MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, MT, WHELDALE, ST. GEORGE'S ON WEDNESDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 9:00 A.M.

PRESENT

Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP	-	**St. David** **Chairman** Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Information, Disaster Management & Public Administration, Infrastructure and Physical Development, Public Utilities & Civil Aviation and Transportation
Honourable Philip A. Telesford, MP	-	**St. George South-East** Minister for Health
Honourable Lennox John Andrews, MP	-	**St. Andrew South West** Minister for Economic Development, Planning and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources
Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP	-	**Carriacou & Petite Martinique** Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government
Honourable Kerryne Z. James, MP	-	**St. John** Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy
Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead, MP		**St. George North-East** Member
Honourable Delma Thomas, MP	-	**St. Andrew North-West** Minister for Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs, with a special focus on the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital
Honourable Andy Williams, MP		**St. George South** Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation
Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP	-	**St. George North-West** Leader of His Majesty's Opposition
Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP	-	**St. Mark** Member
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP	-	**St. Andrew North-East** Member

Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP	-	**St. Andrew South-East** Member
Honourable Peter David, MP	-	**Town of St. George** Member

ABSENT

Honourable Joseph Andall, MP	-	**St. Patrick West** Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development (*Excused Tendered*)
Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP	-	**St. Patrick East** Minister for Finance (*Excused Tendered*)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Andrew Augustine	-	Clerk of Parliament
Ms. Charmaine Blackette	-	Senior Human Resource Officer
Mr. Gayvon Mark	-	Information Technology Officer (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Ms. Leasha Francis	-	Recording Secretary (Office of the Houses of Parliament)
Mr. Mike Sylvester	-	Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Finance)
Mr. Justin Hazzard	-	Chief Budget Officer (Ag.) (Ministry of Finance)

WELCOME

The Presiding Chairman, Honourable Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, welcomed all to the meeting.

The Chairman suggested a start time of five minutes later than the time stated on the agenda to allow the Opposition Members of Parliament to arrive.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Chairman brought to the Honourable Members' attention the amended start time of the meeting, which should be 9:00 a.m. rather than 10 a.m., the initial start time of the meeting, and asked for a Motion to be moved to adopt the amended Agenda.

The Honourable Delma Thomas moved the Motion, and the Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford, seconded the Motion to adopt the amended Agenda.

PRAYERS

The Chairman asked Honourable Philip Telesford to lead the meeting in prayer.

Honourable Philip Telesford led the meeting in prayer.

Announcements by the Chairman

The Chairman announced that the Honourable Member of Parliament for St. Patrick East, Dennis Cornwall, Minister for Finance, was out of state in the Middle East as part of a team heading the delegation to seek financing for the construction of the new hospital.

The Chairman also announced that the Honourable Member of Parliament for St. Patrick West, Joseph Andall, was out of state attending the CARICOM Heads of Conference Meeting in Barbados as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development.

An excuse for tardiness was made on behalf of Honourable Tevin Andrews, due to the delayed inbound flight from Carriacou to Grenada and Honourable Kerryne James.

Further, the Chairman announced that he saw the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell on the compound and believes that he will join the meeting soon as an excuse was not tendered on his behalf.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

The Chairman asked for the Minutes of the Standing Committee on Finance held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, to be taken as read.

The Motion was approved by Honourable Philip Telesford and seconded by Honourable Ron Redhead.

CORRECTIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO MINUTES

There were no corrections or amendments to the Minutes.

MOTION FOR THE CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES

A Motion to confirm the Minutes held on Wednesday, August 28, 2024, was moved by Honourable Philip Telesford and seconded by Honourable Delma Thomas.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2025

The Chairman introduced the Estimates of Expenditure for 2025-2027 Vote by Vote, the Integrity Commission Budget 2025, and the Ombudsman Budget and Plan 2025 for approval.

The Chairman informed the Honourable Members that the Draft Estimates were circulated, and since it was a reasonably large document, he ensured that all Members safely navigated it. He stated that there should be a bookmark or a table of contents to facilitate ease of navigation. In addition, he requested the presence of the Information Technology Officer to assist Members in the event of challenges.

