



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**THIRD SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2025  
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

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at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Attendance***

**PRESENT**

Mr. Speaker  
Honourable Leo Cato, MP  
*in the Chair*

Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP  
(*St. David*)

- 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 Joseph Andall, MP  
(*St. Patrick West*)

- Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development

Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP  
(*Carriacou & Petite Martinique*)

- Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government

Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP  
(*St. Patrick East*)

- Minister for Finance

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 Youth and Sports, 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

Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP  
(*St. Mark*)

- Deputy Speaker

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

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***Attendance***

**ABSENT**

Honourable Lennox John Andrews, MP  
(*St. Andrew South West*)

- Minister for Economic Development, Planning  
and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands,  
Forestry and Marine Resources  
(*Excuse tendered*)

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP  
(*St. George North-West*)

- Leader of His Majesty's Opposition  
(*Excuse tendered*)

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***Prayers  
Minutes***

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Let's pray.

**(House Prayer was said)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Join me in saying the Lord's Prayer, please.

**(The Lord's Prayer was said)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Pray be seated.

**(Sound of gavel)**

**Mr. Speaker:** This Parliament is now officially open. For whatever reason, the sun is directly...

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 3 – Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a new Member.  
Item 4 – Confirmation of Minutes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Happy New Year to Members of this Honourable House, and to all of Grenada. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Wednesday the 18th of December 2024, at 9 a.m., be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

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**Minutes**

**Minutes taken as read.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** 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 Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday the 18th of December 2024, at 9 a.m., be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 5 – Messages from the Governor-General.

Item 6 – Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have been advised that the Leader of the Opposition won't be with us in today's Sitting. I have also been advised that Honourable Lennox Andrews, MP for St. Andrew South West, won't be with us either. He had a death in his family, and as such, he won't be able to make it to the Sitting. Of course, we have to keep him and his family in our prayers, because death, even though it has been with us for as long as human beings have existed, it is still a very difficult thing to deal with. So our prayers go with the Honourable Lennox Andrews in this situation.

I wish to also say in this Honourable House that a number of Bills have received the assent from the Governor-General, since they were passed in both Houses of Parliament:

- Bank Holiday (Amendment) Act, 2024 has received the assent;
- Tax Administration (Amendment) Act, 2024;
- Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2024;
- Proceeds of Crime (Amendment), 2024;

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- Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) Act, 2024; and
- Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (Judicial Officers Pensions) Act, 2024.

Right, and I wish to announce also that the Honourable MP for the Town of St. George is no longer a Member of the New National Party. **(Applause)** Those are my announcements.

- Deputy Clerk:**
- Item 7 – Presentation of Petitions.
  - Item 8 – Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.
  - Item 9 – Unopposed Private Business.
  - Item 10 – Questions.
  - Item 11 – Urgent questions under the provisions of Standing Order No. 20 (1) (Notice of Questions).
  - Item 12 – Statements by Ministers.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for St. Andrew North West.

**Hon. Delma Thomas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, good morning to everyone, and let me take this opportunity to wish everyone a very productive 2025. Mr. Speaker, allow me to update this Honourable House on some of the very important initiatives under the ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of lighting of the cricket stadium, and I want to highlight Progress Park, since it's so very important to us in St. Andrew. We promised to light the Progress Park in 2025, and I'm pleased to report that we are one step closer to realising that reality. The tendering process has been completed, the contractor has already signed the contract, but more than that, Mr. Speaker, a down payment, according to the contract, was made to the contractor. And so, very soon we'll have the cricket stadium being done for us, by the same contractor and the Progress Park, which is part of our upgrade and our improvement, as it relates to sporting facilities across Grenada. As a

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Government, we have promised that we will improve sporting facilities across Grenada, and so, this is a start of what we'll see in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I had the privilege of attending the Youth Explosion event in Carriacou, under the theme "Resilience Rising – Rebuilding Hope After the Storm". The event was a powerful showcase of our youth's creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and resilience through vibrant boost, talent, display and meaningful engagement. The young people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique remind us that they are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but they are the change makers of today.

Our Government remain committed to supporting their growth through youth programmes, entrepreneurial initiatives and cultural development, empowering them to overcome challenges and thrive. Mr. Speaker, this is part of the activities in 2025 for our young people. So this kind of activity or similar activities will be duplicated across Grenada. And so we look forward to 2025 to working and providing all the necessary support to our young people. I thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Andrew North West. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you, good morning to the Honourable Members of this House, and a Happy New Year in the event I have not had the opportunity to say so to Members of the House individually.

Mr. Speaker, I just wish to provide some updates to the public in relation to work being undertaken by the Home Affairs Department to digitise certain aspects of our operations, starting with applications for citizenship. We are earnestly on our way to digitising the process. We expect that by the end of this month, we will be in a position to, internally, go live with a fully automated and digital process. We expect that within the following month, we should be in a position where the application process, as well as the certification process for persons applying for citizenship, whether it be via the Citizenship by Investment or the Investment Migration Programme, or whether it be via the traditional



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naturalisation route, or whether it be by shared residency in Grenada, will be fully digitised.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we are also moving ahead with having more kiosks installed at the Maurice Bishop International Airport, with the view to having our embarkation card, or what is called the ED Card, also being done fully online. **(Applause)** And I think, for most of us, having to fill out this paper ED Card is an annoyance; there's no way to put it. So we are working steadfastly to have this done, so that it can be done electronically. I've asked why we couldn't eliminate it altogether, but for security reasons, we are not yet in that position to do so.

And the main security reasons will be, most people asked, for example, when you're going to the United States, you don't need to fill out any form. That's because the United States has a visa regime in place, and essentially takes all of your biometrics in advance, so that by the time you land in the US, they pretty much know everything about you already. We don't have that biometric system in place yet for all of our visitors or returning nationals.

Hopefully, if we get it for nationals in particular, as we continue to work on those systems, then certainly, for nationals, we could get to a point where we eliminate the use of ED Cards, even the electronic ones altogether, for our citizens. But that would require us to have a fully biometric system, with either your fingerprint or your retina, or some other biometric data collected from our citizens. So those are two areas that the Home Affairs Department is working steadfastly on. All things being equal, we expect that those systems will go fully live by the first quarter of 2025.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the National Disaster Management Agency received 21 containers from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre from the Government and people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in support of the Government and people of Grenada. A lot of the aid that is contained in the containers, Mr. Speaker, will directly benefit the residents of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, but it will also significantly strengthen NADMA's ability to better prepare, predict, respond to and help with the recovery efforts when dealing with natural disasters.

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The items delivered are a long list of items, but they include things like forklifts, which actually puts NADMA in a significantly improved position. Because you'll appreciate that for storage, in particular, the warehouses both in Carriacou and in Mount Jaloux are of significant height, which allows us to be able to pack storage items much better and to be able to access them, remove them and help to distribute them. So it is a significant aid. The aid is to the tune of \$5.3m **(applause)** and it is the single largest aid package that we've received from any nation, post-Hurricane Beryl.

So we think it's fitting that we go on record to thank King Salman and King Salman's Centre, His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince and the Government and people of Saudi Arabia for their kind donation. **(Applause)** The Ambassador, who is accredited to Grenada, is based in Venezuela, and he flew in personally to hand-deliver the 21 containers. A similar donation is being made to the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So, Mr. Speaker, as I explained at the handover ceremony yesterday, when we travel, we travel for a reason, and the 21 containers are proof of that. **(Applause)** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister, and I now invite the MP for St. George South East.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to update on some medical missions that are happening this month, January and into February. And we also express our appreciation to the visiting missions, who have been coming to Grenada year after year, providing service to the population, much-needed service. This time around, January 27 to the 31st of January, as a matter of fact, I think it goes up to the 2nd of February, there is the Spice Isle Smiles, which is offering dentistry services for the parishes of St. Patrick and St. Mark. So they will be in those parishes from the 27th, it started already, the 27th all the way up to the 2nd of February. St. John's is included, I'm told. So that means they might have visited you already, then? Yes. Okay. So I have from the...

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All right, also Dr McKinney's Foundation continues to provide much-needed OBGYN services to Grenada. I think we had a very successful year, last year in particular, quite a number of surgeries were done, and he's back this year, January 29 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of January. He would be there leading that charge at the General Hospital, attending to those in need.

Also, from the 31<sup>st</sup> of January to the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, SGU will be providing much-needed general cardiology services, and that is under the auspices of SGU, but under the direction of Dr Anthony Tramontano. So that's cardiology from the 31<sup>st</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of February. Also, world paediatrics, they're coming. They will be here on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of February, providing paediatric orthopaedic services and under the direction of Dr Gordon.

So, also, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, SGU will be providing ophthalmology services, under the direction of Dr Bernard Spier and from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, neurology services by SGU, by Dr Richard Mikilitus... So, just alerting the population so that we can take full use of these services. Most of it would be at the general hospital, and also, in case clinics are going to be held elsewhere, I would want to encourage us to listen to the media announcements for any changes in services and locations. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I think I just want to make a brief mention of the matter of statutorisation of the three state-owned hospitals, which is something that is going to happen. It's under consideration by the Cabinet, and at the appropriate time, we will notify the nation as to the current status of things. So it's under consideration. And it's important to say this because we have indicated that, come 2025, statutorisation is going to happen. We have not changed our minds about it. We are working in the background, trying to set things in order. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. George South East.

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 13 – Personal Explanations.

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***Personal Explanations***

**Mr. Speaker:** MP for the Town of St. George.

**Hon. Peter David:** Morning, Mr. Speaker. Morning Members. Mr. Speaker, I'm new to this. After over 20 years in Parliament, I've never had to sit as an independent, so I'm asking the question. How long do I have on this matter, Personal Explanations, so I know if this is where I need to speak?

**(Inaudible comments by Members)**

**(Laughter)**

**Hon. Peter David:** There are no seats on the other... I'll proceed if the...

**Mr. Speaker:** You can proceed. The Standing Order doesn't specify for ...

**Hon. Peter David:** That is what I was looking...

**Mr. Speaker:** ... this particular...

**Hon. Peter David:** ... for it, and I say no, but I will, I will be reasonable, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes. All right.

**Hon. Peter David:** I guess that is what you'll ask of me. I'll be very, very reasonable.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay.

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**Hon. Peter David:** I've gotten with the 10-minute...

**Mr. Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Hon. Peter David:** ... rule. So I'll work with that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes. Proceed please.

**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, firstly, let me stand here today, and let me pay tribute to the people of the Town of St. George, to start. It is because of them that I'm here. I've been here four times, Mr. Speaker and the four times they have elected me to be here. I've also been in this House as a Senator, so really five terms.

Mr. Speaker, let me say to them, and some of them are present in the House this morning. Let me say to them that I do cherish and feel honoured that they saw it fit to vote for me, to have me here, even if they did not support the party that I was a member of. I'll tell you why I say that, because I won this NNP and I won the NDC. It must mean that they are people who came, despite political allegiance.

So, I just want to say to them, and through those sitting here and to all of them who would be listening, I really do respect and feel, you know, overwhelmed by the fact that they see in me someone who they made represent them for four terms. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Let me also thank my colleagues on "This Side" of the House. Mr. Speaker, I have spent the last two terms with the colleagues here, and I must say this: they are also tremendous servants of the people. Despite whatever issues you may hear and whatever issues there may be, I want to say to them that I do thank them for the assistance I've been given and for the honour I've been given to be a Member of the New National Party.

I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition. He's not here this morning, I wish he were so that I can thank him personally for his service as an MP, his service as a minister, Prime Minister and now his service as Leader of the Opposition. Again, I want

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to thank him for allowing me the honour of serving with them in the Parliament of this country.

And you know, it is as I entered as an independent, I felt... You know, every time you come, you come with a team, both sides come with a team, so you figure you have a team with you, but now I come alone. And now I see and feel the awesome responsibility we have, sitting in the citadel of democracy in our country. I feel it more.

I'm more overwhelmed by it because it is me now as an independent, as an individual to speak on behalf of the people I represent, and also on behalf of all the people, the people in NNP, the people in NDC and the people who are in no party because there is a substantial number of people who are in neither party. I think we always believe that the country is split 50/50, and each side is a member. No, some people vote. But, of course, the fact that some win and some lose at different times means that there are people with no allegiance.

So, let me thank the Members on "This Side" for the honour of serving with them in "This House". Let me also thank my colleagues on the "Other Side". They're on the "Other Side, but they're on the same side because they're the side of Grenada. Despite the differences we may have, we all come here, and I repeat this all the time. People sometimes say, Peter, you say that too much. We all come here to do the people's business. We may disagree, but we are here for a single purpose. I want to thank them for the privilege of serving with them, for the banter back and forth, and for the camaraderie sometimes. Sometimes we appear to be angry.

I want to say this to the people outside: we are paid to be angry, but the people should also be here when we're sitting, having lunch and talking together. We, too many times, give the people the impression that we are angry with each other. We are not. We just disagree, but we are friends. We have lunch together. We have breakfast together. You know, my good friend Andy... **(Laughter)** My good friend Andy and I talk all the time, because we disagree on issues, but we are friends, and that is what we want from Grenada. So, my friends, we are here to do the people's work.

