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GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday 3rd September, 2021

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House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 3rd September, 2021.

Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP, JP, MBE	- Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
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 of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Cooperatives
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, ITC 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, ITC and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ITC
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition

House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 3rd September, 2021.

Attendance

ABSENT

(Excuses tendered)

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 Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	- Minister for Labour, Agriculture and Lands
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Information and Religious Affairs
Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
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
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker

Prayers
Minutes

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:02 a.m.

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

(House Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Let us join together, 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.

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 Wednesday, 7th July, 2021 be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Minutes
Announcements
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 Wednesday, 7th July, 2021 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, I just wish to announce that the Parliamentary Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique would not be with us today, and also the Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-West would not be with us today. They are otherwise disposed.

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. Grenada 2021 Mid-year Economic Review and Estimated 2021 Performance.

Papers / Reports

2. Minutes of the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Finance held virtually via Zoom Platform, on Thursday, 26th August, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
3. The Annual Report of the National Insurance Board (NIS) for the year ended 31st December, 2020.
4. Annual Report and Financial Statements and Audit Report thereon of the Grenada Ports Authority for the year ended 31st December, 2019.
5. Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) for the period 1st January to 31st December, 2020.
6. Annual Report and Report the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of Grenada Food and Nutrition Council for the year ended 31st December, 2019.
7. Report of the Director of Audit on the resources managed for the period 1st January to 31st December, 2020 for CARCIP, the Caribbean Regional Communication Infrastructure Programme.
8. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Financial Statements of the Child Protection Authority for the year ended 31st December 2017.
9. Report of Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Financial Statements of the Child Protection Authority for the year ended 31st December, 2018.
10. Report of the Director of Audit and the Financial Statements of the OECS.
11. Regional Agricultural Competitiveness Project (AGRICOM) for the period ended 31st December, 2020.
12. The Director of Audit Report and Annual Report of the Grenada Bureau of Standards for the year ended 31st December, 2019; and
13. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on the Financial Statements of the Office of the Ombudsman for the year ended 31st December, 2019.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, the Reports and Papers have now been laid on the Table.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 - Questions

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a few questions here, and the first question directed to the Minister for Health, Honourable Nickolas Steele. Questions (1) to (3) have to deal with the Pharmaceutical Industry.

Question (1): What are the current policies regarding the sale of pharmaceutical to Government Institutions by private Companies in Grenada?

Question (2): What are the legislative controls on the source of drugs to the Government, Public Hospitals, Clinics and Pharmacies? Do the current policy outline consequences for unethical practices such as competitive pricing that prevent the sale of Government supplies? If so, are the consequences implemented, and (b) are the accountability measures in place?

Question (3): What are the policies regarding the responsibility of healthcare workers and providers regarding the sale and distribution of Pharmaceutical products?

And, the last one here: are employees, healthcare workers and providers required to verify any conflict of interest and sign legal document stating this?

Mr. Speaker: Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am sure my learned Colleague, on the "Other Side" would recognise that right now, as always, we are doing the business of the people, and I will, as always address his questions in writing to this House, but he shall have it. But I do apologise not being able to right now, because we are dealing with the pandemic, but his questions are pertinent and relevant and will be addressed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. So, the answers to the questions would be addressed in writing.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, Question (6), here, No. (6) on the Order Paper here, I think is one that should be relevant. But, this question, probably, was submitted over a month ago.

Can the Member of South St. George and the Minister for Health tell this Honourable House what is the percentage of the population that is vaccinated and what percentage of Healthcare workers under his Ministry is vaccinated?

Maybe I can take Question (7), here, at the same time. Can the Minister for Health, Member for South, St. George, provide to this House, the number of doses of vaccine that is in stock for the Grenadian people?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, the level of vaccination of the population is released to the population daily, and I will make an effort to present to my learned brother in writing, as it is his right to give him in writing, specially, what those public announcements are daily. With respect to the number of stocks of vaccines, it changes daily, so I will put it in writing, but we did also announce and we do also announce the receipt of every single quantity of vaccines and by a process of Mathematic, we can dictate what the stock is. But, also in writing, I will present to him. But, as of yesterday's figures we were approximately twenty-five thousand persons with the first dose and approximately nineteen thousand persons with the second dose. I do hope that by the time I am making these statements now that those figures are not as

accurate, in that individuals will be receiving their vaccines at present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The next Question here is for the Minister for Education, Information and Religious Affairs.

Can the Minister for Education, Member for St. Andrew South-East provide the cost of registration upon entry upon to public Secondary Schools for students, who have exited Primary School in the State of Grenada?

Mr. Speaker: We did not… Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member is not present, we will commit to present the response within the time limit given by the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the next question on the Order Paper is for the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister and Member for St. George North-West provide to this House the evidence of corruption that a former Diplomat was involved in, as stated by the Prime Minister in this House, on May 22, 2017?

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Similarly, the Prime Minister is not here, and it's best to wait on him to address this particular question. It is not the

normal run of the mill question, so I would not put a time table or a commitment as to when a response would be given, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, next question on the Order Paper is for the Minister for Finance and Leader of Government's Business, Member for St. George South-East.

1. Can the Member of St. George South East and Minister for Finance provide to this House the cost of the infrastructure work that was done and condemned from La Borie junction to the Medical Clinic?
2. Who absorbed the cost of the work that was done?
3. What is the total cost for the reconstructions of the drains?

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member would be responded to. As indicated this is a cross-sectional issue that must go to Infrastructure and returned. And so, within the time limit, as set by this House, Mr. Speaker, the response would be given.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister for Legal Affairs, the following question: Can the Minister for Legal Affairs, Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, tell this House, if the Government of Grenada has been taken to court by the True Blue Development Limited, and if so, what is the cost of this defence for such?

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Similarly, the Member is not present and so we commit to operate within the rules of the House. And I think the Member is well *au fait* with the conditions, or the state that we're in and the Minister for Legal Affairs as all Members of the House will be particularly engaged in at this present time. So, we will undertake to work within the constraints of the environment we are in and the Rules of the House to present the answers.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the next Question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Member for St. David. Can the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member for St. David tell this Honourable House how long the Grenadian Ambassador to Cuba has been in Grenada and when is she expected to return to her designated position in Cuba?

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Similarly, Mr. Speaker…

(Honourable Oliver Joseph was in the top section of the Chamber)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Oh, he is here.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Yes, Mr. Speaker, had I got that question yesterday, I would have come with the answer today, because it's a simple answer. But, he is asking how long, so have to be very precise with the time and I just got the question, taken by surprise. Maybe even one hour ago I could have gotten the answer for that. But, now I don't have it, because I never expected that question coming in. So, it will be submitted in writing.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I think with the leave of the Clerk, he would be able to inform you, as to how long these questions were submitted to this House through the Clerk.

(The Clerk converse with the Speaker in private)

Mr. Speaker: All the questions were sent out, but I don't know what happened at Foreign Affairs. So, as the Minister indicated, he is going to forward the answer to you in writing.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to...

Mr. Speaker: Would you make a special request for an oral answer?

Hon. Tobias Clement: I do believe that the request was made and it was highlighted by the asterisks which questions should be given orally, too. But I just want it to be placed that these questions were submitted over a month ago. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Thank you.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 11 - Urgent Questions under the Provision of Standing Order No. 20 (1) - Notice of Questions.
Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Minister for Health.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Mr. Speaker, I have no formal statement or lengthy update, because we are under COVID restrictions, trying to minimise. But I would just like this House, in lieu of my statement, to have a moment of silence for those we have lost this week, to COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, can we stand and for a moment of silence for those who have departed this Land, as a result of COVID-19.

(Moment of silence observed)

Mr. Speaker: May they all rest in peace.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 13 - Personal Explanations.
Item 14 - Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business and Minister for Finance.

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

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

BE IT RESOLVED that the Supplementary Appropriation 2021 for the Fiscal Year 1st January to 31st December, 2021 be approved.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business and Minister for Finance.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is now seventeen months since the Coronavirus disease disrupted our lives. Today, Mr. Speaker, our people continue to hurt, with the path of the pandemic still unclear, but at this time, pointing to an extremely tough near to medium term health and economic environment. There is evidence of community spread, Mr. Speaker. The Delta strain of the Coronavirus, more contagious and deadlier, is here. In less than a month, Mr. Speaker, the number of positive cases has moved from around four (4) active to close to six hundred (600) and counting. Hospitalisation is rising, Mr. Speaker. We now also have recorded our fourth death.

It is also nine months, Mr. Speaker, since the Parliament of Grenada approved the 2021 Budget in December of 2020, of which $629.6m was Recurrent and $305.6m, Capital. The Capital Budget for 2021 was to be financed by Grants of $243.6m or 79.7%; loans of $44.6 m or 14.6%, and local revenue of $17.4m or 5.7%. The anticipated main source of non-local financing was through the NTF, which will account for 59.7% of the total external financing. Other sources of financing included the People's Republic of China, the World Bank, the Kuwait OPEC Fund and the CDB and EDF financing.

