the Political Leader now of the NNP took over he asked me about it and I said I supported that move because at the time I saw almost the ailing health of Mr. Blaize and he looked at me in the eye and he said “so you with Keith too?” But then after I looked at the stress and I felt sorry for him. And he made some statements and today when I look at it, you know things have a way of coming back. They say what goes around comes around and I remember the mantra back in the day, if he has the money to pay, let him pay. **(Laughter)** In other words today the same thing can be said but I would not say that, Mr. Speaker, I have to be responsible. Mr. Blaize sold majority shares in Cable and Wireless to pay the back pay. My question is what are we going to sell this time to pay pension and gratuity?

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Sell you.

(Laughter)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Me? My hands and my soul belong to the Lord, so who want to sell, sell. I know where I am going. Mr. Speaker, maybe we might have to sell GRENLEC this time to pay the pension and gratuity. I would not say that it can be done now but what I said and I will say it again that all parties must sit down and come to an amicable solution and way in which the Court Order must be ordered. And I do believe that, **(applause)** honestly I do believe that and so those people who are thinking it should be done today for today, I cannot say. But Government must and will and probably start to make preparation so that these things can be honoured. And I think that will be taken into consideration so that when they have to do what they have to do that would be part of the deal and maybe that might be part of the legacy that they were

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

the one who started in terms of paying pension and gratuity to the workers and so the workers.... I made mention that I had conversation with one worker, a teacher and I spoke to her the Thursday, the last question that she asked me that is Rachel Bartholomew, I could never forget that “Mr. Clement, do you think that we will get the pension and gratuity?” And I said “I don’t know”. I bid her bye and the next thing I know she passed. And that always rang in my mind that the last question that she asked me, Mr. Clement do you think we will get our pension and gratuity? As they say sometimes the old people say if I die ants will bring news for me so maybe we have ants walking now to those who have gone on before that those who remain may get a little bit of justice. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for the Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, good morning and good to see you here as Prime Minister said.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Peter David: We wish you continued good health. I had my light the same time the Member had his light on so he went first but I have no hesitation to give a Ministerial Statement, so I am here prepared.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment on Agriculture and Labour, two areas that I cover in the Government of Grenada. I will start with agriculture and I want to say that the Member for St. George North-East raised a critical point which is the cost of inputs and he started by mentioning fertiliser and in fact in my notes that I had prepared for this morning that took the top of the list. Because we are absolutely aware of the impact that COVID has had, the war in Ukraine, not only COVID, the war in Ukraine and if you listen to the news, anybody who turns on the TV on international news on any given morning will hear that inflation worldwide is a big

Adjournment

issue. In fact, President Biden in the US is threatened by inflation and Maurice Bishop used to always say when the North sneeze we catch the cold and so there is a whole... and I know the Member for St. Patrick West and the Member for St. George South-East will know that our inflation is largely imported inflation. So the rise in prices should not be a surprise to anyone. What we try to do and I am sure the Member for South-East will articulate that better than I can ever do, is the way in which we try to mitigate the rise in prices; the imported inflation, we can only mitigate the impact and that is what we are trying to do. And I would just use the example and the Member did indicate to his credit that we are trying to mitigate it for the farmers.

I stand as Minister for Agriculture and with respect to fertiliser there are a couple of things that we are doing. First, the Member spoke of the agreement we entered into with the Government and People of Morocco where we receive fertiliser from them and we are sending a very much discounted price to the farmers. And he is correct when he says that prices of fertiliser skyrocketed in the period after COVID. Everybody knows there is new terminology in the world now, supply chain problems and all of these things. So we are mitigating it by having that reduction and it is as a result of a bilateral relationship and continued good relationship with Morocco that we've received the fertiliser. The farmers now have access to it.

