GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

THIRD SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FRIDAY 7TH, MONDAY 10TH, & TUESDAY 11TH MARCH, 2025

(BUDGET PRESENTATION AND DEBATE)

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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, Information and Communications Technology
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 Lennox John Andrews, MP *(St. Andrew South West)*	- Minister for Economic Development, Planning and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources
Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP *(Carriacou & Petite Martinique)*	- Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government
Honourable 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 & 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

House of Representatives Budget Presentation and Debate, 2025
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Friday 7th, Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th, March 2025

Attendance

Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP *(St. Andrew South East)*	-	Leader of His Majesty's Opposition
Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP *(St. George North West)*	-	Member
Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP *(St. Mark)*	-	Deputy Speaker
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP *(St. Andrew North East)*	-	Member
Honourable Peter David, MP *(Town of St. George)*	-	Member

Prayers
Minutes

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

Mr. Speaker: Let us 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 now convene.

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. Good morning to Members of this Honourable House. 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 Tuesday, 28th January, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes taken as read.

Minutes

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, 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 Tuesday, 28th January, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes confirmed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Special Sitting of the House of Representatives held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale St. George's, on Tuesday, 11th February, 2025, at 9 a.m. be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.
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 Special Sitting of the House of Representatives held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale St. George's, on Tuesday, 11th February, 2025, at 9 a.m. be confirmed. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.
Minutes confirmed.

Announcements
Presentations of Papers / Reports

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

Item 6 – Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. I wish to make the following announcements. Honourable Members, and the folks sitting in the balcony, we now have a new Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, as per the correspondence received. The Honourable MP for St. Andrew South-East is now the new Leader of His Majesty's Opposition in this Honourable House. I wish to extend my very best wishes to you, Honourable MP and now Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. **(Applause)**

I wish to also say that over the past two and a half days, Grenada hosted the Honourable Speaker of the House of Commons in the Canadian Parliament, Honourable Greg Fergus. I know that he left the island this morning to go back to Canada, but we were hosts to him, and I know he did pay a courtesy call to our Prime Minister and some other entities. His comment to us, not just last evening, but even prior to that, was that Grenada is a wonderful place and he intends to return to Grenada with his family for an extended vacation.

And finally, tomorrow the world celebrates International Women's Day, and I want to, at this point, wish every woman hearing my voice, not just here in the Parliament, but every woman hearing my voice, advance, best wishes for International Women's Day. I am also advised that special tokens have been prepared for the women MP's in Parliament. So you would receive those tokens when the Sitting is finished today. I do hope that as the women celebrate tomorrow, they are given the support of the men in so doing. Those are my announcements.

Deputy Clerk: Item 7 – Presentation of Petitions.

Item 8 – Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Presentation of Papers / Reports
Motions: 2025 Budget Presentation

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following Papers and Reports from Select Committees to this Honourable House.

- Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025;
- Medium Term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report 2025-2027;
- Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2025-2027;
- Annual Debt Report 2023;
- Report on use of CCRIF Payout;
- National Organising Committee Report – 50th Independence Anniversary Celebrations;
- Report on Contingency Fund 202; and
- Minutes of the Standing Committee on Finance held on Wednesday, February 19, 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Members, those aforementioned Reports are so laid before the House.

Deputy Clerk: 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.
Item 13 – Personal Explanations.
Item 14 – Motions.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move the following Motion standing in my name, and it reads:

Motions: 2025 Budget Presentation

WHEREAS it is necessary to provide for the services of the State of Grenada for the Year 2025 by means of an Appropriation Act;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Fiscal Year 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025 be approved.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister for Finance.

Question put.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Mr. Speaker, I wish to signal to this Honourable House that I have the consent of the Governor-General to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, in compliance with the Public Finance Management Act, the Fiscal Resilience Act and the Public Debt Management Act, I wish to advise that the following accompanying documents are laid before the Honourable House, which were done earlier:

- The Economic and Strategic Report 2025–2027 in accordance with section 12A of the Public Finance Management Act of 2015 as amended.
- The Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2025–2027 in accordance with sections 5(1) to 5(3) of the Public Finance Management Act, No. 28 of 2015, as amended; and
- The 2023 Annual Debt Report.

The following additional Reports are laid.

- Report on the Contingency Fund pursuant to SRO 42 of 2015; National Transformation Fund Regulations as amended;
- Preliminary Financial Report for 50th Independence Anniversary Celebrations; and
- Report on the use of the CRIFF Pay-out.

Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honour to present the Budget Address for the fiscal year 2025 to this Honourable House.

Motions: 2025 Budget Presentation

Mr. Speaker, permit me to begin my presentation by thanking the Almighty God for his grace and mercies endure forever.

Despite monumental challenges in the past year, as a nation and God-fearing people, we have demonstrated impressive resilience. As we look ahead, we remain assured in our faith that we are blessed and highly favoured. For it is written in Romans Chapter 8 Verse 28, "….**we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are called according to his purpose**."

Mr. Speaker, I wish to also thank the Prime Minister, the Honourable Dickon Mitchell, for his continued confidence in me to lead the Ministry of Finance in yet another difficult period for Grenada and the global economy.

Permit me to also thank my Cabinet colleagues, the staff of the Ministry of Finance, and all others who have contributed to the preparation and presentation of this year's Budget.

Allow me to also express profound gratitude to my constituents of St. Patrick East for their continued support, and I look forward to continuing to work for them. I will speak specifically to developments within my constituency during the debate.

Mr. Speaker, on 1st July 2024, Hurricane Beryl, one of the strongest tropical cyclones in modern history to make landfall in July, struck our beautiful nation, inflicting significant damage to homes, roads, and bridges, utilities, businesses, and the agriculture and marine sectors. The damage amounted to roughly $630m or 16% of our gross domestic product, particularly affecting Carriacou, Petite Martinique and the northern parishes of mainland Grenada, namely St. Patrick, St. Andrew, and St. Mark.

Four months later, in November, unprecedented rains caused major flooding and landslides, further compounding the recovery and reconstruction needs of our beloved country. Mr. Speaker, it is said that the true test of leadership is how one leads in times of crisis.

We took decisive and strategic actions to shield our citizens from the harsh realities of these disasters.

Key interventions include:

(i) Keeping the Nation fully abreast of all preparedness activities.

(ii) Targeted assistance to affected citizens to support recovery and reconstruction, such as tax relief on emergency supplies and building materials, and direct cash transfers to farmers and fisherfolk.

(iii) Suspending the fiscal rules and targets of the Fiscal Resilience Act pursuant to Section 9 to facilitate immediate, urgent, and critical disaster-related spending.

(iv) Launching of a Disaster Relief Fund to receive donations in support of a proactive response. As of today's date, $13.3 million has been deposited into this Fund.

(v) Activating and allocating disaster risk financing such as grants, concessional loans, and insurance payouts.

(vi) Invoking of disaster clauses in our debt instruments, where applicable, to ensure adequate fiscal space to support recovery efforts.

(vii) Delaying the 2025 Budget to ensure appropriate focus was placed on the immediate to short-term challenges posed by Beryl.

Again, Mr. Speaker, you would hear out there that we delayed the Budget for a number of other reasons and so on, notwithstanding that it is continuous.

Mr. Speaker, our swift and strategic response has been instrumental in bolstering our robust economic performance in 2024 and in setting the foundation for continued transformation.

Mr. Speaker, our leadership and composure in the face of disasters have not gone unnoticed. Reputable regional and international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the Caribbean Development Bank, have lauded our prudent approach in preparing for and in navigating the relief and recovery from Hurricane Beryl thus far. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we owe much of this praise to the significant support of the donor and creditor community, and most critically, to the fortitude and resilience of our people. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, while much has been achieved in a short time, there is still much to be done, not only in the context of Beryl's recovery but also in support of our transformative agenda for Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, the robust macroeconomic performance in the past year, despite significant challenges, demonstrates impressive resilience.

The medium-term outlook is favourable, supported by continued strong tourism demand, ongoing reconstruction efforts, and investments in transformative initiatives in healthcare, housing, skills development and renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, we have just celebrated our 51st Anniversary of Independence in another spectacular display of talent and patriotism under the theme, "**The Next 50: (cell phone rings) Embracing a future of development, transformation and unity**".

Mr. Speaker: Just hold. Just hold, Honourable MP. I said it before, and I will say it again, your phones should be turned off. There should be no shrilling. Please proceed.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This theme is deeply rooted in our National Sustainable Development Plan 2035, which is further embedded in our Vision 75. Vision 75 embodies a resilient Grenada, a prosperous Grenada, a conscious and caring Grenada, a Grenada where human dignity, sustained inclusive economic growth and environmental progress are promoted.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, Grenada is a Nation on the rise, supported by the resilience of its economy and people.

Considering the foregoing, our theme for the 2025 Budget is: "**Towards Vision 75: Grenada – Resilient and Rising**."

Update on Key Reforms and Policies

Development of Grenada's Hydrocarbon Potential

Mr. Speaker, we extend our sincere gratitude to the technical working group for their tremendous work over the past year. Thanks to their efforts, we now have a clear road map for advancing Grenada's hydrocarbon potential.

Mr. Speaker, following the presentation and debate of this Budget, we will provide the public with a comprehensive update on this matter.

Development of the Former Kawana Bay Project Site and Expansion of Beach House Silversands

Mr. Speaker, further to significant progress made in resolving the Kawana Bay dispute and engaging a new developer, Joyau Des Caraibes, construction is expected to recommence this year, simultaneously with the expansion of the Beach House Silversands Project. We will provide further information on developments in this area in due course.

Reform of the Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB)

Mr. Speaker, we have taken decisive steps to address the longstanding financial mismanagement and inefficiencies plaguing the Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB). To stop the organisation's financial and operational decline, we scaled down all operations and assumed all debts, creating a foundation for meaningful restructuring. However, the restructuring process has faced delays due to the absence of years of audited financial statements, complicating valuation and due diligence efforts.

Despite these challenges, the Government remains committed to transparency and accountability in this transition. The engagement of a strategic partner is key to building a modern, efficient, and sustainable entity that will better serve farmers, agro-processors, and the broader economy.

To this end, a new company – Import-Export Agromart (IMEXA) Ltd - has been established to replace the MNIB, and legal and financial experts are developing a prospectus and legal agreements to engage a suitable strategic partner and have the new entity up and running before the end of the third quarter of 2025.

Strengthening Parliamentary Representation

Mr. Speaker, our Government remains committed to strengthening parliamentary representation and ensuring that all Members of Parliament are equipped to serve their constituents effectively. The goal is to provide adequate resources over time, including the establishment of state-owned parliamentary offices in each constituency, providing a

permanent and accessible space for constituents to engage with their elected representatives. **(Applause)** To this end, in 2025, each constituency, as far as practicable, will be outfitted with a suitable vehicle to facilitate greater mobility and outreach, ensuring that the needs of every community are met with efficiency and care. Efforts will be made to secure hybrids and electric vehicles consistent with the Government's policy of greening the transport sector. **(Applause)**

Public Sector Pension Reform

Mr. Speaker, our hard-working public servants dodged a bullet, the risk that the NNP administration would have refused to pay them their retroactive pensions and gratuities, when the electorate voted the National Democratic Congress **(applause)** into office to form the current Administration. It is pellucidly clear that the former Administration had no intention of honouring the payment to over 500 retired public servants **(applause)** who dedicated their lives to the service of Grenada. We have kept our commitment to pay the retroactive sum of $75.1 million **(applause)** and are making current monthly payments going forward.

Mr. Speaker, in our continued commitment to ensuring that our public servants do not retire in poverty, we have enacted into law a new Contributory Pension Plan to cover over 3,600 government employees who were previously not included under the existing pension arrangements. **(Applause)** To secure their years of service, a sum of $11.3 million, representing 100 % of past service due, is provided for in this year's budget. **(Applause)**

This initiative ensures that all government workers can now look forward to living out their golden years in a secure and comfortable state because they are now part of a retirement plan. This, Mr. Speaker, reinforces our pledge to improve the livelihoods of both current and retired public servants.

Public Sector Regularisation

Mr. Speaker, the regularisation of the Public Service is progressing steadily. Phase one, which targeted 300 temporary officers, officers on probation, officers on assignment, and officers holding acting appointments, has surpassed the target, with

some 455 officers confirmed. **(Applause)**

Phase two, which targets approximately 1,262 workers holding PSC contracts, Government of Grenada Contracts, Ministry Letters, and Daily Paid instruments, is being processed. Some 1,100 officers will be regularised by April 2025. **(Applause)** In addition, 224 teachers are also being processed for regularisation by the end of March 2025. **(Applause)** This will bring the total number of officers regularised by the end of April 2025 to 1,779. **(Applause)**

Phase three, which targets some 3,316 workers holding Contracts for Service and IMANI trainees to be considered for regularisation by December 2025, is on schedule. A total of $22.7 million is budgeted to cover the additional cost of the regularisation exercise. **(Applause)**

Pay and Grade Adjustment – Royal Grenada Police Force

Mr. Speaker, our Government is pleased to announce the resolution of the longstanding and painful issue of pay and grade adjustment for the hard-working and dedicated men and women of the Royal Grenada Police Force **(applause)**, a legacy of neglect by the former Administration.

The adjustment is effective 1st January 2025 and will cost an estimated $6.5 million, positively impacting over 1,000 members of the RGPF. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the average increase in pay for Police Constables is estimated at $750.74 per month. **(Applause)** This is the fulfilment of yet another promise to our people, a testament to a caring and truthful Government. **(Applause)**

Sound Fiscal Management

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Beryl has tested the robustness of our disaster resilience financing strategy, and we can draw important parallels between this Government and the former Administration on this important subject.

(i) Our commitment to the payment of the CCRIF premiums, when the former Administration was contemplating withdrawing from the facility – a potentially disastrous decision- thankfully, this Administration stayed the course and expanded coverage for CCRIF to include Grenlec and NAWASA. As we

consider Hurricane Beryl's impact a few months ago, our decision to stay the course has resulted in a CCRIF payout of US$44 million or EC$118 million into the Treasury. The Payout from the CCRIF includes but is not limited to:

(a) Immediate post-event repairs to public buildings and physical infrastructure (roads & bridges, hospital, schools, etcetera) - $15.8 million;

(b) Repairs to infrastructure for communities (housing, community health centres, etcetera.) - $15.7 million;

(c) Purchase of food, water and medication for individuals - $3 million;

(d) Risk mitigation activities to reduce vulnerability to future natural hazard events - $13.5 million;

(e) Payment to persons in support of their livelihoods (e.g. farmers, fishers) - $31.3 million;

(f) Beryl Response Income Support Programme (BRISP) and Relocation of Elderly citizens due to damaged eldercare facilities - $14.5 million;

(g) Business Reactivation Support - $25 million.

A more detailed report on the use of CCRIF payout is laid together with the 2025 Appropriation Bill.

(ii) The prudent decision to expand the CCRIF to our utilities, resulting in a significant payout to GRENLEC of US$9.3 million and NAWASA of US$2.2 million, to support the quick restoration of power and water in affected areas.

(iii) The actual set aside of 10% of all National Transformation Fund receipts into a Contingency or Rainy-Day Fund to support recovery in the event of a major economic shock. As of 31st December 2024, the Fund balance stood at $44.9 million. Mr. Speaker, the Government has decided not to access this Fund to finance Beryl activities. While the former Government heavily criticised our decision to reduce the percentage set aside from 40% to 10%, they did not put a dollar into the Fund since the Law was passed by them, many moons ago. **(Applause)**

(iv) And finally, Mr. Speaker, we did not have to impose a Reconstruction Levy on the backs of ordinary Grenadians to fund the rebuilding of the Grenadian economy post-Beryl. Mr. Speaker, we hear talk of deficits, of borrowing, and of poor fiscal management. One only has to look back to the three or so years post-Hurricane Ivan to see deficits, financing shortfalls, and new burdensome taxes in the name of shared sacrifice, and compare this to our response to Hurricane Beryl. **(Applause)**

Macroeconomic and Social Context

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the macroeconomic and social context in which the 2025 Budget is presented.

Mr. Speaker, the 2025 Budget is set against a complex macroeconomic backdrop, shaped by domestic and external factors.

Robust economic performance in 2024, despite the devastating impact of a major hurricane, underscores Grenada's growing resilience. The near-term outlook is also favourable. Real GDP is forecasted to grow by 4.1% in 2025, driven by continued tourism demand and post-Beryl reconstruction activities, following the 3.7% realised in 2024.

Mr. Speaker, consumer prices declined in 2024 from the high levels experienced in 2023, helped by Government policies to keep prices down, including the removal of the Value Added Tax on basic food and other essential items and the electricity and petroleum price subsidies. That notwithstanding, food inflation, although declining, remained unacceptably higher than overall inflation. Period average overall inflation is forecasted to remain low and stable at around 0.9% over the medium term.

Mr. Speaker, labour conditions have remained stable, with a consistently low unemployment rate of around 12% in the last 2-3 years. With continued buoyant economic expansion in 2025, the unemployment rate is forecasted to decline further.

Mr. Speaker, unprecedented Citizenship-by-Investment inflows and the CCRIF insurance payout bolstered the Government's fiscal position in 2024. A primary surplus of $432.9 million or 11.3% of GDP, was realised, in spite of extraordinary spending on account of Hurricane Beryl.

Mr. Speaker, to support the continued resilient recovery of the Grenadian economy, the fiscal rules and targets of the Fiscal Resilience Act will be further suspended in 2025 to allow for increased rehabilitation and reconstruction spending.

Finally, on the domestic front, Mr. Speaker, the financial sector remained stable and sound, and external stability was well anchored in 2024. Looking ahead, financial sector conditions and the external account are expected to improve, further reinforcing macroeconomic stability and growth.

On the global front, economic growth is projected to remain stable at 3.3% in 2025 based on the most recent World Economic Outlook by the IMF. However, this positive outlook is pregnant with uncertainties, fuelled largely by ongoing geopolitical tensions and, more recently, protectionist policies in the United States.

Additional details on the macroeconomic and social context for the 2025 Budget are included in the Medium-Term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report 2025 – 2027, which is laid out together with the Appropriation (2025) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and the specific areas of Intervention for 2025.

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2025

Overview

Mr. Speaker, as per the philosophy of our Administration in prioritising the engagement of our citizens in this important aspect of our country's governance, we actively involved our people in widespread consultations on the 2025 Budget. The resulting policies, projects, and programmes have benefited from the rich insights of our citizens, for which we are most appreciative.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to our citizens, here at home and in the diaspora, who embraced our participatory approach to governance and shared their ideas and suggestions with us in helping to shape the 2025 Budget.

Mr. Speaker, this third Budget sets our country and people on a more resilient and inclusive path, consolidating past gains and accelerating progress. It provides for a total expenditure (including principal repayments) of **ONE BILLION, NINE HUNDRED AND**

TWELVE MILLION, EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO THOUSAND, AND FOURTEEN DOLLARS (EC$1,912,872,014).

The overall Budget summary is as follows:

Recurrent Revenue: EC$1,192.5 million;

Total grants: EC$72.5 million;

Recurrent Expenditure: EC$1,105.9 million;

Capital Expenditure: EC$496.5 million;

Current Account Surplus: EC$86.5 million;

Principal Repayments (Amortisation): EC$310.5 million;

Primary Deficit (after grants): (EC$208.6 million); and

Overall Deficit (after grants): (EC$337.4 million).

Mr. Speaker, while the rules and targets of the Fiscal Resilience Act merit further suspension in 2025 in light of the ongoing recovery and reconstruction needs post-Hurricane Beryl, our Government is committed to fiscal prudence and a return to the fiscal rules and targets once it is not harmful to macroeconomic stability to do so. Based on our assessment, the return of the fiscal rules and targets under the FRA will not be before 2027. That said, Mr. Speaker, a key aspect of the FRA, that is, the wage bill ceiling of 13% of GDP, will not be breached in 2025. Good faith salary negotiations for the next negotiation cycle will ensure compliance with the FRA and sustainable wage bill management beyond 2025.

Financing of the 2025 Budget

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the 2025 Budget is fully financed. **(Applause)**

Of note, the Overall Deficit of $337.4 million will be largely financed from a drawdown of some $287.3 million of Government deposits held in the Consolidated Fund. **(Applause)**

Details on the financing of the 2025 Budget can be found on Page 9 of the 2025 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

Thematic Areas

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to the specific areas of intervention underpinning the 2025 Budget aimed at strengthening the resilience of our economy and accelerating high, sustained and inclusive growth and development.

These interventions will be presented under four broad thematic areas, namely:

(a) The resilient recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl;

(b) Accelerating our transformative agenda in healthcare, housing, education, skills development, and renewable energy transition;

(c) Expanding and diversifying our productive base; and,

(d) Investing in cross-cutting areas.

Rebuilding Smarter After Beryl

Mr. Speaker, a deliberate and strategic approach has been taken to not only replace lost or damaged infrastructure and livelihoods but to build back better.

Mr. Speaker, in response to Hurricane Beryl, we have so far pumped in excess of $100 million into the hands of ordinary Grenadians **(applause)** in the form of cash grants, building materials for roof repairs, construction of new homes, business reactivation support, farm labour and input support, among other critical needs.

Mr. Speaker, in all our efforts, building resilience was at the forefront of our interventions.

Today, significant progress has been made in rebuilding our country and in restoring lives and livelihoods in a more resilient and sustainable way.

We have built resilient houses for low-income and vulnerable families.

We provided building materials assistance as well as tax relief to homeowners who suffered levels one and two or minor to moderate damages to help restore their lives.

Through strategic partnerships, we have secured some 47 prefabricated houses for our less fortunate citizens.

To support livelihoods in the agriculture and marine sectors, cash grants and other forms of direct support have been provided to some 4,862 farmers and 279 fisherfolk. **(Applause)**

To support the rebuilding of the economy of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, as of January 22nd 2025, 49 grants amounting to $0.7 million and 49 loans with a total value of $2.1 million have been provided thus far. **(Applause)**

Through Project Pristine, we have largely restored the natural beauty of the sister isles with a massive clean-up of the land and marine environment. **(Applause)** We have also made significant investments in the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority to transform waste disposal and management and achieve environmental sustainability going forward. So far, some $20.7 million has been expended on Project Pristine and equipment upgrades for the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority. **(Applause)**

We have rehabilitated and restored critical public infrastructure, including roads and bridges, the Princess Royal hospital, medical facilities, schools, police stations and Government offices. **(Applause)**

Despite the substantial progress in such a short period, Mr. Speaker, the road to full recovery is still a long and arduous one. Our Government empathises with our teachers and students, our public servants, our homeowners and businesses, and ordinary Grenadians who are still dealing with the harsh realities of Beryl. We remain committed to providing the necessary support for as long as is necessary to build a better and more resilient society.

Accelerating our Transformative Agenda

Mr. Speaker, the people of Grenada voted for transformation – a pivot from the failed and visionless policies of the former administration. **(Applause)**

Our bold and visionary policies to transform our nation is taking root. Many of our people are talking about Project Polaris – our new Hospital Project; **(applause)** Project 500 – our innovative housing solution; **(applause)** Project Skills – our laser-focused plan on upscaling and retooling our workforce with relevant skills, especially our young people; **(applause)** and Project Renewable Energy – aimed at energy security and lowering the cost of energy. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, our people are once more hopeful and are beginning to see a bright future ahead. **(Applause)** Undoubtedly, Grenada is on the rise towards progress,

prosperity and unity. **(Applause)**

As our Prime Minister declared in his Independence Address on February 7, 2025, "**We are a great Nation**." "**There is greatness in every one of us**." **(Applause)**

Allow me to elaborate on the key transformative pillars.

Healthcare

Mr. Speaker, we remain steadfast in our thrust to transform our healthcare system into the healthcare capital of the Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, given the state of the healthcare system that we inherited, our commitment to this nation on this issue is no easy feat. Yet, we are undaunted and laser-focused on addressing the critical challenges facing the sector.

In 2025, we will advance several critical initiatives to strengthen the health sector, improve service delivery, and lay the foundation for a transformative future. **(Applause)**

Strengthening Organisational Capacity

Mr. Speaker, we remain cognizant that efficient healthcare delivery depends on a well-structured and effectively managed system.

With the support of Mount Sinai, one of the largest teaching hospitals in the United States, a comprehensive needs assessment and quality improvement initiative of our current healthcare system is underway to guide the development of the new hospital and broader health sector reforms. This assessment will evaluate gaps in infrastructure, service delivery, human resources, and equipment needs. The findings will inform strategic planning and resource allocation to ensure that our investments are targeted and impactful. A key feature of the proposed reform is the statutorisation of our hospitals.

Strengthening Human Capacity

Healthcare is only as strong as the professionals who deliver it. In 2025, we will implement strategic measures to address critical human resource gaps in the sector. This will involve conducting an HR audit, expanding training opportunities for healthcare professionals, recruiting additional doctors, nurses, and specialised medical personnel, including implementing a specialised programme to ensure adequate succession planning. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, while we continue to diligently tackle the longer-term HR challenges, incentivising our doctors and nurses remains necessary to stem their attrition to other countries. Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to report that the Cabinet has agreed to extend the honorarium of $12,000 annually and $ 6,000 annually for doctors and nurses, **(applause)** respectively, for 2025.

Advancing Project Polaris

Mr. Speaker, one of the most transformative initiatives on our healthcare agenda is the construction of a new state-of-the-art hospital. The new hospital will be designed to offer a higher standard of care, expanded specialist services, and improved diagnostic capabilities. In 2025, we will focus on finalising key aspects of the design and financing, with the aim of breaking ground on the Hope Vale site in the first half of 2026. An amount of $23.6 million has been allocated for this Project in 2025.

Additionally, the Cabinet has approved the establishment of a Special Fund at the ECCB into which a sum of US$25 million is to be deposited as the Government's contribution towards the overall financing of Project Polaris. **(Applause)** Furthermore, a small percentage of all NTF receipts will be set aside monthly, commencing June 2025, after finalising the legal requirements, to support the smooth transition to the new Hospital once completed.

National Health Insurance: Expanding Access and Affordability

Mr. Speaker, ensuring equitable access to healthcare remains a priority for this Administration. To this end, national health insurance is of the utmost priority.

Regrettably, after many years, there is very little in terms of progress. That said, we are not interested in pointing fingers and ascribing blame on this game-changing initiative in transforming our health sector. This Government's simple commitment to our fellow citizens, "we WILL get it done."

In 2025, we will advance the legislative and institutional framework needed for the implementation of NHI. This will include finalising the coverage model, engaging stakeholders, and launching public awareness initiatives to ensure smooth implementation. An allocation of $2.4 million is made for this Project under Vote 20.

Strengthening Mental Health and Wellness

Mr. Speaker, mental health and wellness are an integral part of this Government's health strategy. To this end, a new Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs has been created to give greater focus and strategic importance to these portfolios.

In 2025, we are committed to expanding access to mental health services, reducing stigma, and integrating mental health support into primary healthcare. Additionally, we will focus on strengthening the infrastructure of our mental health facilities to provide a more patient-centred approach **(applause)** to care, including the start of construction on the Mirabeau Rehabilitation Centre. **(Applause)**

The combined allocation for the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs is $171.3 million. **(Applause)**

Transforming Education and Skills Development

Mr. Speaker, the foundation of any prosperous nation is a strong and resilient education system. Our Government remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring that our citizens, especially the youth, have access to quality education and the skills needed to thrive in an evolving global economy.

Building on yet another year of solid progress in the education sector, we will strengthen our efforts on increasing access, enhancing and expanding technical and vocational training, upgrading school infrastructure, technology, and education financing.

Increasing Access to Education

Mr. Speaker, to reduce financial barriers to learning, we introduced free tuition for students up to the tertiary level at the T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) and the New Life Organisation. This historic initiative saved our hardworking parents and guardians in excess of one million dollars and saw record enrolment of students in these institutions. An amount of $1.5 million is allocated for the continuation of the Free Tuition Programme in 2025.

Added to this, Mr. Speaker, our Government is pleased to introduce a new school bus transportation pilot aimed at providing a safe and reliable transportation system for the future men and women of our country. **(Applause)** The six-month pilot costing $0.8

million will be offered free to students, but there will be a cost-sharing formula when the initiative is implemented island-wide.

Furthermore, the Government will continue to pursue scholarship opportunities for thousands of Grenadians locally, regionally, and internationally. Our inaugural 1st Generation Scholarship Programme, in collaboration with Monroe University, which targets a university graduate in every home, is a clear testimony of our commitment in this regard. **(Applause)**

Free Hot Meals Programme

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that no child goes hungry at our primary and secondary schools. To this end, we implemented a free hot meals programme that provided free nutritious meals to all students. This investment in our children's health will continue to improve concentration, reduce absenteeism, and support families facing financial strain. An amount of $5 million is allocated for the continuation of the Free Hot Meals Programme in 2025. **(Applause)**

Transforming School Infrastructure

Mr. Speaker, we are cognisant of the fact that some of our teachers and students are operating in less than suitable conditions. Hurricane Beryl exacerbated a school infrastructure system that was largely in a state of disrepair. We empathise with them and continue to thank them for their patience and understanding as we work to address a problem that was left unattended for many years.