While I'm here as an independent Member, I will continue to do the people's work.

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I will support the Bills that I believe are in the interest of the people, oppose those that I believe are not in the interest of the people and give advice on those where I believe corrections can be made to make it more perfect for the people. I will continue to do that.

Every morning I wake up thinking—How do I serve today? I serve in the courts. I serve in the Parliament. I serve on the streets. I serve in the communities, and that is what I will continue to do. Colleagues, I come from a tradition of service. My mother was a public servant throughout her entire life, rose to the position of Cabinet Secretary, and so I understand service. My father, again, is someone who grew up quite poor, very poor, but he made it because he always served his community. So that is where I come from.

I give a solemn undertaking to continue here to serve not only the people of the Town of St. George, but all of the people of this country, regardless of political affiliation. You see, we come here... People believe you have won elections. We have 15 different elections. 15 elections. You are all elected by people individually in your communities to represent them. We have 15 elections. But you know, the British system told us we need to come together and huddle together, and you have your party whips. Fortunately for me, I am free of that, for now. I don't know where the future is going, but for now, I am free of the party whips. I am free of the shackles of the party, but I am still shackled by the interest of the people—that is the shackle I wear. When I stand here, I am shackled by the people's interest, so it gives me, for now, the liberty to speak things as I see them and as I believe the people see them. So being an independent has its benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this in closing. Our Parliament must be a place of contending ideas. History develops because we have contending ideas; contending ideas within the groups, contending ideas between the groups. The Parliament must be the place where these ideas are manifested. So we need more discussion on the issues, and I have said that.

I've talked about the committees, you know, and I've talked about the need for us to have the bipartisan committees and the need for us to discuss major issues collectively, because when you come here, the party whips are in place. I mean, you know, when you talk about health, I mean the party whip has already whipped you into shape, but in the

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committees, maybe the party whips have not whipped you into shape yet, so you have to say, “I” when everybody else says, “Aye”.

But let us find a space where we can all discuss as 15 independent persons. So, why not the committees? I say that all the time, and I get tired of repeating it. So, for example, on transportation. I am delighted that the issue of transportation has come to the fore. I've said it for years upon years that we must treat transportation as a pillar of our economy. I would like to see us, Mr. Speaker, find a way to bring that into a parliamentary discussion. Why do I say that?

Imagine the amount of man-hours, get an economist to do it, the amount of man-hours lost every day with people stuck in traffic. You come down Grenville recently and get caught up in Beaulieu... We are not blaming anybody. I'm not saying the Government is responsible, or this Government is. We need... And I'm happy that it is being seen as something important to address. You know the amount of pollution that is caused by the cars idling for hours in traffic? In other words, let's just not see it as you're getting late for work. You being late for work costs the economy a lot, and imagine the impact on productivity. Productivity. Let us treat transportation as a pillar, upon which the whole of the economy rests.

Let us talk about agriculture, plus tourism, not agriculture or tourism. Let us have that discussion free of the parliamentary whips that whip us into shape. Let us talk about foreign policy. What more can we do to leverage our place in the world? Let us talk about how we address the issue of the Cuba embargo. Look, it's been, Mr. Trump has come back and re-imposed Cuba as a state-sponsor of terrorism, which we all know is not true.

What has Cuban given us? Cuba has never given us a terrorist. Go to any hospital in this region and it is filled with Cuban-trained doctors despite the embargo, **(applause)** despite the pressure, Cuba has done what it... You know, so much and in this room we have Cuban-trained—we have Dr Modeste. Cuban-trained doctor. We have my dear brother, the Foreign Minister studied in Cuba. The Minister for Finance studied in Cuba; this is only in our Parliament. I ask, can we do more?

We go to the UN every year and we put the line in the speech, “Is there anything



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more we can do"? Let us talk. And you know what, if we get bipartisan support, we feel stronger in doing it. Cuba needs our help. We must rise to the occasion collectively.

**(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, our National Development Plan, and I will end on that note in a minute. We have a National Development Plan. I want to commend the New National Party for that National Development Plan, and I want to commend the "Other Side" for highlighting the National Development Plan when they assumed office. But are the people involved? Can you tell me that the people of this country are aware of what is in the plan? Does the plan need updating? Maybe, if we can come together to look at the National Development Plan, as a people, it will serve us better. Those are some of the issues.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, Constitutional Reform. I also want to commend the NNP for taking that up on two occasions. The British gave us a Constitution in 1974. Do you believe they were trying to help us develop? Now, is there anyone in this room who believes that the Constitution was aimed at helping us develop? We have to develop that Constitution so that we develop. But we can only do it if we sit together. Let us find a way to develop our...

Look, when you hear about the US Amendment... What do you think an amendment, this amendment, that amendment in the US... When they had the Constitution, they continually amended it to upgrade it to fit modern times. You know, Mr. Speaker, you know there are a lot of issues that we don't realise, we are unable to progress on because of the shackles that our Constitution places on us. So, Mr. Speaker, this Parliament must not be a rubber stamp. This Parliament must be a place of active debate.

Now I am here, fortunate enough, to be free of the party whips, fortunate enough to be able to speak only on behalf of the people, for now, and I plan to use that for as long as I have that, to ensure that we address issues that some may feel restrained in raising. I will raise them, because I believe based on my interaction with the people, the issue that I raised and many more, are issues that we need to discuss going forward, as a

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Parliament. And let us stop making the people believe that all we come here to do is fight. So you know, they sit outside waiting to see who will win the war today. Let us make the people win the war by collectively working on behalf of the people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for putting me in this position. I thank you for recognising my contributions. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've known you since I came into the Ministry of Agriculture, so anytime I see you, I remember nutmeg trees and cocoa trees because that is what we spoke of. But I thank you too for your service. And to the Parliamentary staff for the wonderful service that they've provided to me over the years, and I look forward to our continued cooperation for the next several years, months, days, whatever it allows me in this Parliament. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member for the Town of St. George and may I just remind all visitors that no applauding is allowed from the balconies. Right? The noise is going to come from the Chamber. It doesn't matter how you feel about it. Yes. The applause and the table knocking will come from the Chamber.

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 14 – Motions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 73 OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR  
EMPLOYEES (PENSION FUND) ACT NO. 19 OF 2024**

**WHEREAS** it is provided by Section 73 of the Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) Act No. 19 of 2024 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") that the Minister may by Order, subject to affirmative resolution, amend the Schedules to the Act;

**WHEREAS** pursuant to section 73 of the Act, the Minister proposes to amend Schedule I, to insert additional statutory bodies to which the Act shall apply;

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**AND WHEREAS** it is expedient that the Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Amendment of Schedule I) Order, 2025 be approved by Parliament;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Amendment of Schedule I) Order, 2025, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution, is hereby approved by the House of Representatives.

Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business.

**Question put.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Right. I sense there is no debate. Which light is this? Is it the Honourable MP for St. Andrew South East? Is the light on? Okay, yours is off. MP for St. Andrew North East.

**Hon. Kate Lewis-Peters:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a small contribution on this Motion in front of us here today. Mr. Speaker, this Motion is seeking to add additional statutory bodies to this pension fund, the Act that was passed sometime late last year. Mr. Speaker, this Act was very controversial, and there are many learned individuals who have deemed this to be unconstitutional.

Whereas the Act gives the minister the power to make changes and updates, we were hoping for additions that will reflect the satisfaction of the unions and the people they represented or they represent. We were hoping that this Act would have additions to include the desires of those who would have been impacted. However, Mr. Speaker, this Motion brought forward is to add additional workers to this pension fund, one that has been so controversial.

So, here we have workers who were of the belief that they would fit into the one public service that was proposed to them. Now, and I'm not going back to what was already debated, but it's important to reemphasise some of the controversial issues that

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this Act had in it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the workers believe that they would have benefited from the 1958 Pension Law. That is what they believed. However, a new pension fund is created, and they are dissatisfied with it. So now that we are adding, using this Motion to add further workers, we were hoping for different additions to this fund.

Mr. Speaker, Government has to contribute an additional 3% to the workers' pension fund as proposed by the Act. There is a question. How will the additional revenues be raised? Will there be additional taxes on the backs of workers to raise these revenues? These are important questions, because additional revenues have to come from Government to contribute towards this fund.

We must also realise that this is just a savings plan; what you put in is what you get out. Nothing more; nothing less. Therefore, I ask the question, what happens when the worker outlives that fund, those savings in the fund? What happens thereafter? So these are the things I was hoping the Motion would have been brought forward to include, so that the workers or those who would be impacted by it, will feel more comfortable and satisfied by it, Mr. Speaker. Not just coming and adding additional workers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we have experienced in the past where many workers have saved into pension funds before, and those funds, for whatever reason, went bankrupt. Can the Government guarantee these workers today that if the fund goes bankrupt, the Government will be responsible for the amount contributed to that fund? These are some of the questions I have, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for St. Andrew North East. MP for St. Patrick West.

**Hon. Joseph Andall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning to you, morning to everyone on both or maybe three sides of the House. Happy New Year to all in the House and in Grenada as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to support this Resolution. I've been a Member of this

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Honourable House for just a little over two and a half years and I'm extremely pleased to be part of a government that has seen it fit to be proactive and to attend to matters, to attend to fellow citizens who have been marginalised, who have been neglected and who over the decades have been forced to wallow in poverty, simply because they were not considered to be established workers.

Mr. Speaker, very few things in this life are perfect. And it is ridiculous to sacrifice the good, to throw away the good, to reject the good in pursuit of the perfect. Mr. Speaker, this new pension arrangement takes care of people who previously had no coverage. Governments in the past have simply just ignored them, and we could easily have let the status quo prevail without a whimper from anyone in this House or in society at large. Because I've never seen anybody demonstrate for pension rights for the unestablished workers.

So what we are showing, Mr. Speaker, is that we are concerned about the well-being of our fellow citizens who, after having served their country well, for decades in many cases, now have something to look forward to. Mr. Speaker, to say that what you put in is what you get out is a total fallacy. Mr. Speaker, if I open an account in a bank or a credit union, and I put \$10 and somebody else contributes a further \$10 to it, don't I now have the ability to access \$20? **(Applause)**

When we speak, Mr. Speaker, we must recognise that the whole world is listening. Children are listening to us. And as Honourable Member from the Town of St. George said recently, I'm not quoting him, but just paraphrasing, we have an obligation to stick to the facts and not oppose for the sake of opposing. **(Applause)** So I commend the Honourable Member for saying that.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite fitting that every category of worker, whether they work directly with the central government or with a parastatal institution, to be given reasonably and decent pension coverage. And therefore, I'm extremely happy to support this new measure, this Resolution so that our people who labour for years, decades in some case, now know that they, they can retire with a degree of comfort, knowing that if they go to the poor house it's to visit somebody who has not covered by the pension plan. Thank

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you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Patrick West. **(Inaudible comment)**

**Hon. Dennis Cornwall:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to make some comments. Once again, I want to wish every Member of this House a happy and prosperous New Year and make it very productive, if I want to add to that.

But also to say that I rise on this occasion to support the Motion fully, which deals with the amendment, so that we can actually have our brothers and sisters in the statutory bodies and other state-owned enterprises being part of this new pension plan. I do not want to repeat what my colleagues would have said about, you know, what you put in, what you get out, because that's not true for sure. Because that fund would be a fund that is entitled to basically earn income or interest on it, and so that dividend or interest would be shared, or will be shared among the workers at the end of the day.

The question was also raised, Mr. Speaker, that if you die, what happens to the fund that you would have put into that pension fund? We have made it very clear, abundantly clear in the last sitting, that whereas the current 1958 pension plan does not provide for you as a pensioner, to allow your spouse and family to receive an ongoing pension thereafter. This fund provides for you to receive, or your spouse or your dependents to receive, whatever you are due as a benefit under this fund. So let us clear that up once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, it also concerns me when I hear people say let, you know, that the fund is a risky business and so on and the talk about other funds that would have collapsed over the years. It is nothing new that pension funds that were defined benefit funds in the past, for companies as well as governments, some of them would have failed. In fact, accountants who would have done a lot of work on those things would have told you that they come across several companies that would have failed, in terms of providing a defined benefit for their staff.

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And so, it is touted throughout the world that the approach of going with a contributory pension fund has to proceed in most cases to define a benefit pension plan. And I'm saying that to say that we have tried everything in this world, and we know for a fact that companies that do not have prudent guidelines in place could possibly fail in terms of catering to their workers. But this Bill, that we are talking about, has put in place measures to ensure that there is a committee established under law, that is guided by the legislation, to make sure that people's funds are protected, invested properly, they're not risky ventures and as such...

There are examples throughout the world which show that if the fund is managed properly, it can live forever. And so, I do not want to put cold water on this Bill and say that okay, it will be a riskier thing because Government is involved in it and so on. In fact, Government has basically put in place that they would provide the financing of the operations of the fund for a period of five years, before that fund is able to basically run itself, free from all these issues and so on where you don't know whether or not you're going or you're coming.