Mr. Speaker, the performance of the NTF, as for many other sources has not met expectation. Up to 2019, the economy recorded its seventh consecutive year of expansion, growing at an average of 4.5%, per year, since 2013. Prices were lower and

stable. The unemployment rate was on a firm downward trajectory, reaching a historical low of 15.1% in the last quarter of 2019. The Debt to GDP Ratio was falling also, Mr. Speaker, steadily, and at that time projected to reach the targeted 55% by 2023. The economy contracted by 13.7% in 2020 and is projected to grow in 2021 from the reduced GDP base by 5.1%. The value of construction related imports, the main indicator used to measure activity in the Construction Sector rose by 34.9% in the first half of 2021, against the comparable period in 2020. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there was a significant spike in the secondary indicator with retail sales of building materials of 126.2% during the same period. This suggests, Mr. Speaker, a pickup in both commercial and residential construction, as evidenced by the increase in both indicators over the period.

Improved implementation of Government's Public Sector Investment Programme, the PSIP, mainly as it relates to the construction and repairs of roads, bridges, schools and other public infrastructure, as well as several on-going Private Sector projects contributed to the performance of the sector thus far, and helped in general, with the growth, the 5% expected growth.

The socioeconomic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially severe, Mr. Speaker, on vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth. The Government has launched the second Economic Support Programme to run from September, 2021 to December, 2022, to provide support to individuals most affected by the Pandemic. This thirty-six plus million dollar programme will provide income and payroll support to workers and small business owners in the tourism and related sectors, as well as, the Transport Sector.

Other measures include the provision of unemployment benefits and loan moratorium by financial institutions to persons and businesses in need of this form of relief. This package will also help protect the most vulnerable for more job creation and help Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMSE). Mr. Speaker, this is crucial in helping to boost economic recovery and preventing further economic scaring and social dislocation.

The package includes support to vulnerable populations on the roster of existing Cash Transfer Programmes, SEED $5.3 m, support to vulnerable populations, who are not on the roster of existing Cash Transfer, $8m, those are EC dollars, Mr. Speaker. And support to vulnerable populations, who are not on the roster of existing Cash Transfer Programmes, working in the informal sector, $10.6m. These three components are funded through a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank to the tune of US$8.95m or EC$24.2m.

The fourth component, the Internet Connectivity Programme, will see fifteen hundred homes, Mr. Speaker, receiving support to be able to access the Internet at the 50 megabit, $104.00 monthly rate, Mr. Speaker. Then, we have the fifth programme, Mr. Speaker, which is MSME support from which the other $12m to make the $36m will be spent, Mr. Speaker.

So far this year, economic activity has been slower than projected. Activity in the Tourism Sector remains depressed with visitor arrivals being only a fraction of the pre COVID levels. The sluggish recovery in global travel and the slower than anticipated vaccination rollout are contributory factors to the weak performance for this sector, thus far. The general increase in prices locally is projected to reach 2.2% inflation this year, Mr. Speaker, which is slightly above the 1.6% predicted at the time of the Budget Presentation last December. The increase in prices is driven by international developments, including rising food and fuel prices, as well as international shipping costs.

The fiscal situation, Mr. Speaker, remains very fragile. For the first six months of this year, total revenues and grants are behind target by $31.1m. For the year thus far, the Government is spending on average $10.6m more than it collected in receipts, $60m expenditure, more than receipt. Notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, the Government has met all its commitment during 2020, even during the lockdown period and in 2021, so far. Mr. Speaker, when you spend more than what's coming into the purse, this can only be done through a combination of removing from the reserves and increasing our

Debt-to-GDP Ratio. Areas in which, we made significant advances over the last pre COVID, many years, due to the prudent fiscal management of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, these Supplementary Estimates are primarily to provide for health related expenditure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to bring into Government's account further drawdown on loans already approved for projects, some on-going and others soon to commence. The Categories and Votes are as follows, Mr. Speaker, and these, Mr. Speaker, can be located as a Schedule to the Bill and these will be additional financing to what was approved last year, Mr. Speaker.

The first Vote, the Police Vote, $999,705.00, Mr. Speaker, that is to take care of recurrent expenditure, increments and so forth that were due to the police over the years and is now budgeted, so that they can receive this amount, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Education, Mr. Speaker, with its amount under Capital of $5,171,722.00, Mr. Speaker, and this would, if you look at the various items and obviously, the Minister for Education would have gone into this, if she were here. Licence fee due for Education Management Information System. Remember, Mr. Speaker, we had to move from the traditional Face-to-Face Educational System to Virtual Educational System, Mr. Speaker, and we pay fees every year, $409,210.00 for such a fee, Mr. Speaker. The Global Partnership in Education, again, having to do with the virtual and online progress made by the Ministry of Education, $409,000.00.

The COVID Response and the Ministry of Education has to make sure the workers, the environment for the workers and the environment for the students meet the standard as set by the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker. We have people that must sanitise; we have people in the building. Particularly now, Mr. Speaker, when we were hoping that this will be relaxed, we have to be ever so more vigilant, $2,587,512.00 in this context.

Our School Feeding Programme, we have to ensure that the children get the right type of food, in this particular environment, Mr. Speaker, and that Vote has been exhausted, $1,725,000.00 and that has to do with the payment of the salaries and the Cooks and the purchasing of fuel, etcetera. These people were paid. The labour

component of this went right through 2020 and right through 2021, so far. We must continue to ensure that is done so. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we could say that even during the 2020 lockdown, we met all our commitments, Mr. Speaker.

Then the Ministry of Health, we see $2m there, Mr. Speaker, to get additional equipment. It's small, but what we are facing here, we know we have to cut and contrive from other Ministries to ensure that health has its budget, all to do with the COVID response. $204,000.00 for the Vaccination Campaign. We might say it's small, because we have to step up our Vaccination Programme, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, in Health again, the Regional OECS Health Programme, $8m and this is the OECS Regional Health Programme. The COVID situation prevented us from doing all that we have to do with that programme. Yes, we were given an extension. We couldn't go forward in 2020. We have been given further extension. But lo and behold, the financers, the World Bank said there is a timeframe. We understand why you cannot do it but we will take back this money and you will have to reapply. So the Ministry of Health has placed all the emphasis in ensuring that we have utilised the sums of monies by the end date, Mr. Speaker. And the Ministry of Agriculture, they have $100,000.00 for support to farmers directed at the sub Vote, Praedial Larceny. So, the Ministry of Agriculture will be, Mr. Speaker, to help in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back to the Ministry of Finance, $3.3m of their component, you would see the total in the Schedule. I am just giving you the breakdown here, Mr. Speaker, and that is to do with the G-CREWS Programme, and this is a grant given by the Green Climate Fund, and there is a certain component that was placed in for 2021, and we now see, Mr. Speaker, that we will be able to do more as the project progresses and so we're taking in this grant into the Budget. Remember that total grant was $125m, Mr. Speaker? But every year, we must allocate, so we have approval for the spending, and we note now that we will be able to spend $3.3m more than what was budgeted for.

The RDVRP Project, Mr. Speaker, we would be taking $3m more. As a matter of fact, this was one project where the World Bank again, Disaster Reduction Vulnerability indicated we gave you a break as we gave all the Members who borrowed from us and we gave you a further break in 2021, but according to our rules, we just cannot give you another break, so spend the monies. And the Ministry is working with the various organizations and we know we have to spend this by the third quarter of 2021. This is why it is here, Mr. Speaker, for approval to spend.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Infrastructure have targeted the various schools and projects, identified in the programme, and now they are going full swing to expend that, Mr. Speaker. We understand where we are with respect to the Coronavirus pandemic, and so construction must proceed, because if we stop now, Mr. Speaker, if we lock out construction, then this financing will be gone forever. A lot must go in, in the decisions that we make, Mr. Speaker.

The Technical Assistance Fund, the Fund is there. We now have to take from the Fund and bring into our Appropriations to allow us to spend $1.8m on Human Resource Development tuition fees. And Finance is doing it, but a lot of training in Education and Human Development for people to be able to use the modern technology to teach our children, Mr. Speaker.

You do have, Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 Loan Support to the Grenada Airports Authority. We had loaned to the Airports Authority, discussed here in the Resolution, when they were making only $350,000.00 a month, dropping from $3.5m a month and so it was either a total shutdown and prevent the very medication that we want to get to our people from coming in, as the Airport is closed, or people going out for medical attention and other very important reasons. So, we had to provide this loan, Mr. Speaker, and now that we are taking it into the Budget, so that it can be duly accounted for.

On this, Mr. Speaker, we have the $15m that is to deal with the Stimulus Package, if you want to call it so, or the COVID-19 Support Package, $15m. Of the $36m, we're allocating $15m to be spent this year, by the end of the year, and the rest

will be spent during 2022, Mr. Speaker. And we know how important it is that the support will be for our people, and we cannot say that since we will not be coming back here to include this, we must have sufficient.

This is the only case, Mr. Speaker, that we may expect a little spill over of $2m, $3m, if we will not have disbursed everything. But what is facing us, we must make sure that it is accounted for, so we can assist all those who are in need and we expect a significant quantity of persons to be in need, Mr. Speaker.

The World Bank Share Capital; in this very Honourable Place, Mr. Speaker, we came and got approval to increase our shares in the World Bank. Now, $2.8m must be paid in 2021, and we are bringing this now into the Budget to pay for the shares in the World Bank.

I could recall all of the good things and the benefits that we got from the World Bank and one approaching us with another US$25m based on our shares. If we do not do this, we do not benefit, Mr. Speaker. So, under the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker, you will see the total there, Ministry of Finance, of $36,434,719.00. That's the total, most of which we are bringing in to take care of loans. The loans are already approved, they are there, but we must disburse as per the yearly permission we get from the Appropriation Bill and so most of that $38m will be there.