We are committed to building and maintaining modern and safe learning environments to support quality learning. In 2025, we are making an unprecedented investment in school infrastructure, with plans to begin construction of several new schools, rehabilitate existing facilities and retrofit math and science labs across the country. These include:

(i) The St. David's Catholic Secondary School **(applause)** – no objection to award contract already issued by the Procurement Board; Construction expected to commence in May 2025; **(applause)**

(ii) The St. Andrew's Anglican Primary School – the contract has been signed with construction to commence in May 2025; **(applause)**

(iii) The St. Giles Government School – 95% of the Final Design Completed; Construction is expected to commence in July 2025; **(applause)**

(iv) The Florida Government school – Civil works is expected to commence in June 2025; **(applause)**

(v) The Grenada Christian Academy – under construction, with 20% completed; **(applause)**

(vi) Dover Government School – Construction scheduled to commence in June, 2025; **(applause)**

(vii) St. George's Anglican Senior – Refurbishments scheduled to commence in June 2025; **(applause)**

(viii) Bonair Government – Retrofitting of Math and Science labs expected to commence in April 2025; and **(applause)**

(ix) St. Patrick Anglican Primary – Retrofitting of Math and Science labs expected to commence in April 2025. **(Applause)**

Equipping Students with Relevant Skills

The demands of the modern workforce are changing rapidly, and our education system must evolve accordingly. In 2025, we will focus on equipping students with practical and relevant skills, ensuring they are prepared for emerging industries. This includes:

- Expanding digital skills training in schools to foster competence in areas such as coding, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.
- Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes to produce a skilled workforce in areas such as construction, renewable energy, hospitality, and other high-demand sectors.
- Establishment of TVET Centres of Excellence.
- Integrating entrepreneurship education to cultivate innovation and self-reliance among our young people.

Mr. Speaker, these strategic interventions in education and skills development will empower our people, drive economic growth, and lay the foundation for a more competitive and resilient Grenada **Applause)** Through bold investments and decisive action, we are securing the future of our nation—one student at a time. An amount of $183.4 million has been allocated for the education sector. **(Applause)**

Housing

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's significant housing deficit was further exacerbated by the devastating impact of Hurricane Beryl. The post-disaster assessments indicated that roughly 2304 houses were damaged, with 36% being severely damaged or totally destroyed.

The destruction caused by the hurricane has underscored the need for a comprehensive housing strategy—one that not only rebuilds what was lost but also strengthens our housing sector for the future.

Our strategy has three main pillars.

Our Emergency Housing Recovery Plan is under the ambit of the Build Back Better Project, with targeted interventions in critical areas. This includes:

- Reconstructing homes that were completely destroyed, with priority given to the most vulnerable citizens. To date, 147 new houses are at various stages of construction. **(Applause)**
- Conducting repairs and providing material assistance to homeowners to help them rebuild their homes. Some 1,866 families have benefited from the materials distribution assistance programme or had repairs conducted on their houses.
- Offering concessions and other forms of financial support to families working to rebuild their homes. Some 318 families have received assistance totalling $7.5 million under the tax concessions programme to date. **(Applause)**

In 2025, allocation is made for the continuation of the Build Back Better Project throughout Grenada Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

In addition to our Emergency Housing Recovery Plan, our Government is taking

proactive steps to reduce the housing deficit through our major flagship initiative—Project 500. This project aims to construct 500 Grenadian-style homes on both government and private lands, creating sustainable housing solutions for our people. The initiative is well underway, with a pilot project in Dunfermline, where 17 model homes are currently under construction. **(Applause)** An amount of $10 million has been allocated in the 2025 Budget for the continuation of this Project.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, under the third pillar—the Government Home Improvement & Soft Loan Programmes – the Government will continue to provide material assistance and soft loans to facilitate additional support measures, providing more Grenadians with access to affordable housing solutions. An amount of $15 million has been allocated in the 2025 Budget for the continuation of these programmes.

Through these combined efforts, we remain committed to ensuring safe, resilient, and accessible housing for all Grenadians, reinforcing our nation's ability to withstand future challenges. **(Applause)**

Renewable Energy Transition

In 2025, we will redouble our efforts geared towards supporting the diversification of our energy mix in the electricity sector and greening the transportation sector, with the goal of achieving energy security, lowering the cost of energy, and reducing our carbon footprint.

Supporting Electricity Transitioning

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada is actively pursuing all viable opportunities to transition our energy sector through the development of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, geothermal energy, and wind power. This commitment aligns with our national energy policy and our broader goal of achieving energy security, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and building resilience in the face of climate change.

At the forefront of this transition are three major renewable energy projects that will significantly enhance our energy infrastructure and sustainability.

First, we are advancing the development of a 15-megawatt geothermal project. This initiative has the potential to provide a stable and reliable source of clean energy,

reducing our reliance on imported fossil fuels and strengthening the resilience of our electricity grid. Phase two, which covers exploratory drilling, is currently underway, and we remain committed to unlocking Grenada's geothermal potential. Mr. Speaker, I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to the United Kingdom Government for the generous donation of US$10 million towards this important project. **(Applause)** An amount of $ 3.6 million is allocated for this Project in 2025. **(Applause)**

Second, the Government is facilitating the establishment of a solar PV system at the Maurice Bishop International Airport (MBIA) as a utility-scale Independent Power Producer (IPP) project. This initiative will contribute to the country's renewable energy mix and demonstrate the viability of large-scale solar investments. To support this and future IPP projects, the Government is making critical investments in the necessary infrastructure, ensuring a conducive environment for private sector participation in renewable energy generation. Grenada plans to contribute US$10 million towards the Caribbean Renewable Energy Infrastructure Investment Facility, a fund spearheaded by the ECCB to finance private sector projects in this area.

Third, we are embarking on a transformative project to install solar PV systems on government buildings. **(Applause)** This initiative will not only reduce the public sector's electricity costs but also serve as a model for sustainable energy use. Importantly, this project includes critical upgrades to the national transmission and distribution network, along with battery storage solutions, to enhance grid stability and accommodate increased renewable energy generation. Mr. Speaker, this Project is funded through a grant and concessional loan from the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the Clean Technology Fund and will be executed jointly with GRENLEC. An amount of $1.6 million is allocated for the rollout of this Project in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, these projects underscore our Government's commitment to a clean energy future. By expanding renewable energy generation, modernising our infrastructure, and fostering private sector participation, we are laying the foundation for a more sustainable and energy-secure Grenada.

Greening the Transport Sector

Mr. Speaker, to accelerate the transition to a greener transport sector, the Government will build on existing measures, such as the removal of duties and taxes on renewable energy vehicles. Furthermore, the Government will lead by example by transitioning its vehicle fleet to electric and hybrid models. **(Applause)** As a decisive step, we are setting a 25% target for all new Government vehicle purchases in 2025 to be either electric or hybrid, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability.

Expanding and Diversifying our Economic Base

Mr. Speaker, a robust economy, delivering sustainable jobs, is the bedrock of a thriving society. Through solid economic management, innovative policies, and sustained investment in both existing and emerging sectors, we are committed to transforming our economy—ensuring that our people not only adapt to the challenges of tomorrow but thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Our strategy places strong emphasis on private sector-led growth, complemented by proactive government policies that create an enabling environment for businesses and entrepreneurs to succeed. This collaborative framework will drive development across key sectors, strengthening resilience and unlocking new opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and the digital and blue economies.

Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security

Mr. Speaker, agriculture remains a cornerstone of our economy, and our vision is to modernise and expand this sector for greater productivity, sustainability, and food security.

Our vision for the sector was dealt a major blow in July of last year. The impact resulted in untold hardship for our farmers and fisherfolk who saw their lives and livelihoods upended by yet another natural hazard.

In the wake of this disaster, the government acted swiftly to provide much-needed relief. Through the Emergency Response Plan, we invested roughly $32 million in income support, farm labour support and farm input assistance **(applause)**, helping farmers and fisherfolk regain stability and begin the recovery process. But our work does not stop there.

In 2025, we are deepening our commitment to revitalising agriculture through strategic interventions that will build resilience, enhance productivity, and drive long-term growth. An allocation of $32.4 million has been made in the 2025 Estimates to fund various projects in the Agricultural Sector. **(Applause)** The Minister for Agriculture will highlight some of these key initiatives in his presentation.

Tourism, Creative Economy & Culture

Mr. Speaker, tourism is one of the main pillars of Grenada's economy, providing thousands of jobs and contributing significantly to GDP. Thankfully, the sector was largely untouched during the passage of Hurricane Beryl and was primarily responsible for the robust economic performance in 2024.

Notwithstanding the strong rebound of the sector in the post-COVID-19 period and its significant contribution to employment and GDP, much more needs to be done to harness the full potential of the sector.

Mr. Speaker, our Government is committed to the realisation of the full potential of the sector through targeted interventions.

To this end, it is imperative that we fully integrate and leverage the potential of the creative economy and cultural industries, both of which are intrinsically linked to our tourism product.

In 2025, as a first step, we have undertaken a portfolio realignment by bringing the portfolios of tourism, creative economy and culture under one umbrella to exploit synergies and shore up opportunities.

By strengthening the linkages between tourism, culture, and the creative economy, we can increase visitor spend, extend their length of stay, and create new avenues for sustainable economic growth.

In 2025, the focus will be on ease of travel, expanding airlift, product enhancement, expanding the Creative Industries Fund, and growing our festivals. An allocation of $37.4 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to fund various policies, projects and programmes, in support of the integration of the tourism sector, the creative economy, and culture.

The Blue Economy and Marine Affairs

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's marine and coastal resources offer significant opportunities for economic growth, environmental conservation, and community resilience. To harness these assets sustainably, the Government has established the Ministry of the Blue Economy and Marine Affairs to drive an inclusive and transformative agenda.

The Government aims to position Grenada as a regional and global leader in sustainable ocean-based development, leveraging strategic investments, sound policies, and strong partnerships to promote economic diversification, climate resilience, and innovation while enhancing livelihoods.

Key pillars for transformation include:

1. Sustainable Marine Resource Management – Expanding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to cover 30% of coastal ecosystems by 2030, reducing illegal fishing by 50% by 2027, and integrating climate adaptation into marine governance.
2. Fisheries Transformation – Increasing fish production and exports by 20% by 2028, ensuring 80% of fishing households adopt climate-smart practices by 2030, and improving market access for fishers.
3. Blue Economy Diversification – Developing marine biotechnology, renewable ocean energy, and sustainable maritime tourism, attracting $100 million in investments by 2030, and supporting 20 blue economy startups by 2027.
4. Coastal Community Empowerment – Strengthening community participation in marine management, boosting coastal incomes by 30%, reducing food insecurity by 20% by 2030, and enhancing disaster resilience.
5. Governance and Institutional Strengthening – Building a highly competent ministry, enforcing transparency and accountability, and implementing performance-based policies.

An allocation of EC$36.9 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to fund various projects to drive this new engine of growth.

Rebuilding a Stronger Economy and People - Carriacou and Petite Martinique

Mr. Speaker, one of the most defining moments of our nation's recent history occurred on July 1, 2024, when Hurricane Beryl ravaged Carriacou, leaving widespread destruction in its wake. However, in the face of adversity, the resilience of our people shone through. From the very first moments after the Hurricane, our Government committed to rebuilding a stronger, more resilient Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Today, I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made. The clean-up of both land and marine environments has restored a sense of normalcy. Homes and businesses are being rebuilt, and government operations have resumed. Most importantly, economic activity is once again gaining momentum. But our work is far from over.

In 2025, we will continue to press forward with strategic investments aimed at building back better. **(Applause)**

The budget for Carriacou and Petite Martinique has increased from $33.4 million in 2024 to $44 million in 2025—a clear demonstration of our commitment to the full recovery and transformation of our sister isles. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Carriacou and Petite Martinique is rising once again. **(Applause)** The spirit of resilience and determination that defines our people is stronger than ever. The Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs will further elaborate on the key interventions planned for 2025.

Youth and Sports Development

Mr. Speaker, as we continue the journey of economic transformation, we recognise that our young people are the backbone of our nation's future. Investing in youth development and sports is not just a social priority—it is a strategic economic imperative. Sports, in particular, hold immense potential as a new engine of growth, fostering employment, entrepreneurship, and national pride while promoting health and social cohesion.

Sports as an Economic Driver

Grenada has long been known for its sporting talent, with our athletes excelling on regional and international stages. However, to fully harness the economic potential of sports, we must transition from viewing it solely as a recreational activity to a viable industry that generates employment, investment, and opportunities for our youth.

In 2025, we will focus on:

- Expanding sports tourism;
- Infrastructure development, including the lighting of the National Cricket Stadium **(applause)**, construction of an Olympic-size swimming pool **(applause)**, and the upgrading of the La Saggesse Playing facility **(applause)**; and
- Incentivising and empowering our athletes.

Youth Development: Fostering Leadership and Participation

Beyond sports, our young people must be actively engaged in shaping the future of Grenada. We are committed to ensuring their participation in all spheres of national development. Key initiatives for 2025 include:

- Youth Parliament: Strengthening platforms for young people to engage in governance, policymaking, and national dialogue.
- Skills Development Programmes: Expanding training beyond traditional skills to include digital economy skills, entrepreneurship, and innovation, ensuring our youth are equipped for the jobs of the future.
- Youth Economic Inclusion: Providing funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities to help young entrepreneurs establish businesses in agriculture, sports, technology, and other emerging industries.

Mr. Speaker, one of our flagship programmes in 2025 is our Elevate Her Programme, which targets young women, especially heads of households, with the necessary skills and financial and other support to improve their lives and contribution to national development.

Mr. Speaker, by investing in youth and sports, we are not only nurturing talent but also laying the foundation for a dynamic and diversified economy. Our young people are

ready to lead, and this Government stands ready to support their ambitions—whether on the playing field, in government, or in national leadership. This is our commitment to building a future where youth and sports are central pillars of Grenada's economic transformation. **(Applause)**

An allocation of EC$68.9 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to fund various policies, projects, and programmes in the area of youth and sports development. **(Applause)**

Digital Transformation

Mr. Speaker, our vision to transform Grenada not only as a consumer of digital technology but as a creator is taking shape.

In just over two and a half years, we have achieved the following, among other major accomplishments.

- We have digitised the application process for passports, and are on the verge of digitising other certificates, such as birth and death certificates and other government services, thereby reducing the time and cost for accessing these services. **(Applause)**
- We have digitised the application process for Pension Life Certificates renewal. That will be a very important thing for the pensioners.
- Expanded the network of Free Wireless Access Points in every community, school, government office, tourism site and recreational park. **(Applause)**
- Expanded education and training in coding and other critical IT skills.
- Launched phase one of the Digital Workforce Initiative, in collaboration with Cyber Nations Canada to provide internationally recognised cybersecurity training, certification and work opportunities. **(Applause)**

May I remind everyone, Mr. Speaker, that Grenada, under the former Government, held the position of ICT lead for CARICOM for many, many years, with nothing to show for it? **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, make that make sense. **(Laughter) (Applause)** Mr. Speaker, in 2025, the focus will be on establishing a digital transformation agency and further reinforcing the foundations of our digital economy. More information on our

achievements and detailed plans for digital transformation will be provided during the budget debate.

Investing in Cross-Cutting Areas

Mr. Speaker, as we drive the comprehensive transformation of the Grenadian society, we must invest strategically in cross-cutting areas that create synergies across multiple sectors. This includes investing in resilient physical infrastructure, promoting private sector development, modernising labour relations, safeguarding citizen safety and security, and investing in social and community development, among others.

I will now elaborate on some of these cross-cutting areas.

Transforming our Physical Infrastructure

Mr. Speaker, transforming our physical infrastructure landscape is fundamental to expanding and diversifying Grenada's economic base and, more broadly speaking, transforming our economy and society. Mr. Speaker, this will require significant investments in resilient infrastructure over many years. In 2025, strategic initiatives and investments will include:

- Grenada Resilient Infrastructure Project;
- Cliff Road Rehabilitation Project;
- Coastal Protection of the Shoreline of the Sauteurs Bay Project, we normally call it the "Breakwater";
- The South St. George Water and Sewerage Expansion Project;
- The G-CREWS Project;
- St. John's River Flood Mitigation Project;
- Feeder Roads Project;
- Bridges Rehabilitation Project; and
- Hurricane Beryl Response initiatives.

An allocation of EC$155.7 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to fund various policies, projects, and programmes in the area of infrastructure, physical development, public utilities, civil aviation and transportation.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Minister with responsibility for

Infrastructure, will elaborate on the major initiatives and interventions under this portfolio.

Social and Community Development

Mr. Speaker, a robust social protection system is essential for reducing poverty, promoting economic participation, and ensuring that no one is left behind in Grenada's development journey. In 2025, our Government remains committed to protecting the most vulnerable while fostering opportunities for self-sufficiency and economic empowerment. Building on the significant progress made, including the strengthening of the National Insurance Scheme, the introduction of the permanent Unemployment Insurance Benefit Programme and the better targeting of support for Education, Empowerment, and Development ("the SEED Programme"), key initiatives for 2025 include:

- Continued support for the SEED programme, with enhancements to ensure greater efficiency and impact for beneficiaries.
- Continuation of the Multiple Projects for the Elderly.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is also committed to fostering resilient communities through investments in community infrastructure and grassroots empowerment programmes.

Furthermore, our Government will continue to support policies and programmes that promote gender inclusivity and equality. **(Applause)** As we are one day away from the universal celebration of International Women's Day 2025, we reaffirm our dedication to advancing the rights and opportunities of women and girls in the State of Grenada, ensuring their full participation in our national development. **(Applause)**

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to wish our women a Happy International Women's Day. **(Applause)**

An allocation of EC$85.1 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to fund various policies, projects, and programmes in the area of Social and Community Development and Gender Affairs.

Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Mobilisation, Implementation, and Transformation

(MIT) was established to enhance coordination within the government and improve the execution of policies, programs, and projects. In 2025, our Government will further strengthen collaboration across all sectors to accelerate national development, ensuring that our economic and social policies align with our overarching vision for transformation.

Through this cross-cutting strategy, we are reinforcing our commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous, and resilient Grenada—one where progress is not only envisioned but actively realised.

To this end, several long-stalled World Bank-funded projects have been transferred to the Ministry of Mobilisation, Implementation, and Transformation to remove bottlenecks and accelerate implementation. The results thus far have been extremely promising, demonstrating the effectiveness of this strategic approach.

An allocation of EC$47.8 million has been made in the 2025 Budget to support the implementation of key policies and initiatives, ensuring sustained progress toward national development goals. **(Applause)**

Promoting Private Sector Development

Mr. Speaker, the Grenada Investment Development Cooperation (GIDC) continues to play a critical role in attracting and facilitating private sector investments in Grenada.

In 2024, the GIDC generated 238 investment leads, a 31.5% increase from the previous year, with local investments showing great potential. These leads spanned key sectors, including manufacturing, tourism, agribusiness, health and wellness, ICT, and services, reflecting the country's diverse investment opportunities.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the GIDC processed 65 applications for investment incentives, surpassing its annual target by 163%. This resulted in the approval of 61 projects, with a combined EC$80 million in proposed investments and the creation of over 800 permanent jobs. Additionally, 66 projects commenced operations, generating 564 direct jobs, a 14% increase over 2023.

To build on the strong momentum, the Government is committed to enhancing the GIDC's capacity and effectiveness in 2025.

Key focus areas include:

- Expanding Investment Promotion Efforts – Strengthening engagement with international and regional investors through targeted roadshows, trade missions, and digital marketing campaigns.
- Streamlining the Investment Approval Process – Enhancing efficiency in processing applications and approvals to create a more investor-friendly environment.
- Leveraging Strategic Partnerships – Collaborating with multilateral agencies and development partners to unlock new investment opportunities.
- Leveraging the hosting of the Afro-Caribbean Trade and Investment Conference in July of this year – A major platform to showcase Grenada's investment potential to regional and global stakeholders.

By prioritising these strategic initiatives, Grenada will further strengthen its investment climate, increase capital inflows, drive economic diversification, and expand job creation opportunities.

Support for MSME Development

Mr. Speaker, we reiterate the critical importance of supporting the creation of new micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the expansion of existing ones in delivering sustainable jobs throughout the State of Grenada.

In 2025, the following interventions will be pursued in this regard

(i) The extension of the incentive package for non-priority sectors on selected building materials, equipment, capital goods and other critical inputs.
(ii) The extension of the MSME concession for priority sectors.
(iii) The repurposing of $7 million in existing funds at the Grenada Development Bank (GDB) as equity contribution to support business lending.
(iv) The recapitalisation of the Small Business Development Fund administered through the GDB with an injection of $3 million.
(v) The provision of competitive matching innovation grants of up to US$30,000 per

beneficiary through the Grenada Investment Development Corporation as part of the OECS Skills and Innovation Project.

(vi) The provision of grant financing to farmers through the GDB as part of the Challenge Grant Component of the G-CREWS Project.

(vii) The provision of grant financing by the Ministry of Agriculture to support young farmers through the CARICOM Development Fund supported Youth in Agriculture Initiative.

Strengthening the Citizenship-By-Investment Programme

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's Citizenship-By-Investment (CBI) Programme continues to evolve. It is now a noteworthy contributor to government revenues, tourism, and job creation. Our Programme continues to be one of the best with deeply entrenched, robust due diligence processes. In 2024, Grenada and four other CBI jurisdictions in the Eastern Caribbean signed a Memorandum of Agreement, which inter alia, called for the establishment of an independent regional regulator for the industry. Legislative drafting and consultation have commenced, with the plan to have the Independent Regional Regulator operational by mid-2026.

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's Citizenship-By-Investment Programme is also innovative. We have listened to the genuine advocacy of local businessmen and women for their participation in the programme. While there are already a few local developers who have successfully developed and marketed their projects, the years ahead will witness a ramping up of such projects. Mr. Speaker, this Government, in the coming weeks, will pass amended regulations to reduce by 70% all fees that are to be paid by local Grenadian developers with new projects, in any priority economic sector under the CBI Program. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, we will facilitate the mentoring and coaching of our local Grenadian developers with the international developers to help them execute their projects with utmost efficiency. **(Applause)**

Prudent Economic Management

Mr. Speaker, we continue to manage the Grenadian economy with distinction. No

amount of old talk **(applause)** and disinformation will change that fact.

The International Monetary Fund ("the IMF") in a release published on January 24, 2025, commended our Government for the excellent stewardship of the economy. This is the third commendation in a row. **(Applause)** Moreover, they lauded our decisive and strategic handling of Hurricane Beryl. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, other reputable regional and international organisations have expressed similar sentiments. **(Applause)**

This speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, about our ability to lead, not only in times of calm but also in times of crisis. **(Applause)**

Building on our strong record of fiscal discipline, aggressive resource mobilisation, and prudent debt management, we will press ahead with ambitious reforms to maintain economic stability and build resilience towards achieving robust, sustained and inclusive growth.

Modernising Labour Relations

Mr. Speaker, we remain steadfast in our commitment to modernise labour relations to ensure that the needs of both the employers and employees are met.

As promised, we met our commitment to the workers by addressing the Minimum Wage, a matter of zero significance to the former administration.

In 2025, we will continue to modernise labour relations by updating our labour laws, enhancing dialogue with stakeholders, and enhancing the dispute resolution mechanism.

Through these efforts, we aim to foster good labour relations and maintain industrial peace.

Enhancing the Governance of State Bodies

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to make good progress in strengthening the governance and fiscal management of public institutions.

As I speak, 125 directors have completed the Directors' Education **(applause)** and Accreditation Programme of the Corporate Governance Institute of Canada, facilitated by the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange (ECSE).

Further, Mr. Speaker, we have issued a "Governance & Fiscal Management

Handbook" for public sector institutions, which aims to bring about clearer guidance on how they should operate within the legal, fiscal and governance framework provided by various legislative instruments and best practice.

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the legacy of the former administration regarding the oversight of statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises, so I will spare you the details.

National Security, Home Affairs, Information and Disaster Management

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work diligently to maintain Grenada's reputation as one of the safest places in the region and the world, to work and live and as a model of disaster management.

My Government Priorities for 2025 are as follows:

We are committed to reducing crime through targeted initiatives, community partnerships, and leveraging modern technologies for law enforcement. We will invest in advanced crime prevention technologies, expand community policing, and introduce tougher measures to address organised crime and repeat offenders. Legislation will be introduced for the installation of CCTV cameras in public spaces across the country. **(Applause)**

We will remain steadfast in our efforts to enhance the working conditions of the Royal Grenada Police Force and His Majesty's Prisons to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in maintaining law and order. To this end, we have accomplished a significant milestone by relocating the Police Headquarters from Fort George **(applause)** to the Carenage, a long-awaited and welcomed move for many Grenadians.

Added to that, the Grenville Police Station will be relocated to the former MNIB Grenville location very soon. **(Applause)** Going forward, we will be taking proactive steps to improve other police stations, including the Coast Guard Base and the prison system. Additionally, we will strengthen the human resource capacity of both the Police and Prisons in 2025. **(Applause)**

To improve passenger clearance, we commissioned on Thursday, 6th March 2025,

six new kiosks at Maurice Bishop International Airport on Thursday, 6th March 2025. **(Applause)** We will replace physical E/D Cards with an online version and upgrade the Seafarers' ID/Passport and Emergency Travel Documents to meet international standards.

We are committed to enhancing financial security through a Public Sensitisation Programme at the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to educate citizens on preventing scams and securing their finances.

We will introduce an automated system for the application and certification processes for Permanent Residence, Citizenship (including Citizenship-by-Investment), and Alien Land Holding Licenses.

Additionally, we will transition the National Disaster Management Agency (NaDMA) into a statutory entity to improve disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

For the Government Information Service and Government Printery, we will focus on building human resource capacity and upgrading equipment to enhance productivity and broaden service delivery to a wider population.

A combined total allocation of $133.9 million is allocated in 2025 to support our national security, information, and disaster management systems. **(Applause)**

Prioritising Foreign Policy and Trade

Mr. Speaker, as Grenada navigates global challenges and advances its transformation agenda, we remain focused on strengthening external relations and trade.

In 2025, Grenada will enhance diplomatic engagements, promote South-South cooperation, and deepen ties with African and Asia-Pacific nations. Strengthening Caribbean regional integration and advocating for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in global forums will also be central to our efforts.

In the area of trade, the Government will enhance trade and export facilitation by reducing barriers, improving export readiness, and supporting value-added production. Focus will be placed on streamlining processes, leveraging trade agreements, trade promotion, and providing technical assistance, particularly in agriculture and

manufacturing.

An amount of EC$23.5 million has been allocated in the 2025 Budget to support foreign policy and trade.

Economic Reforms

Mr. Speaker, this budget is responsive to the near-term challenges as well as the longer-term developmental needs of our nation.

In this section, I will elaborate on the reform of existing policies to enhance long-term growth and competitiveness and relief measures to reduce the impact of inflation on the population.

Structural Policies

Mr. Speaker, to support our transformative agenda, the following structural reforms will be implemented in 2025:

1. Development and Implementation of a Policy on the Procurement, Maintenance, and Disposal of Government Vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, efficient management of the Government's vehicle fleet is critical to ensuring cost effectiveness, accountability, and operational efficiency in public service delivery. To address longstanding challenges related to vehicle acquisition, maintenance, and disposal, the Government is advancing a comprehensive policy reform. This policy will establish clear guidelines for the procurement, maintenance, and disposal of Government vehicles to improve transparency, reduce costs, and enhance fleet efficiency. The Grenada Transport Commission will drive the development of this policy.

2. Amendment to the Importation Policy on Used Vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our strategy to ease the congestion of traffic on our nation's roads and improve road safety and environmental concerns, we will amend the current policy on the importation of used vehicles. The existing restriction, which prohibits the importation of vehicles 10 years and older, will be revised downwards after consulting widely on this issue. The new policy will take effect no later than June 2025.

Cost of Living Measures

Mr. Speaker, since assuming office, this Government has taken decisive steps to

mitigate the impact of inflation, recognising our heavy reliance on imported goods. Without these interventions, ordinary Grenadians would have faced significantly higher prices, particularly for essential items such as food and fuel.

While global inflation has eased compared to previous years, Mr. Speaker, price pressures persist due to ongoing supply chain disruptions, geopolitical tensions, and climate-related shocks. As a small island developing state, Grenada remains highly vulnerable to external economic conditions, which continue to drive up the cost of living.

That said, Mr. Speaker, this Government remains committed to shielding citizens from the adverse effects of high prices for as long as necessary, particularly for essential goods and services. In 2025, the following cost-of-living relief measures will remain in effect:

1. Extension of VAT Exemptions on Essential Goods **(applause)**

To ease the financial burden on households, Government will extend the VAT exemption on 20 basic food items and essential products, ranging from cooking oils to baby diapers to all female sanitary hygiene products, including sanitary napkins, tampons, and panty liners for an additional year, effective January 1, 2025, with a review scheduled for December 2025. **(Applause)** The full list of items can be found in Appendix Two. The estimated revenue forgone for this measure is $3.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, while we had intended to further protect consumers by placing these items under formal price control for monitoring by the Consumer Affairs Division, this step was not completed in 2024. However, we remain fully committed to implementing this measure in the near term to prevent price gouging and ensure that savings reach consumers.

2. Maintaining the Fixed Price of Cooking Gas

The government will continue to cap the price of a 20-lb gas cylinder at $40, helping to cushion households from fluctuations in global energy prices. The estimated revenue forgone for this measure is $2 million.

3. Reduction in Petrol Tax

To mitigate the impact of high fuel costs, the Government will maintain the reduced Petrol Tax at $3.50 per gallon instead of $5.50 per gallon on duty-paid sales. **(Applause)** This measure alone is expected to result in $26.9 million in foregone revenue.

4. Electricity Subsidy for Low-Consumption Households

To support low-income households, the Government will maintain the $10 monthly electricity subsidy for all residential consumers using up to 99 kWh per month at an estimated cost of $3 million.

The following new cost-of-living relief measure will be introduced:

1. Public Transportation Subsidy

Mr. Speaker, our bus fares, which are regulated by the Government, have not been increased for over a decade. That said, our bus operators, who are faced with high and rising operational costs, are legitimately seeking an increase in bus fares. Recognising the impact of an increase in bus fares on the population, the Government is introducing a Public Transportation Subsidy **(applause)** to support bus operators and maintain affordability for commuters.

Through this initiative, the Government, through the Grenada Transport Commission, will provide a direct subsidy to registered bus operators to help offset the increasing costs of fuel and maintenance. This measure is designed to stabilise operational expenses and, in turn, maintain the current regulated bus fares, preventing any undue financial burden on the travelling public. The annual cost of the subsidy is estimated at $12 million.