So I want to basically join my colleagues to say that this pension fund is not only one that would basically protect those who are not receiving a pension right now. And those who are receiving one right now, could basically well oh, it's not their problem. But I think we should also look at our colleagues who have not been receiving a pension, because they found themselves on the wrong side in the public service, meaning that they were not an established public servant and were not in receipt of pension at the end of the day.

So let us enjoy it and support this Bill to make sure that all our colleagues, unestablished colleagues, the temporary ones that we call them, be a beneficiary from a pension at the end of the life in public service. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Thank you, MP for St. Patrick East. I now invite the MP for St. Mark to the floor.

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**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to make my contribution to the Resolution as presented. Mr. Speaker, I just want to seek clarity on a matter that was raised, and maybe to also share clarity. I heard my colleague here mention that one can outlive the amount of money that is lodged in the pension scheme that should cover them. I didn't hear or see what happens if the person dies? So I think, I don't know if she picked it up, that the Member for St. Patrick West was saying, but I think... St. Patrick East. Sorry... Was saying. And I think that needs to be clarified. It's not if the person dies, but if there is a certain contribution from Government and the worker, and the person goes into retirement and there is not enough money in the fund, and the concern is there. If there is not enough money in the fund to cover that individual, as well as other individuals, then what happens?

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for St. Patrick East and the Minister for Finance say that the Government has recently taken a decision to cover the fund for the next five years. Well, that, as many other things that the Government does, has remained top secret until now, so maybe we can see some official document to support that, because we on "This Side" haven't seen it. And I daresay, I haven't heard the public say, well, at least we're covered for the next five years.

Because the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that any fund could have problems, could meet difficulties for whatever reason, whether it's mismanagement or whatever, seems to be a secure means of raising funds. At one particular time, or one particular instance, could in another instant turn out not to be so secure. And therefore, I think the Member for St. Patrick East and the Minister for Finance, and of course the "Other Side", including the Prime Minister, I think they have a responsibility to explain to people how the Government would ensure that these people are covered.

These people are certainly covered for a period of time. I haven't heard that. And I think it would be very good, maybe the Resolution could have included that the fund will be covered for five years from the Government's coffers. I think all of us would have been happy with that. So we're not we're not criticising the Government's attempt to provide pension, which is what the "Other Side" seem to be interpreting and seem to be focusing



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on, but we're saying that there must be some kind of security, or reassurance, something reassuring that says to the people, yes more money... because this is money that persons would have catered for, to do other things.

And, of course, you must protect yourself, protect your pension, and protect your future. So there's nothing wrong with people contributing, but there's something wrong if people are not assured that there's a backup in case something goes wrong with the fund, that there is a backup to protect them should something untoward happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Mark. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Sorry, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I was at the Roman Catholic Church in Petite Martinique on Sunday, the learned Member of Parliament for St. Patrick West said, when the priest indicated that the service was a special service, I think every third Sunday the church focuses on a word.

The priest challenged members in the congregation, including the Honourable Member of Parliament for St. Patrick West, to, you know, indicate to the public a biblical verse that he was fond of, and he said, "He that keeps a still tongue keeps a wise head". I still challenge him to find the biblical quote... The actual reference for this... **(Inaudible comment by Members) (Laughter)**

But when I was in Presentation Brothers College, one Mr. William Steele, deceased, may his soul rest in peace, was my physics teacher, once said to me, and I quote, "A silent fool is often taken as a wise man".

Mr. Speaker, when we come to the House of Representatives, we owe it first to ourselves and to the public to make sure that we don't just simply come and throw things out, and say we asking questions, and say we want clarity when we ourselves make no effort, first, to seek clarity or to educate ourselves before we speak. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I really didn't want to speak. I didn't even expect, as you said, that there would be a debate on this. This is simply a Resolution asking to add the T. A.

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Marryshow Community College, a statutory body that is not, by any stretch of the imagination, entitled to any pension under any of the Pension Acts. **(Applause)** This has nothing to do with public officers. The Planning and Development Authority; a statutory body. The Grenada National Stadium Authority; a statutory body. The Grenada Cultural Foundation; a statutory body.

So when we come here and say, you are telling me a teacher at TAMCC has expectations that he or she would be paid under the 1958 Pensions Act or that the Stadium Authority, which didn't exist in 1958, that the workers hired by the Stadium Authority have any expectation that they will be paid under the 1958 Pension Act. I mean, come on. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** So, Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of disinformation, misinformation and fake news that people talk about. **(Applause)** We have to do better than that. So, that's the first premise.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance covered it, but I think it's important, worth repeating. This is a pension fund. The money is being segregated and taken away from the control of the Central Government. It is being placed, by law, as a trust fund, and trust funds have certain implications. The Trustees will have a fiduciary responsibility to manage those funds for the beneficiaries, i.e., the workers.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want us to underestimate the importance of this. The existing 1958, what we call pension, there is no segregation of... There's no fund. There's no fund. The only fund that exists in Grenada is the Consolidated Fund. And when all previous governments from 1984 onwards decided that they were not paying the pension, what happened?

When you have structural adjustments or whatever financial issues the Government is going through, the first people that don't get paid are pensioners under that type of system **(applause)** because they are not working, so they can't strike. They have no negotiating tools. It's happening right now in the United Kingdom. So, there's no security in the 1958 pensions. There is none. There's no segregated fund. There's no trust fund. There's no security. The Government isn't putting any money aside.

And make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, if you work for 15 years or 18 years, if you do

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not meet the minimum length of service, according to the “Jab Jab”, “You still have to dead”. If you dead, you're not getting nothing. **(Applause)** If you want to resign and move on, you're not getting nothing. I'm saying “nothing” deliberately as opposed to anything.

So, Mr. Speaker, the existing pension system only has security in the hope that you meet the minimum length of service, whether is 22 or 26 and a half years or 20 years or whatever the case is, and you then have to hope that you have a solvent Government or worst yet or better yet a caring one. **(Applause)** You had a solvent one before June of 2022, but they didn't care, so they refused to pay it **(applause)** and we paid it.

And let's make no mistake. Let's not pretend. When we got into office, Mr. Speaker, the pension reform Act had eventually come here and all the groundwork towards the same pension reform legislation that we passed there was already done by the New National Party Administration. So don't come here and try and deceive the people, and lie, and pretend that this pension reform Act somehow miraculously happened after the election.

You had already retained the International Monetary Fund to do all of the reform work, to do the exact same thing that we've done. So tell the nation the truth. Tell the public servants that you will never going to pay them that \$75m in retroactive pension. You were going to try and institute pension reform and not pay the retroactive pension. So when I walked into office, the IMF already had the question and the work done which the Ministry of Finance already had. So why do we have to do this? If the pension is good, it is good.

Are we okay with teachers at TAMCC having no pension fund, or the Planning and Development Authority, or the Stadium Authority? There are other statutory bodies that we have to look at: GARFIN and all of these entities. Are these people not working? You think this is a benefit to me? This is not a benefit to me. I am not a public servant. Just like my learned and distinguished friend there, “by the sweat of thy brow I shall eat thy bread”. If I don't work, in fact, for lawyers, they say you work until you're dead.

So, there's no personal benefit for us in advocating this. So, when we talk about

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country, if we genuinely care about the people who work, let's give them what is due. Let us help. Nothing in life is guaranteed. So are we going to say because there's a risk of having a pension fund that you don't have one?

The distinguished former President of the Senate is sitting here; a lifelong, probably the most renowned living trade unionist in the Caribbean. He would not have said to me, because there's a risk that the pension fund at Caribbean Argo or GRENLEC may go bottoms up if the guys don't manage it properly, we shouldn't put in the union agreement that there should be a pension agreement. No.

So I'm saying... I mean, Mr. Speaker, there really is, in my view, nothing else to say, that, in fact, there'll be more orders seeking to add more statutory bodies to this because we understand pension. The strength is the numbers. The strength is the numbers. It is the strength in numbers that will ensure that there is no such thing as outliving the pension. **(Applause)** Right.

Because what the pension fund is going to seek to do, Mr. Speaker, from its investment perspectives, is invest in things that will create employment so that those who are working and contributing to the Fund can help assure those who are already retired that they will continue to earn a pension. That is the link between the young and the old. And I say this repeatedly: You could only go to places like small countries, relatively speaking, like the Netherlands, and you'd see how they've been able to use their pension funds to drive the economic development of the Netherlands and to make it a far more successful country than it otherwise would be.

So, Mr. Speaker, all I'm saying is this is simply meant to add to the already existing cohort of public workers and statutory bodies. I think we even went further to say we are going to encourage private employers, particularly small private employers, who would otherwise be challenged in having a pension plan to come onto the Scheme.

And then finally, Mr. Speaker, again, you know we can't deliberately mislead the public, and we owe it to read before we come and talk. **(Applause)** A pension plan that is now being set up has administrative costs associated with it. It has setup costs associated with it. What the Government is saying is that we, the Government, will

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undertake to pay for the five years all of the administrative **(applause)** costs associated with the setting up of the pension plan. That's all we are saying.

What is this thing about cover and... I mean, what is this? So all who are joining the plan now, the plan is now being set up. The Trustees. The trust fund. People have to be appointed. They have to be paid trustee fees. We are saying we will cover all of these administrative costs so that it does not come out from the Pension Fund itself. Therefore, guarantees that, at a minimum, for the first five years, there are no costs associated with the running of the pension, which will be paid by the Pension Fund itself, and the Government is going to underwrite that cost.

And I want to make one final point as we talk about guarantees and so on. The Government, the Cabinet of Ministers, in my absence, because I wasn't in Cabinet on that day, took the decision to pay past service contribution—100% of the past service contribution **(applause)** for all employees. The recommendation was 50% from the actuary.

So, just so that people understand what past service contribution is, we're saying that from the date you started working with the Government when there was no pension, when no contributions were being made on your behalf, the Government is still going to pay that contribution. **(Applause)** In some cases, that means 10, 12 years, maybe even more.

So when we start talking about we care about people and we care about poor people... **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** I mean this is simply, Mr. Speaker, the right thing to do **(applause)** and this is for the benefit of the people who work for and on behalf of Grenada. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I've answered the questions that were raised. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** I noticed the light of the MP for St. Mark; was it a point of order or something?

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker...

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**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, no, Honourable. I think you spoke before.

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** So that's why I asked, "Why is your light on again?"

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** So, should I sit to answer, or should I stand to answer you?

**Mr. Speaker:** No, my question is... Because once you make a contribution, that is it, so I'm not quite sure if you were finished.

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Mr. Speaker, no, according to our Standing Orders, there are other situations where someone can rise again after having spoken.

**Mr. Speaker:** That's why I asked you...

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** And I was rising on a Point of Order, but you didn't notice.

**Mr. Speaker:** I asked you this. I asked you this. Okay. Okay.

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** You didn't notice, Mr. Speaker, and so I let it go.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay. Okay. I'm sorry.

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** So, I don't know, in that situation when you don't see, you know, the microphone or something...

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**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, I didn't see the light my head was...

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** I would just like to ask here, Mr. Speaker, what do I do?

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, the way it is...

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** But now it's done, and it's gone.

**Mr. Speaker:** Correct. The way it is, if the Speaker doesn't see the light, that's it. It is when the Speaker's eye catches the light. Right? So, I said to you I'm sorry that I didn't pick up that your light was on, so you can pose the question to the speaker on the floor. Yes?

**Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot pretend to understand, but you are the one in charge, so I will let it go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business, your light is still on?

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Sorry.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Honourable MP for St. Andrew South East

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, like others who went before me, let me use this wonderful opportunity to extend to you and your staff and all Members of Parliament, those who are viewing and listening through you, Mr. Speaker, a very happy and productive 2025 and may God bless all of us for this New Year.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of "right things to do", I just want to say this. It might be right to do something, but there can be several better ways to do it. So, not because it's

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the right thing to do, means that there isn't a better way to do it. And also, Mr. Speaker, that it might be even better when listening to the alternative views and opinions of people, not just people in this House, but very ordinary people too. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, when my colleagues rose to speak, one of the first things that they pointed out was the concern about consultation. Mr. Speaker, I too share the same views that when this Resolution came, this was an excellent opportunity to consider the concerns, the real issues that have been raised over the past weeks by people who will be affected and people who care.

So, let's minus "This Side" of the House, where people don't have wisdom, where people don't know better and let us minus we can't read, we don't read. Let us just eliminate this for the time being and let us just consider that there are union representatives who have raised serious concerns. There are lawyers who represent unions who raised serious concerns, the same concerns that the unlearned people on this side have raised. Mr. Speaker, there are workers... As a matter of fact, a Member of the Opposition was reached out to by a group of workers asking for a private Zoom session to discuss and to explain certain aspects of this.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we speak, we are not just expressing our personal views. I listened to the other persons on "This Side" of the House, and every single view that was presented this morning represents a view and a concern of workers in the service. And so that is why, Mr. Speaker, at the least, at the least, we can listen and note and not classify who is intelligent and who is bright and who is wise and what the preacher said. Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility, and this is why we come here. We didn't come here to shut up. We didn't come here to be spoken down to. We came here to represent people, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And so what we are sharing... I'm not sharing any personal opinion this morning, Mr. Speaker; it is all the concerns of people who will be affected by this.