We have an allocation there, Mr. Speaker, of $2m Recurrent, and this is placed under the Ministry of Finance, so we can manage it. We know there will be unexpected expenditure, particularly in Health, Education, Mr. Speaker, in particular. But, if it is not spent, the Ministry of Finance will be watching, and we do not want to have significant expenditure under Recurrent. That is why it is placed there to be managed. So, ideally, we may spend half of this, hopefully. But when we see what is facing us out there with the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, we expect that, perhaps, we may not be able to withhold anything from it, even if it may distort what we are doing, but we are spending on Recurrent. But, at this point-in-time, it would become a necessity.

So, Mr. Speaker, I gave this explanation, particularly, because many of the Members, who would have expanded on it are not here. I therefore, Mr. Speaker, beg the approval of this Motion from this Honourable House. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. Do we have any more contributions? Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, this Supplementary Estimate that is brought before the House, I go back to last year's Budget Presentation. It means, therefore, that we are seeing an additional $54m) to the Budget, both Capital and Recurrent Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, we all remember last year's Budget Presentation and the Minister for Finance here would remember his presentation to this Honourable House. But I can recall, Mr. Speaker, that I said in the 2021 Budget Presentation that this 2021 year, we should have a COVID-19 Budget, and I said probably we should have put an additional $150m, but no, so we are here today.

But, Mr. Speaker, what was telling is that the Minister for Finance came to this House with this grandiose idea that this economy would have a 6% growth. I mean, under the best of circumstances, we have never seen that in this country, so to talk about a 6% growth, I mean, the economy would have been on fire, and we would have had to cool it down. But, look at how depressed the economy has been, and we have fallen short in a lot of areas, and he just alluded to that, that it is a difficult year and we understand that. But, one must have vision and this is what I am talking about.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine the budget for the Police and we are looking at a shortfall here of $1m, as if we did not expect promotion, or we did not expect these reoccurring expenditure to take place, so now we have to bring it back in a Supplementary Estimate. I wanted to raise that point during the Finance Committee Meeting, but my voice was giving problem with the mic. And so we stand here under

these circumstances to give the Police an additional million dollars for Recurrent Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, as I went through this document, I had to pause, because, as I paused and I asked about it. I love our Grenadian people. We love to talk, and in Finance Committee Meeting I raised a few issues and then a few others came up, and probably I would start from the bottom.

I see Agriculture is given $100,000.00 for praedial larceny in these times, Mr. Speaker. But, my question is, is praedial larceny now the most significant event facing agriculture in Grenada today? It is, Mr. Speaker, it is. I mean, yes, we know about it. But, Mr. Speaker, I too, engage in a little bit of farming and do you know what the farmers complain about today? Well, Mr. Speaker, you, too, I believe you're involved in farming. All over Grenada, blight take over, Scale Insect, the citrus, the avocado, the mango. Productivity dropped significantly, but we're not hearing anything, not even in this document, to put support to the farmers who are greatly impacted because of blight.

I have heard some of them asking for Mist Blowers, chemicals, and I have some citrus also, some coconut and soursop and everything, Mr. Speaker. And while praedial larceny may hit us in a certain way, the blight infestation in Grenada's agriculture is devastating, and all farmers could talk about it. So, Mr. Minister for Finance, I don't know if we can get a little savings here or a little savings there, so that we can address this burning issue today. It is an issue that must be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I go back up and I look at the Education Budget, and it was relating to the question that I asked a long time ago that school will be opened just now and kids are moving from Primary School to Secondary School and the costs almost prohibited that parents have to come to you to at least to get their kids entering into Secondary School, because of registration and all other things that come with it. In these difficult times, it could reach $300.00, $400.00), Mr. Speaker, and we are talking about disadvantaged people; just to enter their child into Secondary School.

But, Mr. Speaker, I look at the Supplementary Budget here, and I see more than half of it, under COVID-19, $2.587m. This is to facilitate the payment of Contractors,

Monitors and Cleaners in various schools. And yes, I agree, I agree that the schools must be sanitised and all the necessary stuff must be put in place. But, you know what came to me? The question that should be asked, who are the Contractors, who runs the Company that give out the Contract? Seek and you shall find.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful, because one thing about us Grenadians, we love to talk, nothing stays hidden. It might be for a little while, but it comes out, Mr. Speaker. It comes out. And this must be discussed in high places, as to what is going on in our little country. I said little country, because again, everything that we do, even in secret, the people will know and talk about it, and they are talking.

Mr. Speaker, I go back again, to this very important one that I look here and it says here: "$15m, second Stimulus Package. Payment is scheduled to be made in 2021." And that loan was taken from the CDB, $15m. The only explanation is payment to be made. And I will go back to what we called the first Stimulus Package. But I wouldn't really call it a Stimulus Package. It is really support for our people, in terms of those; well, it should be support for our people for those who are depressed now, in terms of their everyday life. They are sending their children to school, meeting their daily demands at home and expenses. But what will stimulate our economy is if we take a loan and we put it into the economy where we see infrastructural development and economic activities taking place and these are what we are looking for.

But, Mr. Speaker, yes, we have to support our disadvantaged people, but mind you, we are taking a loan today and if we take a loan today to satisfy this, are we going to pay it back? When I say "we", those of us who are inside here may not even be around. I want to find out though, how prudent it is for us to take a loan and then our children and grandchildren would be the ones to be satisfying it later down in the years?

Mr. Speaker, when the first give away happened, we heard it all over, and we are people, we are sociable people and we love to have a good time, and some good times were had. So, Mr. Speaker, and there was some discrepancies in the first one. My question is and my hope is, is that we learnt from last year. I hope we have learnt.

Mr. Speaker, I looked back at the question that was asked the Minister for Finance at the time, the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell about these discrepancies. Mr. Speaker, we went, as if we do not know our people. Sometimes when we see monies, all our senses go out the door. Imagine you asked Companies and people to send in their payroll and everything like that. The payroll was inflated, so some people who did not satisfy the objective, because the payroll was inflated they came under what was given off. Then people called to say that, Mr. Clement I worked in this Industry and we have not gotten anything, but I heard that my Managers and the Management, they got, but we did not get. We did not even get what was assigned by Government to give us. It was found out, and when I raised the point it went back to the Ministry of Finance, and it was found out about some of those discrepancies. And, what was done? They got a slap on the wrist, and said, don't do it again. Mr. Speaker, if it was the poor man, if it was the small man, if it was the little man, we would have dragged him up in Court and he would have had to pay the consequences. Mr. Speaker, this package that is given out this time, again, it is my fervent hope that it reaches the people, who it is supposed to reach, especially those that are still in line waiting and did not get.

Mr. Speaker, an event happened a couple weeks ago, well, not even a couple weeks ago, about a week ago, and it brings to mind that I got a few calls from St. Andrew and a few Traffickers asked me, if I think that they will be included in this little package. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday or so, they lost everything with the disaster that happened between Trinidad and Tobago when that boat sank. You talk about several Traffickers, and if you understand what happened there, this is the last week in August, so this is the time when you would get a good load from Trinidad to come, because they are trying to turn their hand in order to satisfy their expenses for their kids that are in school and so forth. They lost everything. Mr. Speaker, I feel their pain, and you know why I feel their pain? This is not the first time this happened. Let me tax your history a little bit, Mr. Speaker. In 1986, there was another accident like that, same date to the 't', Sea Fortress and Piccadilly, an accident between Trinidad and Tobago. The lost is still

felt, because one of the boats sank and family lost everything. Mr. Speaker, even at that young, tender age, I was just leaving High School, and I was supposed to be on the boat there too to go to Trinidad to go see my family. But, I guess God always have an intention for us. I had just graduated from High School, in July, and my Grandfather said to me: "You have to take your rightful place."

Mr. Speaker, the Captain of the Piccadilly, Mr. Jones Clement, he was my Grandfather. He died on that boat, and I find that it happens so often, because I know today people, who never recovered from that accident. Were they helped? No. There are some Traffickers today, who took loans to get their goods from Trinidad. They would have to pay it back, but I hope they are not on their own, and with the little crumps that are falling from the Table, I hope, they too, can be blessed in this aspect.

The Minister for Trade, he is here, and I am sure they called, and for me I can put myself in their shoe. But, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this $15m, why is it that a breakdown is not given? I do not think our Grenadian people mind we're helping our people, you know, no, we do not mind, but what we want to know, we want some transparency on it. Who gets what? How much they get and the fairness and this is my take.

There should be a level of fairness in the distribution that the Grenadian people can see. And don't come and tell me Government is giving funds and it has to remain private. If you are getting Government's funds to help your situation, how private can it be? After all, it's the Taxpayers of this country that will have to pay it back. After all, it is our children and grandchildren that will have to pay it back. I would ask and I would request that at least all the checks and balances that should be put in the place, as of the last time must be put in place, and let there be some accountability, so that we who sit here in Parliament, when any issue arise, we can be vindicated, Mr. Speaker; if not history will not judge us well.

Mr. Speaker, I move to the Ministry of Health, and the question that is raised, I know that it is a Ministry that is under a lot of pressure and they are the tip of the spear, so to speak. And I have been looking and I have been interacting and I have had

communication and talks with people that are involved in the Healthcare Sector, especially the Frontline workers on the COVID Team and some of them are really stressed, really stressed out, because at this point in time especially, they are afraid to go home and see their families. But, the question is asked, under what conditions are they on the COVID Team? Do we have a Rotation System in place where others would join the COVID Team?