In addition to that we have discussions going on with the Ministry of Finance and some of the suppliers of fertiliser to see what we can do locally for our Government to subsidise for a period in any event fertiliser prices so that farmers can access it. Because everybody is aware that without fertiliser agriculture will perish. And additionally we have also entered into discussions with the Government and People of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; they have agreed to supply us with urea. Urea is one of the most popular fertilisers that we use in Grenada, so again they are going to supply us with fertiliser and we are going to make it available to farmers at very much discounted prices. So we are working to ensure that the farmers, as much as possible mitigate their costs. We know that farms have already received most of the inputs if not all at concessionary prices. The Government grant concessions to farmers for the inputs into farming. Of course we have to ensure and this is where we have been

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

having discussions with many of the farmers to ensure that the business people who sell agricultural inputs really do pass on the benefit of the concessions that the Government gives for agricultural products. So farmers who wants to buy vehicles, they get a discount on it, the concessions are given to them for vehicles, for inputs, for fertiliser, for forks, for spades, for boots. So the Government in its attempt to mitigate the effects of the imported inflation will do more to ensure that the prices stay down and to ensure that the fertiliser and other inputs reach the farmers at reasonable prices.

With respect to the Ministry of Agriculture, another important development is the Land Policy that we have developed. I keep talking about it because land use in Grenada is a serious problem. We only have 80,000 acres; I say that every time I speak. We have as much as possible to ensure that the acreage is utilised properly. So what do we have? We have a land bank in order to provide land to farmers who want to farm, that is being done. We have to ensure that we find all of the land because there is no real inventory of all of the land. So the Government has agreed that we are going to have someone locate all of the lands so we know which lands to put for agriculture, which lands to put for manufacturing, which lands to put for housing.

Housing is a serious problem. In fact housing is something that the Government is actively looking at, so what are we doing in the Ministry of Lands? We are going to identify plots of land to make available to the Ministry of Housing to develop housing sites and that is something that the Government is working on aggressively. So agricultural land to be used for agriculture, housing land to be used for housing, manufacturing land to be used for manufacturing and recreational land to be used for recreation. We are also identifying areas where we can develop National Parks. We are going to ensure that Grenadians have places they can go close to the beach, in Grand Etang, in other areas where we can take our families on Sundays, in the mornings go to the beach. So we have to also allocate a portion of land everywhere in every constituency so that our people can have leisure. Because we work hard, but we need to rest and that is where we are going to develop these National Parks.

In addition to that in the Ministry of Agriculture we have rehabilitated the Mirabeau Station, the Ashenden Station, the Laura Station and the Maran Agricultural

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

Station, why? Because we need to ensure that we have plants, we need to ensure that our agronomy division is able to supply plants to all of our farmers. We know that citrus for example, there was the issue of citrus greening, so we are just in the process of rehabilitating the green houses so that we can begin the process of production of citrus sometime later this year. We are also looking at access roads; the Ministry of Agriculture is working with the Ministry of Infrastructure to clear some of the access roads. There are roads still down after Hurricane Ivan, we are trying to work... in fact we have received some of the equipment to develop access roads into these farms.

The Youth in Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth recently signed off with CDB on Youth in Agriculture. It is important, you know I met a group of TAMCC students recently and it is amazing that these young people, the passion they have for agriculture. So we are going to integrate them into the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that they develop their skills in the interest of this country. In addition to that the Chinese Agricultural Mission, we are about to go into the 8th phase. We are also working with GDB to get new financing, a very big issue to ensure that young people who go into farming, we provide the land, GDB to create some financing mechanisms.

I want to thank all the farmers. I have visited the traditional farmers, the cocoa and the nutmeg and the new farmers, the people who are into seamoss and into soursop. I want to thank them for working with me over the last year.

With respect to the Ministry of Labour, just briefly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the workers for the invitation extended to me on Labour Day. I have been going to Labour Day for 22 years and I enjoy it thoroughly. Despite all of the rancour, I thoroughly enjoy interacting with the workers, listening to them, receiving their complaints and I want to thank them for the invitation and God's willing if I am there next year I will be, if I am in the Ministry of Labour, I will certainly be there. But if I am not on the podium I will certainly be in the audience on Labour Day next year. In addition to that I want to say to them that we are working to resolve the disputes despite the challenges in the Banking Sector, in the Commercial Sector, in the Tourism Sector. Our role is to mediate resolutions, we are working assiduously to do that despite the challenges that we have. Just to indicate that a recent pronouncement by the Privy

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

Council in a matter brought before the Privy Council has created a challenge, a challenge for many workers. The challenge is that the Privy Council has said once they finish with us at the Ministry they cannot go to court. We are considering Legislative changes in order to deal with that but I will not speak much of that but that in our view was a serious blow to the rights of workers. That is why this Government will make whatever Legislative changes need to be made to ensure that the workers' right to get a fair resolution in any forum in this country is secured and we are working with our partners at the Ministry of Labour to ensure that the workers' right to get good resolution is not affected by the recent Privy Council ruling.