Mr. Speaker, in total, this targeted relief package represents an investment of over $47 million, a 76% increase over 2024 in direct support for Grenadian households. **(Applause)** These measures underscore our commitment to protecting the most vulnerable while balancing the need for long-term fiscal sustainability.

As global economic conditions evolve, we will continue to monitor external developments and take proactive steps to safeguard our people from economic shocks.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on our journey through 2024, we stand as a testament

to resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to the people of Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique. Despite the trials of Hurricane Beryl and the excessive rains in November, we did not falter. Instead, we rose to the occasion, delivering on our promises and securing a brighter future for our people. **(Applause)**

Indeed, we have demonstrated that we are a Government at work—promises made, promises kept. **(Applause)** Our nation has witnessed the fulfilment of long-overdue reforms, from long-awaited minimum wage adjustments to the historic implementation of a Contributory Pension Plan. **(Applause)** We have empowered our youth through digital skills training, increased wages for our IMANI workers, and ensured that no child goes hungry in our schools. **(Applause)** Our economic growth has remained strong, investor confidence is unwavering, and our people are finding opportunities to thrive. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, even as we celebrate these achievements, we remain ever mindful that our work is not done. We press forward, knowing that our strength and wisdom come not from ourselves alone, but from Almighty God, for as Philippians 4:13 reminds us: "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**." **(Applause)**

We remain humbled by this responsibility, fully aware that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). **(Applause)** We are called not only to govern but to serve, ensuring that no one is left behind—from our children to our youth to our elderly. **(Applause)**

As we look ahead to the next 25 years, we call on all Grenadians to unite in the spirit of nation-building and collective progress. For, as Proverbs 29:18 states, "**Where there is no vision, the people perish**." Our vision is clear—a resilient, rising Grenada, one that stands firm on the foundations of equity, prosperity, and sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, let us move forward in unity, putting Grenada first in all that we do. Let us build a legacy worthy of future generations, ensuring that what we leave behind is greater than what we inherited.

With renewed energy and unwavering commitment, we reaffirm our pledge to work

tirelessly for you, the people of Grenada, in 2025 under the theme: "**Towards Vision 75: Grenada – Resilient and Rising**."

May God bless Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique.

Let us unite. Let us build. Let us rise!

Acknowledgements

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to thank all our friends and partners who have helped us through our journey.

As you can appreciate, our list of acknowledgements is extremely long. Therefore, a detailed listing can be found in Appendix Three of this Statement.

Permit me, however, to mention just a few.

We cannot thank the creator enough.

Allow me to also reiterate sincere gratitude to the Prime Minister and my other Cabinet Colleagues. We have a great team of men and women who love Grenada and are committed to serving you.

I wish to also thank all those who contributed to the preparation and presentation of the 2025 Budget and accompanying documents, including the staff of the various Ministries and Departments, Statutory Bodies, State-Owned Enterprises, and all other public officers.

Permit me to especially thank the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Advisor, and staff of the Ministry of Finance who have worked tirelessly in the past year in a less-than-ideal working environment.

I must also mention the Attorney General and her staff, the Cabinet Secretary, the Director of the GIS and staff, the Press Secretary, and many others who played various roles in the budget preparation and presentation process.

I wish to record my thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, and the Clerk of Parliament and his staff who have given me full support in facilitating the delivery of my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, finally allow me to reiterate my appreciation to my constituents of St. Patrick East for their support and confidence in my representation in this Honourable House. **(Applause)**

Thank you, and may God continue to bless us all. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister for Finance, for presenting this Statement of Revenue and Expenditure to this Honourable House. Honourable Minister for Finance

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Mr. Speaker, I stand to address the Resolution for the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure, for the year… No. No. That's not it. That's not it. Yes, another Resolution.

WHEREAS it is necessary to provide for the services of the State of Grenada… Sorry. Sorry. Yes.

RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 9(5) OF THE FISCAL RESILIENCE ACT, NO. 11 OF 2023.

WHEREAS section 9(1) of the Fiscal Resilience Act, No. 11 of 2023 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") provides that the Minister may, subject to negative resolution, suspend the public debt…

(The Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford, approached the Clerk's Table to converse with the Clerk privately)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Finance. Please resume your seat. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be adjourned until Monday, 10th March 2025, at 9:00 a.m., in the forenoon. Thank you.

Question proposed.

Adjournment

Hon. Joseph Andall: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, a point of correction. March 10, not 11.

Mr. Speaker: Before me, I am seeing… Thanks. I am seeing 11. Thank you. So let me just take the question again.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned on Friday, 7th March 2025, at 11:59 a.m.

Resumption
Attendance

The Sitting of the House of Representatives resumed on Monday, 10th March 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

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, Information and Communications Technology
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 Lennox John Andrews, MP *(St. Andrew South West)*	-	Minister for Economic Development, Planning and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources
Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP *(Carriacou & Petite Martinique)*	-	Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government
Honourable 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 & 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

House of Representatives Budget Presentation and Debate, 2025
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Friday 7th, Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th, March 2025

Attendance

Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP *(St. Andrew South East)*	-	Leader of His Majesty's Opposition
Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP *(St. George North West)*	-	Member
Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP *(St. Mark)*	-	Deputy Speaker
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP *(St. Andrew North East)*	-	Member
Honourable Peter David, MP *(Town of St. George)*	-	Member

Mr. Speaker: Let's pray.

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Mr. Speaker: This Parliament now convenes. Good morning to everyone. Last Friday, we sat here and had the Presentation of Revenue and Expenditure for the period 2025, presented by the Minister for Finance, the Honourable Dennis Cornwall. Today, we will have the Budget Presentations from other Members of Parliament, beginning with the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. I now invite the Honourable Leader of His Majesty's Opposition to make her contribution.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a profound sense of duty and responsibility to deliver my Maiden response to the 2025 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in my capacity as Leader of His Majesty's Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I do not just see this as an opportunity to analyse figures presented by the Government, but I see this as an opportunity to advocate on behalf of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

Mr. Speaker, although I reserve my acknowledgements for the end of my presentation, it would be remiss of me not to thank God for his grace and his mercies that have kept me. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today drawing strength from the words of the psalmist David in Psalms 121, when he said, "I will lift my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which make heaven and earth. The Lord shall preserve my going out and my coming in, from this time forth and even forever more." Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is with this faith in God that I embrace this opportunity entrusted to me to serve as Leader of His Majesty's Opposition.

I am also grateful, Mr. Speaker, to the father of this House, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, who has dedicated 40 years of distinguished service within the parliamentary walls. **(Applause)** Demonstrating, Mr. Speaker, an unwavering commitment to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

To my esteemed colleagues, the Members from St. Mark and St. Andrew North East, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the confidence you have placed in me and for your unwavering support on this journey. Your dedicated service and selflessness are sources of motivation for countless women and girls across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and I say, across the world.

As we conclude and as the world concludes the celebration of International Women's Day, I emphasise the impact that they have on the world. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, under the New National Party's Administration, Grenada gained international recognition, ranking as high as sixth in the world, for women's representation **(applause)** in Parliament. Mr. Speaker, this is an achievement that is unmatched in the region, except for Cuba, which ranked second.

Mr. Speaker, after the 2022 general elections, Grenada fell to 64th in the world. I therefore call, Mr. Speaker, this morning for renewed efforts to advance gender equality **(applause)** and to strengthen women's participation in political representation in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as we turn our attention to the 2025 Budget, which is before us today, I dare say it is a troubling picture. Mr. Speaker, never mind the nice words, and all that

has been said in the presentation last Friday, this budget, this budget is a narrative that has been woven with threads of incompetence, mismanagement and self-interest. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this budget, which raises significant concerns about the stewardship of this country, must be dissected properly. Mr. Speaker, the mere fact that we are debating the 2025 budget, almost at the end of the first quarter of 2025, is in itself a reflection of the incompetence I spoke about. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I therefore want to register our very strong opposition to this government's unjustifiable delay in presenting this national budget, which should have been before this House, traditionally, in December 2024. Mr. Speaker, this is not a political issue. It is a matter of governance. It is a matter of efficiency. It's a matter of national stability.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of Hurricane Beryl in 2024 was cited as the main reason for the delay in presenting this budget. Poor Beryl. Poor Beryl. Mr. Speaker, let us remember that the destruction of Hurricane Beryl, as the Minister himself said, amounted to 16.5% of GDP, the damage done. We were fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that all of our major ports and government institutions remained intact.

Furthermore, the government was not reliant on external aid to initiate recovery efforts. Let us remember, Mr. Speaker, 14 days, only 14 days after the passage of Hurricane Beryl, Mr. Speaker, this government received a payout of $118 million from the CCRIF Fund to start the recovery efforts, Mr. Speaker.

Might I remind us, a facility initiated by the New National Party **(applause)** administration. But, Mr. Speaker, on the subject of the CCRIF payout, can you believe that after collecting $118 million, the Minister for Finance, Mr. Speaker, had the audacity to attack the previous government **(applause)**, falsely claiming that we decided to discontinue that facility.

Mr. Speaker, instead of fabricating accusations, shouldn't the government be acknowledging the fact that they directly benefited from the very decisions that they now seek to discredit? Mr. Speaker, the $118 million they received after the passage of this

hurricane would not have been possible had it not been for the vision, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** and the actions of the New National Party's administration.

Mr. Speaker, every time this government speak about CCRIF, they should be saying, thank you, NNP. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, as my grandmother would have said, ungratefulness is worse than "obeah". Mr. Speaker, how can we even begin to compare Hurricane Beryl's destruction and recovery with that of Hurricane Ivan?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance, and I excuse him. He lived out of Grenada during the passage of Hurricane Ivan, obviously he would have missed the fact that Grenada sustained damages, not 16.5% of GDP, 200% **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker. It is, therefore, lawless or almost lawless, in my opinion, to compare 16.5% with 200%.

Mr. Speaker, let us just get serious for a moment. Mr. Speaker, given the immense scale of damages caused by Hurricane Ivan, the delay in presenting the budget was absolutely justified. The government had to secure international aid to start the recovery process. We had to reassess national priorities and finalise the national budget. There was no $118 million payout 14 days after. Mr. Speaker, in fact, there was no CCRIF at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the treasury was not pregnant at that time either. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, and we did not have a CBI Programme, so we did not have $1 billion in CBI revenue. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I remain uncomfortable, and it remains unacceptable the lame reason that has been advanced for the late, delayed presentation of the 2025 Budget.

Mr. Speaker, even with the extent of the damage caused by Ivan, the NNP administration, in a shorter time, was able to bring a budget to this House. But notwithstanding this today, Mr. Speaker, as we closely examine the allocations and priorities outlined in this budget, we must confront the harsh reality of missed opportunities, squandered potential, and overshadowed and narrowed interests.

Mr. Speaker, the figures presented do not merely represent cold numbers. They embody decisions that affect every aspect of our lives. From education and healthcare to infrastructure and economic sustainability, it is our duty, Mr. Speaker, to scrutinise

these decisions rigorously and to illuminate the instances where short-sightedness and personal interest have prevailed over the common good **(applause)** and the common man.

Mr. Speaker, the tale of the numbers within the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure starkly contrast with the very theme of a Grenada that is rising through prioritising investments in economic growth, youth development and healthcare, as advanced by this government.

Economic Governance

Mr. Speaker, this budget is being introduced at a pivotal moment, when we are most confronted, and we must confront, Mr. Speaker, the unyielding realities of our global landscape. We just have to turn on our televisions and understand what faces us. Mr. Speaker, the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook for 2025 anticipate a troubling contraction in global growth of 3.3%, which falls below the 20-year average of 3.7%.

Mr. Speaker, you would not have heard this on Friday, but in Grenada, we have witnessed a sharp decline in our growth rate since this government took office, dropping from 6.4% in 2022 to a projected 3.9% in 2025, according to the IMF. You know, we quote the IMF conveniently. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the current posture of the United States regarding trade, investment and migration poses a significant threat to our revenue from the CBI Programme. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it threatens to further escalate the cost of living for citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this very alarming situation demands bold, expansionary fiscal policies and strategies that would effectively channel funds into sectors essential for invigorating economic activities in Grenada. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we must heavily rely on capital projects. **(Applause)** Not recurrent expenses, capital projects. What was presented on Friday, Mr. Speaker, definitely, absolutely, cannot achieve this.

Mr. Speaker, this government, upon taking the reins of power in 2022, inherited a pregnant treasury, boasting of over 500 million in reserves and a primary balance surplus of 84.5 million or 3.6% of GDP. Mr. Speaker, over the past two and a half years, this

administration has proudly proclaimed revenues from passport sales exceeding $1 billion, achieving, gloatingly, the highest passport revenue in any two years in Grenada's history.

Mr. Speaker, the amount generated in CBI and CBI revenues over this period, guess what? It is more than what was generated in the lifetime of this programme. Yet, Mr. Speaker, almost three years later, not one single new investment project **(applause)** to show for the over $1 billion generated from CBI.

Mr. Speaker, one would naturally assume that, given the very solid fiscal foundation that this Government inherited, and the substantial revenue derived from the sale of passports, financial constraints should not be an issue right now. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, you would expect that the capital investments that are required for this period to achieve the very objective of this budget can be done without any financial or fiscal challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I'm getting to a very uncomfortable feeling that by the very action of this administration, we are being forced back to a position and a point in our previous history, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)** The previous NDC Administration, when there was selling Grenadian assets to finance recurrent expenditure **(applause)** and to pay salaries.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us scrutinise. You see, it's not just about what the minister said, because you see there's something that's more important than what he just said. It is what is in the budget document, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And it's not even just what's in the budget document, Mr. Speaker, it's the behaviour of the administration, the posture of the administration. Put that together with the figures and what was presented, and you get the true picture. Don't just listen to what he said.

So let us scrutinise the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure, to assess the harsh economic reality we currently face as a nation. Mr. Speaker, the Government projects total revenue of approximately $1.265 billion against a staggering total expenditure of $1.602 billion, resulting, Mr. Speaker, in a deficit of $337 million. Mr. Speaker, where are we heading **(applause)** with this deficit, Mr. Speaker? We have moved from previous surpluses to a daunting deficit of $337 million. And it really doesn't matter, Mr. Speaker,

how the PR representatives of this government explain a deficit. A deficit is what it is, a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, this deficit … and he didn't say that either. This deficit does not include debt, which, if it is added, Mr. Speaker, will take us to over $776 million. He never said that. So, who's paying the debt? Who's paying the interest on the debt, Mr. Speaker? As a matter of fact, you know we spoke about suspending debt payments...

Well, Mr. Speaker, you see, there are children here and they need to understand. Suspending debt payment doesn't mean that all our debts are suspended? This is why, Mr. Speaker, if you check the document, the said government made an allocation for the payment of debt in 2026. So, Mr. Speaker, I am therefore not surprised that the government has brought a Loan Appropriation Bill before this House, not for 50 million, if you want to be, you know, nice and say well after you take off what the Minister said, they can draw down and you're left with a 50 million deficit still.

Mr. Speaker, they bought an Appropriation Bill before this House for $825 million. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, it's either you have, let me rephrase that. Mr. Speaker, you have to be, not serious, I don't want to say, you might have a mental problem. You have to be not serious to know your situation and come here with a Loan Appropriation Bill for $50 million. It is because you know your situation that you came with a Loan Appropriation Bill for $825 million. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this situation is therefore unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, spending above your means is a dangerous place to be. **(Applause)** We don't need an economist to tell us that. Mr. Speaker, the drone shows that is why I say it's just the numbers, you have to add the behaviour to the numbers. So, Mr. Speaker, the drone shows, the fireworks, the galas, the travelling with large delegation continues to extend, to the extent, Mr. Speaker, that this government is budgeting almost 100% more for international travels in 2025 **(applause)** than in 2024.

Mr. Speaker, this tells me that there is a lack of awareness of the seriousness of this situation and the situation facing this country. But maybe, it can be an indication that

the Government just don't care. It has to be either an unawareness or a just don't care" attitude of this government. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I say "God help us."

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister for Finance attempted to mislead the general public into believing that the government is financially capable of funding the budget from government deposits, and that a loan is not necessary. Mr. Speaker, permit me, permit me… you know, Mr. Speaker, if everything was so hunky dory, we have enough money, then why are we coming with a Loan Appropriation Bill for that amount? And, Mr. Speaker, why did we leave out the $700 million plus, and did make no reference, Mr. Speaker, to that figure?

It says, the Loan Appropriation Bill, "An Act to authorise the Minister for Finance, so that's what we did in this House, we authorised, we gave permission to borrow from various sources, the amount of $825 million. And listen to what the Bill before this House says, it didn't say for if needed, it says to finance the 2025 Budget and the New Hospital Project.

So it means somebody would have calculated, Mr. Speaker, what is needed, what is necessary to come to this conclusion. Because, as I said, it could have been $50 million. It could have been $10 million, it could have been $100 million, or $825 million.

Mr. Speaker, this loan represents 51.5 % of the total expenditure. It means that over half, Mr. Speaker, of our budgeted expenses, including day-to-day operational costs, could be financed through loans. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance may be reluctant to tell us, but it is akin to taking out a loan to pay your utility bills, your water bills at home. The Hansard would therefore record this as the largest Loan Appropriation Bill in Grenada's history.

Mr. Speaker, when the New National Party administration exited office in 2022, the national debt stood at $2.1 billion. Since then, Mr. Speaker, between 2023 and 2024 alone, the government has already incurred an additional $132.2 million in debt. With this current trajectory, Mr. Speaker, in less than three years, this Government could, with the single stroke of a pen, drive our national debt to approximately $3 billion, a staggering 43% increase in just about half of a single term in Government.

Mr. Speaker, this raises profound concerns about the future of our economy. It raises concern, Mr. Speaker, about the future economic stability of our country. So, Mr. Speaker, the government is seeking an approval to borrow $825 million, more than half of our total budgeted expenses, reflect a staggering lack of fiscal responsibility, to put simply. This is not just borrowing, Mr. Speaker, it is an invitation to financial instability that will burden citizens for generations to come.

These children here, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** would have to bear the brunt. Some may argue, Mr. Speaker, that debt is necessary for investment. We've heard them. It is necessary for investment in vital capital projects, and affordability should guide our decision. Absolutely. I acknowledge this perspective, Mr. Speaker, as it supports my suggestion of an expansionary policy stance at this time. We need that.

However, in this instance, Mr. Speaker, the funds are not being earmarked for just capital projects. They are also being directed towards financing the operation of the state, particularly, Mr. Speaker, there would be used in areas of outsourcing of services, for advisors, security services, travel expenses and the like, despite, unfortunately, an inherited surplus of millions.

Mr. Speaker, in what appears to be another glaring attempt to mislead the nation, the budget has an increased expenditure of $281.6 million. With only a mere 76.9 million or 27% being allocated for Capital projects, while 207.5 million or 73% is associated with an increase in recurrent expenditure. Mr. Speaker, this glaring imbalance exposes a fundamental misallocation of resources, it clearly illustrates, Mr. Speaker, the mismanagement and incompetence that defines this administration's approach to fiscal governance, but it also explains their posture and behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the funds that should be earmarked for critical capital projects, these investments, Mr. Speaker, those investments which are essential for our nation's growth and development, are indeed and instead of that, Mr. Speaker, they are squandered and will be used for financing day-to-day operations of the state. The Government is yet to demonstrate, Mr. Speaker, to this nation, from the numbers, not from the fancy speech

that we heard on Friday, from the numbers, that this budget is a so-called prioritisation of economic growth and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no serious growth and job creation when more will be spent on recurrent expenditure. **(Applause)** That's just a fact. Didn't you find it strange? Mr. Speaker, the Budget Presentation fails to list any new projects for 2025, if ever, maybe one or two, and announce how many new jobs will be created. Mr. Speaker, will be created, Mr. Speaker, outside of this administration, I don't remember listening to a budget that doesn't speak about job creation and how many jobs would be created. The Government cannot be serious about economic growth and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, in just a short time in office, this administration has burdened future generations with an inflation of bureaucracy filled with high-paying jobs for the elite. **(Applause)** While essential services such as education, healthcare and public infrastructure remain woefully neglected, this is not merely a failure of budgeting. This is a failure of leadership.

Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** by neglecting the fundamental investment that drives progress, this government is ensuring that future generations will inherit not just a mountain of death but also a diminished economic landscape stifled by bureaucratic excess that prioritises the few over many.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we will have limited fiscal flexibility to response any major economic shock, Mr. Speaker, to evaluate the government's specific priorities we must look closer at the expenditure drivers and the extent to which social issues have been prioritized for spending in this budget so this end I therefore turn my attention to healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, healthcare is not just a basic human right. It is the function of a resilient nation, I'm sure you've heard that before, yet. Mr. Speaker, our healthcare system remains in crisis after almost three years. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Health admitted publicly that healthcare has not improved under this administration. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, Government admitted that nothing has improved since the last election.

Mr. Speaker, Grenadians everywhere are agreeing that healthcare has gotten

worse under this administration. **(Applause)** What has happened, Mr. Speaker, to the transformation agenda that was supposed to be rolled out immediately from January 2023? Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister projects his plan for Grenada as the health capital of the Caribbean. Mr. Speaker, let me see, this vision is definitely not manifested in the government's action.

Mr. Speaker, 2024 in the 2024 Budget, $122.89 million was allocated for healthcare, an important sector. Mr. Speaker, $24 million remained unspent. Interestingly. Mr. Speaker, the areas where allocation remains unspent were critical to the people, namely medical supplies and materials, medical equipment, community health services and funds for upgrading and refurbishing health facilities.

Mr. Speaker, could you believe that the Government has underspent in those areas? Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, our people are left to suffer. Medication is not affordable, and essential supplies are no longer available at many Government facilities, while $24 million allocated remains unspent. Mr. Speaker, the reverse holds true for the jet-setting Prime Minister's Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Ministry overspent not by $50,000, not by $100,000, but by $2.1 million **(applause)** for international travel, hosting, and entertainment far exceeding what was budgeted. Mr. Speaker, the question is this: a lack of prioritisation, is it incompetence, is it mismanagement?

Mr. Speaker, what is this over $2 million overspent on international travel, hosting and entertainment? Mr. Speaker, while Ministers of Government and the political appointees travelled the globe in first class, exceeding budgetary allocations. Mr. Speaker, the family of two-year-old Kelvin, who has been lying in the hospital for almost two months **(applause)**, waiting for his family to raise the funds to take him overseas for medical attention, don't choke.

Where is the empathy for this child? Where is the empathy for Grenadians? Mr. Speaker, where is the Government's intervention? The rising cost of medication only deepens the problem, with many unable to afford necessary quantities of medication, forcing them against doctors' orders to adjust their schedule, just to make do with over $2

million over the budget in one ministry, Mr. Speaker, international travel, and hosting entertainment.

Mr. Speaker, this is more reason why we need National Health Insurance after almost two or three years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, NHI is geared at making healthcare more affordable and accessible to people. The fact that we are engaging in an elusive statutorisation process where healthcare services are likely to be more costly and less accessible to our people is a major concern, particularly, Mr. Speaker, for those among us who are less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, with the NHI contractor terminated, we need a clear road map for this necessary facility. The Minister for Finance said almost nothing, except to tell us that the contract has been cancelled. Mr. Speaker, under the NNP Administration, significant work was facilitated by the contractor **(applause)**, the Ministry of Health and other organisations such as the University of the West Indies. And so, Mr. Speaker, the NDC inherited, if nothing else, an excellent platform that they could have moved speedily on towards the implementation of NHI. And hear what, Mr. Speaker, even if you inherited nothing, three years **(applause)** must have been enough time to begin to implement NHI in Grenada.

You said, you know how to do it, and you come to do it, get it done. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are not far from where we were almost three years ago, so today we have more questions than answers about this. Is there a new contractor? Was the contract signed when NHI will be out of the pipeline? These are questions, Mr. Speaker, that we have.

Mr. Speaker, how can we expect any real improvement in healthcare when the capital allocation in this budget increased by $36 million? Great, but $31.5 million is allocated to the construction of a new hospital? You know, people clapped. They clapped **(applause)** that the statutorisation and transition projects in healthcare are all fitted in under this $31.5 million.

Mr. Speaker, this money is likely to be used in soft costs for consultants and professional associates of the current administration, while at the same time, Mr.

Speaker, the 2025 budget for medical supplies, listen this, the budget for medical supplies, including medication to be used in the hospital, has been cut by $10 million. **(Applause)** How can we be serious, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the Government has refused to add not one medical item to the list of VAT exemptions. One just has to check the consumer price index. Look at it. The cost of medication and food has been increasing consistently. I guess it is easier, Mr. Speaker, to increase the budget for international travel and large delegations than it is to add a medical item.

I know, maybe to the list of VAT exemptions, Mr. Speaker, the notion that we are building a new hospital. Mr. Speaker, that a building would fix our healthcare problem highlights the cosmetic and superficial thinking of this very administration. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, healthcare isn't about new buildings. It is about improved services, better staffing, consistent access to medication, and improving affordability and accessibility. You could do that anywhere. We need a strengthened and primary healthcare service now. That is what we need right now to improve existing medical stations and enhance preventative healthcare services.

What will the construction of a new hospital mean for the average Grenadian in 2025? I wish somebody could answer that. What would it mean this year? People will die this year, what would it mean this year? Mr. Speaker, we are not talking. Mr. Speaker, proper healthcare cannot wait for a new hospital. When would construction even start? **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance gave us a hint that's what we got on Friday, a hint that we should expect a groundbreaking ceremony to happen sometime in June 2026. And if we judge by the current rates at which projects are moving in the pipeline, then we can guess accurately, Mr. Speaker, that construction will not happen under the current administration. Mr. Speaker, he gave no date for the start, no date for the completion of this new hospital, only 3D drawings, only videos, and AI.

Only the date for the groundbreaking ceremony was afforded to us in this house on Friday. Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to empathise with people who cannot buy medication,

who cannot pay for a doctor's visit, who wish they had had the NHI available. Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for someone to look forward to the groundbreaking in 2026 when they might have been waiting for a date for surgery for one year now. What does the groundbreaking in 2026 mean to them now? Mr. Speaker, this is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, for someone to look forward to the groundbreaking ceremony for the new hospital in 2026 when they cannot get basic medication now in the government pharmacy. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, 2026, this is great if you ask me, do I support a new hospital? Yes, I do, but Mr. Speaker, 2026 is when this new hospital is expected to have a groundbreaking. I am more concerned about the people I represent from Café, Crochu, Telescope, and Marquis, who cannot purchase medication now and are having difficulty getting an appointment in the hospital. I'm concerned about now to 2026. Let's talk about that a little more.

Mr. Speaker, these persons cannot be excited about the groundbreaking in 2026 when they cannot afford to buy a month's supply of high blood pressure medication or baby aspirin for their health condition. It is a great idea. Let us get it done, but priority number one must be to fix the current system.

Mr. Speaker, after promising all contract workers permanent employment after twelve months of serving in office. Mr. Speaker, today, staffing remains a major issue in the health sector in 2023. Mr. Speaker, the governance approach was to give all nurses a monthly text on honorarium, quite different to what they did for themselves. While this will continue in 2025, we noticed that $7.1 million was cut in compensation for healthcare workers. Mr. Speaker, who are these healthcare workers that would be affected?

Mr. Speaker, we must address healthcare workers' retention and morale before we continue to gallivant about the hospital groundbreaking, which will take place in 2026. All these need to be urgently addressed, Mr. Speaker, before we celebrate the groundbreaking. Mr. Speaker, will this be another election gimmick based on utterances from members of the inner circle? This was an election promise to be completed in this

term, and from the pronouncements made on Friday, Mr. Speaker, I consider this yet another broken promise of this administration.

Mr. Speaker, this Government promised to transform the healthcare system after three years; we should be at a turning point. An opportunity to fix the systemic issues plaguing healthcare, yet this budget fails to adequately invest in the areas that would enable our healthcare system to function effectively. We're cutting where there is a necessity?

Mr. Speaker, although the Government has admitted that healthcare is not better today than it was in 2022, I suspect. Mr. Speaker, I suspect the rebuttal today will be the great mantra, "NNP has been there for 23 years". That's the way leaders respond when they fail to deliver. **(Applause)** If this Government were performing, they would not even mention the New National Party, but it is the escape route that leaders use when they fail to deliver. They find a scapegoat; NNP, Beryl, anything, anyone, blame somebody.

Mr. Speaker, listen carefully over the coming days, and prove me wrong, Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to ignore the reality that our healthcare sector is in crisis. It's worse than it was in 2022, and that almost three years is enough time to show some turnaround in this sector.

We are being reasonable and honest. You cannot be saying that almost three years later, it is worse. There is a need. Mr. Speaker, therefore, for urgent action and this budget must move beyond rhetoric's and deliver real solution to the challenges that we face in healthcare that's what you promise in verse where it matters prioritise your spending, settle down reduce race, reduce travels and deliver with empathy for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we are yet to see the prioritisation of youth development beyond the cheap rhetoric of youth development. Where are the opportunities? Mr. Speaker, our young people are not short of ambition, talent and drive. What they lack are real opportunities. When we examine the youth development programme in this budget, we will see that. Mr. Speaker, what I see is a lack of significant programmes beyond what was inherited from the NNP Administration to truly uplift and empower our young people.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

You see, you came to make things better. You came to fix what NNP couldn't fix. You came to swing a magic wand to get things through the pipeline. Mr. Speaker, this Government is touted as a youthful Government. You would think you would stand for youth, yet this budget does not reflect the reality that young people face on a daily basis, well, the bold transformative initiatives that will genuinely equip young people with the skills and the support that they need to thrive.