So fundamentally, I have absolutely no reservation in statutory bodies being added on to this Fund. No reservation. But it doesn't deny the fact, Mr. Speaker, that there are some major concerns and if those major concerns could be addressed, then they too, the



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members of statutory bodies, the workers of statutory bodies, they too will benefit. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight a few of those concerns.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard, for example, the unions contemplating taking legal action. Where would this Fund be? What would be the status of all of this if we go back to the court? And that is why consultation is so important because you reduced the possibilities of this matter going back to the court for a couple number of years, and then who knows where we will be.

Mr. Speaker, at the last Sitting, I raised the point of the importance of fiscal assessment and fiscal reporting; reporting the data so that we can analyse, you would have analysed, you present, we analyse as well. Mr. Speaker, so it is unfair even to the worker that there is no data presented, no fiscal assessment, no projections of what this is going to be in the next five years possibly. But, Mr. Speaker, representatives of the Government making loose statements, for example, that a worker will get 80% of their last salary; officials of the Government.

And I'm saying this is nowhere in the legal documents, and if it is established that it is a percentage of somebody's last salary, which is not according to the law, then at least somebody present that additional data to the people who are the legislators. We were told we are just legislators. We just come to pass laws. No, no, no, no, Mr. Speaker. In passing laws, you want to be informed, you want to have sufficient data and knowledge to pass the right laws, or else you'll be going to be passing laws in a vacuum. That's dangerous. And so, Mr. Speaker, the concerns are real and genuine, and I'm surprised by the sort of response to concerns and genuine issues that are raised.

So, when we speak about categories of workers, Mr. Speaker, there are several workers, 10 years in the service, categorised as new entrance into this. You know, it was said that we lied to the people. Mr. Speaker, if we lied, then how do you categorise, how do you define a campaign promise that says, "As soon as we get into office we're going to make everybody permanent"? How do you define that? How do you define the promise that says, "All workers in the public service; we would have one public service, no more contract work"? Mr. Speaker, all I'm saying is that at the end of the day, the issues are

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real, the concerns are real, and we don't dismiss people in that way. So, Mr. Speaker, physical, new entrance into this Fund. We are concerned.

And while we are saying, for example, in the statutory bodies that they never had before, but how do you compare that, Mr. Speaker, to a public officer who was in a pensionable position, acting? Mr. Speaker, you can't trick both so closely equal. So even if you say, for example, you get 3%, 5%, whatever the case might be, what does that work out to? In some cases, \$300. Mr. Speaker, so, we have to at least listen to the real concerns that people have raised.

So it's been said, Mr. Speaker, this morning NNP did nothing, and this is good, so let's just move overhead with it. Well, there's good, better and best, and so if we can move good to better, then let's do that. But let's go back to 2018, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the union and Government had a MoU. That MoU, Mr. Speaker, persons were getting 70% of their last salary on exiting the system. Mr. Speaker, there was just one issue that the union had with the Government on that MoU and that arrangement that was in place, and that was the issue of gratuity. That was the issue of the formula for the payment of gratuity. There wasn't an issue with pension. So when it's stated over and over and over that the previous administration never paid pension, we came and paid pension. Mr. Speaker, well, obviously that is a lie if we are going on the true definition of what is not true because in 2022, the Government of Grenada was paying on their payroll 2,200 pensioners with a budget of \$75m. So we can't say it is true that NNP wasn't paying pension.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, credit was given for the engagement of the IMF, wisely so, so maybe the wise people were before 2022, wisely so, because you are getting into—which is why we are here with this problem right now. Mr. Speaker, the formula that was to be developed then was with an understanding of the implication of the court's ruling. So, Mr. Speaker, when the decision was taken... As a matter of fact, let me just step back one.

Before the court ruled, Mr. Speaker, the NNP took a decision, the NNP Administration took a decision to pay. So, the NNP did not wait for the court to decide.

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The NNP took a decision, engaged the union and decided to move. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Hermilyn Armstrong case and the results and what happened thereafter, how could anyone say, even before the court ruling, that the actions taken by the NNP administration did not care about pension? Mr. Speaker, this administration, then 2022, to me is the biggest demonstration of a genuine interest to address the issue of pension in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique **(applause)**.

The ruling was in 2011, under an NDC Administration, and absolutely nothing was done. It was the NNP that came back and gave a commitment, but not just a verbal commitment; action was taken to start paying persons who are affected. Mr. Speaker, this morning I say to us it is okay to differ. It is okay to have different ideas, but to call one another liars when the truth is so clear is unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of outliving the Fund. I heard a lot of things said about investments. Well, we can only speak for sure on what people put in because we don't know... Well, let me put it this way. We all know that you can invest but it doesn't always turn out that you get the kind of return on investment that you expect. And so the only thing we can speak to, with an assurance with guarantee, is that of what workers put in. And as it is, let's just use an example. A worker who goes on no-pay leave for very good reasons, let us put it this way, and is not making a payment to the Fund, is that worker treated the same way as they would have been treated under the 1958 Act if they were to retire?

So, Mr. Speaker, when people raise their issues and concerns, it is genuine, and that is why they must be taken in that spirit, discuss, review, go back to the drawing board. It's okay to say we go back to the drawing board, and maybe there's this one little thing that we're going to add or we're going to subtract because the concerns are real.

So, you have workers, Mr. Speaker, who are now having a 3% deduction, and NIS is going to increase another 1%, but check the consumer price index. Every time it comes out there's an increased upwards, food, medication and other items. So we are saying their concerns are real. So when you make it sound as simple as they put \$10, I mean how did we trivialise this thing to that point? They put \$10, we put \$10, so you have \$20.

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Well, what happens when the \$20 finishes, Mr. Speaker? We cannot trivialise it in that way, and so if workers have concerns, we have to pay attention to those concerns.

The protection of the Fund. Now, we don't read. Mr. Speaker, we're hearing this morning that for five years, the Government is going to cover, and there's a hope. There's a hope, Mr. Speaker; that's what I heard. There's a hope that the investments would generate sufficient funds so that if something goes wrong, workers would not be affected. Mr. Speaker, we are extremely concerned, and we would have wished that there is some kind of clause by which the Government takes some more responsibility as it relates to the protection of the worker's investment.

We are happy that you put a board and you have people and, you know... But many projects, many initiatives would have failed... The unions would tell you that they lost significant resources because they invested in various plans that they were confident would work. They invested in various insurance policies that they were confident about. When they look at the board, when they look at the management structure, they look at all the systems, they had absolutely no doubt that it was a great investment. Ask some of these people right now about the funds that they've lost. So if someone raises a concern about protection of the Fund, I believe it should be treated as genuine.

So, Mr. Speaker, this morning, as I said, fundamentally, the addition of those persons to this plan, the Fund, I don't think any person on "This Side" has an objection. But we are saying that there are some basic things, there are some critical things that remain a major concern, which is why one of my colleagues described this as a savings plan. It is very different from a pension plan, very, very different.

So, we are still hoping that at some point, the Government would take all of those concerns raised, and if there is a way, to come back to this House at some point. And whatever they consider to be genuine, whatever they consider to be useful, taking not just our concerns here that we've raised but those of the workers, those of the unions, people who are **(time bell rings)** legal professionals, Mr. Speaker, take all of those, sift through and there must be something that can move this Fund from great to greater and that would make everybody happy. Mr. Speaker, thank you. **(Applause)**

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**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable MP for St. Andrew South East. Now I'm seeing some new lights, I'm not sure if there's a change of mind. I saw the MP for South St. George light on before and the Town of St. George, but I'm seeing a new light now, so I'm not sure. Honourable MP for St. George North East.

**Hon. Ron Redhead:** All right. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Good morning colleagues and happy New Year, as mentioned by everyone speaking before me. Mr. Speaker, in listening to this debate, which is unfortunate, it is clear that the debate on "This Side" of the House is in line with the contents that are before us.

What we are debating this morning is to essentially widen the pool of people in the fund, and so we are talking about adding additional statutory bodies. We had the opportunity to debate this Bill last year, and it has passed. Mr. Speaker, the concerns by the Opposition, though it sounds nice, though it's a good sound bite PR wise and it could make a little headline here or there and give the PRO some work to do, these are not concerns, Mr. Speaker, that is going to change the benefits that is to be derived to the workers.

The issue, for example, that the Member just raised about the cost of living, the Government responded by increasing the minimum wage. One. Two. There are always continuous negotiations for wage increases for workers. **(Applause)** So the argument to put it as if for the rest of the 15 years it will be the 3% and o' God, everyday price going and so on, is not making any sense, practically. That's where the unions now should stop focusing on the partisan debates and focus on how do they get the Government to understand how much they should be getting out of these new series of negotiations that is to be derived. That's one.

Two, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members on the Opposition side keep making this argument over the security and safety of the Fund. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister made it clear that the new or rather the benefit to the security of the Fund, is now enshrined by law that there is to be resources set aside from the consolidated funds. Prior, and this is very clear, prior, there is no budgetary allocation unless the

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Ministry of Finance puts it because they have to pay, to specify that there is a fund to pay pensions. This new pension arrangement will introduce that.

So on the basis of security, it is, again, it sounds nice as an argument, but if you dive into it, what we have existing or had existing prior to what we are proposing now is better and is more secure, and we have to accept that. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want the Members on the "Opposition Side" to use their platforms wisely. Don't come to the House and frustrate the process just to create the perception that the unions riled up, workers riled up, lawyers riled up, and so on.

Again, and I want to end on this note, Mr. Speaker. When the former administration was in office with all the nice things I just heard there, and if I didn't know better, I would say well that era might have been a progressive era; demonstration left, right and centre. The largest sets of demonstration. So to come here now and pretend, I don't know. I got up this morning. Today is my birthday, by the way, Mr. Speaker. I haven't seen any demonstration against the Bill. **(Applause)** I haven't seen demonstrations against the Pension Bill.

So, I am saying, Mr. Speaker, from a realistic standpoint, it is just a light moment. But, from a realistic standpoint, you know, I want to express to the Opposition. The Government is welcoming discourse, intellectual discourse, yes, but discourse on improvement. But when you are coming with these partisan arguments which you're labouring every day about, you say there should only be one public service. You destroyed the Public Service. **(Applause)** You destroyed it with the three for 10. You destroyed it with these temporary contracts that issued all over the place **(applause)** and we have to now come and fix it.

So let us have an honest discourse, yes, but let us have one that is deep and focuses on the solutions based on facts, and get everybody to understand that it is not who does it, but it is the right thing for the people and the Government of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So, I want to end on that note. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. George North East. MP for the Town of St.

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**Hon. Peter David:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. I want to recommend. I know the debate has been going on for some time this Sitting and the last Sitting of the House, and there are concerns. I think everybody acknowledges that. Some of the concerns were addressed, but they are concerns. I just want to make a recommendation in line with what I said earlier when I spoke.

You know, we can follow the British in some things. One of the things done in the British Parliament would be to issue a white paper on some important issues like this because there are many questions that go unanswered, and not everybody will have the information. That is a fact. So, if on matters like this, a white paper can be issued to submit it to discussion that is after setting up a Bipartisan Committee of the House, this an issue that have played with us for years, if not decades, Mr. Speaker. So I just want to recommend not to prolong the debate, the majority will have it passed; set up in the future and it could still be done in this matter. Have a white paper issued.

The trade unions have concerns. We may be able to deal with the concerns, but if we set up the white paper, set up the Joint Committee, issued the white paper we can hear the concerns, we can hear recommendations and we can still proceed with the way the Government is proceeding at least the people who are involved would have their concerns satisfied and it maybe at one Member on "This Side" said that some of the concerns that are raised are addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to prolong the debate. The debate has gone on for quite some time. In fact, when I was Minister for Labour, I was in the middle of all of this. So, Mr. Speaker, I am very much aware of what took place over the years, but I think going forward, we must treat these major issues for what they are. Major issues that need for us to sit together in the committees and say where we can have these discussion, issue a white paper for the people, interested parties, the unions business community can see it so we can have informed discussion on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for the Town of St. George. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Members of this Honourable House for their contributions to the debate on this Motion. This Motion, Mr. Speaker, basically was seeking to amend Schedule I to include the Grenada Culture Foundation, Grenada National Stadium Authority, Planning and Development Authority and T. A. Marryshow Community College on the list of Government entities to be included and eligible to join the Pension Fund.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I really do not wish to prolong this any further because I believe that we might have done even injustice to this discourse, and I say this because there is a certain element of ill-discipline when it comes to these matters. I say this because this is a Motion to include four government-controlled entities on the Schedule. We have substantially in 2024 discussed and debated the Bill passed in the Upper as well as Lower House of Parliament, and this morning we're seeing a replay of the said debate, literally, Mr. Speaker, saying the same things that were said in December. And that is why I called it a certain element of ill-discipline because this is not the substantive reason why we are here this morning. Though important, it is not the substantive reason. And so, of course, I can respond to quite a lot, and I can say quite a lot, but there is really no reason to do that because we have substantially covered this Bill and successfully passed it in 2024.

So, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that, I still want to take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to call upon us to, one, study the documentations when circulated and let us remain relevant to the debate, relevant to specific Bill or Resolution in question and that would add to the quality of debate emulating from this House and help us to carry out our responsibilities in a much more efficient manner. That being said, I wish to thank my colleagues on "Both Sides" of the House for their contributions to this Bill, and I now commend it back to...

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business.



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**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

**Deputy Clerk:** Item 15 – Bills.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for its first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Water Resources Management and Regulation Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to provide an institutional framework for the sustainable management, conservation, controlled allocation, development, use and regulation of the water resources in the State of Grenada, shortly entitled Water Resources Management and Regulation Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the House be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

**Question proposed.**

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**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the Water Resources Management Regulations Bill, 2025, seeks to provide an institutional framework for the sustainable management, conservation, controlled allocation, development, use and regulation of water resources in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also seeks to divest the National Water Sewerage Authority (NAWASA) of its current management and regulatory functions in relation to the state's water resources. It empowers the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) to now provide regulatory oversight to the unit in the management of Grenada's water resources. It also establishes a tribunal for persons who are aggrieved, Mr. Speaker, by any decision concerning the grant refusal or conditions attached to an appeal.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill contains six parts and 56 clauses. So, it's a relatively long but very important Bill. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will seek to address certain aspects of the Bill that I believe the population need to be aware of as it affects the regulation, use, control and allocation of water in the State of Grenada.

This particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, will also result in the amendment of the National Water Sewerage Authority Act, CAP. 208 and the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act, No. 20 of 2016. Mr. Speaker, those we will deal with subsequently are included on the Order Paper today.

But, Part I, Mr. Speaker, of this particular Act treats with the short title and also the important definitions. Clause 4, Mr. Speaker, and as I mentioned, I'm going to skip some of it because I want to focus on some of the more pertinent ones that the population needs to be made aware of. So clause 4, and in particular, clause 4 (1) contains the declared policy of the Government of Grenada relating to water resources. And the policies, Mr. Speaker, include ensuring the orderly and coordinated development and use of the state's water resources.

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And, Mr. Speaker, one could easily understand that there has been a call and the general population of Grenada especially during the dry season, especially when we have long dry spells that the Government of Grenada and in particular NAWASA needs to do more to conserve water and to ensure an even distribution of our water resources so that in the dry season we have sufficient water to service the population.

But, you see, Mr. Speaker, the structure of this Bill, how it speaks to the management of these important resources to assist us to get to a place where we can be properly advised as to how we control this particular resource and ensure that our householders and population in particular is well served. So the policy continues, speaks to conserve and protect water resources of the state for the benefit of present and future generations of Grenadians.

Clause 5, Mr. Speaker, mandates that the Act must be interpreted and applied in a manner that promotes the following principles—

- (a) water resources shall be managed in an integrated and sustainable manner;
- (b) water, Mr. Speaker, is a basic human right and need and, as such, domestic use shall always be given priority in the context of the allocation of this resource;
- (c) the gender-equity component in which our female folks, Mr. Speaker, to be included in the decision making process and the management of the resources as to how we allocate, how we manage and how we plan for the use of the resources.

Clause 5 (2), Mr. Speaker, speaks to the principles to be guided by if a person is exercising jurisdiction under this Act and, in particular, principles as such—

- (a) the polluter pays principle;
- (b) the precautionary principle;
- (c) the principle of the ecosystem integrity;
- (d) the principle of public participation.

So, Mr. Speaker, the polluter pays principle speaks to cases where people pollute water, for example. They are made to pay for the management cost to restore in case that this is some element of pollution. So we want to ensure, Mr. Speaker. We are told, Mr. Speaker, there are instances where people who have farms just spray chemical

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without regard for what happens and the dumping of waste and different things. So, Mr. Speaker, we are getting to a stage where the management of this scarce resource will be properly taken care of. The stewardship, Mr. Speaker, surrounding the management of water will be given top priority.

The precautionary principle speaks to measures to be taken to prevent or to minimise the harm even if there is not a full scientific certainty; any measures to be taken if there is any harm to be done to the storage or the flow of water. The principle of ecosystem integrity. The ecosystem should be free from human manipulation and should function and be structured in a natural way so that we do not unduly manipulate or interfere with the ecosystem because plants, animals, and human beings all have to function within the society. The principle of public participation. People who are affected by decisions should be involved, Mr. Speaker, in the process of decision-making.

Clause 7, Mr. Speaker, establishes the Water Resource Management Unit as a Government department to manage the state's water resources. So, this, Mr. Speaker, is very important because a unit, Mr. Speaker, will be established within the Ministry which has responsibility for Public Utilities, and, of course, Mr. Speaker, the Minister with responsibility for Public Utilities shall be the Line Minister for this particular unit. So, there will be a unit set up and properly staffed to actually oversee this particular resource.

Clause 8, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the director and other officers who will be appointed by the Public Service Commission to function within the unit. The director will be the person responsible for managing the affairs of the unit, and the unit will be staffed accordingly. The director, of course, Mr. Speaker, as appointed by the Public Service Commission, will have the responsibility to advise the Government as the chief and principal advisor as far as the management of resources is concerned.

Clause 9, Mr. Speaker, seeks to empower the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) to have the oversight of the unit. So, PURC, Mr. Speaker, will be the regulatory body that regulates the functionalities and the behaviour of all entities treating with water. All right. PURC will oversee, Mr. Speaker, the functionalities of the commission.

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And, Mr. Speaker, I notice that management personnel, directors, and others from NAWASA joined us, but apparently, they had to leave. I know they came in an hour ago, so I think they tried to time the Bill, but I guess we ran over time, so they had to leave. Well, we thank them for being here. Some of the staff are here with us, so I guess they will bring back the message.

So clause 9, Mr. Speaker, continuing. So I was saying that PURC, Mr. Speaker, provides oversight to the commission and ensures that the policies of the Government in relation to the management of the water resources are implemented by the unit in an effective and efficient manner. And it also advises the unit on such matters relating to water resource management as the director may refer to the commission or as the commission sees fit. So, any matter that is refer to the commission, he would give such advice to the Government as he sees fit.

Clause 10, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the functions of the unit. The functions are as follows, Mr. Speaker—

- (a) advising the Minister on matters relating to a policy;
- (b) identifying and protecting potential sources of water.

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, identifying water sources is important, and the policy surrounding the development and the use and conservation of water, Mr. Speaker, is critical. As a small island state, Mr. Speaker, with a small landmass, it is important that we're able to conserve and have strong policies that guide that process.

- (c) And, of course, promoting a national policy for the provision of water in the State of Grenada and ensuring the effective execution of that policy by the entities responsible.
- (d) Also, Mr. Speaker, advising the commission in relation to water-related emergencies pursuant to section 24 of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, from time to time, there are going to be emergencies. There are going to be times when there's a restrictive use of water based on what is happening. And so, during those emergency situations, Mr. Speaker, the commission, the PURC, the regulatory body would have to, of course, the unit may have to advise the commission

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accordingly.

- (e) Advising also the Minister in relation to gathering grounds pursuant to section 14 of the Act; and
- (f) exercising the planning function for the use of that water resource.

Section 12, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the vesting of property and the right to the use of property and the flow of water in the state except only in so far as the private rights have been established under abstraction licence and permit. We'll speak to the abstraction licence and permit a little later. But, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that presently, these resources are vested with NAWASA, and so the vesting into the unit would now have to happen, and this would provide for the proper regulation of the use and the management of water in Grenada.

Clause 13, Mr. Speaker, mandates the director to cause the unit to prepare a draft master plan to be approved by the commission on the water resources of the state. And, Mr. Speaker, again, one must appreciate the importance of having a master plan for present and future use and present and future generations of Grenadians. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have periods where we have quite a lot of rainfalls, and rain apparently is not falling the way it used to fall according to seasons. But, we are recognising, Mr. Speaker, when times designated as dry seasons we are actually getting rain and times for which we know to be wet season sometimes we getting lots of sun and sometimes very dry spells.

And so that master plan as to how we conserve water, how we prepare for long periods of droughts or even flooding, Mr. Speaker, what do we do? We have homes... A lot of water falls onto the roofs and into the drains and flood areas. What do we do with all this excess water when it falls? So we have to now prepare, Mr. Speaker, to be able to conserve and use water in a more responsible way. So a master plan, Mr. Speaker, must be developed to be able to manage that resource in a proper way so that, in turn, Mr. Speaker, present and future generations can benefit.

So pursuant to subsection (3) in preparing the draft master plan, the unit will also be empowered to—

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- (a) collect from any source, data and information relating to water resources or they are empowered to get those information from different sources or from any source as it sees it fit;
- (b) to consult, Mr. Speaker, and obtain data and information on any water resource from persons, organisations, agencies or department of Government or local authority as the director thinks appropriate; and
- (c) also to undertake studies and investigations and to carry out such other activities as may be necessary or relevant to the preparation of the draft master plan.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, this subsection empowers the director to be able to get all necessary information to enable him or her to properly plan for the use and conservation of water.

If the commission is satisfied with the draft master plan, it must subject, to clause 7, a parliamentary approval of the draft master plan by notice published in the *Gazette*, declaring the draft master plan to be the approved master plan by notice published in the *Gazette*. So, Mr. Speaker, what this is basically saying is that the master plan is not a document that will be just be created and used internally. It is something that we must publish, and there must be some measure of publication in the newspaper so that Grenadians are aware as to what our plans are in relation to the master plan.

Clause 14 speaks to gathering grounds. Gathering grounds are lands that are declared to be a protected forest or protected reserve under the Forest, Soil and Water Conservation Act. That's subsection (1). If additional gathering grounds are required, Mr. Speaker, the Minister, acting on the advice of the director, shall delineate the area and, by order published in the *Gazette* and at least one other newspaper in circulation in the state, specify the boundaries, Mr. Speaker. That's where the delineation has happened.

All areas which are declared to be protected areas under the National Water and Sewerage Authority Act, Mr. Speaker, shall also continue to be protected under this said Act, director, the Chief Forestry Officer and the Sanitary Authority to protect areas around

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gathering grounds by issuing an Order to protect the quantity and quality of water in any gathering ground. Prohibited or regulated acts include placing, depositing or discharging within the area of material or any kind that is likely to impair the quality or significantly reduce the quantity of the water or the storage capacity of the gathering ground. So, Mr. Speaker, this, Mr. Speaker, is seeking to ensure that no contamination happens in those specific areas. There is a penalty, Mr. Speaker, in case that happens. There is a penalty of \$3,000.00 or imprisonment for a period of two years.

Clause 22, Mr. Speaker, deals with the discharging or disposing of any organic or inorganic matter or waste, including water containing such matter, into a water resource, whether directly or indirectly through drainage or other drainage system, or seepage so as to cause pollution of the water resource. Discharging or disposing of any effluent or waste water which has been produced by, or results from, the use of water for any purpose, into a water resource, whether directly or indirectly through drainage or seepage. The penalty, Mr. Speaker, summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000 or a term of imprisonment for two years.

So, Mr. Speaker, this again speaks to, and then, the population must be made fully aware of this, that we have to be careful when it comes to, under this new Act, the pollution of water. We spoke about using, spraying, disposal of garbage and all of these things, Mr. Speaker. We have to understand that we must manage our water resources. We must ensure that our water resource is protected for the present and future generations of Grenadians, and therefore, it is important that there are no deposits of organic or inorganic waste into our waterways, drainage or soil that is close enough to that.

Mr. Speaker, that being said there are many situations where there is certain disposal systems that are close enough to waterways that can create these kind of problems and so I think we've had some of these from the Ministry of Health point of view that we are dealing with even at this point in time and so it is important that we are very cognisant of the this legislation so that we can take remedial actions.

Clause 24, Mr. Speaker, empowers the commission to declare a water related emergency acting on the advice of the unit if the commission is satisfied that the flow of



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water or the level of water in any water storage in any area has fallen or is likely to fall below the level specified in the abstraction licence. Again, the monitoring of the resources, ensuring there is sufficient for the population and taking action where necessary to prevent any unnecessary shortage. Again, the long-term planning and management of the resource becomes very, very important.

The commission, Mr. Speaker, shall by order be published in the *Government Gazette* and one newspaper of weekly circulation within the State of Grenada or by any other media declare a water-related emergency and direct the unit to take any action specified, which includes—

- (a) prohibiting or limiting the use of water for any purpose specified in the Order;
- (b) the prohibiting or limiting the taking by any person of water from a source specified in the Order if the commission is satisfied that the taking of water from that particular source depletes or otherwise affects the supplies available to the public;

So, Mr. Speaker, again, this is possible because of the close monitoring and management of the water through the unit.

Clause 26, Mr. Speaker, is important. A person is prohibited from abstracting and using water or constructing or altering or causing to be constructed or altered any works for the abstraction and use of water except under and in accordance with a valid abstraction licence granted under this Act. So, Mr. Speaker, what this is saying, Mr. Speaker, in clause 26 is that persons wanting to abstract water must obtain a licence. Failure to do so, Mr. Speaker, there is on summary conviction a fine of \$3,000 and imprisonment not exceeding two years.

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Member, I have to leave the Chamber for a very brief moment.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair.