Mr. Speaker, it is said that within the United States we talk about burnout. Over 100,000 nurses have left the Profession, because of COVID-19. Are we different here in Grenada? How do we treat our people? How do we compensate them? I know maybe, we do not have the resources to compensate those that are on the frontline, or at the tip of the spear in the COVID Team, as they should be and we are always, and should be always grateful for the sacrifice they have made and some of them do it with passion, and if you ask them to do it, they would do it again. And they talk about it, because in some cases their colleagues would not step up to fill their position, although they are getting tired and they are getting burnt-out, and I hope these things will be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, and so, again, I look at some of the infrastructure work that is done throughout Grenada, and I wish we had more of it. And so next time, when the Minister for Finance comes, and he can talk about delivering the Stimulus Package, in terms of getting Grenada; the roads, the bridges, the drains everything up to speed, I say that you should double that, so that we could put our people to work and this Stimulus Package would serve the purpose that it should serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, for your contribution. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion, as presented by the Member for St. George South-East and the Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, the need is very obvious, and I do not think that there is much to say, but I just thought I wanted to make a few comments. Some of it is spontaneous based on the comments from the Member from St. George North-East. And, I know he ended up by calling for more infrastructure as a Stimulus Package. But I do not think he may have heard the constraint that the Minister for Finance mentioned, in terms of the big disparity in our revenue generation and the expenditures, some of them unforeseen and some of them very unprecedented, especially in the area of Health.

But, I also want to compliment the works that have been done, in terms of infrastructure, in spite of what has been going on. And, I want to speak, especially, for what I have seen in St. Mark, and sometimes what I see on the road happening for schools. This is so important and quite a lot has been done and I am sure the responsible Minister will say.

But, in St. Mark, for example, St. Mark's Secondary School has been pretty much totally refurbished. We have had some challenges from since Ivan and all of that is corrected now whereas students had to be housed in temporary locations. In a conversation with the Principal, she was able to say that now they have satisfied all of the present needs and I am very happy for that.

We go to Bonaire Government School, we see significant facelift and improvement in the infrastructure. Samaritan Presbyterian School, significant work has been done, and recently, I know a lot of the schools are on the inside and you won't see them. But going up to Grenville, recently, I saw the Seventh-day Adventist School, massive works being done there. And, while it is a church school, it is important to note that these works are carried on, primarily, by the Ministry of Education and by extension the Government of Grenada.

The Ministry has a very long list of work that is on-going, some that has been recently completed, and I believe that the Government's priorities are in the right place, in terms of infrastructure, but the funds are very limited. I will just shorten it to say that, but the Stimulus Package that was mention again by the Minister for Finance, I know that the Economists will say that if you want to stimulate the economy then you invest in

infrastructure and so on, but we have to stimulate people. And, I don't know what name we could call it, but this is an extremely tough time for people and just as how people go to the Member, the Leader of the Opposition, they come to us, and we know what is happening. There might have been some errors in the first distribution, but the good thing is that it was caught up and it was remedied, but the better thing is that most people, who were out of jobs especially in the Tourism Sector had, and I know, because we have our records, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)**, and it did give support to a lot of these people, who otherwise would have been destitute, and so I believe they needed a stimulus.

It's good to invest in infrastructure, in bricks and stones and whatever, but it is so much more important to invest in people, and to give a sense of buoyancy in such a difficult time. So, I am happy for that $15m that has been allocated for the persons in the industry, because we know that the Tourism industry will not rebound aggressively, as we would have liked it to do. And even recently we saw more flights coming into Grenada. JetBlue started, tentatively, and now we have them daily. American has two. VA started, Virgin started, and Condor has given a commitment to start in November, and recently Condor pushed back that. They haven't given us a date, but they have cancelled, because the numbers of the bookings are down and may not make such a trip viable and they have cancelled Grenada, Barbados and one or two of the other Islands that they usually come to.

So, it is a very uncertain time in the industry. There are people who have been taken back in their jobs. There are some people who have not worked from since March when we had the close down. But the good thing is, when they come to my office, when they come to my Constituency Office, those who work in the industry from my area, and when they come to the Ministry or GTA, when you ask them the question, did you get before? Almost everyone got, and I want to compliment the Government on that, because it made a difference. **(Applause)** But, of course, if you got a little money and you're spending and nothing is coming in, you need another little stimulus. So, while it may not stimulate the economy and it will, because it is spent. Really and truly it

is spent out there, in the little shops, in the bigger shops, in the Supermarkets that is where it is spent. And perhaps, that next one would help to offset the cost of the transition of the children from the Primary School to the Secondary School. And if the parents are wise and I want to encourage parents to use their monies wisely. So, while the Leader of the Opposition might be able to give them a little something and I have not heard that, and I have not heard an appeal.

Mr. Speaker, somebody said to me last night, this is not the time for politics; it is the time for leadership. And he is not a person of high level education, and it has sent me thinking. We, as politicians cannot only be politicians at this time, we have to lead. We have situations. We need to know how many vaccines were administered. But we also need to say: "I took mine, take yours." **(Applause)** Let us get this country opened up, because other countries are able to open up and improve the economy, because they have that level of herd immunity. I don't know, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, but they can take the chance. We cannot take the kind of chances that even the US, with their growing numbers take, because they're closer to the herd immunity. UK and other countries are opening up, they are staying open, because they have that. So, as Leaders we have to send that message too. Let us stimulate the economy. Go and get the vaccine. Stimulate your resistance and your immunity, or some people don't believe in that, but if you don't, then tell us what to do. Come out and tell us what to do, and encourage people to observe the protocols.

Mr. Speaker, people jumped up in the Jab, Jab. They said things about all of us in the Government. They said we don't want them to enjoy the culture and it didn't have no COVID. But when the COVID came, they said we knew it had COVID and we hid it. You know, it is like we cannot win. But, we need leaders to stand up. And I have heard one or two persons, who are not of our political persuasion stood up. I don't know if it is fitting to call names here, Mr. Speaker, and they don't have a voice here. But, I just want to applaud two (2) persons who spoke out and said that this is not right, and I am just paraphrasing here, they may not have said it in this way, but we have a country to save and we are doing our best. And these are uncharted waters and maybe we gave

out some monies and people misappropriated it. Shame on them, not shame on the Government, for trying to help our people, and so we have to be clear. And maybe Government could have picked them up and put them in Prison, but I don't know what that would have served. I believe the Ministry of Finance would have learnt their lesson, and I would exalt my colleague the Member for St. George South-East and the Minister for Finance to make sure that we tighten up. And this advice from the Leader of the Opposition is well received, that we tighten up and ensure that those for whom it was meant they receive it.

I know the Minister for Health is here, and I don't know if he will say, but I think I also need to say that the expenses have been phenomenal. The question is asked, how many vaccines we have? The question has not been asked, how much we paid for the PCR tests and on-going costs. **(Applause)**

So, when we're talking finances, and I don't know a lot about it. I leave it to the Economists and so on. But, it is common sense that when you ask the question, something must come and say, look we have to spend so much for PCR test, we have to pay for masks, now we are telling people double mask, I came double masked here. And now we're saying to wear; how we call the other mask again, N95, which is a higher cost. All of these things are costly, so I would like to hear and my learned friend, Leader of the Opposition, and I know you are learned. But, I want you to share those thoughts; Mr. Speaker, through you, I should not be speaking directly. My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I would like to hear the Member share those thoughts, where should we be going, what we should be doing, say something to the public either in this Honourable House, because this is the forum for it or on other programmes. We are in unchartered waters. We are in a very volatile time, and we are seeing it, the numbers are increasing. So, yes, if we have not used funds wisely, this is the place to talk about it, and it is correct to do so.

But when we talk about other needs, how are we generating, the 4%? I think the only set of people who did not get the 4% were those of us inside here, and the Member

may not have gotten, as well. But, Government has an added burden there. So, how do we deal with it?

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that, in terms of Agriculture, the praedial larceny, that money is there and is well placed. Maybe we should have put more there, because we know that farmers are discouraged, and that again, might just stimulate them to produce. We know farmers go out there and they produce, and the Government has been helping. The Farm Labour is on now and that is not even there, because maybe that was provided for before. So there are many things that are happening that are not even in this Supplementary that Government has gone in different ways to find monies for, the Farm Labour Support for farmers is going out there.

But, I also know that the Minister for Agriculture, who is not here, they do have a programme on for some disease that is affecting plants. I don't know if it is same disease that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about, but I know that they are doing work and they are expending monies to see how they can control the disease that is affecting our plants.

So, I just want to urge my dear friend, and he is my good friend to be a little bit more balanced, not to just seek out the negatives, because there would always be negatives. When you are dealing with human beings, there will be something that goes wrong. But, there is so much good that is going on in this country. The Debushing people went out. They may have to go back in for a time, but they are working. All of our workers have been paid, and sometimes people take it, as a negative for us. I am proud, if our country can pay our workers. And so, when our Government does these things, when the situation comes where the Government says that it cannot do anymore, then we should look for innovative ways and share ideas, as MPs, fifteen (15) MPs, share ideas and give support to this Government. We need it now at this time, because Grenada needs it now, at this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to support this Motion for the Supplementary, and I just want to, through you, Mr. Speaker, to say to Grenada, let us be a team. Grenada

needs us now. We have an upsurge, we can contain it, we can control it, but there are all different kinds of measures that need to be taken. And there are some things that each one of us must do, if we are able to contain that and to go back on the path of recovery. So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Mark. Honourable Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Supplemental, as presented by my learned Minister for Finance Colleague and neighbour to the South-East.