The IMANI Programme, Mr. Speaker, was chastised for years by this administration. A cut of $8 million was recorded in this budget. $8 million after three years. Mr. Speaker, for almost three years, not a single new person has been added to this programme. Almost three years later, Mr. Speaker, no new programme, no serious restructuring of that inherited programme. What is the same, Mr. Speaker? What has happened to the promise made to IMANIs, "We will make you permanent as soon as we get into office"? Mr. Speaker, that is what we are interested in instead. Mr. Speaker, many of them were sent home, and now there is an $8 million cut in this programme.

Under the New National Party Administration, there was a clear pathway and a policy position as it relates to the permanent employment of IMANI Trainees. Mr. Speaker, while the Government congratulated itself on the two new initiatives, Elevate Her and the Enterprise-Based Training Programme, Mr. Speaker, note that the budgeted amount is $2 million and $1 million, respectively. They fail to acknowledge that these programmes are funded under the GRIP Programme and the NNP initiative.

Mr. Speaker, only accounting for two and one, $3 million, while at the same time you are introducing three, but you are butchering $8 million off one programme that you inherited. Are we really serious? Mr. Speaker, what is the investment? Mr. Speaker, we have thousands of young Grenadians who are unemployed and underemployed. What about those at risk, those rural areas, those struggling with poverty and those left behind by a system that is supposed to support them?

Mr. Speaker, the Government's antique in 2025 are not surprising. Data from the programmes for youth development in 2024, as presented, highlights serious concerns and competence. Less than 50% of the M-Power Programme fund in 2024 was spent.

(Applause) How can we claim to care about at-risk young men when the very programme meant to uplift them remains underfunded and underutilised in 2024? **(Applause)** What justification can be given for failing to invest in our youth while millions are spent on travelling internationally, hosting parties, and entertainment? Mr. Speaker, no justification. As a matter of fact, that budget, Mr. Speaker, I reference there, $3 million is not very far down the road from the added $2 million spent by The Prime Minister's Office in overseas travel, hosting and entertainment. We cannot be serious, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Members of this Administration attacked the M-Power Programme. They promise a better programme. Today, the same NNP Programme was re-launched. Even the same name. No major changes were made after the programme was suspended for a long time. That was the most noticeable thing. The long suspension of this programme. So many young men who were expecting a so-called transformational project are left disappointed, and I say today, less progress is being made in this programme than was made in 2022. **(Applause)**

Beyond the employment programmes, where the focus is on education, mentorship and rehabilitation? We have students dropping out due to a lack of support, a rise in gambling, and disruptive behaviours in institutions, and young people are disengaging from education and training. The lack of foresight in policy implementation has created major barriers rather than opportunities.

If we are serious, Mr. Speaker, about building a resilient Grenada as the theme suggest, we must be serious, more serious, far more serious about investing in our young people, not just words, but with meaningful actions. Put your money where your mouth is. **(Applause)** You can't be adding three and cutting out eight. Something is wrong with that. Where is your math?

Mr. Speaker, these young people deserve better. They deserve the promises that were made. "Get rid of NNP, we're coming to make life better in the stroke of a pen." "With the stroke of a pen, within 12 months." They deserve a Government that recognises their struggles and is willing to act.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

Mr. Speaker, Education. Education is the backdrop and bedrock upon which any resilient nation is built. Yet, the education sector already faces systemic challenges that have only worsened. Education is not just an expense. It is an investment in human capital, economic growth and social development. That is why, Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, I appeal to the government to review the free tuition for all. Mr. Speaker, the free tuition for all policy and consider, this was my advice, who is me, to me to advise. I said consider providing assistance for transportation and other necessities so that students who need additional support could truly benefit from the free tuition for all policy. I wasn't condemning the free tuition for all, I said let us provide more support so that people can take more advantage of this programme, a greater advantage.

Mr. Speaker, when the NNP Administration implemented free tuition for needy students, we recognised that financial barriers went beyond tuition. We ensure that students who need extra help with transportation, uniform, tools and resources receive it, but instead of listening and responding with care, this Government brushed aside the realities of struggling families and defended its policy without question.

Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, interestingly, there's a 50% cut in this programme in 2025. Mr. Speaker, is this about helping people or is this about ticking off a box to say, yes, we implemented free tuition? Who's benefitting? Why are we cutting a programme like this by 50%? Who's fooling whom, Mr. Speaker?

Today, despite free tuition and not just free tuition, I spoke about it too, the raising or the increase in the compulsory school age. In spite of that, we say you must continue school until you are 18. We say you're getting free tuition, go to school, man. You would have expected, Mr. Speaker, that TAMCC would not be able to accommodate the upsurge in applicants and students attending. Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, despite free tuition and an increase in the compulsory school age, enrolment at TAMCC has dropped, and tuition rates have surged. Check it.

This is confirmed by the Government numbers for 2024, also. Only 26% of the 2024 Budget for free tuition was spent, which tells something. Parents simply cannot afford the hidden cost, transportation, meals and supplies. What has been the

Government's response? They don't care. We already ticked that box.

Social Development, a Government devoid of empathy. Mr. Speaker, Social Development should be the heartbeat of any responsible Government. I said before, don't waste time talking about us. You came to do it better. You came to fix all the things we couldn't fix. Go right ahead, you have full support. Ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are protected and uplifted. However, this Administration has demonstrated a disturbing lack of empathy for the struggles of the ordinary Grenadians.

Their failure to deliver on critical housing and social welfare programmes has left thousands in hardship. Housing is not a luxury. It is a basic human need. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the current situation, particularly for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, is indeed alarming. Mr. Speaker, the Government's handling of housing projects has been nothing short of disgraceful. Nothing short of disgraceful.

In a strange turn of events, 50 to 100 homes were supposed to be handed over to victims of Hurricane Beryl by December 2024. I'm going with the numbers. Mr. Speaker, so when I said this was graceful, that is. However, what is disgraceful, Mr. Speaker, is that not one built-back house was delivered in December 2024. Nine months, Mr. Speaker, after families remain under tents enduring unbearable conditions while the Government moves at a snail's pace, not at all bothered, travelling the globe, two plus million dollars, two point something million dollars overspent. So I'm not talking about what was budgeted, overspent, international travel, hosting and entertainment in one Ministry. Mr. Speaker, look at what has happened. No one, Mr. Speaker, should boast about handing over three houses. Come and get real. No one should boast about handing over three houses out of 100 Build Back Better Houses. No one. **(Applause)** It is disgraceful, Mr. Speaker.

The intervention of the hands that saved from Trinidad was a blessing. Providing shelter to some 27 families in Carriacou, even though not one house was delivered to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique under the Build-Back Better Houses, Carriacou, Petite Martinique and northern and southern parts of Grenada. The Government, at the same time, all that being the case, has recorded an expenditure,

interestingly, of over $26 million for the rebuilding of houses in 2024. Where? What do we have to show?

You know, the Minister for Finance said the former Minister was head of ICT in the region. What so we have to show? So, what do we have to show for the $26 million that was spent on housing in 2024? **(Applause)** Where did that money go?

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the incentives given on furnishing have come to an end at a time when most people are still without shelter, and the cost of furnishing has increased according to the Government's own consumer price index numbers. How can any caring Government, Mr. Speaker, be armed with such information and cease the concession to the people in a time like this?

Mr. Speaker, you know the Government also promised to build 500. That is why I said it's a housing thing; it's painfully disgraceful. Five hundred Grenadian-style homes every year. Almost three years, Mr. Speaker, later, when we should have a thousand five hundred houses completed, not one, not one **(applause)** has been completed. **(Applause)** Meanwhile, hundreds of empty Chinese-built homes stand as a painful reminder of the broken promises and the misplaced priorities of this Government. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this budget offers little hope as it relates to housing.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, 1500 Grenadian-style houses, the government boast, full credit, 14 houses under construction. You know, I've never expressed this before, but I'll express it now. I have a strong feeling that one reason for this delayed budget is to give the Government time to start a few projects like these, which we have started. Who is fooling whom, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the Chinese build apartments that are owned by the Government and people of China for low-income families. Yet, Mr. Speaker, many of these units remain unoccupied. Who are the real beneficiaries? Mr. Speaker, the report suggests that most of the units were sold. The official report presents that most of the unit was sold. Mr. Speaker, the question, therefore, is to whom are there Grenadians in need? Well, if they were, then they would be occupied now. Are there first-time owners, or has this Government commercialised a humanitarian project, shutting out the very people that it

was meant to help? Is the distribution based on who you voted for? Where is the empathy, Mr. Speaker? Where is the heart for the people?

Mr. Speaker, the SEED Programme is supposed to be a safety net programme for the most vulnerable. Yet many qualified individuals are being denied assistance not because they don't meet the criteria, Mr. Speaker, but because of political discrimination. Mr. Speaker, my constituency, others have reported the same experience, why some officers acted with such hostility towards those who are perceived to be supporters of NNP applying for this programme.

But. Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Prime Minister at the recent convention rally saying, and I quote, "We need to know all of us belong to the National Democratic Congress, so we can just fight for what we will get. When you know or when you don't know who your people are, it is sometimes the reason the other side is getting it. It is because we are not saying who the real NDC people are".

Mr. Speaker, thank you. It is much clearer now why so many people are denied the support they genuinely need. It is the philosophy of this Administration. Mr. Speaker, we need a Grenada for all; a Grenada where people can strive regardless of their political affiliation, **(applause)** regardless of religion, regardless of social class. Mr. Speaker, let us move forward together, not backwards.

Mr. Speaker, beneficiaries of any Government programme should be selected based on need, not political affiliation or party loyalty. What are we encouraging?

Mr. Speaker: Just hold, Honourable. I said it on Friday, and I will say it again. Please have your phone turned off or have it on vibrate. You should not disturb the speaker on the floor. Please proceed.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Okay. So, may I try to get my train of thought back? Mr. Speaker, as I said, beneficiaries of any Government programme should be selected on need, not political affiliation, not party loyalty. Mr. Speaker, the question must be asked: Should a struggling mother, an unemployed father or an elderly citizen have to pledge

allegiance to a political party just to receive basic assistance? Mr. Speaker, that is what the current Administration said. That was the promise to the people. Vote for us. It doesn't matter whether you're an NNP or an NDC; you will benefit. This is not just unfair. Mr. Speaker, it is heartless, in my opinion.

Agriculture and Food Security. A Government that actually doesn't care about farmers, fishermen and others. Mr. Speaker, and I actually hate the fact that I have to speak to this when the Minister for Agriculture is from the food basket of Grenada, is from St. Andrew, my brother, but I have to speak, Mr. Speaker, on what the budget documents said, not to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, the current administration has inflicted what I consider to be the greatest blow to the agricultural and food production sector in the shortest period in this country's history. Prepare to hear maybe today about the chickens and the goats that were distributed, but Mr. Speaker… **(Applause)** We are prepared to hear about that, no problem. We all anticipate it, whether the chickens are dead or alive, let's prepare to hear it today.

Mr. Speaker, but I am not really interested in the chickens and the goats. Mr. Speaker, I am more interested in hearing about the sustainability of the agricultural sector and the real strategies to deal with the food security crisis that is facing this country. **(Applause)** What is the plan to revive the rural economy through agriculture? What is the plan that you had to expand the brain of the ministry by pulling in technical support and advice from individuals who are knowledgeable, experienced and passionate about agriculture? So many of them are outside. So many of them are outside and do not have an opportunity to use their skills and their resources.

Mr. Speaker, let us go back to the Minister for Finance's 2024 Budget Presentation when he spoke so eloquently. I have a little empathy for him. **(Laughter)** He did speak eloquently, Mr. Speaker, on the Food Security Enhancement Project. Yes. Let's redefine that word for today. Hear what the Minister said in 2024. He said, "This $27 million, World Bank-supported project, will provide direct support to farmers and fisherfolk, thereby reducing reliance on food imports and cutting food costs. Key components

include increasing production supports for crops, livestock, poultry and fisheries, providing equipment and training, promoting sustainable agriculture practices, establishing central storage centres and improving farm road access. An amount of $9 million has been allocated for this project".

Now this was in 2024, and that is why I say be careful with the words that are spoken in those speeches, because they do not go very much further than this room. Mr. Speaker, we have to be so careful when we listen to these speeches about what we choose to believe. Mr. Speaker, we should filter what we believe.

To the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the Central Statistics Office's database shows that Grenada's food exports in 2024 fell, in value, by 37% over 2023. This, in part, Mr. Speaker, was a result of reduced domestic production and, to a lesser extent, lower export prices for just a few commodities. So what was done in 2024 was supposed to increase production, so let's see what happens.

Mr. Speaker, we are yet to see the central storage centres and farmers themselves have reported that not one mile of farm road has been improved, while they experience mountain incidents of predial larceny. They are saying that they cannot see the farm roads. Farmers, fishermen, and vendors are frustrated, and they are still awaiting much-needed support. There's an urgent need for strategic action, not activities, not distribution of things and photo-ops, real strategic direction and action in the Ministry of Agriculture and the leadership of this country must take responsibility for setting the tone as it relates to agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the Medium Term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report submitted before this House, along with the 2025 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, informs of an average drop in agriculture production in Grenada by 25.3%. As food prices soar, families struggle to access basic goods, and we would expect this budget to prioritise. I mean, really prioritise agriculture and food security beyond verbosity. You're going to hear a lot of that today and tomorrow, only nice words, Mr. Speaker, while farmers who are the backbone of this nation are left abandoned. That's how they feel. They say that. They feel, not my words, their words. The numbers do not lie, Mr. Speaker.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

A total of $67.3 million was budgeted for agriculture in 2024. Mr. Speaker, $26 million remains unspent in that ministry. Mr. Speaker, in 2025, the overall budget for agriculture is expected to be approximately $30 million. **(Applause)** And I ask, is this incompetence or is this neglect for the farmers and fishermen of this country? How do you justify cutting the budget for a productive sector that has been suffering from year-on-year declines? Sadly, Mr. Speaker, many of the capital projects and programmes that could assist the country to satisfy the mission statement of the Ministry of Agriculture would not be funded in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has no issue with spending on international travel and consultancy, but when it comes, yes, again, I need to remind you because I need you to change, I needed to change that travel. **(Applause)** Yes, it must sink in… But when it comes… So you are very comfortable overspending on international travels, but when it comes to farm roads, Mr. Speaker, $312,674 of the $1 million that was allocated was spent on farm roads? Let's overspend on some farm roads.

Mr. Speaker, imagine this while farmers struggle to access their own lands, Government officials travel regularly around the world in first class and in comfort. Where is the priority? What is the point in increasing budget numbers? So, I'm not listening to any numbers today, Mr. Speaker. What's the point of an increase in budget numbers if it remains unspent? It is nothing more, Mr. Speaker, than deception on paper, and a strategy to create an illusion of investment without actual commitment to the people. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the underperformance continues across almost every agricultural initiative of the $2 million allocated to boost the poultry sector. Imagine this, Mr. Speaker, less than half, $873,580, was spent while poultry farmers cry out for basic support. What is even worse, Mr. Speaker, in 2025, the budget for this area, you would not believe this, was cut by 50%. How, in good conscience, Mr. Speaker, could this be acceptable? Is this a special initiative to completely destroy or kill the poultry sector? What is this? What is this, Mr. Speaker?

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

Mr. Speaker, the consumer price index recorded price increases not just for food and medication, but guess what, it attributes some increases to an increase in the price of poultry, pork and preserved fish. Mr. Speaker, what is the plan? What is a strategy to provide more support for farmers and fishermen?

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about youths in agriculture, an area critical to the future of food security. Mr. Speaker, of the $1.6 million allocated, only $414,569 was spent. Mr. Speaker, in 2025, the allocation for this programme was also reduced. Mr. Speaker, I know they don't like to hear. I'm sure you don't have a problem.

Mr. Speaker, while we are increasing the cost of travel, we are cutting the cost to support agriculture. Mr. Speaker, we are cutting allocations for critical productive sectors like agriculture. What happened to the Government's pledge to encourage young farmers, to support young farmers, to invest in the youth in agriculture, to transform the agriculture sector? What happened to that? Is it yet another case of lip service with no real action? How can we take anything that you say between today and tomorrow seriously, at least I wouldn't, I don't know about anybody else, I wouldn't.

Mr. Speaker, and the most glaring failure, Mr. Speaker, is the allocation for sagasam seaweed. Mr. Speaker, I am from an area where the stench, the effects, Mr. Speaker… I searched; couldn't find. I've searched all over, but couldn't find anywhere where somebody can show me what was spent in this area, but I'm not so concerned about what was spent in that area. I am more concerned, Mr. Speaker, where is the promise to collect the seaweed before it comes to shore? **(Applause)** I'm more concerned about that.

Mr. Speaker, where are the solutions for a fisherman whose livelihood is being destroyed by this very crisis? Little or no action in that area, that's why he's not so concerned about the speech. The document is over 800 pages, and that's what the action of this budget entails. Mr. Speaker, not in the speech, an hour and 30 minutes, 35 minutes, that's not it, the document is 800 plus pages. That's what's most important.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to climate resilience, the situation is no different. Of the $4.4 million budgeted for climate resilience, agriculture for integrated landscape

management doesn't appear to be spent there, even in a year. Mr. Speaker, where food security is such a serious threat, I mean, how could this be of the $9.1 million budgeted for food security? I just say this again. $9.1 million budgeted for food security, only $359,000 was spent. How does the Government justify this?

Mr. Speaker, the new MNIB, Marketing and National Importing Board, was supposed to be fully operational by June 2024. Today, there are more questions than answers. While the farmers continue to struggle with market access, last Friday, the minister told us that they are expecting a new entity that will replace MNIB to be up and running closer to the end of the year. I'm not sure whether to believe or not. Farmers are running out of patience; almost three years, to make matters worse.

Mr. Speaker, in a time of food security challenges, when farmers are struggling, instead of supporting local production, the Government has been allowing businesses to import items that are already being grown by local farmers, undermining their ability to compete. How can this be justified, especially now with the food security crisis that faces us? Mr. Speaker, food security is not just an economic issue. It's also a matter of national security. Without a strong well supported agriculture sector, we are at the mercy of external shocks, we are at the mercy of external shocks. Yet, Mr. Speaker, this Government treats farmers as an afterthought.

It appears, looking at the numbers, not what is said, the numbers show a failure to deliver on promises, failing to invest in infrastructure and failing to prioritise local production. Mr. Speaker, if we are truly serious about resilience, then agriculture must be a national priority. **(Applause)** It must be a national priority, but based on the budget, Mr. Speaker, only one thing is clear: this Government does not care about farmers or food security for the future of the agricultural sector, as they care about themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the Government continues to make excuses. Everything on the sun is the reason for non-performance. If the excuse is not that NNP has been there for 23 years, then the excuse that we've just been there for three years has to be one of them. Mr. Speaker, until now, some bona fide farmers have yet to receive support after

experiencing the ravages of Hurricane Beryl. Farmers have reported that some individuals are not farmers.

In one case, someone who buys from farmers to sell received grant funding from the Ministry of Agriculture for damage to their farms. Mr. Speaker, farmers themselves are concerned that some persons who received most of the benefits did so because of the perceived political affiliation with the National Democratic Congress. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, even in Carriacou, farmers have complained about the distribution of the black tanks.

Mr. Speaker, the Member knows the reaction of farmers in the meeting that was held in Carriacou. Their disappointment and anger, not just disappointment, some left the meeting. Mr. Speaker, and most of it had to do, Mr. Speaker, with the way that the distribution post-Beryl took place. Farmers are concerned. They've expressed it in the newspaper. They've expressed it on various programmes. Listen to them. Listen. Listen to them. Many farmers. How many months now since the passage of Hurricane Beryl? Imagine farmers are still complaining that they have not received.

You met a pregnant treasury. You've got $118 million in CCRIF payout. You said that you generated over a billion dollars in CBI revenue. Why, Mr. Speaker, why is it that you can increase and overspend in certain areas, but the farmers are still begging for grants and support?

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the CCRIF payout that came 14 days after the passage of this hurricane would have been used primarily for that purpose. Get them back. Get them going. **(Applause)** We need food. Mr. Speaker, it is a crisis. I don't know if we are understanding this. It is a crisis that we are facing. When many who are not farmers, as I said, benefited simply because of their political affiliation, but you can understand why, it's clearer now, some fisher folks are still waiting.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened and what do we plan to do, Mr. Speaker, at this stage? We understand the pain of farmers and fishermen and why they have been demonstrating such frustration, but their cries seem to fall on deaf ears. Mr. Speaker, as

the young people would say, "We have to stop that, we have to stop that". We cannot continue to treat our farmers and fishermen in that way.

Infrastructural Development

Mr. Speaker, the Public Sector Investment Programme is the lifeblood of the Government's effort to drive economic growth and create jobs. Despite the administration's claim that this Budget fosters economic expansion and employment opportunities, funding for infrastructural development has been slashed by $75 million. Somehow, the words, the actions, and the figures are not matching. How does reducing funding for the Ministry of Works encourage economic growth, looking back?

I have to say that this Government should really seriously consider this. There is no politics. They should really extend gratitude to the previous administration, Mr. Speaker, as they have not been able to initiate not one new major project in almost three years. You must be very appreciative of the previous Government. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, it almost appears to me as if the Government is deliberately keeping projects in the pipeline to help protect their image and to disguise their non-performance. I have to conclude that. Why are they being kept in the pipeline?

So I am curious to know, after almost three years, Mr. Speaker, when will these projects come out of the pipeline? I am not going to pull a pipe now to demonstrate anything, but consider these projects, Mr. Speaker, where some preliminary or advanced actions were taken under the NNP administration and they were catered for in the 2022 Budget, when will they come out of the pipeline?

In almost three years, Mr. Speaker, this Government cannot justify the progress they've made or the lack of progress made under any of these projects since they claim the title as the Government with the record for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation? Some of these projects, Mr. Speaker, are still at the groundbreaking stage after almost three years. Some of them, the ground has not even broken yet.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's look at some of those projects that I am referring to right now. As I said, they were either in the 2022 Budget or they were at some stage of implementation in 2022.

- Florida Government School Project;
- St. Andrew's Anglican Primary School;
- St. David's Catholic Secondary School;
- Grenada Christian Academy;
- Simon Cultural Centre;
- Molinere Project;
- St. John's River Project;
- Lighting of the Stadium;
- Gouyave Ministry Project;
- The National Aquatic Facility;
- National Health Insurance;
- Charlton House Project;
- Maurice Bishop International Airport Expansion;
- Western Main Road Project;
- The Cliff Project; and
- The New Fire Station.

Mr. Speaker, should I go on, or have we gotten the point? **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, after almost three years, this Government continues to run on NNP fuel. **(Applause)** The only notable thing about some of these projects, Mr. Speaker, apart from the lengthy delay, is the astronomical cost of overruns and debt to the state of this country, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, who is providing leadership and oversight on these projects? **(Applause)** NNP has been there for 23 years, enough of that. Almost three years, get down to work. Get the work done, Mr. Speaker.

I got the impression in 2022 that MIT had the magic formula for the unclogging of the pipeline in record-breaking time, but it appears, Mr. Speaker, it appears the original role of this ministry is changing daily. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the numbers tell a story that contradicts the catchy slogans, contradicts the Facebook posting and the broken promises.

Mr. Speaker, even the Prime Minister publicly admitted his disappointment in the progress of many of these projects. The only problem, Mr. Speaker, with this is that the Prime Minister is admitting disappointment with himself too **(applause)** because he is the Minister for infrastructure and not just the snail pace at which MIT is moving, but infrastructure must take responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, and let us not listen to the next excuse of the minister that he was busy. That was one of the excuses I heard. He was very busy with the Build Back Better Houses. He was very busy and Carriaco. Mr. Speaker, not one, let me remind you, not one Build Back Better House was handed over by December. The 100 that were promised, mouth open, and words jumped out. **(Applause)**

The minister said that from September, this is what was said, and I could only go with this, Mr. Speaker, we will build 80 houses per month. Mathematically speaking, let us say that 480 homes have already been built. Then we were told, Mr. Speaker, 50 by December, no, no, no, no, let's say 100 by December, that's what we were told. Somewhere in my head, I have 100… Well, it appears that it is still in the minister's head.

Mr. Speaker, do we understand that this is no joking matter? Do we understand the value of proper planning, the value of Strategic Planning in Government, not just jumping up and deciding out of your head how many houses could be built within three months or within a month? Mr. Speaker, how can we begin to take this Government seriously? How can we even take this Budget seriously? Look at the numbers? We can't.

Mr. Speaker, in the Presentation on Friday, speaking about the slow implementation rate and the transformation vision, I noticed… You know, Mr. Speaker, when he spoke about the transformation vision, he got very quiet, very, very quiet. I'm sitting here, I could hardly hear him. Mr. Speaker, the Minister said, and I quote, "several" so what I just said is supported by the Minister, you know, he said, "several long-stalled World Bank Programs have been transferred to the Ministry of MIT to remove the neck and accelerate implementation". So now you know what I just said was accurate, the Minister himself said that.

The result thus far has been extremely promising. You see, we're fed up with promises, so don't tell us it's extremely promising because we're going to interpret that in a particular way, demonstrating the effectiveness of this strategic approach. Well, Mr. Speaker, how do you define a strategic approach?

Anyways, let me just make the point that when the Supplementary Budget was taken before this House, which was in March 2024, it was clear that some capital projects could not be accomplished based on the timeline. But I guess for PR purposes, Mr. Speaker, it was necessary to call out a long list of projects that would be completed between March and December.

Mr. Speaker, we are again experiencing a similar situation, mark my words that we will have similar or the same results as a Supplementary Budget in March. Mr. Speaker, it may have been more effective to just suspend the PR for a while, put on paper what you know that you're able to do in nine months, we are already in March and that way you might have even reduced the deficit that is before us today. Mr. Speaker, Grenada will be better off if this Government would stop focusing on NNP, settle down, mind their business and provide, produce and deliver for the people of this country. **(Applause)**

National Security and Crime: A Growing Threat.

Mr. Speaker, while this Government identified National Security as a key priority area for Budget 2025, the Capital Budget for the Police has been reduced. There is an alarming and continuous exodus of Senior Police Officers **(applause)** from the Royal Grenada Police Force. **(Applause)** Let's look at the situation, are we keeping count of the number … It's interesting when you speak, it's very interesting when you choose to speak. Mr. Speaker, are we keeping count on the number of Officers who have taken early retirement, or have resigned or how many have submitted their application to leave?

Mr. Speaker, exactly why did the Member react? You see, while some in political security circles have dismissed this, they call it an NNP purge, Mr. Speaker, based on their perception of political support. The reality is, and that is what I am concerned about, not the politics, the reality. The reality is that most of these officers are highly experienced, well-trained and **(applause)** are at the very peak of their careers.

Many of them, Mr. Speaker, never even supported NNP. They are simply frustrated and disillusioned with the system. This is not a matter to be trivialised. It is a direct threat to national security, and everyone, regardless of political affiliation, must be extremely concerned. This is national security. This is not a joke.

Mr. Speaker, these experienced police officers play a crucial role in mentoring, training and supervising younger police officers and recruits. Look around, young recruits are being deployed with just weeks of training, having inadequate guidance and supervision. Mr. Speaker, I was at a function and I cringed when I saw a recently trained Officer who was introduced to me as the head of the detail holding the gun. Mr. Speaker, I cringed. No one in that detail had more than a few months of training for a major national activity.

Mr. Speaker, we are facing a manpower crisis in law enforcement. There is a serious decline in policing standards due to inexperience and a surge in crime. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the capital budget of the police was cut. Note, though, interestingly, that there is an allocation of over $28 million under the Prime Minister's watch that caters for security separate from the police. Do research on the areas where most of these deployments are made. I'm not a security expert, but I'm sure every single person would conclude that most of these areas are what we would call low-risk areas.

This is approximately, Mr. Speaker, 36% of the total amount for the Royal Grenada Police Force. So while our hot spots and our high-risk areas remain exposed, Mr. Speaker, help make sense of this, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when police can't respond to crime because of manpower issues, we are in a serious situation. What is our priority in this Budget Document, saying about our response to this? About a proactive response to this?

Mr. Speaker, does it make sense that the budget for overall overseas travel keeps increasing while the Coast Guard, which is supposed to protect our ready exposed borders, was denied gas for its engine because the Government did not pay outstanding bills. Where is our priority, Mr. Speaker? When these factors are analysed, a thinking person or just let's say somebody who doesn't even think, will conclude that we are in a

crisis with no strategic intervention or plans being considered. However, we should not expect any positive change if this administration continues to put square pegs in round holes for political expediency. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the solution is not simply to train more young recruits. That's not a solution. It is not to buy longer guns as the Prime Minister proposed, we need an urgent, serious, strategic approach **(applause)** to national security. What is the Government's plan to tackle the rise in crime and address the serious emerging threats that face our country today? There's a leadership crisis, a manpower crisis and a rise in crime situation. Combine these, Mr. Speaker, and we have another ticking time bomb in this country.

The Government cannot continue to take a wait-and-see approach to national security. Far more support must be given to the RGPF, good for the pay and grade to be moving along, great, but, Mr. Speaker, we need more support for the RGPF to proactively respond to the current internal and external threats to national security.

Two years ago, Mr. Speaker, a commitment was made to hold a national stakeholders consultation and develop a National Crime Plan. We were promised this by this administration. Where is the plan? Where is the policy? The urgency of this issue, Mr. Speaker, cannot be overstated. Grenada needs a decisive strategy to restore law and order and address the issues that confront us. Let's not wait till it gets worse. Despite these challenges, Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the officers of the Royal Grenada Police Force for their dedication. **(Applause)** You deserve, Mr. Speaker, to be recognised amidst the political victimisation. Police Officers continue to sacrifice their lives in the line of duty to keep this country safe. The merit-based system is being thrown away by this Government, and promotion appears to be an act based on emotions and political direction. Mr. Speaker, a nation cannot prosper if its people do not feel safe. What is the Government really doing about the crime situation in Grenada? Grenadians deserve peace of mind, not fear of crime.