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**Madam Deputy Speaker (Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen):** Honourable Leader of Government's Business, you may proceed.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker, I think my time is... Yes. Sorry. I have to try and see how I can speed up. But I believe this is important, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just want to speak a little bit more on the licensing because I believe it's important for those who are engaged in the abstraction of water.

So clause 28, Madam Deputy Speaker, persons interested in doing abstraction must apply and obtain a licence from the unit through the Minister.

Clause 29 sets out the matter the unit considers in recommending to the Minister within 28 days of the application whether to grant or to refuse to grant an abstraction licence. The Minister must notify the applicant within a period of 14 days. Persons aggrieved, Mr. Speaker, can also file a formal complaint, which goes to the Appeals Committee.

Clause 35 provides... I am skipping, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I am going to wrap up as quickly **(time bell rings)** as possible. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask for a few more minutes just to try to see how I can wrap up. I just wanted to...

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen):** Honourable Member, we will allow you five minutes...

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen):** ... to wrap up.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** All right. So, clause 35 provides for the unit to carry out investigations where there are allegations of breaches of an abstraction licence.

Clause 37 empowers the Minister, on the advice of the unit, to review the terms and conditions of an abstraction licence if it is in the public interest to do so.

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Revocation of an abstraction licence. This will occur if an abstraction licensee has ceased to comply with the provisions of the Act or is in breach; the application for the abstraction licence contains false or misleading information, or if the abstraction licence has failed to remedy the breach which gave rise to the suspension of the abstraction licence.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will sort of stop here to say that this particular Bill really seeks to underscore the importance of the management of these resources, the liquid resources or water resources. Madam Deputy Speaker, the general population, over a number of years, have been clamouring for water during the dry season, and we recognise, Madam Deputy Speaker, that during the rainy season, there is a lot of water wasted. An average household in Grenada does not have a proper storage facility, and in particular, we do not do things like rainwater harvesting, but on the sister island of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, for example, rainwater harvesting is commonplace. So I think this Act and setting up the unit and creating a master plan around the management of water in Grenada will ensure that we consider all of these very important components: rainwater harvesting, reduction of contamination and spraying close to waterways, and really guarding and cherishing the very valuable water.

And maybe, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a nation, we really have to consider even building bigger dams because look at what happens when it rains heavily. I think we have to invest more into bigger dams, into ensuring that when we have heavy rains, we can actually harvest the water as opposed to seeing floods happen so prevalent. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to thank you so much, and I now commend the Bill to the House for debate. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen):** Honourable Member for St. David.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't get the chance to debate often when you are in the Chair, so I rushed to

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take the opportunity before anyone else. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is actually a very pivotal Bill that seeks to fundamentally alter the water landscape in Grenada.

The legislation is seeking to establish first a Government department known as the Water Resource Management Unit that is responsible for the management and the regulation of water resources in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. In order to do so, obviously, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill has to give effect to that stated policy, which is to separate the management and regulation of water from the management and provision of water supply and sewerage services.

So as we currently stand, the National Water and Sewage Authority, in a sense, is the sole legal entity tasked with addressing both the provision of water supply and sewerage services, as well as the management of water supply and sewerage services and the regulation of water resources. So the current landscape is such that one entity does everything. That entity is also subject to, perhaps, approval by the Minister and is also responsible for setting the tariffs and the rates that people are charged for water supply.

Therefore although not yet introduced to the House, but the NAWASA Act itself and the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act itself is also being addressed as part of the suite of legislations in order to give effect of the stated policy of separating the management and regulation of the state's water resources from the actual provision and supply of water and sewerage services.

The Bill is seeking...

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Honourable Member, the substantive Speaker is in the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed, Honourable Prime Minister.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** The Speaker, in the Chair.

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**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Short-lived is my bliss. **(Laughter)** Welcome back, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was pointing out that I don't often get to address the House with Madam Deputy Speaker in the Chair, but you robbed me of a long opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I was at the point of saying that the Bill seeks to establish, as indicated by the Leader of Government's Business, an institutional framework for sustainable water resource management. It is creating the unit, it is separating water supply and sewerage services to enhance conservation and equitable treatment of stakeholders, and it focuses on six main thematic areas—

1. The governance over water resources;
2. Development of a master plan for the entire country;
3. Managing water quantity and quality;
4. Regulating water abstraction, including the granting of permits for water use and waste discharge, importantly; and
5. Water regulatory framework for appeals and addressing grievances.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to give some background here on how long the State of Grenada, and, in a sense, the international community, has been at addressing the issue here of water resource management. And I want to start off right away by saying, given the relative newness still of this Administration and all of what I've said would have taken place either under an NDC or NNP Administration of yesteryear.

Mr. Speaker, going back as far as 1992 under Agenda 21 of the United Nations Convention on Environment and Development and then the World's Summit on the Sustainable Development, which was held in Johannesburg in 2002 and a resulting plan of implementation that was then endorsed by member states, particularly article 22 of that plan called for all countries to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005 with specific emphasis on support the developing countries. This was part of the drive to achieve, back then, the Millennium Development Goals, which had a target date of 2015.

Mr. Speaker, between 2007 and 2008, the then Government of Grenada, in

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keeping with those international commitments, embraced the need to reform the water sector, particularly aimed at ensuring that water resources were conserved, developed, promoted and protected in a sustainable, cost-effective and integrated manner. It also proposed then for a more efficient and equitable framework to manage and regulate water resources to maximise the contribution of the water sector for a sustainable economic, social, and environmental development.

So, several studies were then commissioned by those governments to address some of the policy challenges that needed to be addressed. Coming out of this, there was an initiative that included the water sector review, which took place in 2007, a framework for water policy implementation in 2007 and the Grenada National Water Policy in 2020. Mr. Speaker, the previous administration entered into a partnership with the Green Climate Fund, the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, the Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection to implement what is known as the Climate Resilience Water Sector in Grenada or G-CREWS Project.

What is the relevance of this project in relation to this legislation? Part of the component of the project, Mr. Speaker, allocates EC\$7.3m for funding the setup of the Water Resources Management Unit as well as to address the very legislation that we are seeking to table and pass in this House as well as to address a review of water charges or the tariffs as it is perhaps more technically called that is charged for water supply. Part of that institutional and technical work, which is being funded by G-CREWS, Mr. Speaker, has a deadline of November 2025, and so, we need to get moving on this matter.

So the unit itself, Mr. Speaker, and the provisions which provide for the appointment of a director by Public Service Commission and officers under the director, all again, appointed by the Public Service Commission is aimed that making the unit, to some extent, autonomous from the Central Government. Although it does provide for the Minister to provide overarching policy guidelines to the unit to ensure that the unit can implement the government's policies in relation to water resource management, conservation, sustainability, and environmental prudence. But a unit itself, Mr. Speaker, will be accountable to the Public Service Regulatory Commission, and you would see that

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there's a subsequent amendment to the NAWASA Act to also make NAWASA a regulated entity under the Public Service Commission.

Because it stands now, I think we can all publicly acknowledge that when there are complaints about, for example, water quality supplied by NAWASA, to a large extent, there is no grievance process, perhaps short of going to court, that currently exists to adequately treat with issues such as the quality of water supply. There is no effective mechanism in place right now to deal with charges or the tariffs or whether one objects or doesn't object to what is being charged for the provision of water supply.

And so the unit as well as the Public Service Commission are meant to be in a sense the regulator, in the case of the commission, on things such as the charges for water, in relation to the unit the actual management of water resources throughout the length and breadth of Grenada. And there are some fundamental principles, some of which have been highlighted by the Leader of Government's Business, but I think it's important for us to emphasise again, Mr. Speaker, and I will seek to do so.

The first principle I wish to highlight, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the Act makes it clear that the water resources in the State of Grenada belong to the State of Grenada. Let me repeat that. The Act makes it clear that the water resources in the State of Grenada belong to the State of Grenada, and therefore, there is no private right to water ownership in Grenada. The Act clearly establishes that. I think one may ask why. I think we can accept just like the air is fundamental to life, so too water is fundamental to life.

In fact, if I am not mistaken, biologists say our bodies are made up of about 70% water. That tells us the significance of the importance of water. So, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that if we are going to truly have principles such as equity, access, etcetera, this has to be a resource that is owned by the state for and on behalf of the people of Grenada. So that's the first point I wish to emphasise.

The legislation also makes it clear that no right can be granted in perpetuity to water. In other words, it restricts the ability of the unit to give to an individual a licence, for example, to abstract water forever. There must be some duration to it for obvious reasons. If you give it forever, it basically means you are essentially arrogating onto that

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entity absolute ownership of the right to water. So, this is clearly stated in the legislation that the state owns the water resources of Grenada.

But there are some clear exceptions because I am sure questions would be asked, and the question was, in fact, asked by one of our own colleagues. What does that mean, for example, in relation to a farmer who is abstracting water for farming? The legislation makes it clear that if that water is on the farmer's land, then the farmer can continue to abstract the water. The farmer, his family and his employees can continue to abstract water on his land. But that abstraction does not include blocking of the water in such a way that others cannot get it. That abstraction does not include, for example, polluting the water because it will be an offense under the Act to do so.

The Act also provides that where someone has been abstracting water for at least 24 months prior to the coming into effect of this Act, that you have a right to apply within six months for a licence to continue to abstract the water. Right. The right to abstract does not extend to trespassing onto other people's property and abstracting.

So, while it accepts that the water belongs to the state, the legislation saves a number of things. It saves the existing rights of NAWASA to continue abstracting and providing and supplying water. It saves the right of individual landowners who have water on their land to continue using the water without even applying for a licence. In instances where people are abstracting water not necessarily on their land, but they've been doing so for the last 24 months, they have a right to apply to the unit to seek permission to continue abstracting the water and whatever terms and conditions that the unit may so impose.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain what I call "green elements" of the legislation which is meant to protect water and to protect the environment, and I think it's important for us to, in a sense, highlight some of those. But before I get to this, there are two principles set out in the Act that I want to highlight, which I think are of importance from the perspective of the philosophy underpinning the legislation. They are contained in section 5 very early in the Act. Section 5 (1) (b) states, "Water is a basic human need and, as such, domestic use shall enjoy priority of allocation".



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So when the unit has to make a determination and when NAWASA has to make a determination if there are competing interests, given that the Act explicitly states that water is a basic human need, prioritising domestic use of water is the key guiding principle. Equally important... And that's where I come to what I call the "green clauses" in the Bill. 5 (1) (c) of the Bill says, "The environment... **(Time bell rings)**

Mr. Speaker, may I beg for two minutes to wrap up? Mr. Speaker, I suppose I was under the impression that I had 30 minutes, like the Leader of the Government's Business. And so...

**Mr. Speaker:** Permission granted, Honourable Prime Minister. Permission granted.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Section 5 (1) (c) of the Bill says, "The environment is a water user and shall enjoy second priority of allocation to the human need", and this is of vital importance, Mr. Speaker. I want to repeat it. The environment is a water user, and we need to emphasise the importance of water to the environment and to our ecosystem, both on land, in rivers, mangroves, and in coastal areas, because oftentimes we starve those areas of water and effectively kill them. And so this is the second principle of water allocation, which I think is critical for us to highlight and which has been enshrined in the law.

Mr. Speaker, and so in an attempt to ensure that the environment is adequately protected as I said there are a number of what I call green clauses which speaks about water quantity and water quality management in Part III of the Bill and in the interest of time, obviously, I would not go through it.

Almost all of Part III seeks to address water quality, water quantity, environmental flow level and the volume of water resource including things like making preservations for

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water reserves, ambience standards, water resource quality and monitoring and pollution control. It also provides for the declaration of a water management area and the declaration of waste... Let me get the right term. Sorry. It includes steps to control water pollution and the pollution of water resources.

So, we are prioritising, Mr. Speaker, the ability to manage water in such a way that the environment can be preserved and in such a way that we criminalise the pollution of water and areas that are declared as water gathering or water catchment areas including, in some instances, surrounding areas because sometimes you also have to protect the surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also seeks to address the realities of climate change and so you would see because the regulation and the management of water is being segregated from the supplier of water as well as the regulation of water, you would see that the power to declare water related emergencies is now being transferred to the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. And as only as recent as last year, we had to deal with the need to pass an SRO to treat with regulating water supply and the use of water in light of the severe drought conditions that we experienced.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, with the importance of the unit and the director ultimately developing the National Water Management Plan because in the absence of a plan you don't know if you're coming, you don't know if you're going and it will be absolutely critical for that plan to be developed. The G-CREWS resources, in addition to establishing the unit, hopefully can assist us in some measure in proceeding with this.

I think the Leader of Government's Business made reference to our practices on issues such as rainwater harvesting. And we need to go further than that in terms of new construction, whether we mandate that if you build that, you must, in turn, have a cistern or water tanks. These are things that our ancestors in Carriacou and Petite Martinique truly understood, and I think the fancy word these days is "intangible cultural heritage". **(Applause)** I think the practice of rainwater harvesting has, in a sense, been preserved and perhaps turned into a unique expertise in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and I certainly think on mainland Grenada we can benefit from that. But, we need to

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institutionalise and, in a sense, legislate that to make sure that our behaviour conforms to that.