Mr. Speaker, what is worthy of mention and highlighted in this is that despite the COVID-19 pandemic; despite the fact that that has had significant economic impact, in terms of reductions in revenues; despite the fact that in the initial 2021 Budget, significant resources were put to Health. And despite the fact that in this additional resources are being put to Health, this Government and the Ministry of Finance still found the wherewithal to find an economic Stimulus Package in these Supplemental, and as best as possible, maintain our principles, with respect to fiscal responsibility. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, that is factual. It is right here, plain and simple, for all to see, and we will be under the scrutiny of others, and they will make their comments on it.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 is going to be part of any of these discussions here. I have made significant statements in this House, when last we met, about COVID-19. While I said it with a certain level of emotions, and it did peek a significant level of emotions to some individuals in the public, it was based on science. And like other parts of science, for instance, Mr. Speaker, gravity, gravity in the United States is the same as gravity in Canada, gravity in St. Lucia, gravity in Grenada, gravity in the UK, gravity in China.

The pandemic and its exponential spread, because of a Delta variant is the same in any country in the world. The further risk because of super spreader events is the

same in any country in the world. The fact that in the first quarter of 2020, the world said collectively, we need to try and protect our borders, so that we can delay the spread, so that we can strengthen our Health Systems as best as possible, so that we can avoid the inundating of our Health Systems, but that as these variants increase and if we do not follow all of these protocols and measures, we will be inundated.

And what surprises me, Mr. Speaker, is some, in this House, still continue to make statements as though they are surprised that the Mathematics is following the Mathematics, while they are students and teachers of Mathematics themselves. But, Mr. Speaker, they will not spend time to explain, based on their own personal knowledge and experience, what exponential spread means. One will infect seven (7), and each of those seven (7) would infect seven (7) more, and each of those would infect seven (7) more and what that means, and that, that is why we are here, because it is science.

And, Mr. Speaker, some will ask questions to cast doubt to the public, and, Mr. Speaker, it is their Constitutional right to ask questions in this House, which is why, Mr. Speaker, I will ask you to ask them why they are not asking one particular question, which is, how can I help? **(Applause)** That these are dark, predicted moments that we are now in. Let me repeat, that these are dark, predicted moments that we are now in, that every single country in the world is facing as well, without exception.

And to create an impression because of your form of questions or tone of statements, that it is reasonable to assume that this Government, because despite all of its capabilities, somehow is at fault by not being able to avoid the inevitable. We had delayed the inevitable. We are to control the inevitable. We are to be measured by that, yes. But, we will not survive the inevitable unless we recognise two things, that it will be by the Grace of God and unity. It is with unity that we would get through this. That if, at this point, some of us still choose to think that there is a fence that separates us, that we are on different sides of this pandemic, that we have some sort of ability to still remove ourselves, as we so choose, without recognising that we are all equally victims, then we are doing a disservice to our country.

To assume that your role is simply to challenge and not to come forward and help is a disservice to this country, and the intent of the various offices that we hold. To use your God-given talents and your profession to support the knowledge and sharing of information that is science based. To be working in a very Institution that is supporting medicine, that is making the statements that are committing to the positions that will get us through this storm. But to remain silent on it, when you finally get the pulpit, when you finally get the ears of the Nation, you choose to question those who have drawn the cards to lead us through this, as opposed to be a leader with this, as well. **(Applause)** Leadership in not in questioning, leadership is with leading. And these are dark times, and we need everybody on board; and it is time that those who still think their role is simply to question, wake up and get on board, as well. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, who the cap fit, let them wear it. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I continue with the debate on the Motion, I want to advise that the Member for the Town for St. George and Minister for Agriculture did indicate and ask that we inform this Honourable Place that he too, is at the same function, a very important function with the Prime Minister. And so I want it to be recorded that he has passed on this information to the Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my two colleagues for their very meaningful contribution towards this Motion, very pertinent, to the point, really relevant. And I could see my colleague from the South, and I know that he was chastised for making certain predictions that we see now coming through today, Mr. Speaker. And we are in this position, not because we were not warned. That is why it is so instrumental, as he indicated and the Member for St. Mark, that we must lead and come together. So, it

does not make sense that the Leader of the Opposition not indicating publicly, his willingness to join with getting us out of this particular situation.

Mr. Speaker, less than one week ago, we were meeting every day in the Ministry of Finance and looking at the intake in revenues and saying, while it was sluggish, we would get there. But we have already seen the impact of what is happening with us today, Mr. Speaker. So we dread the situation that we would fall back in, Mr. Speaker. And, where do we have to draw up on, Mr. Speaker? The reserves! Enter into more debts.

The $25m that we are getting from the World Bank, we would use it, but again, it is a debt. Of course, forty years, ten years' grace. So some people in fact, call it a grant, because it is really extremely helpful, Mr. Speaker. But it was because we had managed the economy so well, in the past, that is why, Mr. Speaker, we're receiving this now, as we look down the line.

And what I do not understand is the philosophy or the principle not accepted. We are paying. If you look at the NIS, the Minister responsible for that area mentioned it here today. We are paying for those who worked before and made their contribution, and when we have to pay back for them, the contribution would come from the younger people to sustain these. That is why Japan, Mr. Speaker, is so concerned about their age demography. In other words, if you do not have a lot of the younger ones coming up, who must make a contribution after the older ones make their contribution, then how will they be sustained? And we were just talking about the Social Services now.

And when you borrow for infrastructural work, you borrow in this generation, normally, when the loans are so tight, this same generation might start to repay. But it is always one and two generations later, Mr. Speaker, who will pay, and similarly for them, when they borrow, it is generations after, who will pay. So yes, we must be prudent throughout the life of the country, throughout our own period here on earth, to ensure that we maintain a proper fiscal management. That is why we look so much at the Debt-to-GDP Ratio, Mr. Speaker, because when those after us come, they must get a manageable Debt-to-GDP Ratio, and they must try, Mr. Speaker, their utmost to leave

with a similar situation. The Debt-to-GDP Ratio, manageable in our time, maybe the 55% that the ECCB and the World Bank is asking us to keep. In later times, it may be 65% or smaller, 45%. But, the situations in those particular eras will really indicate what it should be, Mr. Speaker.

The 6% growth we projected last year, Mr. Speaker, we were bang on target. The projection was 5.15.2%, because of what is happening. So, when the Leader of the Opposition indicated that we were talking, where did we get the 6% from, we were bang on target said the ECCB and the others. What you always factor in is a risk situation into that, and say, but I don't know what the COVID would do, so it should always be indicating something less.

But, to say that we made a wrong projection in 2020, really, is to give no credit to the staff in the Ministry of Finance, to give no credit to the staff in the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, to give no credit to the staff in the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, to give no credit to the staff in the World Bank and the staff in the IMF, because this was not a figure pulled out of the hat. This was a figure that we have to show all the Institutions. Some were saying it is a little less and you pointed it out to them. And as they see the figures come in, they will come back to you in the next quarter and say, yes, you were correct. It has only dropped from 6% to 5.2%, because we are watching. It may drop to 4%, you know, Mr. Speaker. It may drop to 3%, if we have to do certain things in October, November and December, and we collect a significantly less. But it is not because it was not properly done and drawn up. I hope all of us, Mr. Speaker, would have been in a different situation environment.

The Police, $1m, Mr. Speaker, it is not a situation that you are talking about in 2020. It's things that were there long before and things that we see that were fair and favoured over many years, and now we decided to make a contribution in this year towards the correction. So, it was not an issue of saying that it was not budgeted for. In tight times in 2020, Mr. Speaker, we spoke to many Institutions. That is why we have the Budget Consultation and if we can delay something, because we know that in 2021 the revenues would be low. But what is 6%? Half a billion dollars have been wiped off

from our GDP. So, the Debt-to-GDP Ratio, the denominating factor is much smaller. So, when you look at the 6%, you also look at the base, and we made this abundantly clear in the Budget. If we were using the same base, because it is always based on the year before, if we were using 2019 base, that might equate to something like 4%, Mr. Speaker, or maybe 3.8%. But, when you have to use the base of that low base where there is 13.7% contraction in the economy, and yet we are seeing those figures bang on target, Mr. Speaker. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to really do his work, and perhaps, he may have some lovely ideas that he should give. He could give directly to the Ministry of Finance or he can come to the Consultations that we would have, Mr. Speaker.

Agriculture

The indication, and it's a legitimate concern, but the Member should not make a pronouncement on it. Yes, the disease that is out there now, the 2021 Budget can take care of that, and the entire Ministry's Budget is in various Votes, sure, even within the Ministry of Agriculture, you have something that would take care of it. Remember this expenditure is for 2021. So, while we thank the Member for raising it and to say that, yes, what we could not do at the point in time is to take care of this and at the same take care of praedial larceny that is why you see praedial larceny here. And the next year, where we will have a longer period, of course, you will see it there, too, Mr. Speaker.