Mr. Speaker, Pension. Mr. Speaker, the issue of public sector pensions is quite intriguing. This Government touting pension reform as an achievement is laughable, as this issue was not even a topic; pension reform was not even a topic during its campaign.

It was never. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's assurance that pensions would be paid had to do with the regular and continuous payment of the 1958 non-contributory pension to all workers, even if it meant borrowing; that is what the promise was.

There is not a single worker in the public service who would not support this. What the workers did not appreciate, Mr. Speaker, was that the utterances were actually an exercise in deception. Mr. Speaker, this Government touted the payment of retroactive pensions based on the court ruling to 525 individuals as a significant achievement. Yet, they have disenfranchised thousands of workers from benefitting from the said pension, as was expressed **(applause)** in the Court ruling through pension reform within less than three years of being in power. You will hear NNP has been there for 23 years, and we have just been there three years. **(Time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker… Mr. Speaker, you want to remind me what that bell means?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. When the bell goes, it means that you have 10 minutes left before the expiration of your time.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, lest we forget that the NNP in Government, I probably should be asking for the extra time that the minister did not use.

Lest we forget that the NNP in Government had extensive consultation with the social partners, including the Union, on pension and pension reform commencing in 2017. An MoU was signed in 2018 for the reform process. While efforts continued, negotiations with the Union stalled, leading workers to seek legal recourse, which is their right and protest, which is also their right, for the 1958 pension as ruled by Justice Glasgow. At that time, Mr. Speaker, the NNP Government was already paying pensions to 2,200 individuals **(applause)** every month. Mr. Speaker, it is therefore unfortunate that some of the same workers who took to the streets for the 1958 pension will not benefit from the 1958 pension **(applause)** that this Government has promised.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stood in the Parliament and said that the new Pension Act was a continuation of the work of the NNP. Mr. Speaker, we do not oppose pension reform; we never will in principle. Indeed, we did a lot of work in this regard. No lie; that's true. However, Mr. Speaker, our proposal as it relates to pension and pension reform was far different to what the workers are faced with today. **(Applause)**

Today, workers are faced with a pension plan that forces them to deduct an additional 3% and 6% of their salary, while the NNP administration proposal had no additional deduction. Mr. Speaker, the NNP administration proposed that 70% of the workers' last salary be pensioned, while today, workers have no minimum percentage of their last salary expansion, but rather, they can only withdraw what they would have saved.

Mr. Speaker, under this current plan, a worker can outlive their savings, but a lifelong pension was guaranteed under the NNP proposal. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the NNP administration agreed to provide increases to pensioners consistent with the increases given to public Officers. Today, under this new arrangement, this is not the case. I say, it's a clear case of leaving the bone and jumping behind the shadow.

Mr. Speaker, the NNP administration is proud of its record of stakeholder engagement during this process. I know the faucets of Government. This is how the MOU was developed and agreed upon through engagements and consultation with social partners; it is how we build fiscal infrastructure. This Government inherited and destroyed in almost three years. While consultation and discussion were sometimes very contentious, I say today, it is healthy for a vibrant democracy. **(Applause)** It is healthy.

What we see today from this Government is the stark contrast, little or no consultation. Mr. Speaker, there is an open attempt to stifle the voices of the people through **(applause)** economic starvation and bullying be it in the media, social bloggers and commentators, workers who work in the public service some over 19 years, the union, business people even in this very Parliament, you name it, all have felt the brunt of this unwarranted **(applause)** attacks.

Mr. Speaker, it is concerning that some public officers are being called in or written to by PSC or permanent secretaries for attending political activities when they are within **(applause)** their constitutional right to so do. Mr. Speaker, the keyword is some because some Officers are known supporters of the NDC; they are not called in. For example, Mr. Speaker, I have never seen a public officer heading a parliamentary electoral office **(applause)** actively participating in political activities. Mr. Speaker, I am sure she was not called in. This is a cause for serious concern. Not that we care where she goes or does or where she doesn't go. It is a cause for concern as it relates to the electoral process and the fairness of the **(applause)** electoral process or perceived fairness.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to write to the Governor-General about this disturbing development if no serious action is taken, as it poses a serious threat **(applause)** to free and fair elections in Grenada. This is not about the individual. It is about the office that is supposed to be independent.

Mr. Speaker, going back to the pension, we have seen in recent times the Public Workers Union speaking out on this and other issues pertaining to workers' rights. We have also observed the attempt to dismantle this very institution that is older than the existence of the political party in office. Mr. Speaker, the Unions are a key pillar of our democracy, which is why we had no problem, no problem, Mr. Speaker, with the contention that existed in some discussions between the government and the unions. And it is a sad day in the state of Grenada when we witness an open and flagrant attempt to destroy the union, Mr. Speaker. This is serious.

Creative Industry and Investment.

Mr. Speaker, the creative sector has the potential to be a major economic driver, yet we must ask, are we getting value from money? Are we getting value for money with the current investment made? Our investments in the creative industries are cost-effective. The numbers suggest otherwise. Mr. Speaker, after extensive national consultation, a cultural policy was drafted to guide the growth and sustainability of this sector.

To date, not a single aspect of this policy has been meaningfully implemented. How can we expect meaningful development with no strategic framework in place? The office of the Creative Affairs now term Office of the Creative Arts in the Budget 2025 was supposed to be the driving force for artists and musicians and designers and cultural entrepreneurs instead, its efforts are centralized and seems to benefit only a select few leaving more talented individuals across Grenada wondering when an opportunity would come.

Mr. Speaker, we all remember the promise "Unleash", a programme that was marketed as a game changer for the creative industry in Grenada. It was supposed to revolutionise the creative space, but today, many look forward to the promise, follow-up, tangible results and clear direction; many are disappointed. I know the total amount, Mr. Speaker, approximately $1 million was spent on consultancies, contracts and other services. No problem, but how much of this, Mr. Speaker, do the ordinary cultural artiste and young creatives benefit from? Mr. Speaker, are we really serious, or are we joking?

Mr. Speaker, some low blows were pelted across the ball on the subject of information, communication and technology from the Minister for Finance last Friday, yeah. Last Friday, Mr. Speaker, the minister attacked the former Prime Minister, indicating that Grenada has nothing to show for serving as Head of CARICOM and having responsibility for ICT, Science and Technology. Permit me to remind the incoming Minister for Science and Technology in CARICOM of some of the gains, just in case, during his stewardship, he would have to give an update or share progress over the years.

Mr. Speaker, under the stewardship of Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, Grenada made significant progress in this area; the liberalisation of the telecommunication **(applause)** in the region was led by your very own. The multiple devices that some of you may have in your possession right now are because of this particular work done. The Caribbean Telecommunication Infrastructure Programme, a programme that secured US$10 million **(applause)** to increase domestic broadband, Mr. Speaker, we have something to show… **(Time bell rings)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Emmalin Pierre

Mr. Speaker, based on the Standing Order can I request an additional 10 minutes to wrap up? I am actually in the wrapping up stage right now.

Mr. Speaker: You have five minutes to do that.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. … Including submarine cable infrastructure and landing stations **(applause)**, domestic backbone network, cross-border links and national and regional internet exchange points in the region. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have something to show.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of a Regional Digital Skills Task Force **(applause)** to promote awareness of the importance of digital skills in the region for Economic and Social Development. Yes, we have something to show. Mr. Speaker, the Digital Governance Project that this Government is unapologetic about **(applause)** is listed in this very Budget. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the things that we have to show.

The reduction in roaming charges for citizens in the Caribbean **(applause)** as they travel throughout the Caribbean was another milestone under his leadership. Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the achievements, and I pray that the current minister will get an opportunity to do more. I wish he could, or let's hope he lasts long enough to get at least **(applause)** appreciation and commitment, you know, seriously… I am serious when I extend best wishes.

As I near the conclusion and as I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Almighty God, whose divine providence has continually safeguarded, strengthened and guided me both in my personal life and throughout my public service journey. Mr. Speaker, my political journey has been made possible because of the unwavering love and support of so many.

I offer my sincerest appreciation to my husband and our three children. Their patience, sacrifice and constant love have been my anchor **(applause)** throughout these years. It has not always been easy for them, especially when I was required to prioritise the needs of this nation above their own, yet despite these challenges, they have shown

great understanding and a commitment to the value of service and patriotism that I hold so dear. For their sacrifices, I am eternally grateful.

I also want to express my profound appreciation to my colleagues for their steadfast support and commitment to this journey. I say special thank you. Words are not enough to express my appreciation to the people of St. Andrew South East **(applause)** and, by extension, Mr. Speaker, the entire parish of St. Andrew. Heartfelt thank you.

My gratitude is also extended to my dedicated staff over the years, Members of Team Emma and to all those who have offered their support and encouragement. The honour of representing you, I take very seriously. To the Executive Members and supporters of the New National Party, I am grateful for the trust you've placed in me to serve as your leader. I pledge to do all that I can to build upon the strong legacy of good governance, equal opportunity and service for all.

Mr. Speaker, to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, both at home and in the diaspora, you are the heartbeat of this nation. I give you my solemn pledge today that every day I will advocate for you. I will defend your interests and I will work tirelessly to uphold the values of justice, fairness and prosperity for all.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that if you ask me how I conclude about this Budget, I would conclude by saying I am very disappointed in this Budget, which is obviously not for the people. Our people deserve better, and so I will continue, Mr. Speaker, to advocate for their interests, ensuring that their voices are heard while pushing for real change, not old talk. Mr. Speaker, the Members of my team will expand on some of the areas that I have touched on. Any area that I did not get to touch on, Mr. Speaker, will continue in their presentation.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is left to say special thank you to you for your accommodation and your staff and to say to all the Members of this House, may we continue to serve in the interest of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Lennox Andrews

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, the Honourable MP for St. Andrew South East. I now invite the Honourable MP for St. Andrew South West to make his contribution.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very pleasant good morning to all. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support…

Mr. Speaker: Just hold Honourable MP. I know some of you are exiting. Just go as quietly as you possibly can so he has fewer disturbances on his side. Proceed, please.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2025 under the theme "Vision 75, Grenada Resilient and Rising" as presented by our Minister for Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for Finance for presenting to this nation what I describe as a budget of great expectations. It is clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that after listening to the Minister for Finance, I can only conclude that better days are coming. Better days are coming, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, before I delve into the depth of my presentation, I first want to thank, or I should say I want to express and commend, our Leader of the Opposition for being appointed as Leader of the Opposition. I think it's the first lady… The second lady. So, we see women's power at work in this country **(applause)** and wish her the best.

But I also seek your leave, Mr. Speaker, to place on record the profound honour of this Parliament and the people of Grenada in paying tribute to three local business exemplars whose contributions to our country's economic development have been distinguished and outstanding.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to Lydon Rhamdanny of St. Andrew. **(Applause)** Michael McIntyre and Sir Royston Hopkin of St. George, all of whom have been called to rest recently. We pray for the strength and happiness of the respective families, and I do hope

that one day this country will officially recognise their contributions to our economy. **(Applause)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But also, Mr. Speaker, before I delve into the substance of my presentation, there are a few comments I would like to make based on what was presented here by the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. Mr. Speaker, what was said in this Honourable House this morning was that the Government has presented a deficit budget.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this question. Which deficit are you referring to, because there are many deficits, Mr. Speaker? There are many deficits. There are current account deficits. You have primary deficits. You have overall deficits, and there are more. So when you mention a deficit, you must be clear **(applause)** and indicate which deficit you're referring to.

This Government, Mr. Speaker, did not present a budget deficit to this House. **(Applause)** It presented a current account surplus budget **(applause)**, and it is here, Mr. Speaker. It is here. You go to the document on page 12. Read it. **(Applause)** It says, Mr. Speaker, "The overall Budget Summary is as follows…", and I want to point out this one. "Current Account surplus of $86.5 million. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, let me say this. It is quite acceptable to present to this House a deficit budget, but not a current account deficit, and if you look back, this House has been presenting an overall deficit, Mr. Speaker, an overall deficit budget for the past 20 years. **(Applause)** Look back and you will see.

Mr. Speaker, you think I, as an economist who worked in the Ministry of Finance for years, worked at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank for years, as a country economist for Grenada and Montserrat, you think I will allow this Government to present to this House a current account budget deficit? Never. **(Applause)** The Opposition Leader, Mr. Speaker, deliberately, deliberately omitted and misled the population **(applause)** and came and told us that we presented a budget deficit. We did not. We present a current account surplus **(applause)** of $86.5 million, and that's the truth. The numbers are not lying. They are here in black and white. So that's the first point, Mr. Speaker, I want to make.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Lennox Andrews

Mr. Speaker, after Beryl, the Government had the luxury to relax the fiscal rules so that we could undertake all of the necessary expenditure to build back the economy, and we did, and of course, the IMF approved it. But even if we relax the fiscal rules, Mr. Speaker, there is only one rule that was relaxed, one. All the others were maintained, and the important one that deals with our wage bill. That rule is still intact **(applause)** because we have not surpassed. We have not surpassed. We have not relaxed this one.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is not right to come to this House and speak about fiscal imprudence on our part and about fiscal recklessness. We are not by any means reckless, and we remain prudent in our dealings with the fiscal situation in our country. **(Applause)** When there are talks about increasing expenditure, Mr. Speaker, every expenditure on the recurrent side that you see in the budget is covered by our current revenues. Understand this, Mr. Speaker.

Let me explain this to the population. There is a current account balance. What is this? The current account balance is the difference between the current revenues. Your current revenues are your tax revenues and non-tax revenues, and current expenditures are expenditures on wages and salaries, which you call personnel, goods and services, interest payments, and transfers and subsidies. Those four broad headings.

Mr. Speaker, your current revenues must be large enough to cover these four areas of current expenditure. **(Applause)** So when we present to this House a current account surplus of $86.5 million, it means that we have enough money to pay workers and pay on time and pay them well. **(Applause)** It means that we have enough money to pay for our goods and services. It means that we have enough money to cover our interest payments. It means that we have enough money to pay for our transfers and subsidies. After we have paid all that, we still have $86.5 million **(applause)** left. What do you want better than that? This is good fiscal management, Mr. Speaker.

Let me tell you that $86.5 million will go as part of the financing of our capital expenditure. **(Applause)** So we are, in fact, Mr. Speaker, covering our capital expenditure in part because we have a current account surplus. That's what you must say to this House. And I am saying, if the need comes for me to give them a lecture on

Government fiscal accounts so they will understand it well, I'm available. **(Applause)** Free of cost. So don't come to this House and give the population misinformation. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. I am happy to be a Member of this Government, and I will tell you why I say that. This Government has a philosophy which I admire and which I support, and the philosophy is simple. We are here to improve the lives of our people and to make Grenada a better place to live. **(Applause)** And so, Mr. Speaker, this philosophy is grounded in the fact that it is ideas that build our economy. Ideas.

Mr. Speaker, every great leap in human progress from the printing press to the steam engine to the semiconductor has been driven by ideas. But ideas, Mr. Speaker, come from our people. It comes from the talent in our young people, so we must identify that young talent in our people and give them the opportunity to develop that talent, enhance that talent and make that talent available for our country and for humanity.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing here, this Government, is that we have been creating the opportunity to make Grenada like a big school. Grenada will become a big school, Mr. Speaker, in which the opportunities are available for all to become what they want to be, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we now have 32 young Grenadians who have been awarded scholarships from Monroe University.

The Minister for Education, not long ago, told the nation that 32 young Grenadians, we are going to add another 50 in September. We have nine young Grenadians right now at the University of Guyana, the School of Agriculture, studying Agricultural Science, who will come back. We have a young, bright Grenadian right now. He is at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. He is studying for his PHD. Full scholarship. He is studying his PHD in Soil Science. He will soon come back to serve. So, Mr. Speaker, our young people. Get it clear. Opportunities are available for you to go and study so you can contribute meaningfully to our country's development. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in this budget, the Ministry of Agriculture has $500,000 for 2025. $500,000 to work closely with TAMCC to create and produce the different human resources that we need to develop our agricultural sector. So, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes

ask myself where some of us are living? I don't know where some of us are living, maybe not in this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said this, I want to present my Budget Debate as follows. I want to first of all speak about the impact of Beryl on our economy. I will discuss the development in the agricultural sector and the fisheries sector because they say that nothing is happening in agriculture. Where are you all living? Where are you all staying? We're going to talk about that. We will talk about cooperatives. We will talk about the role the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning has been playing. The Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, which I am responsible for, has been doing what we have been doing to prepare projects and to ensure capital projects are implemented, to build our public sector investment programme and to plan our country's economic development. I will talk about that. I will talk about tourism, statistics and what we have been doing in the rural economy, what we've been doing in the rural economy to transform the lives of our people. And then, I will also speak, Mr. Speaker, about the Blue Economy; that's a new ministry that has been created; the Blue Economy and why the agriculture budget has fallen. The agriculture budget has fallen because Fisheries are now part of the Blue Economy **(applause)** as stated in the budget. If you read the budget, you would have seen that. You couldn't come this morning and say that the agriculture budget fell by so much. There is a reason why it fell. Simple as that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask you for 15 minutes so I can speak about my constituents, who are here. They are here to give me support, Mr. Speaker. Look at them there. **(Applause)** They like me, Mr. Speaker. They like me and they are always there with me. They are always there. You see, they come this morning in their large numbers. All of them are here. Take a picture. So I am asking for some time, Mr. Speaker, to talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, after Beryl passed, the Ministry of Economic Development presented another approval from Cabinet to conduct a post-disaster needs assessment, which would tell us the impact of Beryl on our economy and what our recovery needs are. The Minister for Finance indicated that the damage by Beryl was $330 million or 16% of our

GDP. I am saying that's the official figure that was approved by the Cabinet. When we speak about the damages done by Beryl, that is the figure we must quote, 16% of our GDP.

- Housing was affected by 74%;
- Agriculture 10%;
- Energy 6%;
- Education 4%;
- WASH 3%;
- Health 1%;
- Culture 1%; and
- Disaster Risk Reduction 1%.

So, Mr. Speaker, having received the official report on the impact of Beryl and the major sectors of the economy and the recovery needs of our country, our next step is to develop and implement a recovery strategy and that recovery strategy is going to focus on resource mobilisation, improved data management and investment in resilient communities and resilient infrastructure. So we are planning, Mr. Speaker, in 2025 to organise a donor conference to mobilise resources and to identify new development partners.

So, Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn to agriculture. I hear so much talk about agriculture. I am wondering where we are staying. Mr. Speaker, we do know that our sector faces multiple challenges in 2024. The first half of the year was a serious drought. As soon as the rainy season began, Beryl passed, then November, heavy rains, so we had it hard, but we were not afraid of that. We put our team together. Look, Bhagwan, here. Where are the others? Look, Kendra, there. Mr. Williams is there. Look, Betty-Ann, there. Everybody is here. They come to give support. We put our team together, Mr. Speaker, and we put together a plan for the rebuilding of our agricultural sector and making sure our farmers, Mr. Speaker, were not affected because we recognise that.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did was that we went to Cabinet with a proposal

to provide income support to our farmers and to our fisher folks and to others. Cabinet approved it. We sent it to Cabinet. Cabinet approved.

I am saying all farmers; crop farmers, cocoa farmers, nutmeg farmers, those farmers whose land up to five acres would receive cash $4,500, either in their hands, in the form of a cheque or in a financial institution, a credit union or a bank, wherever they want the money go, and those farmers whose acreage was above five acres would receive cash $9,000.

So we got a list of registered farmers, from cocoa and from nutmeg. It's on the list. We have in our ministry a list of resilient farmers. In fact, we have 734 registered farmers in this country, and the aim was to provide all of these farmers affected by Beryl, who were all affected by it, with the sums as I've just indicated.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is true that there are some farmers who didn't get. It is not that we did not give them, it is because they haven't come and collected their cheque yet. We have cheques in the ministry for the farmers to come and collect. So those farmers who haven't got their money, come and collect your cheque. Your cheque is there sitting down waiting for you. Good?

There are some farmers, well, I don't understand, who told me they didn't hear about the programme. Right? So I said, "Well, are you registered?" "Yes," I said, "Well, give me your registered Farmers ID". They gave me, and immediately I sent it to my staff in the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare the invoice to send down to the Ministry of Finance so that they can be paid.

So right now, we have about 40 to 50 farmers who haven't received their money as yet, right, including Carriacou. We are sending down your money for you, through Finance, for your payment. If you haven't received payment yet, please come see us with your Farmer's ID. If you know you are a farmer and you don't have an ID, go and get your Farmer's ID. It won't take long to get because it will be the last. We're closing the programme. It's about time to close it, so we are closing the programme now. Good. So, I'm saying to all farmers, if you know you didn't get some of what you met me and said you didn't get, and you didn't hear about it. I don't know how you could not hear about it;

the talk was all over the place. **(Applause)**

So, I will tell you, we have given out 1,222 farmers' cheques on the western side of the country. We gave out 227 farmers' cheques; they get money on the southern side of the country. We have given out 1,332 farmers' cheques in Sauteurs, in the north, and we're giving out 2,130 farmers' cheques in the east. So, of the 7,336 farmers registered, we have given out 4,411 farmers' money into their hands. **(Applause)** It is the first time, farmers said, that they get money from the Government. **(Applause)** First time in their life. **(Applause)** And I said to the farmers, "Don't eat all the money, you know". **(Laughter)** I told them not to eat all the money. It is not funny.

Some money must go back into the land. **(Applause)** Go, take some of that money and buy fertilisers, because we have a fertiliser programme in the ministry, where you can get 50 kilo bags for farmers for $50. So $1 a kilo. Extremely cheap. Farmers tell me they like it. They like it because the fertiliser is good. It's really good. It increases their yield. Good? And some of them, after they received their cheque, we interviewed them, they said, "Yes, minister, we're going to put back some of that money in the land". **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, apart from that, Mr. Speaker, we recognise the importance of having food security after Beryl, and we have in the ministry, this World Bank Finance, US$10 million food security project. And I called a meeting with my staff, and I told them they have to move fast and implement this project so that our economy and our agriculture can rebound as quickly as possible. Mr. Speaker, that project gives strong support for livestock production, I'll talk about that just now, **(applause)**, including poultry, pigs, goats and sheep together with the infrastructure for them. That's one component.

That project would provide farm machinery and equipment, and I will talk about our farm machinery pool in Mirabeau. And that project also provides for high-quality planting material as support to our fisherfolk.

I have to commend our ministry's staff because we worked quickly to implement that project. So, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we did. We restored the propagation facilities at Boulogne and Mirabeau. Go there and you will see it. Well restored.

(Applause) 17,500 chicks. Starter, grower and finisher feeds were distributed to over 700 poultry farmers. I was there. **(Applause)** I was there giving them out, the chicks, and giving them the feed one time. I was there. We spent a lot of money to import purebred animals from the USA. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we brought in early this year, 144 pigs. **(Applause)** Purebred. 159 sheep, **(applause)** and 161 goats, **(applause)** together with their medicine, and their feed supply, including hay for three months. The pigs are at Mirabeau. I went there.

In fact, I was at the airport when the animals came in huge crates. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** Whatever the word is. Good. I was there. The PS was there and all the doctors who would support the programme, they were all there, and we watched these animals taken off from the big plane, placed in a crate, put into trucks and travelled to their respective locations. **(Applause)** It was a beautiful sight. The only thing, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to happen during the day, but the plane arrived at night. So the people could have seen, you know, exactly what we're doing. But it came at night. Right? The police were there to give us support, to make sure the animals were transported safely. So the pigs are in Mirabeau. You must go and see them. Their mouth looks like a Dobermann, first they're pretty. The goats are in Laura, and the sheep are in Sauteurs, and they're not dead. They're all alive. **(Applause)** In fact, Mr. Speaker, they are multiplying. They are multiplying. Good. So when you ask me… You don't know what condition they are in. They are alive and well. **(Applause)** I'm inviting you to go and see them.

And I want to give praise to our staff in the Ministry of Agriculture—our doctors, Dr Cummings, Dr St. Bernard, and Dr Bernard, right, and the whole team that put together a programme for the reproduction of these animals. **(Applause)** So when you ask if there is a plan for the reproduction of the animal, yes, there is a plan, and the plan is being implemented.

So in a couple of days' time, 75 livestock rearers in Grenada are going to receive one animal, which they're going to use to breed with their locals, and it will happen over and over and over. So after a three-year period, we should have enough pigs, goat and

sheep in our country to feed ourselves and to have for export. That is the plan. **(Applause)**

It is the first time so many animals have been brought into the country. I heard that several years ago, some came in, but you can't find them **(laughter)**, but this time, Mr. Speaker, I made it quite clear that these animals are not for eating. They are for breeding. They are for reproduction. They are to ensure that over the next three years, we have enough meat from small ruminants to supply ourselves. **(Applause)**

And so, Mr. Speaker, we are going to sign an agreement with these 75 livestock farmers, an agreement with them. If the animals are lost or dead for whatever reason, they will pay. They have to give an explanation about the animals not being there, because we want to make sure that the plan is in order. We have assisted those farmers in building proper pens. We have trained them in animal husbandry, how to take care of animals, but you wouldn't see these animals being tied by the roadside. That will not happen. It's not for that. It's a special breed. So over three years' time, you're going to have the "Grenadian Spice Pigs" **(applause)**, "Grenadian Spice Goats" **(applause)**, and the "Grenadian Spice Sheep". **(Applause)** That is the plan, and the "Spice Rum" too. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, so that the plan is with the animal. I hope I made myself clear. All we have to do now is put our talent together and ensure the plan works. I'm going to increase the number of vets, good ones, who will be attending to those animals, to ensure that the programme is implemented because the plan is there and we'll start to work it.

So apart from that, Mr. Speaker, I was saying that we had land scale distribution of crafting materials; coconut, banana, plantain and root crops.

Rainwater Harvesting. We are investing heavily in rainwater harvesting. 20 shed houses with irrigation systems are being provided to selected farmers. **(Cell phone rings)** I said before, 21, 806 50kg bags of fertilisers were sold to farmers.

Mr. Speaker: Just hold on, Honourable MP.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Farm Labour Support…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: … were implemented to assist farmers.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** I wouldn't repeat myself. Just proceed. Proceed, Honourable MP.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank You. Three farm roads: Barrick Farm Road in St. Patrick, the one in Bacolet, and the Stanhope Road in St. Mark. They are being rehabilitated right now. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I heard they talk about praedial larceny, so let me tell you. In the area of praedial larceny, six motor bikes and 500 security cameras have been procured, and right now we are interviewing 40 new staff to be recruited to improve the effectiveness of the Praedial Larceny Programme. **(Applause)'**

Mr. Speaker, the farm machinery pool Mirabeau, and we were going to make Mirabeau the "Centre for Excellence in Agriculture" in this country. The farm machinery pool Mirabeau is going to open, if not this month, then next month. We have one soil steriliser, 30 pounds of steriliser, one crane truck, and one 4x4 pick-up vehicle. We have backhoe loaders, two large tractors, two small tractors, spare parts, two trailers and a subsoiler. They all will come to Grenada this month, to complement what I've just mentioned. **(Applause)** So the farmers will be taken good care of. You said, things don't happen in agriculture, hear what is happening in agriculture.

You mentioned cold storage. Mr. Speaker, the design and specification of four cold storage units are being prepared, and they are going to use renewable energy technology. **(Applause)** There will be one at Mirabeau Agriculture Station. There will be one for the North East Farmers' Organisation. **(Applause)** There will be one at the Maurice Bishop International Airport **(applause)** and there will be one for the farmers in

La Digue, of course, my constituency, and that is to help reduce food waste and post-harvest loss, as well as improve the quality of the agriculture that we produce.

Mr. Speaker, our agro processors also received assistance. Two hundred of them received training, technical support, and upgrades to the processing facilities. Ten medium-sized and 25 small-scale agro processors will benefit from the equipment. The equipment is already here, and the Produce Chemist Laboratory, they too, will also receive some additional equipment.

In the Fisheries component, Mr. Speaker, we have Mr. Rennie here, the mastermind of fisheries in this country. Mr. Rennie, stand up, let them see you. **(Applause)** Stand up, let them see you, man. **(Applause)** That's the brain. **(Applause)** We must let our people know. Mr. Rennie, stand up, man. **(Laughter)** Don't be afraid to stand up. **(Applause)** Yes, man. Take a bow.

We purchased and distributed 120 insulated fish boxes and 90 insulated fish bins throughout the country, including Carriacou. We purchased safety equipment, which will be distributed, one safety crate each, and the fisherfolks would have received the training. We purchase repeaters to improve fishing to show communication, but they will be available for use once the covers have been repaired, because they were destroyed in the hurricane. We purchased fishing aggregate devices material, the so-called FAD, and the FADs will be constructed in the sea, and the purpose of the FADs is to encourage or to ensure that you get a catch. You will get a catch. We will construct some FADs. There is one in Grenville. We will put one in Sauteurs and other parts of the country. **(Applause)** Two five-ton ice-making machines have been ordered, and they are going to arrive in Grenada this month. Mr. Speaker, things are happening. Things happening. Things happening.

So, having said all that, I just want to make reference to all those major projects that we have taking place in agriculture. Sometime this year, we're going to announce a Farmer's Appreciation Day. It's about time we give our farmers in this country the appreciation that they deserve. **(Applause)**

With the support of the Chinese Agricultural mission at La Sagesse, and I see Lucy

is here… Lucy, stand up, you and your team, man, and take a bow. **(Applause)** Yes, man. They have been helping us a lot with agriculture. With their support, we are now on the eighth programme. We have prepared the ninth programme, but we are only going to open the eighth programme in Mirabeau, a Tissue Culture Plant, which should be done later this month. **(Applause)** A Tissue Culture Plant, in which we're going to produce disease-free plantlets for our farmers **(applause)**, and that is to boost agricultural production as well in our country. So, thank you. Thanks to the nation. I'm looking forward to the ninth programme, and that is in addition to all the equipment they have given to us. **(Applause)**

So, I want you to look out for that ceremony we're going to have when the Tissue Culture Plant is officially launched. It will be on the radio, and it will be on television. It will be in the news.