So all in all, Mr. Speaker, sorry it's only 15 minutes, but this is, in fact, a fundamentally important Bill. Clearly, a number of Governments have worked on getting us to where we are today. So I wish to commend the Bill, and I hope all in the House will support it. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** I now invite the MP for the Town of St. George to take the floor.

**Hon. Peter David:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is critical. In fact, I remember reading an article, a book some time ago, which said that "Future wars..." I am not sure they are suggesting a future world war, but, "Future wars would be fought about water and access to water". In fact, in the Middle East, a whole lot of the geography of the Middle East has been shifting a bit on the issue of access to water.

So, I think this Bill, as the Prime Minister indicated, has been in the making, and I also want to commend all of the Governments, all of the personnel, all of the staff over the years who have been pushing in this direction. In fact, I just got a note from a good friend who indicated that this matter has been there for some time. So I look forward to it coming into force.

I think a couple of things need to be addressed, though. One is our attitude to water. A Bill does not change our attitude. The Bill just changed the functioning of the... We need to understand as a people the importance of water and the fact that without water, the entire world would change and without clean water... In fact, clean water, drinkable water, is seen as a fundamental right, in my view. I mean in my view as a fundamental right, and we must preserve that right.

We treat water, in a sense, like the point I made earlier, like transport; we take it for granted. We treat water like the sun; it will be there regardless of what happens. That is not true. We can find ourselves in a position where water... That is why I want to

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commend the people at NAWASA. I mean, there are all kinds of complaints you get about NAWASA, water gone. I mean, I know it's more technical than we believe, but we just take it for granted; we turn on the pipe, and there must be clean water, but I know it is not as easy as that. So I want to pay tribute to the staff at NAWASA who do their best in the circumstances.

Education about this Bill and about water must be part of this. Education of our people in the schools about the risks we have if water is not preserved the way it is expected to do. This Bill wants to preserve our access to water, and I give support to that.

But I also want to talk about the issue of consultation that was raised. I know there are several... The word is overused sometimes, but I want to say the people who are concerned; the farmers... I think the Prime Minister mentioned farmers without water; our agricultural sector would be seriously affected.

Also, bottled water has now become a big business. I may have issues with it, but it is a big business the way it is at the moment. They are stakeholders. You must consult with the bottled water suppliers because people depend on it. In fact, I think we need to ensure that they are on board with it so that they can continue their business because there is high demand for that.

In addition, to those who do with recreational use. Our rivers and people use the rivers. The tourists come and use the rivers. We must have regulations, and I'm sure they're here to ensure that the water is not polluted. Therefore, our tourism operators who bring them to the, you know, sometimes the tourists come, and they believe they can do anything with our water. We need to educate them and put the signs up to ensure that our rivers are not polluted. That needs to be addressed. I think education is critical.

What I want to also raise is the issue of price. Now, as I said, we take water for granted. Will this have any impact? Will this cause a rise in the price of the NAWASA bill when we get it? Will it be that when we get the bill at the end of the year, the bill will increase exponentially? Maybe not. Maybe if it is increased, it is justifiable. I know one of the biggest issues I've had when I was in Government was when NAWASA and other

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essential services asked for an increase in price. Water is one of those things that people respond very negatively to, any request. I think we must know if this, which I support, will cause an increase in the price of water.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the Bill is a good Bill. I also wonder if it will have any impact on the workers in the authority. Will it have any impact on them? I guess the unions are also a stakeholder that needs to be brought on board. So while the Bill is a good Bill, I think all of the stakeholders should be brought on board, not just the stakeholders from this perspective, but all of our people must come on board. Our young people, starting in the schools about the importance of water. As I said, water and access to water will become a major international issue in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for the Town of St. George. MP for St. Patrick West.

**Hon. Joseph Andall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to make a very brief intervention. Mr. Speaker, one of the good things about this Bill, which I rise to support also, is that it removes from NAWASA the function of being a player as well as the referee.

So the concerns raised by the Honourable Member for the Town of St. George are addressed in the sense that NAWASA cannot, on its own or arbitrarily, decide to increase rates. That must be done under the auspices of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission and through the unit. So that is something that has removed that level of arbitrariness.

Also, consumers are now given an added level of protection because as it stands currently, if you feel wronged by NAWASA, save taking legal action which might be expensive and very protracted, you now have the means to appeal to the unit to have your situation redressed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Patrick West. I now invite the MP for St. Mark to take the floor.

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**Hon. Clarice Modeste-Curwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Bill as presented. Mr. Speaker, I am in support of the Bill in general. I know that much work has gone into it to get us to this point, and I want to commend and compliment all the entities that were involved in getting us here.

Noteworthy is the work put in by NAWASA at the time to ensure that the project was sponsored by various donors, European and otherwise. I don't know all of them. I know the German Government was very involved and the Green Climate Fund as well. But there were many other players and I know some persons worked very, very... How shall I say it effectively? They spent a lot of hours ensuring that this document was signed in an appropriate time. I am really proud of the work that our environmental department did under our government at the time, and I am happy to note that the recognition has not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, when this project came into effect and some of the work started in earnest in water conservation, water management and so on, and the G-CREWS Project started, I was then Minister for Tourism. I also want to compliment the hotel sector and the tourism sector for their very avid buy-in to the whole concept. With some support from the project, they were able to implement measures within the hotel sector to conserve and preserve water in their establishments.

It is my hope, too, that the project can extend to individuals so that they can employ measures in their own homes to conserve and preserve water. I know that Carriacou and Petite Martinique... My friend from Carriacou and Petite Martinique have been urging me to say something, so I will say on their behalf, and I think the Member from St. David alluded to that as well, that they have done an excellent job in conserving water, in managing it well; going to Carriacou, I see some of the measures they take in terms of the faucets that they use. With the sensor faucets, immediately when there is no movement, the water stops.

I noticed that even in our washrooms here, you have two different volumes for water, two different gadgets that you can press to get the appropriate water. I don't know what the prices of these things are, but they may be more expensive than the ordinary

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faucet. So maybe it is one of the things that the Government and NAWASA can do to create some incentives for persons so that they are encouraged to employ these means.

I come from an area that very rarely has problems with water. We have an abundance of water in St. Mark, Tufton Hall Waterfall, and so on. We could always send up some to Carriacou when necessary if my brother on the "Other Side" behaves well. However, I know the problem, especially in the southern parts of the island during the dry season. The hotel sector is what perhaps suffers the most because of the volume of clientele that they would have to take care of and so on, and some have come up with various innovative measures like their own desalination plants. I noticed that was used very effectively in Carriacou as well after Hurricane Beryl, but I think we need to get more into these practices so that we can conserve our own water.

Mr. Speaker, I just have two questions and let me apologise upfront. I tried to read the whole document, but maybe I didn't read it. I gathered some things, and I just wanted to raise a question or two. One was mentioned by the Member for the Town of St. George regarding any financial or cost implications. You have new entities. You have new persons. You have a Water Management Unit that is appointed by the Public Service Commission, and it's a unit of Government, so I presume, without seeing any explanation, that there will be some cost on the government's fund. I don't know whether the project or the programme will cover that, but there is that. My question is whether that would affect the cost of water rates or usage of water and how that will affect our citizens, especially the indigent.

This is a word that is not generally accepted in some quarters, but the reality is that we do have indigent persons who cannot afford. I well recall that during our time in office through social services, there was a programme to protect these people. As I said before, water is 70% to 75% of our body, and if we lose it and we cannot replenish it, then we are in serious trouble. Water, therefore, is life.

I looked at the 47 pages or so of the document. I didn't see any exemption from certain things or any protection for the vulnerable. Something as important as that there has to be something, and maybe it was silently done in Cabinet, and we don't need to

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know about it, but I think the indigent need to know, and the Leader of Government's Business did speak about educating our people. These are some of the things that persons would like to know about whether they're covered, if there is more financial implication on the consolidated purses of the of the country, whether that would affect them negatively.

Now, I'm not saying that water should not be charged for. There are persons who would have to be employed, etcetera, etcetera. Such an important commodity has a cost, and to manage it and meet all the standards that have been set, I am well aware that water has a charge to it. When you compare the fees we pay for water as compared to other utilities, it's not so bad, but if you have absolutely no money or no income, then you have a situation in which I expect the Government and the Ministry of Social Services to take care of that. Mr. Speaker, so that is the first thing: the financial implication.

The second one is because the unit comprising the director and other officials would be appointed by the Public Service Commission; then, my other question is, are we reverting NAWASA to a public service? Are we removing some of the autonomy that it has as a statutory body? How will it work? The "Other Side" has said that sometimes I may ask dumb questions, but I will still ask them anyway.

How will it work? Because the PURC is the entity that sets the fees, the unit has to respond or relate to what the PURC has determined, and then the unit has to respond or be accountable to the Minister because they are public servants. So, are they really a statutory body or has that position been reversed? This is the question I would like to know an answer to. Maybe it's in the document, and I missed it, but I did read the document.

So, Mr. Speaker, going back to what I was told about something that was done with Physical Planning, that there was a similar situation, and so that was rectified and changed to make physical planning a more statutory body. So we're reverting from one and the corrected one, and the same thing we corrected, we moved away from it with another entity. So this begs the question.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do support this Bill. I think it is extremely important, but I just



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want to ask that the Government ensure that the indigent and the persons needing water who cannot afford it are well protected. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for St. Mark. Honourable MP for St. Andrew South East.

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise, and I want to join with my colleagues, those who have recognised and commended all of those who have been part of the preparation to take us to this stage. So, particularly I want to recognise those who have been involved, whether it's from NAWASA's end, the G-CREWS Project, all of those, the funding agencies.

As was said before, this particular Bill that is before us here is really a phase of conclusion of significant work that has been done over many years and we do recognise this milestone and, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I support this Bill, but want to bring to the attention a few concerns as it relates to this.

The first thing that I think one of my colleagues on "This Side" mentioned it, the issue of consultation and it seems to be repetitious with every single Bill coming to this House not just the issue of lack of consultation, but also it appears, and I don't recall any Bill as far as my memory goes back that has come to this House in any recent time and wasn't taken through all of the stages at the particular Sitting. And so, in my opinion, some of these Bills require a first reading to allow for more public engagement and consultation. And I believe it is something that needs to be considered. I'm not sure if it has to do with the agenda of the Government, but maybe some more planning can go into this to ensure. I understand there's an urgency with this particular one, but with many others, I don't understand the urgency.

The issue of consultation. You see, what happens is we come, we rush these Bills, consultation is minimal, and then you have all the debate taking place after the Bill goes into law, which is unfortunate and probably defeats the whole purpose of the process of Parliament. So we have to take great advantage of the process that the Parliament provides for first reading, then consultation engagements, you come back, and you

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debate.

So, for example, farmers and I, oftentimes, when some of these Bills come, would do some measure of outreach. So as I said, when we come here, we are not sharing our personal views or opinions. You reach out to people. You ask their opinion. You get their feedback from different stakeholders; how are you affected by the Bills that we present? Very interesting, very interesting was the knowledge of key stakeholders who responded to this particular Bill.

So, I am aware that there has been some measure of consultation over the years. But again, and I listened carefully when the presenter of the Bill repeatedly said, I am going through the clause so that the public can understand. Well, the public; many of them are not listening, and in the format presented, they don't understand. As a matter of fact, they might not even care.

And so, we have to find creative ways. So whether it's through the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, bringing the farmers together, meeting them on the farm, explaining certain things to them. When we come to this stage, there should be a level of knowledge that would provide the kind of binding that is necessary for these very critical and important Bills.

Mr. Speaker, the second thing that I want to raise as it relates to this is the shifting of the role, the key roles as it relates to this entity, from functions from NAWASA into a government department. And as I said before, I'm supportive of this initiative, very supportive of a number of elements within the Bill presented today, but I raised the concern, as was raised before, amplified the concern as it relates to the cost implications.

And again, it may sound repetitive, but I raise again that all of these Bills are coming with absolutely no information to guide our understanding of the financial implications. So, for example, is it that the GCREWS Project, for example, is going to fund the administrative cost for five years, or for two years? How are we going to ensure sustainability? You see, this is the information that we need to be able to determine whether we support in full, partially or otherwise.

So, for example, would it have been more effective or more efficient to have it done

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in a different way? And that is why, again, I'm emphasising that there's some basic information that is required when people have to make certain decisions. And we cannot just treat decision-making so lightly in that regard. And just reading out the clause doesn't help people, or providing a document to make informed decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the next point that I want to raise as it relates to that is the issue of independence. And so, I want to encourage with whatever structure, I have my concerns as it relates to the location, the placement, the physical location of this unit. But I want to emphasise that we want to make sure whatever is done, that the transparency, the independence we protect, that, because of the important role that this unit has to play.

I know that we are probably going to have, I don't know what the numbers are, one, two, three, four, five, whether or not the persons with institutional knowledge within NAWASA are going to be moving over. Whatever the process or the arrangement, we want to make sure that all of that is smooth, people are not disadvantaged in any way, and institutional knowledge is smoothly transitioned into this new operation.