The Chairman informed the Honourable Members of the presence of the support staff at the Ministry of Finance, including Permanent Secretary Mr. Mike Sylvester and Chief Budget Officer (Ag.) Mr. Justin Hazzard, and further shared that their presence will aid in clarifying any questions that may arise.

The Chairman shared that the Budget is being prepared using the new software, Questica. It is an application aimed at streamlining budget presentations to enhance

the budget management process. It is the inaugural year of using the software, and some challenges have been revealed. Therefore, profound gratitude was expressed by the Chairman to the staff of the various ministries for working with the Ministry of Finance on the new software. The Chairman added that consultants who assisted in the operation of the applications provided support to the team during the process.

The Chairman provided an executive summary of the draft Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2025, which provides for a total expenditure of **$1,912,920,013**, including;

- Recurrent expenditure - $1,105,902,050;
- Principal loan repayments - $310,474,386; and
- Capital Expenditure - $496,543,577.

The Chairman named the tables and the abstracts using the Table of Contents and proceeded Vote by Vote, ensuring all Members had access to the document.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 01.

				Recurrent Expenditure
Vote 01	**-**	**Governor General**	**-**	**1,831,894**

Honourable Emmalin Pierre queried the blank tables in the document and asked if they would be reflected in the final document.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, responded yes, but the tables were not needed for the Meeting. He further shared with the Honourable Members that the non-populated tables are one of the challenges the team is progressively working through.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 02.

	-		**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure**
Vote 02	**-**	**Parliament**	**-**	**8,766,277**

Honourable Ron Redhead inquired whether the Actual Provision for Communication of $3.35 was a typographical error.

The Clerk of Parliament, conveyed through the Chairman, that the figure is the mailbox fee.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 03.

Vote 03	**-**	**Supreme Court**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 6,854,494**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 04.

Vote 04	**-**	**Magistracy**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 3,205,734**	**Capital Expenditure 80,500**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 05.

Vote 05	**-**	**Audit**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 2,038,619**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 06.

Vote 06	**-**	**Public Service Commission**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 1,507,866**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 07.

Vote 07	**-**	**Director of Public Prosecutions**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 1,551,589**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 08.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 08	**-**	**Electoral Office**	**-**	**1,954,531**	**4,735,914**

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters drew attention to line item 211 – Salaries; Actual Provisional 2024 $214,527; Estimates 2025 $844,641 and queried the significant increase.

The Chairman responded by indicating that if a new voter registration system is purchased, the system will require additional human resources and training, but was unable to provide an explanation about the approved estimated amount in 2024 versus what was spent in 2024. In addition, the Chairman noted the approved estimates in 2024, $785,143, was more than the estimates for 2025, $780,650 and noted Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters' query to provide an accurate explanation.

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen questioned the possibility of getting an answer to the question.

The Chairman indicated that the query was noted and will endeavour to seek an explanation.

Honourable Emmalin Pierre added that based on experience when a Ministry submits a request for such a significant increase, it is usually justified by the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance staff should have asked questions like, based on the amount spent last year, do you need that much for next year, and if you do, can this be justified?

Acting Chief Budget Officer, Mr Justin Hazzard, shared that the budgeted salary contains vacant positions with the intention of filling those positions during the budgeted year, which, in most instances, were not achieved.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, drew attention to line item 213 – Professional Services being linked to the increased estimates to line item 211 – Salaries, stating that training and additional human resources are required for efficient implementation and use of the equipment and systems. In addition, Permanent Secretary Mr. Mike Sylvester reiterated the point made by Acting Chief Budget Officer Mr. Justin Hazzard on the failure to fill budgeted positions within the budgeted year. Moreover, the 5% employee salary increase took effect in January 2025 and must be considered in the estimated amount.

The Chairman thanked the attending Ministry of Finance staff members and stated that the inquiry was noted and that it would be best to obtain clarification from the Electoral Office.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 09.

Vote 09	**-**	**Ministry of Legal Affairs, Labour, and Consumer Affairs**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 9,424,386**	**Capital Expenditure 2,525,000**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 10.