You know, Mr. Speaker, let me just say this, too often the good things that we do in this country are not known and are not heard, and we don't take time off to speak about the good things that we do in this country. **(Applause)** We want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the good things that we do in this country are widely broadcast **(applause)** for everybody to know, to see and to learn that when you come to this Parliament, you're not speaking with your feelings. **(Applause)** You're not being normative, you're being positive. **(Applause)** That's what the economist is saying. Normative economics and positive economics. Normative economics is based on what you would like to see or what they tell you. Positive economics, and I am a positive economist. **(Applause)** Based on the numbers. You could see it, you could feel it, and you could touch it. Good? So you could broadcast it.

Mr. Speaker, we are working through our cannabis committee. We are working to take to our Parliament a Bill to decriminalise marijuana in this country. **(Applause)** And I see the secretary of the committee is here. Please stand and take a bow, Ms. Noel. Take a bow. **(Laughter)** So I am not lying. I am not lying. **(Applause)** I am speaking the truth. For everything that I say, I can point it out. **(Laughter)** I am speaking the truth. I

am speaking the truth, Mr. Speaker, and that will be a major development in this country. It will be a major development.

The policy has already been approved by the Cabinet. The Bill is being prepared right now by the Ministry of Legal Affairs for the decriminalisation. I use the word "decriminalisation", **(Applause),** not legalisation. Legalisation is a different story. It will come down the road, but a Decriminalisation Bill is being prepared, and when it comes to parliament, my friends, I want you all to listen because I will champion that Bill in Parliament. So, I want you all to listen and be part of the process. Don't go and speak about hearsay and what they say. You must be here. **(Applause)** Be here, so you can get the facts. So when you speak, you speak from the point of view of information, you get it from the horse's mouth. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we, in 2024, we established a Land Regularisation Programme, and the purpose of that programme is to give people in Grenada who are living on crown lands, but they have no paper to show. Some of them have already paid for the land, but they have no title deed, they have no plan, and they have no title deed. Some are paying, and others are there with no title deed.

Our aim, Mr. Speaker, is to regularise them, and regularise them simply means that we're going to give them their plan and their deed, in their hand, **(applause)** which says that they are on that piece of land. Yes? And with that ownership of land, they can improve their economic situation because they can now use that piece of paper and go to a financial institution and get a loan to build a proper house that they're living in, or to educate their child **(applause)** or to open a business. **(Applause)** Good? That is what you refer to as economic independence. **(Applause)**

So, and I mean, there are a lot of people like that in Grenada. The Government gave them the land. The Government say to them, "Go and stay there; take that piece of land", but they didn't give them the title. If you have no title, you can't do anything with the land.

So, Mr. Speaker, hear this. The first batch of about 60 people is going to be receiving their plan and their deed for the piece of land that they already paid for sometime

early next month. **(Applause)** I asked the Prime Minister; I said, "Prime Minister, I want you to give them the plan and the deed. From you. They must receive it from you". So, the people in La Calome, we're coming for you, and those who are all over the country, who are on Government crown lands, we're going to give you the title deeds to your land very, very soon. **(Applause)** So you can feel good about yourself.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are holding this discussion to develop a very strong poultry industry in Grenada. The fundamental problem with poultry in this country is that we already have two big poultry producers in Grenada and a large number of smaller producers. We want to be able, by the year 2030, to have at least 30% of the market of poultry in Grenada **(applause)**, because we consume a lot of poultry in this country.

The problem with poultry is the price of feed; that's the problem. The price of feed. The price of feed is excessive. And what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is that we are trying our best to see how we could bring down the price of feed, so our farmers can compete and produce and compete with the imported poultry products. So we're working on that. **(Applause)** So we're doing all these things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. I was told I do not have much time left, because we have a lot to say. So when people come into this House and say nothing is happening in agriculture, you see what is happening in agriculture, and I'm not finished yet, you know. No, I'm not finished yet.

Under the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, as part of the policy and legislative agenda, we completed the review of the 2017 Fiscal Bill and Regulatory Framework. We completed the National Strategies for Development of Statistics, and our aim is to transform and transition the statistics office into a National Statistics Institute. Good? So we're going to make it into a statutory body.

We have allocated US$325,000 for scholarships for young Grenadians who want to study economics, study mathematics, study econometrics and study statistics. That's a grant. All right? The Cabinet approved it already. The Ministry of Education is going to implement it. US$325,000. Each Grenadian can get up to US$50,000 grant to go and study, as part of our drive to build our Statistics Department.

Thirty-four officers will benefit from training in Advanced Excel. Twelve Information Technology and Survey staff would be trained in a new statistical application. Three officers from our unit will be trained by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia in Trade in Services Statistical Information. And we have over 30 Grenadians, right now, who are well-trained in Post-disaster Needs Assessment. So when the next hurricane passes, we have the people here already who can conduct the assessment for us. Isn't that wonderful? **(Applause)** Does that deserve a round of applause? What do you find? Yes, man. Yes, man. That deserves a round of applause. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we've completed a census and our population now stands, based on 2022 figures, at 109,021. 54,542 are male and 54,479 are female. Our population grew by 2.2% **(time bell rings)**, in 2022. Mr. Speaker, can I ask for another half an hour, please? **(Laughter) (Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I've just started. I have a lot of things to tell our people. Give me an hour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Listen. Listen, Honourable MP.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker: According to our Standing Order, you can't be granted more than 15 minutes. You've asked for 15 minutes at the beginning, and I now grant you seven minutes.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: No, no, no, Mr. Speaker, that's not enough. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker: I now grant you seven minutes to finish.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: All right. I'm taking what you give me, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, our economy has been growing. Our inflation rate, Mr. Speaker, is 1.07%.

You're talking about prices being high? Our CPI, which is the measure of prices in our country…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: … it is 1.07%.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable, may I interrupt you? I think there is a misunderstanding here. When the bell went, the bell meant you had 10 minutes more, so in effect, you now have 17 minutes. Is that clear?

Hon. Lennox Andrews: All right. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank you, thank you, thank you. And this year, we are going to undertake some more data collection on the creative economy so you could measure the contribution of the creative economy to our gross domestic product.

Mr. Speaker, we have completed the Tourism Satellite Account, and that Tourism Satellite Account measures the direct contribution of the tourism industry to our GDP. The figures show that tourism contributes $957 million to our gross domestic product, which is 31% of our GDP. **(Applause)**

And I just want to add very quickly, Mr. Speaker, that in 2025 we are going to continue with the community tourism grant funding project, where we give up to ECD75,000 to people, to Grenadians who want to enhance their tourism product. So all you have to do is go to the ministry, fill out a form, and you get approved. I think last year… How many did we give out last year, Minister for Tourism? You can't remember? But I think, when I was Minister for Tourism, I know I gave out about 25. 25. And in 2025, we've increased the budget by 100% so it's $2 million now. We have to help our local

people to build up and develop their tourism product. **(Applause)**

And just to add in the Creative Industries as well, we have a loan grant scheme at the Grenada Development Bank. Good? We have registered 600 new creatives this year **(applause)**, and we are still asking for creatives who want to build on their creative industry.

In the area of Cooperatives, Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention briefly that we have completed a white paper to give productive cooperatives an Act that is separate from the Financial Cooperatives. Right now, they're under one Act, but productive cooperatives are different from financial cooperatives. Yes? Financial cooperatives are things like credit unions. The Act that governs financial cooperatives can't govern productive cooperatives. They are different, so we are working on giving the productive cooperatives a different Act. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the Rural Economy and what we're doing in the rural economy. Mr. Speaker, we have two main projects in the rural economy: the basic need trust fund, which is a grant from the Caribbean Development Bank; we are in programme number 10, and the Climate Smart Agricultural & Rural Enterprise Programme (SAEP). To start with, BNTF, we are working on completing three major projects; the reconstruction of the Bonair Bridge, which is 85% complete. At the end of this month, it should be completed. The renovation of the Victoria School for Special Education should be completed by June. The Block Five in St. Dominic's RC School, too, will be completed this year. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, things are happening. Things are happening.

In 2025, we are going to start the BNTF 11, and we have asked for projects for BNTF 11. So all ministries that want to submit projects to BNTF can do so now, because we have another grant to start implementing BNTF projects in 2011.

As regards SAEP, the Climate Smart Agriculture Rural Enterprise Programme, just let me say to you, Mr. Speaker, this programme seeks to improve the livelihoods and resilience of beneficiaries by accessing new jobs, start-ups or consultative businesses and adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices. That's the way to go these days

(applause) because we have been affected by climate change, and therefore, our farmers must know what these climate-smart agricultural practices are and how to implement them.

And we're talking about travel, but let me say this. These climate-smart agriculture practices, Mr. Speaker, it is so important that this year, we put $1 million in the budget, because I want the whole Ministry of Agriculture to go to the one-week seminar organised by CARICOM, on CARICOM Agriculture… It's a CARICOM Agriculture Seminar. In that seminar, we are going to learn about the latest developments in the agricultural sector, with a major focus on what the climate-smart agriculture practices are that we must know and we must implement.

So I'm putting a warning right now, Mr. Speaker, so come September, the Ministry of Agriculture would be half full, because the staff would be attending that seminar in St. Kitts, we budget for it. So when we travel, when we travel abroad, we aren't travelling just so. **(Laughter)** We're travelling for knowledge **(applause)** to bring back to our country, so we can better develop the agricultural sector.

I already told the PS. I told him to, because we've already received the correspondence from CARICOM, get the staff in place, and prepare the staff. We're going to St. Kitts to learn about these climate-smart agricultural practices. Our extension officers must know them. Our farmers must know them, and our farmers must practice them, so when the next hurricane passes, Mr. Speaker, we could deal with it. We will not suffer all these losses anymore. Good?

So SAEP has three components: Business Development, Climate Smart Agriculture, they have it too, and Enhance Direct Funding. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that 480 people benefited from SAEP in 2024. **(Applause)** So let me tell you. As of September 2024, 92 local farmers and medium-sized contractors were trained: 52 in St. Patrick, 15 in Carriacou, 12 in St. John, and 12 in St. George. Good? They were trained in how to bid to win. So it was a workshop that assisted them in knowing how to do the bidding process, how to bid for a project. Good? **(Applause)**

So, yes, we had this year, under the committee Tourism Funding Project, 15 approved; each received EC$75,000. **(Applause)** Things are happening. Things are happening, and a lot of things are happening. Let me tell you. 327 beneficiaries accessed grant financing for their businesses under the SAEP. 93 beneficiaries accessed business grant funding to develop their businesses. 40 beneficiaries started business operations in various sectors, including manufacturing, poultry, agro business, health and wellness, animal husbandry, among others. **(Applause)**

66 beneficiaries who access grant financing received training in Risk Management, Business Continuity, Contingency Planning, Costing and Pricing, Record Keeping, Payroll Administration, Packaging and Labelling, Inventory Management, and Preparation of Tax Documents. So we're not only giving you money. We're teaching you how to manage, and we're giving you after-sales service as well. Good?

Under the Climate Smart Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, 337 community members, 218 male, 119 female, including 98 4-H students, received climate-smart agriculture awareness sessions. 143 beneficiaries received climate-smart agriculture and fishing extension support services. 17 beneficiaries, both farmers and entrepreneurs, received marketing support. 666 climate smart agriculture grants were completed, and one climate smart agriculture 4-H shade house, which commenced in 2024, at the St. Mary's R.C. School in La Fillette. It was a big programme. It was a big session. Good? **(Applause)**

And we're going forward, Mr. Speaker. Under climate-smart agriculture, in infrastructure, we have irrigation and farm road access. Good? We have tender documents prepared for irrigation, for Conference, La Porterie, Chambord, Belair Road, Limlair, and Dumfries in Carriacou. Mr. Speaker, we completed the Granton Farm-Access Road. **(Applause)** I was there. Minister Ron Redhead and I opened that road. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, when we opened that road, you know what happened? The road is nice, nice, nice, nice, nice, you must go and see it. **(Laughter)** After everybody was paid. We don't owe anybody on the road. After everybody was paid, Mr. Speaker, we had a savings of EC$800,000. **(Applause)** No, so I started to think. I said, "Aww,

EC$800,000 savings, and everybody got paid"? We didn't make any changes to the document, no corrections to the documents or the roads, everybody was paid, so wait… EC$800,000 savings? What might have happened to those savings? **(Laughter) (Applause)**

The Clozier Farm Road, Mr. Speaker, we have done work on that as well. We have implemented the Boys-to-Men Programme. We conducted a 10-week programme that covered various topics, including Gender-Based Violence, Respectful Behaviour, and Coping Skills. During this period, 17 young men between the ages of 12 and 18 were supported in St. Patrick. Good? We're doing things, Mr. Speaker.

The Rural Development Unit provided support to three major components under the Enhanced Direct Access Project, and that project is funded by the Green Climate Fund.

The Grenada Community Development Agency, GRENCODA. We spent EC$652,000 to construct an additional level of the building in Marquis, and that will serve as an emergency centre.

The Programme for Adolescent Mothers. We enhanced their roof at a cost of EC$716,000.

TAMCC, we fixed their roof for them. Good?

The Grenada School for Special Education. We're also fixing their roof for them. Good? In 2025, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of projects to be implemented, both of the Business Enterprise Development and, of course, the Climate Smart Agriculture.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you. I just want to elaborate a little bit more on that Hydroponic Project, because I remember some time ago, the Member for St. Mark asked about the project. So, let me tell you about this project.

The objective is to introduce modern innovations in agriculture at an early age. Fifteen schools in Grenada and Carriacou are going to be part of that programme. Good? Each school receive a hydroponics system with a planting capacity of 300 plants. Yes? Technical training will be provided to the 4-H schools, to the 4-H leaders, the 4-H officers,

and to the principals and other staff. Good? So, in the 15 schools, we expect a minimum of 300 children to benefit, and I want to tell you which schools they are. The schools are:

- The Woburn Methodist School.

Member for St. Mark, listen to me. Thank you. **(Laughter)** You did well in farming, MP.

- The South St. George Government School;
- St. George's Methodist School in River Road;
- The Constantine Methodist School;
- The Happy Hill R.C. School;
- The St. Peter's R.C. School;
- The Bonair Government School;
- The St. Patrick's Anglican;
- The Hermitage Government School;
- The Tivoli R.C. School;
- The Paraclete Government School;
- The Birch Grove R.C. School;
- The Munich RC School;
- St. Theresa's RC School; and
- Mt. Pleasant Government School. **(Applause)**

Things happening. We're doing things. We're reaching the people directly. We're reaching the people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this to you. In March of this year, SAEP will end, good, but we're going to replace SAEP with a new programme, with funding from IFAD and with funding from **(inaudible comment)**. Good? That new programme is called the Resilience Integration Programme promoting Environmental Sustainability, and its initials are R-I-P-E-S, RIPES. It is the same staff that we have at SAEP that will continue to implement this programme, and, of course, we do have a number of programmes to be implemented there.

So let me move fast, Mr. Speaker, and speak about the Blue Economy. We're going to create a new ministry, which is called the Ministry of the Blue Economy and Marine Affairs. I will be the Minister for that new ministry. The Permanent Secretary is going to be Mr. Javon Williams. Javon, stand up, man, take a bow. **(Laughter)** Good? We have our staffing in place. **(Time bell rings)** Five minutes, please?

Mr. Speaker: I can't; you need to wind up.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: All right, so let me wind up.

Mr. Speaker: I can't grant you any more time.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: So let me wind up. So why not, Mr. Speaker, let me just say a few things about my constituency. Well, my constituency is St. Andrew South West, and I must thank the people because they like me and they support me. We had 20 planned office sessions or meetings. Apart from the numerous formal and informal community interactions with constituents, 80 constituents were seen during those planned office sessions.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP. You need to just wind up.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: So I'm winding up.

Mr. Speaker: No reporting.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: No more reporting? All right, Mr. Speaker. Good? So, Mr. Speaker, let me wind up by saying this.

I want to end my presentation, Mr. Speaker, by leaving you with one word, one word, one word, that can transform society and improve the lives of all Grenadians. One word that can change the world. One word that we must all embrace, because it is good

for us. One word that must be placed at the service of humanity. Mr. Speaker, that word is Ideas. **(Applause)** Ideas. This Government, Mr. Speaker, is a Government of ideas. **(Applause)** New ideas and action, that's why we're going on. Vision with ideas and action.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity we have to bring new ideas to this country and to transform Grenada into a peaceful, meaningful, developed nation, where other people of the world can be proud of and we can be an example for others to emulate and to follow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Honourable MP for St. Andrew South West, and I now invite the Honourable MP for St. George South East to make his presentation.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give full support to the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure, for the fiscal year January to December 2025, as presented by the Minister for Finance, on March 7, in the sum of XC$1,912,872,014, under the theme, "Vision 75: Grenada—Resilient and Rising".

I do so, Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Parliamentary Representative for the constituency of St. George South East, and as Minister within the Ministry of Health. Mr. Speaker, my presentation will set out arguments why I support the budget and, in particular, defend the allocation of $159.2 million allocated to the Ministry of Health.

During my presentation, Mr. Speaker, I will highlight some of our achievements in 2024, identify some of the challenges we encountered, and argue why it is necessary to support the budget allocation to the Ministry of Health. **(Applause)**

I will also, Mr. Speaker, debunk the motion of mismanagement, self-interest, and incompetence as erroneously presented by the Leader of the Opposition. I will explain, Mr. Speaker, why the Government is allocating $94.4 million to Recurrent Expenditure, inclusive of $15.6 million for Administration, $18 million to Community Health, $3.6 million to Princess Alice Hospital, $2.5 million to Princess Royal Hospital and $54.6 million to the

General Hospital. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I will also explain why the Government is allocating $64.8 million towards Capital Expenditure, inclusive of $15 million towards Hospital Quality Improvement, $23.6 million towards Project Polaris: the construction of a brand new state-of-the-art hospital **(applause)**, plus US$25 million allocated towards Project Polaris special fund at the ECCB.

I will also explain, Mr. Speaker, why $7 million is allocated towards the health sector strengthening and transitioning, $1.5 million towards a hospital statutorisation and $2.4 million, Mr. Speaker, towards the National Health Insurance captured under Vote 20. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, for some, our goals may seem overly ambitious, but may I inform you, Mr. Speaker, that this budget is anchored in the words of scripture, in the Book of Zachariah, 4:6 and I quote, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts". **(Applause)**

I now turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the achievements that we have been able to do during the year 2024, sowing the seeds of transformation. Mr. Speaker, during 2024, the Ministry of Health was able to erect the foundation on which the seeds of transformation will begin to germinate.

Mr. Speaker, there was a sharp focus on standardisation of practices during the year 2024, which saw the introduction of the hearts initiative in primary health care and the ongoing work in hospital services to develop departmental protocols. These, Mr. Speaker, we consider as bedrock towards the transformation process.

Mr. Speaker, the engagement of the Mt. Sinai Hospital System in the latter part of 2024, that, Mr. Speaker, is a relevant and timely step towards the transformation process.

During 2024, Mr. Speaker, three additional community Doctors were hired to facilitate the extension of hours of service at the Grand Anse Medical Station, Gouyave Health Centre and Sauteurs Health Centre.

Health Information Systems

Mr. Speaker, during 2024, we saw the digitalisation of surveillance operations with the implementation of a District Health Information System (DHIS2). We are happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that there is now weekly communicable disease reporting, case-based surveillance for agroviruses and a complaint module, Mr. Speaker, is implemented for environmental health.

Mr. Speaker, during the year 2024, we implemented the Civil Registry Information System under DG4R Project; the Digital Government for Resilience Project. This project, Mr. Speaker, aims to digitalise the Civil Registry, and that is significantly advanced.

We are happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that PricewaterhouseCoopers completed the information gathering phase and submitted the draft software requirements specification document for review. So, Mr. Speaker, the foundation, Mr. Speaker, has been laid for take-off.

Nursing and Midwifery Education

Mr. Speaker, I wish to state to this Honourable House that healthcare is built with the useful and helpful hands and the thinking minds of healthcare professionals. That is why, Mr. Speaker, our endeavour is to continue to push for education, training and continuous professional development within the service. **(Applause)** And you will see throughout my presentation, Mr. Speaker, that significant efforts are made towards the professional development of our people within the service.

The General Nursing Programme, Mr. Speaker, is delivered by the St. George's University. A total of 21 candidates, Mr. Speaker, sat the Regional Examination for Nurses Registration, the RN; the RENR examination, during the period 2024. Twenty of those candidates, Mr. Speaker, succeeded, and most of them were able to attain employment within the system. A total of 32 candidates, Mr. Speaker, are also eligible to sit the said exam this year, 2025.

I now take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to wish those candidates every success for their exams. The RENR serves to ensure that nurses have the competencies and skills required to provide quality care to the people of the region in their capacity as registered nurses.

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Mr. Speaker, during the period, 25 Registered Nurses commenced training in the 12-month Midwifery Programme during the period. This programme, Mr. Speaker, is run by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the T. A. Marryshow Community College through a MoU with the college. One Ward Manager, Mr. Speaker, in Carriacou successfully completed the family nurse practitioner programme in Jamaica. This programme, Mr. Speaker, is a two-year programme in duration, and the qualification is at the master's level.

Mr. Speaker, during the year, one staff nurse successfully completed training in Critical Care Nursing, specialised area, at the University Hospital of The West Indies, Jamaica Campus. The duration of the programme, Mr. Speaker, is also a period of one year.

Also, one staff nurse successfully completed training in Operation Room Nursing, Jamaica. This nurse, Mr. Speaker, was awarded second place in clinical work and was also awarded for the best case study in her programme. She obtained an "A" grade overall, and we offer commendation to her. **(Applause)**

Also, Mr. Speaker, one Registered Nurse completed training in Nephrology in Jamaica. Further, a registered nurse successfully completed training in Post-Basic Psychiatric Nursing in Jamaica. Except for the Ward Manager, Mr. Speaker, all of the nurses were funded via scholarship provided by the Government of Grenada **(applause)**, to the tune of $115,292 in total.

So, Mr. Speaker, the argument here is about setting forward, to us, the platform for the taking off of healthcare in Grenada. We understand, Mr. Speaker, the condition within which healthcare currently exists. You would recognise, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a specialised area of care, not simply general nursing, but we want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, throughout the entire system, we have specialists to be able to handle care at various levels throughout the system. **(Applause)**

I continue. Mr. Speaker, four nurses completed their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree online at Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland, England. Ten Nursing Assistants who possessed the entry requirements for the General Nursing Programme

were awarded scholarships by the Government of Grenada to pursue the programme at St. George's University. **(Applause)** Twelve nurses attended the training courses in China, and we thank the Chinese Government for their continued support. One nurse participated in a course held in Japan on the Improvement of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Systems in Disaster Situations as part of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Programme.

I now turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Central Medical Stores. Central Medical Stores, Mr. Speaker, is the facility of the component within the system in which medical supplies are procured and disseminated throughout the system.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that medicine availability at Central Medical Stores was rated at 93% for the year 2024. Which means, Mr. Speaker, for the year, there has been significant improvement in that area. The question is, why is this so?

This is so, Mr. Speaker, because we are able to hire a Central Medical Stores Manager and also add a Supplier Officer. We saw some improvement, also Mr. Speaker, in general processing time for requisitions, and we continue to work with the team to ensure even greater efficiency within the system.

Mr. Speaker, several Standard Operating Procedures were developed for the Central Medical Stores for the various components, including procuring, receiving, storing, delivering medication and cleaning. We also, Mr. Speaker, saw it fit to do a general clean-up of that place at Mount Gay, Central Medical Stores. We were able to remove a lot of expired and broken equipment to create some more space.

Mr. Speaker, we also were able to develop a national list of medicines within the public sector, and this, Mr. Speaker, enabled us to be able to keep track of what medicines are most frequently used in the system so that we will not run out of them. That national list, Mr. Speaker, is extremely important to ensure that we stay on track with diseases as they come forward and we are able to supply the medications to combat any of these diseases as they happen.

I now turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Pharmacy. Mr. Speaker, five pharmacists received training in Leadership and Management. Two junior pharmacists

received training in Epidemiology for Global Health through the University of Washington. We were able to relocate the Hospital Pharmacy from its previous location to the ground floor of Phase 2 of the hospital in November. We were successfully able to do that, Mr. Speaker, without interrupting service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, we are able to compile Standard Operating Procedure for preparing for and responding to disasters and emergencies. Ongoing work also continues on the development of a draft drug control policy. Mr. Speaker, during the year, a review was conducted on the work of the Pharmacy Council—its institutional and legislative framework. A report was submitted, Mr. Speaker, for action. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm taking you through the various departments in a methodical way so that you understand, Mr. Speaker. At every level in the system, we are doing something. We are laying the foundation, sowing the seeds for the transformation.

Laboratory Services

Mr. Speaker, the engagement of Accreditation Canada to lead the process of accreditation of our hospital laboratory is ongoing. We were able, Mr. Speaker, to recruit a Quality Manager for the Laboratory, and we're able, during the period, to also implement some new tests. We continue, Mr. Speaker. We are able to collaborate with St. George's University student group for a blood donation drive.

Radiology

Mr. Speaker, training of Midwives in Obstetrics Ultrasound through our collaboration with RAD-AID International. We were able to do that. We were able to receive the donation of two ultrasound units. We also receive 10 Point-of-Care Ultrasound Systems.

Dialysis

Mr. Speaker, within that unit, Dialysis Unit, we are able to install a New Water System, and in Oncology, Mr. Speaker, we are able to install a new Chemotherapy Mixing Chamber

Medical Services

Mr. Speaker, during the period we're able to hire 26 new staff: four Medical Specialists, seven House Doctors, one Radiographer, two Medical Technicians, and two Physiotherapists. **(Applause)** The Mount Gay Facility, Mr. Speaker, we moved the number of staff there from three to seven. We now have four House Officers, two Physicians and one Registrar. **(Applause)** At Princess Alice Hospital, we have increased the number to eight. We now have seven House Officers and one Registrar.

Community Mental Health Programme

Mr. Speaker, we are happy to report that we were able to implement at the six health centres throughout the State of Grenada that Mental Healthcare is now available throughout all the six health centres. **(Applause)**

Training Opportunities

Mr. Speaker, four doctors received training in Acute Trauma Life Support within the Accident and Emergency Unit. Mr. Speaker, you'd recognise again, these are critical areas within which we must train and develop our people.

Customer Service Training

If you want to call it Patient Care Training, that was conducted system-wide. We engage a Consultant who assisted us, Mr. Speaker, to train our staff system-wide. We expect to repeat the same exercises this year until we get to the place of comfort.

Neonatal Care Training

We conducted that through… Or that was conducted by the World Paediatrics. Also, Mr. Speaker, we had eight doctors awarded scholarships to specialise in the following areas: Psychiatry, Urology, Internal Medicine, and Orthopaedics in Cuba. Also, Mr. Speaker, Internal Medicine, Anaesthesia, Critical Care and Orthopaedics Training was conducted in Guyana, University of the West Indies—Medical Science.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, we want to show that what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, within the system is laying the foundation because we recognise, Mr. Speaker, what we met in the system, Mr. Speaker, must be transformed. We must take it to a desired place before we are able to talk about improvement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn my attention to the Medical Missions, and I do not have all of them listed here, but I just want to highlight just a few. And as we speak, Mr. Speaker, we have what we call the Grenada Medical Missions. They are right on ground. Over 50 people, I heard, right now. They are doing hundreds of surgeries this week and reaching people in the various communities, and assisting in ensuring that our population remains healthy. That Medical Mission, Mr. Speaker, is in collaboration with the St. George's Baptist Church. That is happening as we speak, and we thank them.

We also thank, Mr. Speaker… Well, we thank all Medical Missions, Mr. Speaker, who have visited the shores of Grenada during the year 2024. We thank them and we continue to do all in our power to work with them to ensure that we have a smooth entry of professionals as they come to assist us in those areas.

These Missions, Mr. Speaker, are critical Missions because they fill the gaps that our system is not able to fill in specialised areas, in particular. We want to thank St. George's University. We want to thank World Paediatrics, which chose the State of Palestine and Alliance of Jamaica, and American Humanitarians. Mr. Speaker, there are many more, but we want to thank all of them for their contribution towards the development of healthcare in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I would now want to turn my attention towards the Dental Department. The Dental Department has made significant progress in delivering quality patient care and expanding our services in 2024. Key highlights include the increase in patient care, successful implementation of new programmes, and a focus on staff training and development. Mr. Speaker, during the period, we had a total of 19 staff members, six dental surgeons, one maxillofacial surgeon, and 12 dental assistants.

Dental Services

Mr. Speaker, we are happy to report that the restoration of dental services in Gouyave and Victoria. After a number of years, we now have dental services in Gouyave and Victoria. **(Applause)** Also, an addition of a new dental surgeon to the department, so that is a plus for us, having a dental surgeon. **(Applause)**

We also, during the period, were able to conduct a successful Dental Health Motorcade that was held to create awareness for the population, including a dental health walk which happened, and a quiz which was conducted under the theme, "A happy mouth. A happy body". That was conducted around World Oral Health Day.

Mr. Speaker, the Dental Health Department was able to hold a dental health retreat as part of their continuing professional development at the Coyaba Beach Resort that happened last year and the installation and commissioning of seven new top-of-the-line dental units, DCI Edge. That is one of the top leading Dental Systems in the world today. We are able to install seven of those around the country. All right. We continue, Mr. Speaker, to participate… The Dental Health Department continues to participate in the School Health Programme, and that again is an ongoing process.