The other thing I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the cost implication, because there must be an added cost. And a sensible question, you said, you don't know if it's sensible, but a very sensible question, Mr. Speaker, is who carried the burden of the cost. So it is not dumb for somebody to start wandering, will that have any implication on a consumer, will that affect anybody down the road? It's not a dumb question. It is a sensible question.

Because you want to make sure that, in light of all that consumers are experiencing currently, there's no added burden to them in the process and as much as that can be consumed, through some other means, whether it's through government or through some subsidy, whatever it is, that people are protected in that regard. Particularly, Mr. Speaker, if we speak about regular consumers, we've just had the levy added, we've had a new arrangement as it relates to water connection, for example, as it relates to a deposit.

So I'm just saying, Mr. Speaker, logically thinking, that one would be concerned that there would be no added cost involved at this time. And there's a phrasal process that would give people some breathing space in that regard. But if you consider aspects

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and going back to the subject of consultation, if you consider aspects of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, you've heard charges, you've heard jail time, right, talking serious, serious, serious things.

And so, ever more reason why an ordinary farmer, or, as a matter of fact some of the farmers that I spoke too, the level that they're at, involved in farming, that I'm saying whether it's a farmer, whether it's a businessman, whoever, would be affected in one way or the other, I want to appeal as I believe one of the presenters, I don't remember who it was, made mention of a serious educational plan to go along with the passage of this Bill. And this must be done with urgency.

So, for example, we've had serious situations in Grenada. I don't want to hint at any specific example, where people almost lost their lives, at least in the cases that I know, where they did not die, but people, let me not be too specific, to bring back any memories. But the point is, Mr. Speaker, and I see you're nodding, I'm quite sure it's because you know exactly the example I'm talking about.

And so, we are bringing the management to this. We are bringing control to this, but at the same time, we want to make sure people understand what we're doing and people understand. We have a history of some people saying water is free, water is from God. So, how do we ensure "God's water", right? So, how do we ensure that as we roll this out, people are coming along with us and nothing is done to create too much of a burden, in terms of the changes to be made as we go along?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, again, I want to stress and dwell here, as it relates to those who possibly can be affected. I appeal that there should be some urgent, immediate steps taken as it relates to consultation, as it relates to engagement. Someone just made one comment this morning, just one comment. As a matter of fact, the announcer, I'm coming down, and somebody sends a message to the announcer on the radio station, and he just made one statement, and you would not believe what that one statement would have triggered.

And my conclusion is that we shouldn't be in a situation where a Bill like that is coming before the Parliament, and very few people have knowledge of it. So, one

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statement would have had a ripple effect, and maybe, just maybe, half of what was said thereafter was not true, but people start speculating, they start guessing. And so, I'm appealing to those who are leading in this process immediately, the education process. And as I said before, let us assure people that they will not be affected in ways that they might be thinking and they're implications.

There are serious implications whether it's farmers, whether it's consumers, whoever they are, one way or the other, if we look at the content of this law, we want to make sure they are aware of the details, they are educated, they are protected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP. Thank you, MP for St. Andrew South East. I now invite the MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

**Hon. Tevin Andrews:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand to support this Bill in its entirety. You know, I just want to note, it's important that this is placed on record. This Bill was prepared by the "Other Side" while they were in office. Not even a comma, if I'm not mistaken, was changed by "This Side", so when I hear the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, sorry... **(Laughter)** The Leader of the NNP. The Leader of the NNP, my good Member, spoke about jail time and all of this thing, I'm kind of, you know, confused because all of this was prepared under their watch, including, Mr. Speaker, the consultations and so on which took place, took place on the their watch.

But having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying that all of the information that we have, the Members on the "Other Side" also have the information. So, as a responsible opposition, in my view, they can also lead with the consultations with farmers and various organisations, including their constituents. So, for what it's worth, I was just a little bit baffled knowing that while they were in office, they're the ones that created the Bill, they're the ones that did most of the work, if not all of the work. All this Administration is doing is simply bringing it to Parliament. On that note, I support the Bill in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

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**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to, firstly, again extend my appreciation to this House for its contribution to this Bill. I have a few observations, Mr. Speaker, that I wish to speak to.

Now, almost every time this Government presents, this NDC Government presents a Bill to be taken through all its stages, there is a concern by the "Other Side". There are two things to this, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, most of these Bills that we are presenting to this Parliament represent work that the "Other Side" failed to do whilst they were in office, work they were paid to do and did not do.

Mr. Speaker, and yes, there is an urgency, because we do not want to fall into the trap of poor implementation rates that they suffered from (**applause**) when they were in office. So we must take measures, thank you, to get these Bills out, to have them approved by both Houses of Parliament. So yes, we are working fast and hard to ensure that these things are done. And this is a hallmark of a government that puts the work for the people ahead of our own personal comfort. That's what we've been doing.

But, Mr. Speaker, some questions were raised, like who pays for the unit? The unit, Mr. Speaker, is a unit within and under the auspices of the minister, within the ministry (**applause**) and under the auspices of the Minister for Public Utilities. So, it's a government ministry. Who pays for it? As with any other ministry, that particular unit is financed by the consolidated fund. So, to answer your question. The question was asked by the Member for St. Mark, so is it still going to be a statutory body, speaking about NAWASA? Is it still going to be a statutory body?

Mr. Speaker, this document was submitted to this House; supposedly, we have all read this document. There is absolutely nothing that was presented that indicates that NAWASA is being converted to anything else. (**Applause**) We're not changing NAWASA. Mr. Speaker, all that this is attempting to do is to remove the regulatory aspect of the management of the water resources from the hands of NAWASA to those of the

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Public Utilities Regulatory Commission. That's what we are doing. So, NAWASA, Mr. Speaker, no longer self-regulates, but they are now being regulated by an independent body. **(Applause)** That's what we are doing.

So there is no question as to the dissolution of NAWASA and the transfer of assets. That's not happening. That has nothing to do...that's not mentioned in the Bill. It is only the regulatory aspect that has been expunged from NAWASA and transferred into a new department within the Ministry of Public Utilities, as per the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Andrew South East, one Member, referred to her as the political leader. We're still trying to determine whether it's the political leader. Whatever. Maybe the chairs are empty, so maybe you can occupy one. The question is asked, well, the statement is made, there must be an added cost, speaking to the bills that consumers pay to NAWASA for the use of water.

When, Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Patrick...

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable. Your light.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Sorry.

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a Point of Order? Yes.

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** I believe that the Member who was just on the floor, Member for St. George North East...

**Mr. Speaker:** South East.

**Hon. Emmalin Pierre:** ...South East must be attempting to mislead this House. Mr. Speaker, I never said that the cost implication related to consumers. I said there must

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be an additional cost, as it relates to the operation. If you go back to the records, it will be very clear what I said. I asked that consumers, should, be protected, but I said there must be a cost as it relates to the operation of this new entity. So if we need to check the record, we can do so.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the jury is the people of the State of Grenada. **(Applause)** So, the Member for St. Patrick West said that the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission provides oversight, so if there has to be any cost increase or cost implication, they must get permission from PURC if they have to increase any rates. So let us be clear, that this Bill, and we can flip through the pages of this Bill, there is absolutely no indication in this Bill, or any reference being made to an increase in rates at NAWASA. **(Applause)** So I want the public to be made aware of this.

We spoke about an education plan. How do we educate people? Mr. Speaker, there is an education plan. This Government can boast of more public consultation than any other government in recent history. **(Applause)** This Government can boast of numerous town hall meetings, where the ordinary men and women in this country ask any question to the Prime Minister and any Member of Parliament, any member of this NDC Government, that they so wish to ask.

But in the previous Administration, Mr. Speaker, when questions were asked, the response was, "Don't go there". **(Applause)** That was the response, Mr. Speaker. You talking about an education plan? The education plan is the plan that we have been using to go to the rank and file, and to every nook and cranny in our society, to speak to them about all of these important matters, and to field questions from them.

So, even if this Bill is being passed here today, Mr. Speaker, this is not the end of the discussion. People are free to ask questions, and Bills are amended every single



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year. They can ask questions, make suggestions and recommendations, you take them on board, and you implement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to again simply say thank you, for the support on “Both Sides”, although the numbers are fading rapidly. The so-called grandfather of the House didn’t show up today. Because, of course, Mr. Speaker, there is trouble in the House, disorder in the House, a lot of disorder. So, I understand that one of the grandchildren left the House and all sorts of things, but Mr. Speaker, we still have to continue.

So I want to thank Members for their contribution, and I look forward to every Member of this House, Mr. Speaker, voting positively on this Bill, because it's one thing to say, when you stand on your feet debating, that I support the Bill, but time for voting, there is absolute silence. Abstinence. So I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the truth today, not hypocrisy, the truth. A very important Bill. We must manage our water resources, and I want to see, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to get the support, as said, from all Members of this Honourable House on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I know a Member spoke about being “unshackled”, and you heard the result of that. **(Laughter)** You heard the result? He spoke with all freedom and, you know, was able to speak freely. And so we want to encourage the others to unshackle themselves, unshackle themselves because you can see the freedom that we enjoy on “This Side”. **(Applause)** We enjoy this freedom. We want to encourage the rest to be unshackled. So I want to thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I now commend the Bill. **(Applause).**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Thank you, Leader of Government’s Business.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Water Resources Management and Regulation Bill, 2025.

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**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into Committee of the whole House, to consider this Bill Part by Part.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee.**

**House resumes.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the third reading of the Bill. Thanks.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

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**Bills: National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Water Resources Management and Regulation Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to introduce for its first reading, a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to amend the National Water and Sewerage Authority Act, Chapter 208, shortly entitled, National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

**Question proposed.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

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***Bills: National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025***

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as referenced in the previous discussion on the previous Bill, this Bill, National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025 seeks to incorporate the changes, to accommodate the commission as a regulatory body, and the management unit as the management body for NAWASA, to, and also allow NAWASA to be streamlined, to focus on supply services for water and sewerage disposal.

So, Mr. Speaker, these changes will result in the repeal and replacement of certain sections of the Act to accommodate the PURC and the management unit. Clause 13, in particular, Mr. Speaker, repeals and replaces section 27A of the Act, which empowers the authority, subject to the PURC Act, to levy and to collect charges and fees.

Clauses 14 and 15 repeal sections 28 and 30 of the principal Act, while clause 16 amends section 34 to replace the word “authority” with “commission”. And so, Mr. Speaker, through the entire Bill we’d recognise a number of repeals and replacements to accommodate these, these bodies.

Clause 1, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the short title of the Bill. And so, Mr. Speaker, there is not much we can say in relation to this, because substantially we've covered most of the discussions in the previous amendment. So, these changes are only to accommodate the new arrangement. So, just to reiterate and for us to properly understand, NAWASA is a service provider for water and sewerage disposal. The unit within the Ministry of Public Utilities is responsible for the management and policy development, plans and so on, and the PURC is responsible for overall oversight and regulations. All right. So basically that's what it is, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. I take it that it is so clear that there is no other contribution today. So I now call the vote.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

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***Bills: National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025***

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider this Bill Clause by Clause. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee.**

**House resumes.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

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**Bills: Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025**

**Bill read a third time and passed.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, National Water and Sewerage Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to introduce for its first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to effect some consequential amendments to the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act, No. 20 of 2016 to empower the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission to have regulatory oversight of the Water Resources Management Unit, in managing the State's water resources shortly entitled, Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all the stages at the Sitting.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

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**Question proposed.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, similar to the previous Bill, this Bill seeks to make some amendments by replacing some of the words and sections to accommodate PURC as the regulatory body for the National Water and Sewerage Authority, and to acknowledge the unit as part of that management structure.

And so, Mr. Speaker, there's not much we can add to this, given that we've discussed substantially the changes that are happening because this is basically some consequential amendment as a result of the previous Bill. So I want to commend this Bill for debate. Thanks.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. Sorry. Honourable Prime Minister.

**Hon. Dickon Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish you rise to support the Bill, for the reasons largely presented in the substantive debate on the first Bill that was passed earlier today.

But, I also wish to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill is also seeking to increase the membership of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission from three to five, which is the current number, to five to seven, obviously, because the commission is now being tasked with additional regulatory responsibility. Currently, it only regulates GRENLEC, and obviously, water resources and tariff regulation for water are naturally a little different from that for power, and so, obviously, the need to make sure that we have expertise on the commission that could address water is also of critical importance. So it's also designed to increase the number of persons who may serve on the commission, and obviously to explicitly have NAWASA now as a regulated entity, which would be subject to regulation.

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And as the question of cost and cost and who's, you know, paying for what has been raised, again this reemphasises that it will now mean that NAWASA would not be in a position to unilaterally change its rates, without going through an application process with the PURC, which in turn would have to go through a consultation process with the public, that would then allow for determination to be made. So I support the passage of the Bill through the House. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider this Bill Clause by Clause. Thank you.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House in Committee.**

**House resumes.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report



***Sitting of the House of Representatives  
held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2025  
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Bills: Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025  
Adjournment***

be adopted.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** 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.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Hon. Philip Telesford:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House be adjourned *sine die*.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned sine die at 1:02 p.m.**

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