Finally on the minimum wage, the Minimum Wage Board continues to be constituted, we may make some changes soon but just to assure all workers that we are addressing the issues. Over the COVID period, there was a stall in the Minimum Wage Board's activities but we want to assure all of the workers, workers who will be affected; construction trades, steel benders, masons, carpenters, domestic workers, store clerks, agricultural workers, security guards all of them are affected by the Minimum Wage Board's decisions. I want to assure them that the Minimum Wage Board is being reactivated after a lull of the COVID period. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Representative for the Town of St. George. Honourable Representative for St. George North-West and Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Just to say just a few words on the adjournment as moved by the Leader of Government's Business. Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak but the Leader of the Opposition made a number of reference that I assume he was speaking to me indirectly so. But I just want to make this point, the Member for St. George North-East spoke as if he had the fat lady singing. **(Laughter)** I don't know whether I heard the fat lady singing but he spoke as if he had premonition and therefore he spoke on a wide range of issues as if one is saying that this is the last time I am going to be here **(laughter)** in my entire life, the rest of my life and he spoke about death and all kind of... he really made me feel sad to some extent,

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

Mr. Speaker, so I just want to say to my friend. Because he remembers the last conversation we had at Mt. Royal before he made his own decision, that whatever happens, we wish you the very best in all your future undertakings for whatever you decide to do in the future because at some point it sound like somebody preparing for the election campaign. So I was going to ask him which side he planning to bat with. Maybe he will tell me privately, he may not say it here today but he will do so. I look forward to hearing him tell me what he plans to do.

Mr. Speaker, just something, he made the point on the question of prices and I think we need to be very careful because for example I heard something was \$0.50 today and it's \$1.00 tomorrow, the implication from the statement is as if that price was an inappropriate price. One of the things we have to be careful and in fact Governments all over the world are coming to terms with this, that sometimes people use unfortunate situation to raise prices unnecessarily. I am not accusing anyone here because I don't know the facts but I am just saying be careful that we just run and jump to conclusions. Because I mean you have seen in the United States, the question of oil prices and while consumers are bawling about prices the big oil companies are reporting billions and billions of profit, you know, so one has to understand. If there is a painful experience in a society and if everyone has a conscience there should not be a case where a small group of persons are making enormous amount of profit that cannot be justified especially in a situation that people are having difficulties and the mass of persons are suffering in the society. And you know what happens, whether the politician have anything to do with it at all, the Government, that always comes down because you see Biden is taking licks in his poll numbers in the United States because... and when they ask people questions it's correlative with the increase in prices of energy. Which directly if you analyse it properly, it has little or nothing to do with the actions of Government.

The harsh reality is that we do have to look at this situation seriously and recognise that there are things we need to do. Maybe we need to upgrade and probably develop stronger human resources for the Price Control Department. That is something that we have to look at because it may mean that there must be more

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at the Parliament Chamber on Tuesday 10th May, 2022**

Adjournment

vigilance with respect to prices particularly on basic items that all persons would have to use. So we should not sit back and just make statement about prices but what are we doing about it? And I certainly would have loved to hear the Leader of the Opposition in his statement talk about any suggestion because we're all in this thing together. That's what you have to come with, what suggestions you have. We will in fact be looking at several factors, as I mentioned, the issue of price control as one area but there are a number of things that we will have to take some decisions to deal with.