Environmental Health

Mr. Speaker, approval was given for the introduction of the New Food Handlers Certification Programme. This entails participating in mandatory training programmes, doing medical checks, and receiving a new food handler's ID. All right, so that is new. The programme, right now, is running simultaneously with the old programme until we get to where we need to go, but the training to get certified can be acquired on PAHO's virtual website. You can do it there, or the Ministry of Health can provide the training. To date, we have 14 food handlers duly certified and have received their ID to handle food. **(Applause)**

Complaints Investigation by Environmental Health

Mr. Speaker, Complaints Investigation continues to be a major part of Environmental Health, and several complaints were received during the period. Throughout every district, what we continue to do is work with our legal advice to take some of these matters to court. Hopefully, this year, some of these matters will crystallise in the court, if no action is taken by those who have offended the system.

While the department made some strides regarding establishment of a protocol for taking matters to court, this continues to be a major challenge. So we're going to work on that this year and that we expect to see some results.

Following Hurricane Beryl, Mr. Speaker, Environmental Health made some significant strides. You would recall that there was a dengue outbreak, Mr. Speaker. We are able to move expeditiously with the help and support of CARPHA, getting some fogging machines and all of that, and we were able to respond rather quickly and rapidly on the islands of Carriacou, Petite Martinique, as well as, Grenada to curb that, and by December, by the Christmas weekend, we had zero new cases. So we made some significant progress there.

Illegal Dumping

Illegal dumping of garbage and white goods continues to be a major concern throughout the island. The department responded to several complaints of this nature. Mr. Speaker, we need to be a little more responsible as far as that is concerned. The department will step up its efforts in the New Year. We continue to work with Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority to curb this problem.

An inventory of illegal dumping sites has also been compiled by The Environmental Health Department, and clean-up action has happened. We continue to monitor these sites and ensure that we curb this problem in collaboration with the Solid Waste Management Authority.

Community Nursing Department

Mr. Speaker, several Men's Health Clinics and other outreach activities were conducted during the period, and we continue to champion men's health and other problems within the system. So, we want to commend the Community Nursing Department for their continued work. Mr. Speaker, during Hurricane Beryl, the department worked assiduously with Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in particular, and also the northern part of the island, to bring things under control to ensure that services were not too badly interrupted, notwithstanding the destruction of the health facilities in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

We also pause, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Samaritan Purse for their quick and immediate response. **(Applause)** The department, Mr. Speaker, during that period, was able to do pop-up clinics around the island to ensure that they responded to situations. I

just want to say within that department, also, Mr. Speaker, we had 165 staff successfully complete the PAHO Online Training. I just want to always speak about these trainings because that is what we will use to transform the system.

Receipt of Supplies for Community Health

We were able to receive, Mr. Speaker, 10 automated external defibrillators, 14 43-inch television, and those television sets are necessary for the display of important information to patients as they come into the system; 15 desktop computers to enable greater efficiency with work, nine laptops, six portable ultrasound machines, and 11 oxygen concentrators were received during the period. I'll skip some of these things.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we now turn our attention to the challenges in healthcare. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to us, that, Healthcare in Grenada has not improved to the level that my Government wants to see, and that is why, Mr. Speaker, we are sowing the seeds to ensure that we transform Healthcare in Grenada.

So, Mr. Speaker, not because we are sitting in the chair, we understand and I recognise, Mr. Speaker, that ultimate responsibility rests with me, but I will not come, Mr. Speaker, and lie to the nation and boast that Healthcare has improved, when it has not. **(Applause)** That, Mr. Speaker, is the character trait of the previous Administration. **(Applause)** But this Government, Mr. Speaker, is very close friends with the truth.

Mr. Speaker, as a caring and responsible Government, we reaffirm our commitment to transforming our Healthcare System into the Healthcare Capital of the Eastern Caribbean, and we are proud to say that, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)**, recognising that central to quality healthcare in Grenada is our healthcare professionals; our people. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we insist on training and professional development throughout the entire system.

Mr. Speaker, we inherited a badly broken Healthcare System **(applause)**, with an acute shortage of human resources, acute shortage of human resources, in all areas within the system. And the thing is, Mr. Speaker, we cannot simply pull someone off the street to put them to work in Healthcare, because it takes, Mr. Speaker, between five and 10 years to train people to work within the system. But, Mr. Speaker, this Government

met an Attrition Policy in place within the Ministry of Health, in which for every 10 persons that leave the system, the Ministry was allowed to hire only three. This policy, Mr. Speaker, created a rapid decline **(cell phone rings)** in the availability of professionals within the system. Added to that, Mr. Speaker, there was no previous… There was no provision…

Mr. Speaker: Hold on, Honourable MP. Proceed. Proceed, please.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thanks. I hope I get back my five minutes. **(Laughter)** Added to that, Mr. Speaker, there was no provision for succession planning. Absolutely none. And as a result of this, Mr. Speaker, we saw some of our most senior and well-experienced professionals leave the system with no one trained to fill those positions. That is what we are confronted with at this moment, Mr. Speaker. The problem continues.

Mr. Speaker, at the General Hospital, there are three reporting lines: Administration, Nursing and Medical Services. Mr. Speaker, this in itself is a problem because it leaves a massive gap for passing the blame and escaping responsibility, because overall responsibility at the hospital, Mr. Speaker, doesn't rest currently with any single individual.

It rests with the PS and the Ministry of Health, who do not work at the General Hospital, and ultimate responsibility, Mr. Speaker, rests with the Minister. But, Mr. Speaker, if nothing is reported, the PS won't know, the Minister won't know, and that is the harsh reality. But, Mr. Speaker, that system is a recipe for disaster. There should be a single head at the General Hospital where responsibility rests; that Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Speaker, did you know that if you wish to hire a Medical Doctor, a Nurse, a Biomedical Engineer, an Ambulance Driver or a Cleaner or any support staff within the hospital, their application must be forwarded to the Department of Public Administration to decide whether or not you should hire that person? Did you know that, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, did you know that if any significant work is to be undertaken at the hospital,

approval must first be obtained from the corresponding ministry within the public service? In essence, Mr. Speaker, most of the significant execution of work happens by another ministry. This, Mr. Speaker, is problematic in itself.

Mr. Speaker, Healthcare in Grenada has been in poor shape for many years, many decades Mr. Speaker. This, Mr. Speaker, is the very first Government in recent memory to take this size of action to arrest the healthcare challenges that confront us as a people. **(Applause)** I will tell you why shortly.

Mr. Speaker, this Government did not waste time blaming the previous Administration for the poor state of affairs that we met when we took office. Deplorable as it was, Mr. Speaker, we saddle our horses, put our hands to work, and our minds engage in thinking. But, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that many years ago, a famous doctor from the parish of St. Mark became the Minister for Health, Mr. Speaker, and all of Grenada breathed a sigh of relief at that point in time. But, Mr. Speaker, that sign of relief was short-lived, because the baby was too heavy for her hands. She left it, Mr. Speaker, and took up the Ministry of Tourism. That's the reality.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges of healthcare are real and cannot be wished away. It cannot be fixed overnight. There must be, Mr. Speaker, deliberate, decisive and sustained efforts to transform Healthcare in Grenada. **(Applause)** I repeat, there must be deliberate, decisive and sustained efforts to transform Healthcare in Grenada. **(Applause)**

And this Government, Mr. Speaker, is backing its efforts with a budget of $159.2 million and a set of transformative initiatives for this purpose. **(Applause)** During 2025, Mr. Speaker, we will advance several critical initiatives to strengthen healthcare, improve service delivery and lay the foundation for a transformative future through the following initiatives.

Hospital quality improvement in partnership with the Mount Sinai Hospital Systems. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada, through the Ministry of Health, has embarked on a hospital quality improvement initiative with the help of Mount Sinai Hospital Systems, one of the largest teaching hospitals in the United States. A

comprehensive needs assessment and quality improvement initiative of our current health care system is currently on the way. **(Applause)** This, Mr. Speaker, will guide the development of the new hospital and broader health sector reforms.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is backed by a budget of $15 million. When this process is completed, Mr. Speaker, we expect to see significant steps taken towards a well-structured and effectively managed Healthcare System. As a responsible Government, Mr. Speaker, we recognise that it is important to make decisive cultural and operational shifts before we move into the new hospital. **(Applause)** And that is why, Mr. Speaker, these seeds of transformation are being sown now, because, Mr. Speaker, we cannot simply take old wine and put it into the new wineskins. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, during the presentation by the Leader of the Opposition, she posited that three years is enough time for the implementation of National Health Insurance, but, Mr. Speaker, 23 years was not enough. **(Applause) (Laughter) (Inaudible comments by Members)** Mr. Speaker, NHI is important because it ensures equitable access to healthcare. Healthcare is very expensive, as we must find ways to be able to finance healthcare. **(Applause)** Having a plan without a mechanism to back it up to finance it, Mr. Speaker, is like a spinning top in mud. **(Applause)**

To this end, I wish to state that National Health Insurance is our top priority. In 2025, we will move expeditiously to advance the legislative and institutional framework needed for the implementation of NHI. This will include finalising the insurance coverage model, stakeholder consultation and public awareness. Mr. Speaker, a budget of $2.4 million is set aside for this purpose. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Statutorisation of the General Hospital. Mr. Speaker, we are happy to announce that the Ministry of Health has received Cabinet's approval to proceed with the statutorisation of the three State-owned Hospitals. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this initiative is designed to assist in arresting some of the problems identified earlier, cut through some of the unnecessary bureaucracy, and set the platform for greater accountability and efficiency throughout the entire system.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, a Statutorisation Transition Board has been identified and a Terms of Reference developed. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the Transition Board will be led by a well-known and well-experienced transformation leader; our own Lucia Livingston Andall and a cross-section of well-seasoned professionals. **(Applause)** We expect the Transition Board to commence activities on April 1, 2025. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we understand that statutorisation by itself is not the answer to all our healthcare challenges, but helps to set a platform for the transformation of the system. To this end, Mr. Speaker, a budget of $1.5 million has been allocated along with $7 million for health sector transitioning and strengthening. **(Applause)**

I now turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Project Polaris, the construction of a brand new State-of-the-art Medical and Teaching Hospital. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition in her deliberations referred to the construction of the new Teacher Hospital as something that is cosmetic and superficial in thinking. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, one of the most transformative initiatives on our Healthcare agenda is the construction of a brand-new state-of-the-art Teaching Hospital for all of Grenada. **(Applause)** The new hospital, Mr. Speaker, will be designed to offer a higher standard of care, expand specialist services, improve diagnostic capabilities, and so, Mr. Speaker, in 2025 we will focus on finalising key aspects of the design and the financing model. **(Applause)** We hope, Mr. Speaker, to break ground during the first half of 2026. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, for 2024, an amount of $23.6 million has been allocated for this project, Project Polaris.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet has approved the establishment of a special fund, which will be held at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, in the sum of US$25 million. **(Applause) (Time bell rings)** Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, a small percentage of the National Transformation Fund receipts will be set aside monthly commencing June 2025 after finalising the legal requirements. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the constituency of St. George South East. I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the members of my constituency, St. George

South East, for their support that they have given to me over the last 12 months. I also thank them, Mr. Speaker, for their prayerful support during my period of illness.

Mr. Speaker, during the period 2024, notwithstanding that I suffered a flat tire for several months, we were able to build 33 new houses **(applause)**, 35 bathrooms and toilets, 62 house repairs, and 40 sets of materials given out to different residents. A total of 170 households receiving support from the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, these were done in various villages throughout the constituency, including Marian, St. Paul's, La Borie, Mt. Airy, Springs, Lowthers Lane, the Boca's, Morne Jaloux, Paddock, Calivigny, Hope Vale and Corbeau Town.

Community Development

Mr. Speaker, in our bid to enhance safety and accessibility, throughout the constituency, we constructed several drains, roads and retaining walls in the following areas—

- Corbeau Town Road; we were able to do some widening and drainage in that area; La Borie; concrete roads, curb walls and slipper drains;
- Hope Vale; we were able to do some work there, new roads and a foot path;
- De Faux; we're able to do some roads, slipper drains;
- Creighton; box drain;
- Confer; road construction;
- The Bocas; retaining wall;
- Cocoa Road; road widening, drainage and back wall construction;
- Golden Drive; road repair and drainage; and
- Cleaning and widening of the Hope Vale by-road and more.

Mr. Speaker, during the period, just to sum it up, we were able to do 20 slipper drains, 15 box drains or storm drains, 17 new roads and 10 asphalt pavements.

Sports Development

Community Sport Facilities and Events receive robust funding to encourage youth participation and enhance local amenities. Mr. Speaker, we are able to do some temporary lighting at the La. Borie Playing Field, until we do it permanently, which we will

do sometime this year, and that was to facilitate night activities at the playing field. Repair of lights at the La. Borie indoor sporting facilities. Purchase of new goal posts for La. Borie Playing Field. Purchase of new roofing materials for the Indoor Facility at La. Borie. Contribution towards the Mt. Airy Sports Club. Tents, tables, chairs for Morne Jaloux R.C. School Sports.

We were able to do, Mr. Speaker, some skill training and for people, and, in particular, Mr. Speaker, we have anti-drug campaign running toward the constituency and as part of it, Mr. Speaker, we did anti-drug and violent control, and so we are able to do martial art programme that run for three months, capturing young ones between ages seven to fifteen.

Community Engagement, Social Events and Festivities

We were engaged in some of that, Mr. Speaker. In our bid to continue to strengthen our cultural heritage, we are able to do, in December, Mr. Speaker, we're able to do, "Christmas Begins in Southeast Extravaganza". It was done in La. Borie Crossroad. We were able to do some cultural presentations as an award to a number of citizens who made a contribution in so many different ways. We were able to award our citizens for that. We did toy distribution, hampers and refreshments for the children. So we are able to do quite a lot there. The Guy Faux, we continue to do that in collaboration with Commancheros. We continue to support Commancheors in what they have been doing as the leading steelband in the country.

Community Facilities Upgrade

Mr. Speaker, we assisted some of the schools, also. We did AC units for the Morne Jaloux Primary School. It was pretty hot on the inside. We went and looked at it, and we recognised that, I guess, because of the shape of the school and how it is situated, the circulation of air was very prohibitive, and so we are able to assist the school with some new AC units. We did some fans for St. Paul's Government School, also. We give them a digital printer, which assists the school in being able to set the exams and print materials, so the children can learn in a more comfortable environment. Mr. Speaker, for the Marian Preschool, we did the fencing and windows for the school. Also, for the

community centre, we did some repair work on the community centre at La Borie. Throughout the constituency, we were able to erect some LED lights.

Mr. Speaker, just in wrapping up now, I just want to run through some of the plans for 2025 for the constituency. We want to upgrade the St. Paul's Community Centre, and so we want to do some renovations to the physical structure. I mean that's one of the oldest centres that we have. It's a large centre. We can do much more with it for skill training purposes, and so on. So, we want to do some repairs on the system right throughout the entire facility.

The Indoor Basketball Court, Mr. Speaker, we want to make this one of the top-of-the-line indoor facilities in the region. We have what it takes to do that. The structure is in place, and what we need to do now is to upgrade it, add some more seating, and pave the floor properly, restore the gym and the toilet facilities, the roof, and so much more to be done there. The La. Borie Playing Field, Mr. Speaker, we've got to install the permanent lighting as well as construction of a pavilion.

Bus stops, we have a few marked areas that we've identified for the construction of bus stops. So, you're going to see that happening soon. We will be erecting some bus stops.

Good Hope Playing Field. Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Representative for St. George North East, we are going to be installing the roofing system at that facility and doing some renovation. We work jointly.

The Mt. Airy Playing Field, Mr. Speaker, has been an eyesore for some time now. We need to have it levelled. We had a little setback last year. This year, we're going to get it done.

Education and Training

Mr. Speaker, we continue on that front. This year, we just identified two for now, but hopefully we will be able to do some more. We want to do some electrical training and plumbing training to bring people, some of those who are interested, into alignment. So we've already identified the trainers, and hopefully we will be able to do that.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Philip Telesford

With just a few seconds on the clock, Mr. Speaker, I utter thanks and grateful appreciation. I thank my constituents, Mr. Speaker, as well as the constituency office, for your continued prayer, your best wishes and support as we continue to work together to build a beautiful nation.

Mr. Speaker, I also thank the management and staff at the Ministry of Health for your support and discipline, which you have demonstrated over the last 12 months. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister and all Members of Cabinet for their support and teamwork throughout 2024. **(Applause)** I also thank, Mr. Speaker, the National Democratic Congress, because it's through that machinery, through the party machinery, Mr. Speaker, we are able to contemplate this transformation vision, and it's true that mechanism, Mr. Speaker, I'm able to stand here today, representing an NDC Government.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my family, including my wife, who is here with me, my children, siblings, and my mother, for their continued support. I thank Mr. Speaker, my God, for his amazing grace and the wisdom that he has imparted to me. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me this past 60 minutes to deliberate within this House. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for St George South East. By my watch, it is just past 1:20 p.m. I proposed that we take the lunch break now and resume, sharply, one hour after this. Parliament is now on lunch.

House adjourned for lunch at 1:25 p.m.

House resumed at 2:33 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Tevin Andrews

Mr. Speaker: This Parliament now reconvenes. I trust everyone had enough time to enjoy their lunch, and we will now begin the afternoon session with a presentation from the MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Tevin Andrews: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to Budget '25. Mr. Speaker, I want the Hansard to record my unwavering support for Budget 2025, which I believe, Mr. Speaker, is realistic, visionary and transformative for our nation. **(Applause)**

Before I start the main part of the presentation, Mr. Speaker, my contribution, let me take a moment to commend the Minister for Finance for found and inspiring presentation last Friday. Minister for Finance, take a bow. **(Applause)** Your commitment to our country and its progress is very clear.

May I also take the opportunity to commend and thank the Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Finance, both the Senior and Deputy Permanent Secretaries, especially the staff within the Budget Division, for the hard work and diligence. **(Applause)** Their work, certainly, has not gone unnoticed.

I also like to use your opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge the staff at the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, the staff of the parliamentary office and, of course, the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique who have journeyed overseas, Mr. Speaker, to be here with us as I give my response. I would also like to acknowledge our new permanent secretary, Permanent Secretary Leanwall Perrotte.

Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of things today, you know, about broken promises, you know, giving the impression that Grenada is in shambles, that this Government is not performing, and that the economy is doing so bad, etcetera. That, Mr. Speaker, is further from the truth. I can't understand how people would believe or give the notion that they are broken promises.

In two and a half years, Mr. Speaker, promises made and promises kept. For example, pension payments. **(Applause)** Promises made, promises kept.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Tevin Andrews

Bimonthly salary payments were a promise made and a promise that was kept, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** The "Great Mathematician". The "Father of the House", as they dub him nowadays, Mr. Speaker, through you, said that it's impossible, it cannot be done. But, Mr. Speaker, the "New Sheriff in Town", the "Bright Mitchell" **(laughter) (applause)**, has implemented something that the "Great Mathematician" said was impossible to do. Promise made, promise kept. **(Applause)**

Free tuition payment, Mr. Speaker, not just for a selected few. In terms of what used to happen in the past, it's a promise that was made and we kept that promise, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the pay and grade issue. This budget has addressed it. It's a long-standing matter, Mr. Speaker, that the policemen and women had been clamouring for many years. A promise that was made, and we kept that promise. Taking into account, Mr. Speaker, that it has only been two and a half years since.

The regularisation of public workers. Mr. Speaker, over 1700 workers, by December, were regularised. Promise made, promise kept. Where are the broken promises? You were there for 20-odd years. Some of these things could not have been achieved. In two and a half years, Mr. Speaker, you are seeing us demonstrating that we care for the people, and we care about what we say because we are implementing what we say we will do.

New schools, police headquarters upgrade, police station, etcetera, Mr. Speaker. Promises made, promises kept. **(Applause)** And I heard the talk about healthcare. Now, I agree Healthcare is not just about a building, and the Minister for Health spoke about it and, of course, will deliberate about it more, but we must address the healthcare issue in Grenada, and one of the many steps that we have taken is to start the launch of Project Polaris. The Minister for Finance spoke about the groundbreaking activity, if you want to put it that way that will take place sometime this year. A new hospital, among other things, is coming as we address the healthcare issue in our country. Promise made and promise kept. It was in the pipeline, but, Mr. Speaker, we will get there. All of this in two and a half years. Just imagine what we will be able to do in 25 years and more. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Tevin Andrews

Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to address some concerns, if you want to put it that way, that were made by my good friend, the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, and let me pause, Mr. Speaker, to commend and to congratulate Member Emmalin Pierre, on her ascension as the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

The Member stated that concessions and support have ended in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, I want the world to know that this is not so. If people are interested in concessions as it relates to the response to Beryl, regarding building material, etcetera, including the removal of VAT on building materials, etcetera, there's a process. You go through the Beryl Secretariat that is led by Mr. Devon Baker, in the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. You apply for the concession, and the concession will be waived or granted in this case. **(Applause)** So, the notion that is given to the public that it has stopped, that is not the case, and I want to set the record straight here today, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, let me also put on record, because I heard the talk that farmers and fishers are not given support, and there was a meeting, and people stormed out at the meeting and black tank, etcetera, etcetera. I'll address it later down, but I think it's important to just highlight it. 179 fisherman applied for support for their boats, which are damaged. Out of that 179, Mr. Speaker, 132 of those boat owners, those fishermen, received support. And the support here, Mr. Speaker, means whatever damage that was caused, or the cost of the damage due to Beryl, the Government committed and has paid half of the cost.

So in some cases, for example, if the damage was $100,000.00, the Government of Grenada transferred 50% or $50,000.00 to the boat owner or the fisherman, so that we could assist them with the repairs to their boats, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And out of the 179 fishermen that applied, 132 received support, leaving 47 who have not been given the assistance and my good friend, the Minister for Agriculture, has guaranteed me, the team and the fishermen in Carriacou that the support is on the way. **(Applause)**

One hundred and eighteen farmers were also assisted, given income support. Mr. Speaker, and the issue as it relates to black tanks. Mr. Speaker, 500 black tanks were distributed to farmers in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** Yes, there might have been one or two that might have been left out, but that does not mean they would not be assisted, and we would work on it. We are working closely with my good friend, who seems to have more information than I do, to get the names of the farmers and provide the necessary assistance because, in the end, we are in this to support and to represent people. So I thank you for raising those concerns, my dear friend, and we will work together for the greater good of the people.

Mr. Speaker, to the gist of my presentation. Pre-Hurricane Beryl and the budget implementation, work on the Windward Fish Centre, Mr. Speaker… A fish centre, Mr. Speaker, that we demolished because of the deplorable condition it was in and our commitment, Mr. Speaker, to provide a quality centre for the fishermen of Windward and surrounding areas, Mr. Speaker, is now 98% completed. **(Applause)** We are committed to ensuring that we open the facility, hopefully sometime in April.

So, Permanent Secretary, Perrotte, and team are on standby, noting the date that I have given, but the intention is that by April of this year, the fishermen of the northern side of Carriacou, Windward and surrounding areas will have a new fish centre, Mr. Speaker, top-of-the-line, state-of-the-art fishing centre, and I am proud about that. The jetty facility would also be built to accommodate the fisherfolk, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the boat-building initiative in Carriacou. As you might be aware, Mr. Speaker, we budgeted some funds to assist in reviving the building in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique has partnered with Ambassador Piero Zipoli, Ambassador for Investment, and we have launched a boat-building school initiative. We can't talk about our culture and our rich heritage about boat building etcetera, and not do anything to protect and to enhance and to keep those rich traditions alive. And, Mr. Speaker, this boat-building initiative will be completed sometime this year. It is now 70% completed. The intention is that we will build boats. We already started finding markets for those locally built boats.

So, just to give a little background. The Ambassador normally does trade shows, massive trade shows in Europe and in the Middle East etcetera. He would be bringing some of those locally built boats to Europe and other places to help promote the boat-building initiative in Carriacou and to find markets for those boats. The intention is that we will create employment opportunities. We will keep the tradition alive, and it will help us promote and market Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Those are the initiatives that we are doing in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Roads; and let me just pause for a minute. I am not taking no praise for no road. Roads are something that any Government and any Member of Parliament… This is what we are supposed to do, but it is important for me to highlight some of the work that we are doing because I have to give an account to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and to the nation as a whole.

Bel Air road project, Mr. Speaker, a major road project **(applause)** in Carriacou. Mr. Speaker, you would understand that we started the project sometime in 2024. Beryl slowed us down quite a bit, but work has since commenced. So there are three portions in Bel Air, Mr. Speaker. The bottom portion, which is over 1,000 feet of road, has been completed. We are now doing the top portion of Bel Air, which is about 800 feet, thereabout. And the bypass of Bel Air Road, Mr. Speaker, we have completed. This is the Hospital bypass road, Mr. Speaker. Those projects, Mr. Speaker, would help with access to and from the hospital and to and from the village of Bel-Air and the surrounding areas.

I am proud of those projects. I am proud of it because it is locally funded, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Major road project, Mr. Speaker, which would directly benefit the people, creating hundreds of jobs, and many opportunities for a number of people in different ways.

The Bellevue South Road is another road project that is under construction, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud of it, which, of course, gives access to the residents in the Bellevue area. Bottom Lauriston is another road project that has been done, Mr. Speaker. There is still some more work to be done, but we've started the process, and we will finish

it. Upper Lauriston as well, Mr. Speaker. We have done the road project. There is still a lot more work to be done, but we are getting there, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of those initiatives, Mr. Speaker, as they relate to roads.

Mr. Speaker, a project I am extremely happy about. It's a brainchild of mine, in the sense that I always wanted to see an Underwater Sculpture Park in Carriacou, and I'll give a little joke just now. **(Laughter)** The Member for St. John told me don't give the joke and, maybe, I wouldn't give it in truth, but the Member for St. John told me I getting too much things in Carriacou, but you see, Mr. Speaker, the passion that I have for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, some of the permanent secretaries on mainland and some of the statutory bodies, they now understand where I am coming from when I come with the passion and I say we need x and y for Carriacou and Petite Martinique and we need it now. For too long, the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique have not been given the attention that we needed. So I go with a lot of passion, and I am happy that some of those projects have been implemented.

So the Underwater Sculpture Park, Mr. Speaker, a project that Beryl could not have stopped us from launching. Mr. Speaker, it will bring a number of benefits to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Already, there are people who have visited the site, and out of the visit, Mr. Speaker, a number of people have fallen in love with Carriacou. Some of them said they are not going back, and some of them are already telling others about the Underwater Sculpture Park. A number of people are visiting the site, Mr. Speaker. It is one of the number one attraction sites in the Grenadine Islands, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be associated with an administration that has heeded the call and implemented such a wonderful initiative.

I want to pause and commend and recognise Ms. Petra Roach, the CEO of the Grenada Tourism Authority and Mr. Randall Donald, the Chairman of the Grenada Tourism Authority, for accepting, considering and ensuring that this project became a reality and all **(applause)**, partners who were involved in this very important initiative. So the Member for St. John, we've gotten our Underwater Sculpture Park, the first in the Grenadines, and I am proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, night landing at the Lauriston Airport, soon to be the Herbert Blaize Airport in Carriacou. **(Applause)** Work started before Beryl. In purchasing the equipment, they did all the necessary work. Of course, you know Beryl came, slowed us down, and plans have already been put in place to start back the installation of that very expensive equipment on the runway and in other parts of Carriacou, to accommodate night landing in Carriacou. So by the end of the year, Mr. Speaker, aircraft will be able to land in Carriacou for the very first time in a big way.

So I am proud again, Mr. Speaker. As we do these initiatives, we are doing those initiatives taking into consideration the future of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. You see, the actions we are taking, Mr. Speaker, are not for now. The actions we are taking are for the future as we accelerate, as we lift Carriacou and Petite Martinique higher, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the refurbishment of the Paradise Bathroom Facility. A project before Beryl. Of course, Paradise Beach, as you all know, is a renowned beach. One of the best beaches in the world **(applause)**, the best beach in Grenada. I wouldn't debate… We are not in a debate now talking about the best beach, because we know the Member for St. George South will say Grand Anse is the best, and knowing the Member for St. John, she may say one of the beaches in St. John is the best. But what I do know is that Paradise Beach is the better of the best. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, upgrades to the washroom facility have been done. A lifeguard tower, Mr. Speaker, has also been erected. Of course, Mr. Speaker, with the passage of Beryl, that too disappeared. I don't think we even saw a trace of the lifeguard tower, but I will talk about an initiative that we intend to do which will intend that we rebuild a lifeguard tower and other things on Paradise Beach to really and truly represent what we say in terms of it being the best beach in Grenada, and in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, motorbikes were given to the police in Carriacou and Petite Martinique before Beryl, an initiative by the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. You know, we are serious about the safety of the residents of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and of course, the police means a lot to us. They assist us in keeping

Carriacou and Petite Martinique safe, so whatever tools we can give them to enhance safety on our islands, Mr. Speaker, to strengthen law enforcement, we will do so. So I am happy about that initiative.

The Coca Power Station Road was another project that was done. The L'Esterre Solution Drain Project was done, Mr. Speaker, and the Mt. Pleasant Road, Mr. Speaker. All of those are part and parcel of what we have achieved, Mr. Speaker, in the first half of 2024. All of those projects that we are talking about are for the first half of 2024. I want you to understand that the projects that I have just mentioned are not all. I just gave you a synopsis of how busy the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique has been with the hard-working and dedicated staff.