Vote 10	**-**	**Office of the Prime Minister**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 6,379,719**	**Capital Expenditure 25,811,173**

The Chairman stated that the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology and its projects have been rerouted to the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office, resulting in a significant increase in capital expenditure. Such programmes and initiatives are the Digital Governance for Resilience Project (DG4R), $5,100,000; Purchasing of Computer Equipment, $2,000,000, the Upgrading GOG Telecommunications Network, $1,000,000; the E-Government Services - Microsoft Software Upgrade & Empowerment Programmes, $2,000,000; Licenses, $3,000,000; the Caribbean Regional Communications Project, $3,000,000; the Transformational Project Agency, $1,000,000; the Digital Transformation Agency, $1,000,000; and the Digital Transformation Office, $3,000,000.

The Chairman further drew attention to the Actual Provisional spending of $5,581,156 versus the approved estimate of $7,000,000 for the 50th Anniversary Independence Celebration.

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters drew attention to line item 21 – Employee Compensation Actual Provisional 2024 $1,175,082; Estimates 2025 $3,221,229 and inquired about the significant increase.

The Chairman stated that with the rerouting of the programmes and initiatives, all employees affiliated with the change will now be compensated under the Office of the Prime Minister's estimates.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 11.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 11	**-**	**Prisons**	**-**	**12,564,806**	**1,685,000**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 12.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 12	**-**	**Police**	**-**	**76,834,773**	**1,450,000**

The Chairman pointed out that the increase in Recurrent Expenditure for Police includes the approval by the Cabinet to resolve the pay and grade issue with the Police, which will lead to salary adjustments. Additionally, the significant sum budgeted for Capital Expenditure relates to the relocation of the Police Headquarters from its current location on the Fort to the Carenage, St. George's, as well as the refurbishment of the building in St. Andrew to house the Grenville Police Station.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 15.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 15	**-**	**Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy, and Culture**	**-**	**29,695,445**	**7,800,000**

The Chairman detailed the reason for the null characters within the Recurrent Expenditure's Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates 2024, indicating that the Ministry was created during the year and the figures for the staffing can be found under the previously formulated Ministry.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 16.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 16	**-**	**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Export Development**	**-**	**21,428,087**	**2,080,230**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 17.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 17	**-**	**Financial Intelligence Unit**	**-**	**1,685,127**	**2,080,230**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 18.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 18	**-**	**Ministry of National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information, and Disaster Management**	**-**	**38,470,318**	**2,940,249**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 19.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 19	**-**	**Ministry of Youth and Sports**	**-**	**44,744,424**	**24,155,530**

The Chairman detailed the reason for the null characters within the Recurrent Expenditure's Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates 2024 indicating the current reflection is a result of the realignment of the Ministry.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 20.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 20	**-**	**Ministry of Finance**	**-**	**145,180,743**	**14,279,100**

The Chairman drew attention to the largest sum within the Vote, line item 223 – Utilities amounting to $26,979,128, Actual Provisional 2024; $26,300,000 Approved Estimate 2024 and $28,000,000 Estimates 2025, noting the significantly large sums.

Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell inquired about the Recurrent Expenditure's grand total; Actual Provisional $73,414,679 and Estimates $145,180,743, noting that it is almost a 100% increase.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, explained as part of the Public Finance Management Act, the Government provides 2% of Domestic Revenues as a contingency provision in the event of a natural disaster, fostering fund transfer to other ministries immediately after a natural disaster. He further quantified the large sums, indicating the Citizen by Investment Programme budget includes its operation to reflect functions of staffing and marketing. Furthermore, regarding the reflected sum on the revenue side, the Ministry of Finance budgeted at net, which shows the difference between what was collected in due diligence versus what was paid out. He further shared that the consultant's advice revealed that the approach undertaken by the Ministry of Finance is an incorrect approach and the budget should reflect the gross. Therefore, the gross allocation is the reflected budgeted total for the Citizen by Investment total.

Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell stated the response was not satisfactory. He hopes that a detailed and specific analysis of the rationale will be presented, which will aid in the budget presentation.