But what I cannot take, Mr. Speaker, is to call the support to our poor and vulnerable, a giveaway. I will not take too kindly to this. If, as the Member for St. Mark said that we are walking the streets, that we have contact with our people, we would understand what they are facing out there. There are people who would come, they would go to their Pastor, they would go to a responsible person in the community, they would come to their Representative and when you see that person come to you, asking for assistance, such persons were helping you in finding things to give to the vulnerable. So you know when they come that they have joined the rank of the vulnerable. So, we should not call this a giveaway, Mr. Speaker. If we follow the principle of the Lord,

where we help those in need, whether or not we are in politics, whether or not we are Church Leaders, if, as a person we help people who are in need, we'll understand why we should not call this a giveaway.

Yes, there were certain persons, who tried to take advantage of the last package. We found out and we brought it to this Honourable House. We did what we had to do. And in the Launch, that was two days ago, Mr. Speaker, on this project, the CESS, COVID-19 Support System, we mentioned this, and we asked all the stakeholders to ensure that we look at each other and that the problems were not repeated in the sense that those who deserve it, should receive. **(Applause)** So we understand, Mr. Speaker, and not only ourselves but the recipients and those who would be helping, not only the Ministry, but the entire Nation should have that watchful eyes and work together with us in the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Speaker.

The Member for St. Mark has already alluded to it. When you put monies into the economy and monies that would not go into savings, but would be spent immediately, then you have that sector of the economy benefitting, a stimulus for that sector of the economy, where it is most needed. Yes, infrastructural work can work in a general sense. And let us look at the projects that we have in infrastructure, the Western Main Road, Mr. Speaker, a Grant from the [1]UKCIF. And if we put more monies into it, all that we are doing now in a Supplemental is adding a little more money from the Grant, because even if it is sitting in an account, you must bring it in to get permission to expend, Mr. Speaker.

The Agricultural Feeder Road, the Grenada Enhancement Educational Project, the RFDVRP. As we mentioned here, Mr. Speaker, the St. Patrick Road, CARCIP, G-CREWS, that's the Water Project with financing, grant financing, $125m from the Green Climate Fund. A lot of Dams would be built by NAWASA, significant infrastructural works, Mr. Speaker, and the Capital Budget of $305.6m, that is what is there, with a lot of infrastructure works coming close to more than $200m out of that, Mr. Speaker.

[1] UKCIF - United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund

And don't underestimate when we spend on increasing the capacity of our human resource. The returns on such Capital Projects are humungous, Mr. Speaker. They will manage better. They will ensure that we spend the monies better. They will ensure that the economy responds in a most efficient way.

So out of the $305m, people, you may have what you call the Soft Capital Projects, never underestimate them, and you do have over $200m of hard infrastructural projects. So, when the Member said we should have a $150m, we do have more than that in hard capital projects, Mr. Speaker. But what we must never do is because we have Grants sitting in an account for a specific project, bring everything into the Budget, when we know we cannot expend the sum of monies in the particular year.

Implementation rate falls, Mr. Speaker. So, do what we have to do and maintain our Implementation rate, which we say must be no lower than 80%. This is what would allow us to get more financing, more Grants, because when the Donor says: "I take my taxpayers' money, I gave it to you, and you said you would spend it in three years, well, you don't want Grants, wait, I am going to make another cycle and give to the countries, who need it, and you would fall into a doldrums. So we must look at the implementation rate and appropriate accordingly, Mr. Speaker, so that our country can continue to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, having made these appropriate remarks and having being supported, very, very pertinently, by the Member for St. Mark and the Member for South St. George, I recommend the approval of the Motion to this Honourable House.

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, the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2021.

Clerk: A Bill to appropriate an additional sum of fifty-four million, nine hundred and ten thousand, one hundred and forty-six dollars ($54,910,146.00) to the service of the State of Grenada for the Fiscal Year, 1st January to 31st December, 2021, shortly entitled, Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2021.

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: 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: Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think, as with all Appropriation Bills, we have discussed, at the Resolution stage, most of the items here, Mr. Speaker, and all the relevant facts associated therewith.

Mr. Speaker, I only want to make one point following from the discussions that we had on the Motion, Mr. Speaker, and I do really want to compliment the Ministry of Finance staff and all the others, who have worked with us during this difficult period.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it was only because we did implement at a good rate, because most of these things are loan financed, so we placed a bit in the Budget that we thought we can handle, and then next year, we would place the remainder, all of it within the timeframe of the loan. The fact that now we are asking to take more from loans means that we have implemented a significant component, and we see that the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Tourism, all the projects under them, they are getting off the ground, or they are being expedited. So, before we reach October, and we have nothing in the Budget appropriated for, and then works have to stop, or the State would have to finance them in the interim, we are now seeing that we can, and we do additional works by bringing in more monies into those projects, be it loan or grant, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, the Ministry is responsible for implementing; I want to compliment them, Mr. Speaker. I therefore, commend this Bill for its second reading.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seldom do we get a chance to speak twice on the Bill, but I mean, it was before, a Motion and now the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have lived through dark days in our country and in the world before. This is not the first time the world is going through dark days like this. But, Mr. Speaker, I would probably raise a few points. I love history, because it teaches us

about the past. It teaches us how to behave and it shows us what might happen in the future.

We talk about leadership. One of the persons that I admire a lot, in terms of leadership is gone, Winston Churchill. Being raised a little bit, in Texas, I also love George Bush, the first George Bush, that is; well, the second one, too, father and son.

Mr. Speaker, the English, or the United Kingdom and its Colonies in the 1930s, went through some dark and difficult times, and Winston Churchill came forth. They said that England did not have much, but the man armed the English Army and sent it to war, and people held him in high esteem, even today. And after he was done and the Second World War was over, he lost the Election. George Bush sent the United States again, to war. He was the most popular President, ever. Approval went up to almost 90%. In 1992, he lost the Election.

Mr. Speaker, history shows us that plagues, upon plagues, upon plagues came, starting from Egypt right down through. There was a pandemic in 1920. There was one in 1865, and there were more before that. We are talking about dark days.

The Member stated that no leadership was shown. Maybe I should just drop one word here. ***"If my People, who are called by my Name, would humble themselves and turn from their wicked ways, then I would liberate them and bless them and sanctify them and cleanse them."*** Should I say more, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about leadership, this point must be made. Why is it that the Leader of the Opposition did not come forward and say x, y or z? You know, Mr. Speaker, I stood and looked at the whole charade. You know, last year May, a Committee was put in place, the COVID Committee, and there were some changes on that Committee, people from the whole sector. Was the Leader of the Opposition or his people ever invited to such a Committee? You see, when we want to put the Opposition in a box, when it is convenient, and then when it is convenient that he should come out. You know, Mr. Speaker, in this position, I would tell you one thing. It's only by the Grace of God, only by the Grace of God. And today, again, our Grenadian

people depend and will continue only on and by the Grace of God. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Appropriation Bill.

Let me point out at the very beginning, Mr. Speaker, that of the $54.9m, only 5% is for Recurrent Expenditure, while the $2.99m represents 5% for Recurrent Expenditure, and I will show you why that is significant. 95%, or $51.9m goes to Capital Expenditure, and it is on the Capital side that we will get the growth in the economy, and that is why it is important that 95% of this Appropriation Bill goes to Capital Expenditure.

When the Capital Expenditure will lead to growth in the economy, it is on the Capital side that the projects will provide the income for the workers and as the workers receive income and they spend, then you will see the growth. And that is why I want to commend the Minister for Finance for this Appropriation Bill that allocates 95% to Capital Expenditure. **(Applause)** You see, Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about the current situation. So in a pandemic where we projected that the Recurrent Revenue and it is very simple where Government's revenue comes from. It is no magic. 51% of the revenue comes from international trade or taxes at the Port. The other 49% are collected, locally.

So, if you have a situation where businesses are closing, hotels closed, you will collect less Income Tax from workers, because they are home, because unemployment increase, you will collect less Corporate Income Tax from businesses, because they are not performing at the same level as 2019. And therefore, it is obvious that Government's Recurrent Revenue would drop, would fall. And in a pandemic, this Government still pays a 4% increase to workers. **(Applause)** In a pandemic, I don't know any other CARICOM country that did that. What I heard about is wage freeze and

cuts in the Public Service. This Government has maintained every job. They provided job security for all the workers in a pandemic. It had a time in Grenada when there was no pandemic, everything was going smooth, and the Government of the day could not pay salaries. They had to sell assets to pay salaries, and they were not facing a pandemic. But we are facing a pandemic, where we have a decline in Government's revenues, and it is there for everyone to see.

The only reason this Government is able to continue that is because of the strong fiscal performance of the years before. **(Applause)** That is the only reason, you know. The only reason we can access funding from IDA and the World Bank, $25m and forty years to pay is because of the performance of the Government. If it was not for the strong fiscal performance in the previous years, we would have had to keep borrowing to meet Recurrent Expenditure. And when you borrow to meet Recurrent Expenditure, all you are doing is digging yourself deeper and deeper into a hole. How are you going to come out of it, because you are not putting it on the Capital side where you could generate returns? Business people borrow money to invest in their business for their business to grow, you know. They don't go and borrow money to meet salaries, because when they borrow money to meet salaries, where is the returns, and you have to pay the bank and pay the interest loan.