Government has already done certain things; we have pegged the price of gasoline at \$15.00. I was looking at the data recently from the Customs Department and where they are projecting six point something million dollars from the energy source, I saw six hundred and something thousand dollars. In other words the Government would have lost \$5m in one month, not from January you know, one month. So it tells you the situation is serious. Now had we not done this it means that the price of gasoline would be twenty plus dollars per gallon. So one has to recognise and at the same time we're having this being done, there are increasing demands on Government's coffers. Increasing demands in several areas, education for example. The amount of increases in services to protect our children in the school and our teachers are quite enormous. Where is it coming from? And at the same time you have calls for increment increases that are owed and salary increases that are owed and more increases here and then you have pension this and so on... I don't...

I'll make it very clear; the present situation cannot be compared to 1989. It cannot be. In fact, this Government has never sold national assets to meet debts. **(Applause)** We have never done it, astute management of the economy has been the fundamental basis upon which **(applause)** this Government has existed. And the Member when he was part of it would have been espousing the praises of the Government for having done this, so there's no issue of season. The purse, the Governments that would have done it, past Governments and the one that's talking now, they have solutions for everybody's problems, they're going to now make everybody permanent in the Public Service and the Private Sector. They're going to force the Private Sector to hire people permanently and they're going to find the money

Adjournment

to give the Private Sector to pay. And they have solution, they're now going to have serious wage increases for all the workers, while when they were in their own profession, they did everything to prevent the workers from getting a basic increase, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** But all of a sudden they come from manna drop from Heaven. They're now saviour for every single solution in the country, pie in the sky. You know, as someone said they're simply not ready for prime time, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** they're not ready for this. Because as the Minister for Labour alluded to this, **(laughter)** alluded to the question of wage increases, it's not the same thing where you just make irresponsible statements. It might sound popular to some persons and if I'm earning wages, I, it sound popular to me but you have a wage tripartite, Fiscal Responsibility Act that governs how these things are done, because it's a tripartite relationship: Government, Trade Unions and the Private Sector. That's the only way it has to be done, because if you make a decision that happens to satisfy one element of the tripartite grouping, and it causes major disruption in the Private Sector operation and they start laying off workers, then where are we? So it is nice to say, and some people might just go in a ballot box and vote because they expect to get massive increases because somebody promised them that. But it does not work and we all know when promises like that were made in the sky before, pie in the sky type promises, what happened was disappointment when the election was over. Because when the IMANI was expecting to get massive increase, they were all sent home but the same persons or the same organisation today are telling us that that they can be doing this and they have everything, yes man, yes man, yes man. It does not work.

So I end, Mr. Speaker, on the note I started. The fat lady could be singing but I don't know if the Leader of the Opposition has spoken to her. **(Laughter)** But whatever it is, I want to take this final opportunity to wish him the very best in the future **(laughter)**, the very best in whatever undertaking, but it does not surprise me, it will not surprise me that I would not see him in the Parliament of this country again. But I wish you all the best in all his future undertakings. **(Applause)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

Adjournment

(Inaudible comments/laughter)

Mr. Speaker: Alright Honourable Members, just before I put the question, let me say my gracious thank you to all the Members of Parliament for your concern that you showed during my short period of illness. You know, I was speaking to someone yesterday and I said, that I fell ill and arriving at the hospital there were two Parliamentary Representatives up there, and I was wondering if they fell ill or I fell ill. And they were up there before me, and **(laughter)** it was very heartening, I had to laugh even while I was being placed on a bed, I was laughing. What are these two ladies doing outside when I am the person who was ill? And not only that, they had pain because they were crying. I thank you so very much. It shows the level of concern and empathy that is displayed among my brothers and sisters. And I thank you.

In fact one of the doctors asked, they don't know you're sick? Because the phone kept ringing. I say well they don't have time for that. If you're sick you either get up or you get down. And I thank you kindly for your concern, for your regular calls and cheer up and so on. I am okay, I think so. The doctors have not said anything differently. They're still doing some tests with some of the experts to see what is happening but up till now they have not yet come to a conclusion as to what exactly caused the reaction that I had. But I must say thank you, thank you very much for your concern and waiting for the call sometimes make me forget that I was sick. So I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned sine die at 11:17 a.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTERS

Mrs. Bernice Bridgeman
Miss Janelle Palmer
Miss Shanta Joseph
Miss Akeda David

EDITORS

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Clerk)
Miss Daniele Blackman (Administrative Secretary)