The Chairman, seeking clarity, inquired about the significant increase, line item 26 – Grants and Contributions from an Actual Provisional 2024 sum of $5,220,913 to Estimates 2025, $47,011,163.

The Permanent Secretary shared that the 2% Contingency Fund is included in the total figure, amounting to approximately $19m, and the Citizen by Investment is approximately $47m.

For clarity, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell suggested a specific explanation from the Ministry of Finance or an excerpt of the Minutes of the Standing Committee on Finance dated February 19, 2025 specific to Vote 20 as soon as possible.

The Chairman proceeded to seek clarity from the Permanent Secretary outlining line item 283 – Contingency Provision, Actual Provision $0; Approved Estimates 2024, $18,664,316, (disbursed among ministries), and Estimates 2025, $19,841,955.

The Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, agreed, stating that $18,664,316 was spent after Hurricane Beryl.

The Chairman stated, in summary, that the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, is requesting a written note to explain those line items and took note of line items 26 and 283.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 21.

				Recurrent Expenditure
Vote 21	**-**	**Pensions and Gratuities**	**-**	**143,155,114**

The Chairman stated the increase in the estimates for 2025 is to address the passage of the Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) Bill, the provision of pension benefits to persons who held non-established positions, Government of Grenada contracts for and of service within the Government.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 22.

				Recurrent Expenditure
Vote 22	**-**	**Charges on Account of Public Debt**	**-**	**439,285,761**

The Chairman noted the significant increase in line item 24 – Interest and Bank Charges, noting the Approved Estimates 2024, $56,630,263, versus the Actual Provisional 2024, $122,445,166 and requested an explanation from the Permanent Secretary.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, stated there is a CBI Bonus tied to the performance of the NTF Programme. The calculated pay-out was in the region of $75m last year, given the significant performance of the CBI Programme. Noting that 2023 and 2024 experienced significant performances, it is expected to capture another significant payment of $75m in 2025. The interest payout is tied to the restructured International Bonds that were issued many years ago.

Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell asked who the recipients of the payments were based on performance.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, shared that the recipients are the international and domestic bondholders per the agreement signed by the Government of Grenada restructuring the debt in 2013-2015.

Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford, inquired whether or not this process aids in expediting the repayment of the debt.

Permanent Secretary, Mr Mike Sylvester, replied no, adding that when the international bonds were restructured, the bonds were 9.7%; the Government approached the bondholders for a haircut and a reduction in the interest rate, and both were granted with conditions; one of which included, based on the CBI Programme's performance the bondholders must be paid certain sums.

Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford, inquired whether it is an opportune time to restructure that debt component or renegotiate with the bondholders given the enhanced performance of the CBI Programme currently.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, replied yes, the bondholders can be approached, but is not aware of the possibility of restructuring because there were times when the bondholders didn't receive substantial sums. Additionally, the bond is expected to be paid off in 2030; a few years from now. Therefore, initiating changes now is not advisable since the principal is finally decreasing significantly.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 25.

Vote 25	**-**	**Contributions**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 26,986,802**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 20.

Vote 20	**-**	**Ministry of Economic Development, Planning, and Co-operatives**	**-**	**Recurrent Expenditure 4,550,038**	**Capital Expenditure 19,834,838**

The Chairman indicated the major reason for downsizing the estimates for 2025 for the Ministry, stating there is a realignment.

Honourable Lennox Andrews shared that the Member for St. Mark, Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, requested some information relative to the Hydroponic Project and indicated that the information is currently available.

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen thanked Honourable Lennox Andrews.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 28.

			Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 28	**Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment, and Renewable Energy**	**-**	**2,937,185**	**13,184,559**

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters drew attention to line item 221 – International Travel; Actual Provisional 2024 $237,620; Approved Estimates 2024 $43,000 and inquired about the significant increase.

The Chairman replied, assuming there was more international travel undertaken than was actually budgeted for, asking the Minister for Climate Resilience to explain.

Honourable Kerryne James stated most of the international travels are funded by the organisers or initiators of the meeting, but it is still documented in the Budget. Additionally, while there is a budgeted amount for the international, the funds are often not used.