So, this Government went through a Structural Adjustment Programme, introduced a Fiscal Responsibility Law, Public Finance Management Act and everything is now legislated, as to how we are to perform, how much more we can spend. So, for example, under the Fiscal Responsibility Act, you cannot spend more than 2% in Recurrent Expenditure than you spent in the year before. So, it is important that we spend this year. If it is 2% or a higher amount means that you can spend more.

Countries are able to attract Grants, and that is something now. Because of the pandemic, bilateral Grants have declined, because countries are using their monies to finance their COVID response. So whereas before the pandemic, you might get Grants from friendly countries, now, that is almost non-existent you know, because countries have to grapple and spend on this COVID, the whole world.

You see, if you have a hurricane, it affects Grenada alone, as Ivan, the rest of the world could come together and help us. But when a pandemic affects the rest of the world, each country has to think about how they are providing for their own citizen, you know, and how they could help them, so it is difficult. So, more or less, you are on your own as a Small Island Developing State. And then we have graduated to Middle Income Status, so we cannot get concessionary loans, and that is added pressure, again.

So, unless you have a team in Government that understands all the nuances and understand how to balance their Budget, you cannot survive in these times. **(Applause)** And as a believer in God, I think God has this team in place at this time to deal with this pandemic. That is my strong belief. **(Applause)** I don't think any other team could have done that better than this team, and it is all there. People outside there, all over the place, people meet me and say, well, how are you able to meet all your Recurrent Expenditure, continue all the Social Programmes, no cut in SEED, no cut in the other Social Programmes, paying salaries on time, doing everything in a pandemic, where you are collecting less and less revenue. So, this is the real situation that is facing us today in this country and around the world, and we have to respond.

So, when I saw the Appropriation Bill and note the 5% for Recurrent Expenditure, I thought we would have needed much more money on the Recurrent side, to be honest. Well out of the $2.9m, $1m for the Police. So, I think we are doing well, and the Appropriation Bill that places 95% of the revenue on the Capital Expenditure side that is where we need to spend. I hope that we can increase our implementation rate, so that we can see the growth.

And I heard about Growth Projection. Growth Projection changes, because circumstances change. The IMF reviewed the Growth Projection for the world, the World Bank reviewed all the projections they made, that's a normal thing, to keep monitoring your Growth Projection and reviewing it. There is nothing wrong with that. We could have predicted 6% at the beginning of the year. At the end of the year, you managed 5%. What is wrong with that, nothing, because circumstances have

changed? And therefore, as circumstances change, the factors that would lead to growth have been affected, and therefore, you need to review your projection.

But, I think that this Supplementary Appropriation Bill enable us for this fiscal year to achieve growth, at least positive growth, coming from negative, to positive growth that we would be able to deliver the services to our people.

And regarding this Stimulus Package; first of all, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we cannot print money, so we have to live within our resources. And therefore, the Stimulus Package must have some sort of limitation of how much money that can be provided and to whom and to which sectors of the economy. So, when you see in this Stimulus Package you have income support, it simply means that it is for people who have lost income. And when you see transfers, that is to vulnerable people, who are not earning any money, so you are giving transfers to these people. And you see Unemployment Benefits, people who have been working and now they have lost their jobs, and for a particular period of time.

Mr. Speaker, you know that we do not have any Unemployment Benefits Scheme in Grenada, like other countries that you pay. Countries that have it, a certain percentage of your NIS contribution or what they call Social Security contribution goes towards Unemployment. We do not have that here. We do not have that in Grenada. So when people are calling on NIS or the Government to pay Unemployment Benefits, NIS allocated a certain amount of money to be made available to workers who have lost their jobs, who have been working continuously for six months. But they are not collecting that money as Unemployment Benefits.

So, when you hear the reference made to other countries to pay Unemployment Benefits, they collect a certain percentage, just like we have a 1% for Workman Compensation, when you pay. So some people are calling on the Government to introduce Unemployment Benefits as a certain percentage of your NIS contribution that you should pay, and that's a good recommendation, because we don't know how long this pandemic is going to last for. So you pay Unemployment Benefit now for four months or six months, but what happens if it continues for a long period of time? NIS

cannot continue to allocate money from its budget to meet Unemployment Benefits; that it's not collecting, neither the Government. So, these are some real situations that call for creative thinking. It calls for creative thinking and for leadership and that has been mentioned.

I listened to the Member for South St. George. He was very articulate in his presentation. We have to seriously think outside of the box. What I would like to hear is more suggestions of how we can address things, because it is not good times as usual. **(Applause)** So if you have suggestions, put them forward, recommendations, alternatives. Make recommendations that could help the situation; that is what we need at this time, because all of us are facing the problem of having to deal with the pandemic. So we need some new ideas and suggestions in moving forward. So, Mr. Speaker, I give my full support to this Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for David. Honourable Representative for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my full support to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw attention to some of the key points on this Bill, that this Bill already recognised that the second half of this year would need an additional $2m for COVID-19 response, and it is here, in these dark moments; that this Bill also shows UNICEF saying, and I think this is pertinent, that while we have been successful to date, resources need to be allocated to educate and ensure a successful vaccination rollout, and there is US$75,000.00 allocated here, in support from them. The ability to have found an international partner who recognises our ability to be fiscally prudent, is also of significance and worthy of mention here for my brother and his Ministry, the Ministry of Finance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I rise to give full support, and in giving full support, I am able to give fully support, because like every other Member in this House, regardless of the side we sit on, has received this in a timely matter, because we all sat in the Finance

Committee. So, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask you, if you witnessed what I witnessed, that the only comment from the Leader of the Opposition on this Bill was that he wasn't invited to the COVID-19 Committee. And therefore we can safely assume that he gives full support, because in his opportunity to speak on the Bill, there was nothing critical offered, so I thank him. I know that sometimes it may be difficult to proffer those words to say, I see nothing wrong with this and it is good. But, through you, I just want to ask, if you would miss that, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. George South. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleagues again for their very articulate contributions, as the other Members, who did make their contribution on the Motion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday last, at 10:20 a.m., we had a full two-hour launch of the COVID Economic Stimulus Support, where everything was spelt out, the categories, etcetera, etcetera, and it want Live. So, it was not only persons in this Honourable House, who are aware, but the entire public and we intend, Mr. Speaker, to go on the various programmes, so that people can be reminded. The amount of monies that each category would get, why they would get it and when they would not get it was spelt out in that Launch, Mr. Speaker, fully transparent to the entire public. So, we expect the full support from the Leader of the Opposition, because since transparency was his only concern, Mr. Speaker.

And, I want to indicate a component of that project that is not in this...

(Leader of the Opposition rose)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point-of-Clarity. What I look for, Mr. Speaker, that we spoke about under the Ministry of Finance, in terms of the

Stimulus Package, it says: "$15m. The second Stimulus Package, payments are scheduled to be made." But there is no line item as to how.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. But, Leader of the Opposition, I am not sure why the interruption. If you can point out the Standing Order that is contravened, I would be most grateful.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I stood on a Point-of-Clarity, and that Point-of-Clarity that he was stating that in the Conference or wherever, all the items were there, but it is not in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I repeat, Mr. Speaker, if the Member requires bits of information, the details, which was given to the general public, we approved here, Mr. Speaker, a sum of money, Appropriations that would be coming out and would be controlled by the Ministry of Finance, by the State, that's the $15 m.

Again I said, two hours was spent at the Launch, giving the entire details, and of course, the Member could get such a package, the sums of monies and each category. Over fifty categories of persons; and that is not private. It has already been given to the entire Nation.

So, I continue, Mr. Speaker, with just one point. One person, a good friend, on different sides of the political divide, told me that he was surprised at the quantity, the need that is out there. I, therefore expect that organization or that group to be giving their fullest support and to be cooperating, so that the needy can benefit from this Stimulus Package, and we understand, very well, that the $36m is a drop in the bucket. $2.3m, Mr. Speaker, would not pass through here. This is the Internet Programme, where fifteen hundred households would be helped with Internet, twenty from

themselves, every recipient, fifty-four through FLOW, and thirty the Government would secure from within most of the other members in the Telecommunications Providers Community. That works out to be about $2.3m for one year. And we hope that the pandemic would slow a bit, or these people would be of such good grace that they will continue the programme, either in length or in quantity of persons, who can benefit.

We understand now, Mr. Speaker, if this continues then we may have to have internal teachings or virtual connection for a long period. And there are persons that the Provider indicated they have dropped off the radar with respect to Internet. In other words, in 2019, they had a connection. In the middle of 2020, they have dropped out, and as a business, you would want to say why your customers have dropped out, because they cannot pay, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I compliment that this person, of a different political suasion, who understands the need that is out there. So those of us who must go out, we must talk to constituents, we must talk to people, must also recognise this, Mr. Speaker, that we must help.

And, as the Member for the South said, be part of the Leadership Programme, to ensure that our people, those most in need, get the benefit of this package. And in fact could use whatever influence that they have to get a bigger contribution to it, whether through local persons, or through international contacts that they have, Mr. Speaker. I recommend this Bill for its second reading. **(Applause)**

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 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.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Ag. Clerk Assistant: Item 16 - 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: I beg to move the Adjournment of this Honourable House ***sine die***.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Government's Business. Sorry. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not Leader of Government's Business, at least, not yet. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, I stand here, today, on this Adjournment, because I believe that it is very important that I speak on the situation where we are now, vis-à-vis, COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, as a student of the science, rightly so, I spoke to the COVID-19 and the history of the SARS pandemic, as it happened one hundred years ago, as it happened one hundred and fifty years ago, as it happened throughout our history. And, Mr. Speaker, today, in our world this will not be the last of it, you know.