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters reiterated the question and specifically requested a response tailored to what accounted for the increase as opposed to what was actually budgeted.

The Chairman replied, assuming there was more international travel or an increase in the cost of international travel.

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters asked Honourable Kerryne James if those travels were not accounted for at the time of budget preparations.

Honourable Kerryne James replied no and continued to share that invitations are received through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Based on the frequency and the nature of the meetings, it is difficult during the preparation of the budget to note such. Additionally, there are different responsibilities for caucuses that countries and ministers would be appointed to; for example, Honourable Kerryne James has been

appointed President of the Bureau by Parties to the Montreal Protocol, which required physical meetings attendance initially not accounted for.

Honourable Emmalin Pierre sought clarification based on the procedure by asking if, in all cases, when the ministry undertakes travel funded by the organiser, the funding is captured in the budget document.

Honourable Kerryne James responded, indicating the cost incurred for both international and local travels must be accounted for in the legal construct within the Ministry of Finance and requested that the attending staff members of the Ministry of Finance assist in providing the clarity requested by Honourable Emmalin Pierre.

Honourable Emmalin Pierre rephrased the question by asking if the existing figure accounts for sums of money that the Ministry, a grant, for example, received for international travel.

Honourable Kerryne James shared that grants are explained and expressed differently. She added that some meetings occur annually, requiring the Minister to travel with one or two officers. She stated that grant funding is sometimes incorporated into international travel and may be different from time to time.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, provided clarity to Honourable Emmalin Pierre by sharing that the allocations within the budget facilitate local travel. When a delegation is travelling based on the travel policy, the Government of Grenada pays the sundry or fixed allowances. However, regarding the ticket and accommodation cost, if the organiser takes responsibility for the cost, then it is not journalised. It is not a usual practice. However, the correct information can be sought from the Account General to provide a comprehensive and substantial response.

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen stated that she was seeing tables with explanations for external or internal sources of funding and wanted to know if it would be possible for the information to be reflected on a separate document relative to the questions asked by Honourable Emmalin Pierre for different ministries and projects.

The Chairman indicated that some of the tables provide details of the source of funds, whether it is a grant or local funding.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 29.

			Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 29	**-**	**Ministry of Mobilisation Implementation and Transformation**	**-** **3,952,782**	**43,891,005**

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters inquired about line item 4 – Output Indicators, Nation Builders being subsidised by the Government, if yes, the amount, the nature of the business structure, and the frequency of the subvention.

The Chairman shared that Nation Builders is a non-governmental organisation that is subsidised by the Government to support the WASH Programme and will undertake to provide the figure that is being undertaken for 2025. Thus far, only one subvention has been provided, which was in 2024, and there isn't a commitment to continue providing a subvention.

Honourable Emmalin Pierre said that based on information published by the Government, it states Nation Builders is a division or part of a ministry.

The Chairman replied, indicating that he could not provide comments since he had never seen the publication. Further to that, he reiterated the initial response.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 30.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 30	**-**	**Ministry of Infrastructure, Physical Development, Public Utilities, Civil Aviation and Transportation**	**-**	**30,779,133**	**124,970,000**

Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste Curwen enlightened the Chairman about a project for the area of Waltham, St. Mark, for the use of the fishermen's boat landing along with a signed contract prior to the General Elections, June 2022, which still awaits an update on the progression as it has been under review.

The Chairman stated that he could undertake an inquiry on the matter.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 35.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 35	**-**	**Ministry of Social and Community Development, and Gender Affairs**	**-**	**63,063,841**	**21,988,706**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 36.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 36	**-**	**Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government**	**-**	**22,370,841**	**21,672,000**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 38.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 38	**-**	**Ministry of Housing**	**-**	**2,283,979**	**25,000,000**

The Chairman detailed the reason for the null characters within the Recurrent Expenditure's Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates 2024 columns as a result of the Ministry's realignment.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 40.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 40	**-**	**Ministry of Education**	**-**	**135,805,848**	**47,592,332**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 50.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 50	**-**	**Ministry of Health**	**-**	**94,380,984**	**64,848,145**

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 52.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 50	**-**	**Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs**	**-**	**10,096,303**	**2,030,000**

The Chairman detailed the reason for the null characters within the Recurrent Expenditure's Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates 2024 columns as a result of the Ministry's realignment.