It is predicted, Mr. Speaker, that maybe by the year 2030, thereabout, we will have another one again. But we have forgotten the history that was learnt from one hundred years ago. Yes, we have made improvement in science, vast improvement, but our people and their mind set remain the same, especially we say that we are sociable people.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the virus mutate with different variants. Last I've heard we now have the MU; they name it according to the Greek alphabet. But, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility rests on all of us, collectively and individually to protect ourselves and our family and our country.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I held up my Vaccination Card right here. You even asked where you can get yours laminated. And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people has called on me, many times to ask about it, and I point out to them the history and the legacy of vaccines. We have a Doctor in the House, and so this vaccination is not new. But, we also have to combat the misinformation that is out there about vaccines.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we struggle, not only Grenada, you know, but look at a country like Japan, Mr. Speaker, look at a country like the United States. They say

Africans/Americans in the Unites States is only 30% vaccinated, and this is because of what they called the Tuskegee Experiment, from the 1930s to the 1970s, and the way Africans/Americans were treated. I don't even think Japan is up in the teens, in terms of vaccinations, because of the history.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of education to do, and while we educate our people, we must be mindful that there are other avenues of education. Vaccine hesitancy is not merely okay, you are stupid, so you are not taking the vaccine. But there are legitimate reasons why people are hesitant, and we have to educate them, as to the effects and how they can overcome that hesitancy.

We see a situation now that some people are thinking it doesn't matter if I get the vaccine or not, you'll still get it. But the question is, the underlying question is, is that you will build up immunity to fight against COVID-19, when you take the vaccine, so you may not get as sick as if you did not have it, or you may not get as sick unto hospitalisation, or you may not get as sick unto death. And the same scientists would tell you, the frightening thing about it, is the longer we stay to get to that point is the more dangerous that virus can become.

There is one word that we did not speak in this House. There is what is also known as a super virus, and I pray to God, Mr. Speaker, I pray to God that COVID-19 does not come to the point of a super virus. And so we have to treat, and I would say it here, we have to treat with urgency, the times that we are in, not only as a country, you know, but as a world, because as I said, Mr. Speaker, and some people were against. If COVID-19 is anywhere, it is everywhere, and I say that without apology, because it started from one place. We have to say that we are our brother's keeper, not only here in Grenada, but in St. Vincent, in Timbuktu, in Africa, somewhere in Asia, or somewhere in the Middle East, on every remote part of the Globe. We cannot say that we are COVID-free in Grenada, so we could leave the little Seychelles up to their own, because as a Global Community, we are interlocked, and many people are calling now. We do not only have to take a Grenada approach, but we should take a Caribbean approach. We should take a Western Hemisphere. We should take a world approach.

And so I would let my little voice be heard for whatever it is worth, whether or not I am on any group or any committee, and this is what I have done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see that the Leader of the Opposition and myself came to the House debating, but we leave on the same note, positive note, same message etcetera, because it's science, it's science.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we're on Public Business just to quickly give an update, as to our status quo. At present, at present, at this moment, we have six individuals, who are in our ICU at the General Hospital, our COVID ICU. The information I received from the Doctors there is that three of those individuals are in a critical condition. Of the six individuals, one of those individuals is a middle aged female, who is pregnant, nineteen weeks, approximately, pregnant.

Mr. Speaker, to date, as of yesterday, we have given twenty-six thousand and eighty-eight second doses. That's a mixture of persons with AstraZeneca, as well as Pfizer, 26,088. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Speaker, 19,372 first dose alone without second. Sorry, it is the other way around, Mr. Speaker, twenty-six thousand first dose and 19,372, second dose.

The benefit of using Pfizer now, as opposed to AstraZeneca is the period for the second dose. Because it is twenty-one days, the gap will quickly narrow between first doses and second doses. There are six hundred and sixty-seven persons in quarantine right now, under the instructions, and for; sorry one thousand, one hundred and seven persons between quarantine and isolation on the instructions of the Ministry of Health. As we are very much aware there are countless others who are in isolation and we take that as individuals who have listened to the message and are taking the precautions. It

is better to err on the side of caution, always, even though I know it is causing significant stress and dialogue, etcetera, between managers and employees, owners and their employees, and even here among our Government Administrators and our Civil Servants. But we will get through this together, once we are all focused on that one common objective.

There's one other difficult point I'll like to raise, Mr. Speaker, which will give us a certain sense of expectation and to keep our feet firmly on the ground. That is, that in this week, regrettably, we lost three individuals to COVID-19. Those three individuals had a state-of-the-art bed, had all of the equipment needed, all of the medicine, the full attention of the adequate nursing and doctors there. Full attention, all of the resources, everything needed, but regrettably, they did succumb to the disease, because the disease is a deadly disease.

And I need us, those of us who have not yet come to terms with that, that this is not about politics. This is not about our Government and its resources, or lack of resources, allocation of resources. This is not about industrial relationships. This is not about religion. This is about a deadly disease that if certain people get it, regardless of the resources available to them, they will succumb to the disease. Let me repeat that, that if certain people get this COVID-19, regardless of the resources available, they will succumb to the disease. We as a nation need to appreciate that. We need to recognise that. We need to try as best as possible now, at this eleventh hour, quite likely too late, but still, always, being positive in our thoughts it is never too late to try and make a difference. But we need to prevent the spread of this disease, and that it takes fourteen days. Any actions today, it takes fourteen days before you actually see the results of it. What we are experiencing now is from fourteen days ago. It will continue over this weekend and into next week. What we do now will affect next week, because, as my learned brother on the Opposition and I agree on, that this is science-based. As long as we can remove the emotions and we can recognise the science in this, we can work together and we can appreciate the realities that we now face and the realities that we will continue to face.

So, I want to thank all of those who have come forward so far, to give assistance. I want to thank the Unions that are currently in dialogue with the Minister for Labour too, and our Prime Minister, in recognition of the seriousness of this situation and that we all need to do our part; that we all need to see ourselves in the same role and that is, as a question I posed through you, what can I do to help? Or how can I help? And not anymore of, I sit on "This Side" and therefore, I only have one role that I can play, and that's for all. So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I bid you and all of the Members and all of our beautiful citizens of this wonderful country of ours, God's blessing and sincere hope that we all stay safe. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. George South. Let me, Honourable Members, give thanks to God for keeping us safe. This virus is not a very friendly virus, or it is overly friendly, so much so that when it gets you it kills you. We have to do all we can, each of us.

What you hear is, what is the Government doing and what is the Ministry of Health doing? And it is frightening, when we continue to speak like that. Or, it is my human rights, as though that is the only human being that is on this Planet. We all have our human rights, and I must protect mine and you must protect yours. And sometimes you listen to persons in leadership role, in all the different sectors and you question about what do they think. They all know that it is troubling times, but they would not mention the word vaccinate.

I was listening to a programme yesterday of the Opposition of another country, who was bashing the Government for its lack of leadership. But the Leader of the Opposition ended by saying, I want to encourage every person to get vaccinated. That is what we are not hearing from the leadership in our country. It always ends with a but, but it is your right, but it is your right. Yes, it is your right, go and get vaccinated. And we need to urge that. Someone once said, the reason Grenadians are not worrying about vaccinating, because nobody is dying. It appears as though the numbers of people getting vaxxed is now increasing. I hope it is not because we have started to die

because the Minister for Health in this Parliament indicated that if we do not hurry up and get vaccinated and protect ourselves, people are going to die, nice kind words. You had to say that, if you don't do it, you go dead. We expect that much more.

Honourable Minister, I want to, on behalf of this Parliament, to extend to you Sir, or salute you for the work that is being done by you and your team, and I mean the entire team, the Technical Advisory Team, the members of the Health Department, the doctors and nurses, especially the Chief Medical Officer and the other Directors that I am seeing, the two ladies who are there with you, and the effort that you are making and encouraging. And I sometimes see the stress and the tiredness, because I make sure that I try to keep informed, as much as possible about this disease.

So I want to record my thanks to the Government of this country, to the leadership, to the Health Department, to the First Responders, and I must say, greatly surprised to learn that you had members of the Health Department, who have to be upfront and have not tried to protect themselves or of the Security Services, who have to be the first person upfront and have not protected themselves and throughout the entire ranks of both the Security Services and the Health Services. But I want to say that if you're not vaccinated, you are not my good friend, because you want to commit suicide.

Honourable Members, I wish you very kind week and may you remember, Dr. Brathwaite said, one mask may not be sufficient. I tried putting on two **(laughter) (Hon. Dr. Modeste-Curwen indicated she had two)** …oh, you have two (2), and it's working. Well when I was leaving this morning, my lady gave me two. She said, I must wear the two, but I put on one, because of our distance here. I look forward to the day when I can see all the faces of the Parliamentarians here, and to see the smile and to see what they're saying. Until I can do that, I am not happy, and rather than having to look in the gallery for the Parliamentarians, who should be the Chamber, I want to see everybody in the Chamber. So in order for me to see you, you must stay alive, and I promise you I will be alive with the help of God. Honourable members, the question is that this Honourable House now stands adjourned ***sine die***.

Adjournment

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned *sine die* at 12:00 noon.

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