Honourable Emmalin Pierre suggested the inclusion of a separate sheet to reflect the Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates in areas where ministries experience realignment. The Chairman stated that the use of the new software, Questica, is one of the hindrances to showcasing the changes.

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, shared that the information exists in the document and can be found by comparing the two Votes. In addition, there would be a page within the final Budget Document illustrating the changes in the Estimates.

The Chairman requested the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, to assist in proving the document to the Honourable Emmalin Pierre.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 61.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 61	**-**	**Ministry of the Blue Economy and Marine Affairs**	**-**	**4,918,648**	**2,050,000**

The Chairman detailed the reason for the null characters within the Recurrent Expenditure's Actual Provisional 2024 and Approved Estimates 2024 columns since it is a newly created Ministry.

Honourable Peter David asked, based on the information outlined in the Draft Budget Document, if it is simply moving Fisheries into a new Ministry because the new Ministry makes an allocation of $2,050,000 (a portion) for Fisheries, which is the same allocation made by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Chairman responded and stated that the Government must go beyond fishing because there are major challenges with the yachting industry, and the regulation and management of the marine parks at times can be ad hoc.

Honourable Peter David inquired whether the allocated sum would be sufficient to overcome the mentioned challenges.

The Chairman indicated it is sufficient to commence most of the necessary functions of the Ministry.

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters inquired about hiring and transferring of staffing.

The Chairman shared that staff who are currently employed within the Fisheries division under the Ministry of Agriculture would be transferred, with a new Permanent Secretary assuming leadership the role.

Approved.

The Chairman introduced the Vote 64.

				Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Expenditure
Vote 64	**-**	**Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and Forestry**	**-**	**17,690,347**	**14,735,256**

Permanent Secretary, Mr. Mike Sylvester, shared the omission of the Deputy President of the Senate under Vote 02 which amounted to $42,000.000. He stated that it should be included and will affect the final figure.

Additionally, he stated that under Vote 01 and Vote 02 respectively, the Ombudsman Budget request along with that of the Integrity Commission Budget was different than what was submitted to the Standing Committee of Finance for approval.

The Chairman sought the approval of the Honourable Members to include the position of Deputy President of the Senate, $42,000,000, allowing the Ministry for Finance to make changes.

Approved.

Integrity Commission Budget 2025

On the advice of the Permanent Secretary, Mr Mike Sylvester, the Chairman shared within Vote 01, line item 26 Grants and Contributions; 262 – Grants and

Contribution to Government Agencies and Local Organisations the estimate for the Integrity Commission is **$868,000**.

Ombudsman Budget 2025

On the advice of the Permanent Secretary, Mr Mike Sylvester, the Chairman shared within Vote 02, line item 26 Grants and Contributions; 262 – Grants and Contribution to Government Agencies and Local Organisations, the Ombudsman 2025 Estimate is included in the sum of **$5,147,693**.

Approved.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Honourable Dr Clarice Modeste-Curwen asked if the air-conditioning temperature can be looked into since it is usually extremely cold and uncomfortable given the number of persons in the Chamber when there is a meeting.

The Chairman asked the Clerk of Parliament if the temperature could be adjusted.

The Clerk of Parliament responded, yes.

The Chairman suggested that the Clerk take the initiative, based on the number of persons in the room, to adjust the temperature during parliamentary sittings or meetings.

Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters asked if the previous Ministers will report or if ministers will report based on new alignments.

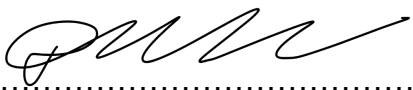
The Chairman shared that the Ministers will not be realigned.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman thanked all the Honourable Members for their active participation, for accommodating the earlier start time and summarised all the notes taken during the Meeting to provide substantive and comprehensive details to the questions that went unanswered.

The Motion for the adjournment of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance was moved by the Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford and seconded by Honourable Ron Redhead.

The Meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m.



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Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP

CHAIRMAN