But, Mr. Speaker, Beryl then struck, leaving a trail of devastation behind. 98% of housing destroyed. Mr. Speaker, from our educational facility, I don't think there was any educational facility that was spared apart from Bogles' Pre-primary. Our hospital, the roof went, our police station, Government buildings, and our solar panels in Limlair, which should have been able to withstand category 4 or 5 hurricanes. Mr. Speaker, that too was impacted. Our airport, Mr. Speaker, was roofless; our port, Mr. Speaker, and I could go on and on, leaving a trail of destruction, debris piled up all over Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Speaker, one person, flying over Carriacou hours after Beryl, said, "Carriacou looked like a dumpsite" with the level of debris all over, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, nine months later, where are we? Repairs are being done on the Mt. Pleasant Government School. **(Applause)** In some instances, it is completed. L'Esterre R.C. School, repairs have been completed. **(Applause)** Petite Martinique R.C. School, repairs have been completed both to the primary and the pre-primary. Hillsborough Government School, primary and pre-primary. Work is done. **(Applause)** Bishop's College, Mr. Speaker, work has been completed. Hillsborough Secondary School, Mr. Speaker, work has been completed, and some people have the guts to say nothing has been done in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

You could highlight every bad thing **(inaudible comment by a Member)**, but you can't highlight the positives. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of us thought school

would not have resumed after Beryl. Some people thought we had to resume school this year. In two months' time, Mr. Speaker, after the passage of a category four hurricane, almost a category five **(applause)**, all schools were in operation, repairs had been completed and in some cases, were on the way.

And I am happy to announce here too, Mr. Speaker, that work will commence this year to rebuild a new modern Dover Government School. **(Applause)** Isn't that progress? Isn't that boots on the ground leadership? **(Applause)** That is leadership. In nine months, some of the countries that have resources galore can't perform like we have, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And this is a true testament through the leadership of Honourable Dickon Mitchell and the Cabinet of Grenada, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, while on education, I must highlight the support that was given to the students of Carriacou and Petite Martinique from TAMCC. A monthly stipend has been given to the students because, of course, you know, the TAMCC building in Carriacou was destroyed, so the students had to be relocated in Carriacou to continue their education. Monthly stipend has been provided to the students. Mr. Speaker, a one-off $3,000 payment was made initially and thereafter, every month, $2,000 to assist them with accommodation, food, etcetera., Mr. Speaker. And we've also provided each student with a laptop. **(Applause)** Testament, Mr. Speaker, that we are concerned about the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and the education of our students.

But even further to that, Mr. Speaker, all of the students who applied to universities, especially, the University of the West Indies, Mr. Speaker, you know what the Cabinet has done? The Cabinet has given each and every one of them 100% scholarship, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Testament that we are a caring Government and we are concerned about the future generations of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker.

The Free Breakfast Programme. Where is the Minister for Education? He is not here? The Free Breakfast Programme and lunch, Mr. Speaker, in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Beryl for the students of Carriacou and Petite Martinique went extremely well, and I wish you could continue the programme because it was a success

and it assisted a number of families in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** So I must give commendation to the Cabinet for making such a bold decision to ensure that our students were not left hungry.

Mr. Speaker, Health Facilities. The Minister for Health is here. I must commend him. Mr. Speaker, I want you to understand that our hospital was basically non-functional after Beryl. The roof was gone, water and equipment spoiled, and we couldn't function. Mr. Speaker, today, and before going there, thanks to Samaritans Purse **(applause)** and other organisations that came into the immediate aftermath to assist us with the medical crises that we were experiencing in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. But, in about 2-3 months after our hospital was back in operation, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Leadership, leadership, Mr. Speaker. Leadership.

I commend the Ministry of Health for such swift action in ensuring that our hospital is now functioning. Yes, there is some work that still needs to be done because some of the equipment that was damaged has to be replaced, and work is ongoing, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that happens. I am proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

L'Esterre Clinic, Mr. Speaker, Mt. Pleasant Clinic, Petite Martinique Clinic, Mr. Speaker, and Windward Clinic. Those clinics were destroyed or damaged during Beryl. Some of their roofs were practically gone, and all of the equipment had been damaged, Mr. Speaker. I am happy, and if you look at the screens, that the L'Esterre Clinic's roof **(applause)** is now being completed, the refurbishment is now completed, Mr. Speaker, and I am happy about that.

On the screen, you would see the Windward Health Centre, Mr. Speaker, a testament of boots on the ground leadership. The roof is now covered. The refurbishment is now done, and a date will be set, Mr. Speaker, for the grand opening. Work will commence on the Petite Martinique Clinic sometime later on, this month, and of course, a new date will be given for the work to commence on Mt. Pleasant Clinic, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to delivering services to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique not just by our words, but through our actions, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Actions speak louder, way louder than words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Police Station; roofless, equipment spoiled. The Court House, etcetera. I am happy, Mr. Speaker, and I want to pause to thank the Guyanese Defence Force for their swift action, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** President Ali Skim must be commended, and I must also thank the hardworking policemen and women.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank two officers, the two Charles who came to Carriacou to assist, ACP John Charles **(applause)**, and ASP Glen Charles **(applause),** who assisted and a number of other officers, Mr. Speaker. Clarence Joseph, who led the Petite Martinique team and all the other officers, Mr. Speaker, to thank them for their steady hand in ensuring that safety was maintained in Carriacou and a level of calm was maintained in Carriacou and Petite Martinique during those tough times, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** The police station is now refurbished, and I am happy about this. I am kind of surprised that the Parliament sent me this note. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** You've got to be kidding me.

So the Resource Centre, Mr. Speaker, which was impacted by Beryl, is now in operation, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** As a matter of fact, that is the area that the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique is temporarily in, and I am grateful for the work that has been done again through the testimony of the leadership that's in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

The Hillsborough Fish Market, Mr. Speaker, was damaged. I am happy to report that the fish market is now back in operation, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Let me turn now, Mr. Speaker, to Housing in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I am putting on record once again, my sincere gratitude to the people of Trinidad and Tobago through the Hands That Serve Organisation **(applause)** for donating 27 pre-fab homes to the people of Carriacou, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, a number of these people are now residing in their homes, and I am proud of that. Those homes, Mr. Speaker, came fully furnished, so these recipients don't have much to worry about.

24 homes, Mr. Speaker, have been either under construction or delivered by the Division of Social Development, led by Ms. Nadina Williams, to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. Some 40 or so Build Back Better Homes have either

been handed over or are under construction, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, some of those Build Back Better Homes will be delivered to some of the recipients on Wednesday of this week. **(Applause)**

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, 20 prefab homes were purchased by the Government of Grenada from Happy Homes, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. It means, Mr. Speaker, some 110 homes are either under construction or have been delivered to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique within nine months **(applause)** after a devastating hurricane.

I want you to understand this. This is nine months after a devastating hurricane, Mr. Speaker, and all of this has been achieved. This was not a Category 1, Category 2, or Category 3… Ivan was a Category 3? This is a Category 4 hurricane, bordering on a Category 5. Hospitals, schools, health centres, airports, and seaports were destroyed and most of which are back up and running **(applause)** and functional, Mr. Speaker. And in nine months, you can either deliver or have under construction 110 homes, Mr. Speaker? If that is not a testament to leadership, Mr. Speaker, then what is? What is? **(Applause)**

Yes, I agree more can be done and should be done, Mr. Speaker, but we also have to understand what we are dealing with. There is a shortage of building materials, not only in Grenada but in the Caribbean. There is a shortage of labour, meaning everybody's working, and those who aren't working don't want to work. **(Applause)** So shortage of materials, shortage of labour...

And instead of the Opposition coming up with a plan or suggestions, they just attack. Attacking. Attacking. Attacking. Where are the houses? Where are the houses? Where are the houses? You can't be serious. **(Laughter)** If you are serious and genuine about the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, you could have come up with solutions. Come, let's sit and talk. Let's work together in the greater interest for and on behalf of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. But you know what, the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are watching, you know. They know who is genuine and who is not. **(Applause)** And we are waiting to send a loud and strong message,

very soon. If you think the message was loud in Beausejour, you wait. Very soon, you would see. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Homeowner's Assistance. Some 200 homeowners were assisted with roofing material, Mr. Speaker. Support. And I am happy that this initiative has bear fruit, Mr. Speaker, because a number of homeowners in Carriacou was able to put back the roof on their heads, if you want to put it that way, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the assistance that we have given, Mr. Speaker, and I am extremely proud about that **(applause)** totalling somewhere in the region of $13 million, Mr. Speaker.

This is clear testimony that, in addition to the 110 homes or so that we have under construction or delivered, we are also assisting residents with support to put back their roofs through material assistance, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

I spoke about the support to farmers and fishermen, but we gave them financial aid, Mr. Speaker. Some fishermen got boat engines. Farmers got water tanks. Farmers got fencing materials. Farmers got feed, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the farmers and fishermen in Carriacou did very well **(applause)**, and we have committed even greater things for them in 2025 and beyond. **(Applause)** Understand. It is a process. Everybody wouldn't get it right away. It's a process, but we are working for the greater interest of all **(applause)**, all the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker.

Hurricane Debris Clean-up, Mr. Speaker. 98% of Carriacou is now cleaned up, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Oh, how I thank my good friend from St. John who went into immediate action with her team at the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority. They accused her of travelling this and travelling, travelling. Well, it is because of all the travelling, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** we were able to make the connection to clean up Carriacou and Petite Martinique in such short order **(applause)**, and I thank her. And she would report more in terms of her Ministry and what they were able to do.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not just the land space in Carriacou that was cleaned up, but the marine space as well, Mr. Speaker, because there were a number of boats, yachts that were impacted as a result of Beryl. So Minister James, you and your team from the

Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority must be commended for a job well done. **(Applause)**

Hunter, if you are able to put back on the screen, our playing fields, which the Opposition give us blows left, right and centre for, we had nowhere else to put the debris. It is not garbage. It is hurricane debris, but I am happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that most of those playing fields are now cleared and are being restored to their former glory and even better, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Testament, Mr. Speaker. We are not a Government of just words. We're a Government of action **(applause)**, and it's clearly demonstrated by what we are doing in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** So I am happy. They don't have much to talk about the hurricane debris in the pastures again. You realised they are not saying much? They now jump on the black tanks, and those who did not get a black tank. **(Laughter)** Trivial, but we will get there. We will get there, Mr. Speaker.

I highlighted it, but let me highlight it again. Final point, and then I will get to some other points. I want you to understand our airport. I recalled bringing my grand aunt days after Beryl to get on an emergency flight to get her out of Carriacou, and we were laughing and crying at the same time when we saw the state of the airport. We looked up, and all you saw was the heavens, no roof at all and only emergency flights that were done. Mr. Speaker, three or four months after Beryl, the airport was back in operation, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And I must commend the Grenada Airport Authority under the leadership of Anya Chow Chung and her team, Mr. Speaker, who have done an extremely wonderful job. **(Applause)** I must put that on record. I must put that on record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, GRENLEC. Mr. Speaker, 98%of lines in Carriacou are now restored. 98%. 60% connection is completed. **(Applause)** And I want you to understand something, Mr. Speaker. 85%. GRENLEC recorded an 85% damage in its equipment, which is, the poles, the lines etcetera, etcetera. 85%, island-wide, both in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So you would understand the devastation that was caused. I, too, Mr. Speaker, in the immediate aftermath of Beryl, I said, "Lord Papa God, how are we going to start"? I said we will be out of electricity for months, maybe for a year.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Tevin Andrews

Mr. Speaker, in weeks, Mr. Speaker, some parts of Carriacou started getting electricity. **(Applause)** And as I reported, 98% of lines are back up, and over 60% connections have been completed, Mr. Speaker. I must commend **(applause)** the leadership of GRENLEC, especially the hard-working team of the Carriacou district. They must be commended and highlighted for their work, Mr. Speaker. They have gone beyond the call of duty, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And I thank all the regional support that came in from Barbados, Trinidad, all over, to come and assist us with the renovations, Mr. Speaker. Nine months after all of this, Mr. Speaker, has been achieved. How can anyone in their right mind who says that they have a conscience say nothing has happened in Carriacou and Petite Martinique? **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, FLOW restoration over 50% of internet and phone services restoration has been completed. Digicel, Mr. Speaker, over 98% of the mobile access has been restored in Carriacou with full upgrades in Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. So FLOW is working. Digicel has done a lot of work in Carriacou, and they will start very soon in Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. I must commend both teams for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to let you know the reality is that after Hurricane Beryl, I couldn't get in touch with the Prime Minister or anybody. There was no internet service. No connectivity, Mr. Speaker. Nothing of that sort. As a matter of fact, colleagues of mine came to Carriacou looking for me, and they couldn't get a hold of me because of no connectivity, Mr. Speaker. Nine months later, we are here with internet connectivity **(applause)** in Carriacou and Petite.

Some parts of the world that have way more resources than us, Mr. Speaker, some of them are still grappling with the effects of all of our storms. They have not been able to recover in such a short space of time like us, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Give Jack his jacket. When good is done, say so.

Hospitality and Tourism, Mr. Speaker. The point I am making here is that Carriacou is open for business. 148 out of the 263 hotel rooms and guest houses in Carriacou are now open, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** I am not satisfied with that clap; 148

out of the 263 rooms, hotels and guest houses in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, after a devastating Hurricane has hit us, are now back up and running. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, 22 out of the 38 restaurants and bars are in operation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you can go up to Carriacou for the day or for a weekend. The hotels are open. The restaurants are open. You have internet service, and you have electricity. Carriacou is open for business, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause) (Inaudible comment by a Member)** Carriacou sweet; Carriacou nice. **(Applause) (Laughter)**

Dive Operations, Mr. Speaker. One of the three dive operations, Mr. Speaker, has resumed their service. So if you want to go diving in Carriacou, diving with the turtles **(applause)**, diving and looking at the Underwater Sculpture Park, Mr. Speaker, we have a dive operation team that is operating, Mr. Speaker.

The water taxi operators, Mr. Speaker, and tour operators, Mr. Speaker, five out of the six are back in business, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** It means that Carriacou and Petite Martinique are open for business, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Nine months must be recorded, Mr. Speaker. Nine months after a devastating Hurricane, Carriacou and Petite Martinique are now reopened for business, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Testimony. Testament of the sound leadership, Mr. Speaker. "The boy with the one subject." **(Laughter)** "The little boy." "The pampers children." **(Applause)** Nine months. Nine months. Pay attention to our actions, not our words. Pay attention to our actions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak about the things that we intend to do this year. All you thought I was finished? **(Laughter)** Things that we intend to do this year, Mr. Speaker: continue with the night landing operations at our new and renamed airport, the Herbert Blaize Airport in Carriacou. **(Applause)** The goal is to complete the infrastructure for night landing at the Lauriston Airport by June or July of this year.

Paradise Beach Enhancement Initiative, Mr. Speaker. It is a new project. We are going to enhance and transform Paradise Beach to its rightful place, Mr. Speaker, where it is supposed to be, so it can be the best of the best of the best beach, not just in Grenada but the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Hillsborough Town Enhancement Project. You would hear more about the project, Mr. Speaker, but the intention is to enhance the Town of Hillsborough. After all, Mr. Speaker, it is our Town and we have to bring some economic life to the Town of Hillsborough, Mr. Speaker.

We talk a lot about our culture and our heritage and how we must protect our heritage and our culture, etcetera. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that we are starting an initiative this year. Planning Officer… Where is Mr. Baker, our Technical Officer? The Bel Air Heritage Park, Enhancement Project. So, we have to enhance these areas, Mr. Speaker. Not just for ourselves in keeping our rich traditions and culture alive, Mr. Speaker, but for the next generation and for visitors alike to come and experience what Carriacou is all about.

Mr. Speaker, we will complete the Windward Boat Building School in Carriacou, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we will commence, and work should have commenced already, Mr. Speaker, but because of the procurement, and, you know, the public service and how it goes. Maybe I should not say dates, but the reality is that when you get the assurance, you run with it. But work will start on the Windward Jetty very soon, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

I empathise with the people of Petite Martinique in particular because they have to catch the boat all the way to Hillsborough and then go to Petite Martinique. It's longer. There's an area, if you travel to Petite Martinique from Hillsborough—Harvey Vale, called Gun Point. It is very choppy, so a lot of people don't like travelling, and there are some cases when the seas are extremely rough; some boats would not venture to come to Carriacou. So we must rebuild a jetty in Windward. Mr. Speaker, that is a project that will start in short order.

But we are not just building back the jetty as it was. We are doing it better because what was there before was a little boat jetty, and every year you have to go and do some patchwork on it. What we are doing is building a brand new state-of-the-art drive on the jetty so that the people of Petite Martinique, Windward, and the surrounding areas will be able to benefit from that.

I was reading the Hansard of Parliament, and I saw a comment that my good friend, former Member of Parliament, who is in his truth now, Mr. Speaker, through you, Elvin Nimrod, was saying sometime in 2013, thereabout, if I am not mistaken. He was talking about the state of the Windward Jetty and how embarrassed he was about it. I am happy that many years later, we are now addressing it, but for good now **(applause)** because it is not just a wooden jetty, but it is a concrete jetty that we are doing, Mr. Speaker. I am proud and happy to be associated with that.

Mr. Speaker, Government Farms Restoration. The Limlair Farm, Mr. Speaker. The Minister for Agriculture talked about the goats, the sheep, and the pigs that are in Grenada; some of those are for Carriacou. They would be coming to Limlair, Mr. Speaker, for the farmers of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, work is being done to restore the operations at Limlair Farm. Work has started on restoring the Bel Air Nursery and other Government farms in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

I like that the intention is to get some greenhouses and some hydroponic systems and introduce new crops in Bel Air, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** This initiative will take place this year. Our Senior Agriculture Officer, Benson Patrice, and Mr. Lawrence, would be working closely with the team to ensure that these initiatives do happen in a timely manner by introducing some new species and making the Bel Air operation a state-of-the-art operation, assisting with what we are doing to make agriculture or give agriculture the prominence that it is supposed to have, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I must talk about Local Government. The draft is now in its final stage. I am happy to announce **(time bell rings)** that it is in its final stage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me know it is only ten more minutes, but I will be grateful for more in the event that I have to say more.

Local Government, Mr. Speaker, will be introduced in Carriacou very soon. The Ministry of Legal Affairs, as I said, is working on the final draft, and then we will go into a series of consultations. The intention thereafter is to implement Local Government for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. A long-awaited Bill. A long-awaited initiative that all my predecessors have promised and have not gotten off the ground for

one reason or another. **(Applause)** I don't want to be part of that statistic, so we are going to ensure that Local Government is implemented.

Mr. Speaker, our Housing Assistance Programme, roofing programme, in particular, will continue. Our Housing and Roofing Assistance Programme will continue. **(Applause)** I am emphasising it because there are some elements in Grenada, including the Opposition, that are spreading a false narrative that all of those initiatives have stopped and will not continue. We will continue those initiatives **(applause)**, to support our brothers and sisters in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker.

Building of homes, Build Back Better, etcetera, will continue as well, Mr. Speaker, because we are committed to ensuring that we support all of the people who have been affected one way or the other.

Mr. Speaker, last year I touted about the two farm roads that would start and didn't start because of Beryl and no, not poor Beryl. Beryl really and truly affected a number of things **(applause)** from getting off the ground. But I am happy to report to this Honourable House that two of our major farm roads, Dumfries and Mt. Dor in Mt. Royal, will commence. The Mt. Dor Road, Mr. Speaker, is 2,360 feet long, and the Dumfries Road is 1,177 feet long, Mr. Speaker. Both projects put together will cost over $4 million, and work should commence sometime by June this year, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** More work for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. More monies injected in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, which will assist with the economic activities in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

A new desalination plant has been purchased; it's now in the procurement stage to assist with the production of water in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. The intention is that by June or July this year, the plant will be in Carriacou to assist with the operations there, Mr. Speaker. So commendation to NAWASA. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I highlighted that we have a new Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Mr. Leanwall Perrotte, who is extremely hardworking and is making lots of sacrifices. I want to put on record my thanks to him for the work that he has done so far. But it would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, I'm not

seeing Permanent Secretary Williams in the audience. I saw him earlier, but I am seeing him again. It would be remiss of me if I didn't highlight and put on record my sincere thanks to Permanent Secretary Williams **(applause)** for assisting with the efforts in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

I spoke about the number of things we were able to do in such a short space of time, Mr. Speaker. Most of it, Mr. Speaker, is testament to his vibrancy and commitment not only to the transformational agenda, but to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** I must echo those sentiments in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, to the employees of the Ministry of Petite Martinique Affairs. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, all of the initiatives that I talked about, all of them, could not have been achieved without their hard work and sacrifices, Mr. Speaker. Some of them are homeless, roofless. Some of them were affected directly, Mr. Speaker, and they have not gotten a rest since Beryl. They have been working **(applause)** on behalf of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique ever since, and I must commend each and every one of them for their dedication, their hard work and their sacrifices. Without you, I would not have been here boasting about all the initiatives that we have done. So thank you very much. **(Applause)**

To the Parliamentary team, thank you for keeping me steady and being that liaison between the ministry, government and the constituents. I think we have done an excellent job in spite of Beryl to still connect with constituents, to get information to them and to get the support that they need. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Terrance Logan, my Office Manager and the entire team, thank you very much.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend and thank my personal assistant, a new kid on the block, who has just come about. We have achieved a lot of work, and I want to thank you very much. **(Applause)** My new advisor, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Logan, I want to thank him, Mr. Speaker, for making my workload a little bit lighter. So thank you for all the work that all of you have been doing.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I didn't mention some new faces within the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and their roles. Like Mrs. Emma Williams **(applause)**, who is our new Educational Officer, who is doing a phenomenal job in Education in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So, thank you very much, teacher Emma, for the sacrifice that you have been making.

Ms. Nadina Williams, who is leading the Social Development charge in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, thank you and of course, congratulations to both of you on your new role.

Mr. Imran George, who is our new Senior Coach, is assisting us in revitalising sports in Carriacou and Petite Martinique and has been behind us to ensure that the playing fields are cleaned up in short order so that we can get sporting facilities back up and running for sporting activities, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

And, of course, to Mr. Devon Baker, who is our new Technical Officer within the Ministry of Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, a new position that he has just taken up. So, he has a very important and big role in ensuring that all of the projects which I have mentioned and more, which I haven't mentioned, are implemented in a timely manner, and Mr. Baker knows me, you know. I mean, we're good. The truth is, Mr. Baker knows that now that I mentioned those things, he has to get boots on the ground rolling **(applause)** because he doesn't want to say; he wants to ensure that we implement the thing. I wouldn't say more. **(Laughter)** So I want to thank all of you.

Mr. Speaker, all of this, as I've mentioned before, has been achieved in record-breaking time. **(Applause)** Record-breaking time. Now, I understand that we would all like to see more happen in such a short space of time, even I sometimes, and sometimes the permanent secretary has to remind me, Minister, you have to understand, it's seven months, it's six months, it's nine months. Sometimes I forget, but the truth is we have achieved a lot in such a short space of time. **(Applause)**

I am repeating it so it would sink in, just in case you forget, because in some cases, even to me, it feels like nine years, but it's only nine months. We are going to continue, and I am going to continue to work on behalf of the people of Carriacou and Petite

Martinique and continue to agitate and advocate for the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique know my passion, and they know that I deeply care about each and every single one of them. Until the day I decide I'm done with public service, I will continue to fight on and champion the cause for and on behalf of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** So we are committed to rebuilding Carriacou and Petite Martinique in the shortest possible timeframe ever, and the process has started, Mr. Speaker, and I am grateful for that.

I want to thank my Cabinet colleagues, Mr. Speaker, for their leadership in their various Ministries. Thank you, Cabinet colleagues, for your unwavering support. Thank you, Minister for Mobilisation and Implementation, who has been a driving force in the rebuilding efforts in Carriacou and Petite Martinique **(applause)**, in particular with the Build Back Better. It was your initiative, Minister **(applause)**, through you, Mr. Speaker. You sat with the team, you came up with the design with the team, and you said, "Let's get the ball rolling". For that, I commend you on ensuring **(applause)** that the Build Back initiative has started.

We must give Jack his jacket, and to all of you Ministers, Health, as I have mentioned before, for accelerating the work within healthcare and to my good friend, I keep talking to him here too, my good friend, the Minister for Agriculture… **(Time bell rings)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One more minute as I wrap up. My good friend, the Agriculture Minister, has started the process of paying and giving income support to our farmers and fishers. **(Inaudible comment by a Member) (Laughter)** My good friend, and he will ensure that the rest of the farmers and fishers who have not received the support will get it sometime as early as possible this year.

The Minister for Finance will be working closely with you to ensure that happens. And to all of you, thank you very much; without you, we would not have been able to achieve any of this. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much, and this Budget have my full support.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters

Mr. Speaker: Thank you to the Honourable MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I now invite the MP for St. Andrew North East to make her presentation.

Hon. Kate Lewis-Peters: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I begin, let me just say that I spy a spy, and it reminds me of the invasion of privacy investigation that you have not yet updated the House on.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the wonderful people of St. Andrew North East and, that of, all the working class people of Grenada who have been battered by rising inflation, touted economic growth from which many have not felt the effect and a general economic climate in which hope is in short supply.

But before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, I must address the statements made by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew South West in attempting to manipulate the numbers and mislead the people of this country. **(Applause)** He proudly stood before this House, boasting of a current account surplus, yet conveniently ignoring the fact that we are running an over-budget deficit. **(Applause)**

Let me break it down, Mr. Speaker. A current account surplus means nothing. It means very little when you have a Government that is spending beyond its means, accumulating debt, and failing to invest in real economic growth. What the Member did, Mr. Speaker, was cherry-picking figures to paint a false picture of our economic stability, while the reality is the country's finances are in a dangerous state. **(Applause)**

I refer the Member to page 13 of the Budget document that clearly states the facts, primary deficit after grant, EC$208.6 million. Overall deficit after grant EC$337.4 million, and that is the deficit that our Opposition Leader is alluding to.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget is made up of Recurrent Expenditure and Capital Expenditure, and yes, there is an overall deficit. Just maybe, Mr. Speaker, the Member before wanting to teach the whole building, the whole Cabinet, the whole Members of Parliament and update them and educate them on the current account, he must update his knowledge. **(Applause)** I would rest that there, Mr. Speaker.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters

Mr. Speaker, I just have a few words for the Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique who… I can't find the words to express his style of presentation, but I just want to remind him that while he is boasting about nine months' achievement here and there. It was only 14 days after CCRIF insurance money was made available **(applause)** as a result of the vision and foresight of this Administration here. So yes, you were able to achieve so many things nine months later on as a result, but I want to find out from you why, after nine months, only three houses were delivered to your people. Why are your people still waiting after nine months?

During those nine months, Mr. Speaker, he will not speak about the alleged wasted millions of dollars; he would not boast about that one. But do you know, Mr. Speaker, after nine months, the hospital or the health centre in Petite Martinique is still waiting for attention, nine months later.

Mr. Speaker, the Budget Presentation painted a picture that was not in sync with our people's lived realities. An economic environment where it is becoming more and more difficult to make two ends meet. The year under review has been one of runaway inflation, rising costs from the sidewalks to the supermarkets, excessive and wasteful government spending and not enough investment in our productive sectors. **(Applause)**

While this is happening, Mr. Speaker, they are handing out leisure to friends, families and favourites; the FFFs. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, 2024 indeed was a bumper year for 1%, the people who run shadow companies to get government contracts **(applause)** and the few who can afford to buy properties paying cash immediately. **(Applause)** So yes, these handful of people are having the time of their lives, but for the others, they have been fed sweet talk only to digest a sour economy.

Coming from a challenging year, Mr. Speaker, the other 99% were looking forward to hearing a package that provided both hope and relief, but from all appearances, we are into another year of "band your belly". The Minister for Finance, in his presentation, said the package reflects Grenada rising… Grenada-Resilient and Rising? Something like that. The question is, Mr. Speaker, rising for whom? Rising for whom, Mr. Speaker, because the slogan does not resonate with the people of Paradise, **(applause)** neither

Tivoli nor Paraclete, nor the people of Pearls and La Poterie, and neither the hundreds who have been victimised and marginalised, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sadly, the gravy train has not reached the people I represent.

The slogan, "Grenada rising", does not resonate with the people who have to travel on the worst roads they have seen in a decade **(applause)**, our health care, which desperately needs intensive care. It is not "Grenada rising", it is prices rising, inflation rising, and victimisation rising, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Yes, we wholeheartedly acknowledge the resilience of our people, because through this economic hardship, the social struggles and the broken promises, they have persevered. So yes, our people are resilient. However, Mr. Speaker, resilience alone is not enough, and the truth is that under the current Government policies, we are not rising. A nation must not only withstand challenges, but also rise above them. **(Applause)**

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we are falling, heading down a precipice, because people continue to struggle, and many have been left behind. For the past two and a half years, Government has abandoned key sectors, critical to our people's progress. They have abandoned the very people they swore to represent, but as if waking up from a deep sleep. They present a budget hoping that we forget their inaction, hoping that we forget their neglect, the hardship and the economic pain, but the people remember, and we will not allow them to rewrite history, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is not a road map for prosperity. It's an attempt to cover up failure. It's an admission by this Government that for the past two and a half years. I think it's more, you know. I'm just saying half, you know, but it's almost three years. This Government did very little to address the real struggles of our people, and now they believe, well, they want us to believe, they expect us to believe, Mr. Speaker, that it will all be fixed with one budget document, one budget speech and an AI hospital. Mr. Speaker, our people know better. **(Applause)**

Today, Mr. Speaker, I will speak on a few areas this Government has ignored and mismanaged, focusing my attention on Youth Development and Sports, Housing, Social Development and Education. These are not just sectors of an economy. They're the very

pillars for which a strong striving nation is built, and yet, under this Administration, these pillars have crumbled due to poor planning, misplaced priority and a failure to listen to the needs of the people.

We are not here just to criticise Mr. Speaker. We are here to stand up for those whose voices have been silenced by the economic hardship and the fear of victimisation. We are here to hold this Government accountable, and we are here to demand that the resilience of our people must be matched with policies **(applause)** that truly allow them to rise.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is too little, too late. No amount of political steam will erase the reality that for the past two and a half years, this Government has failed our people. The people deserve more than resilience. They deserve progress, and for that, we will continue to fight for it.

Let's look at Youth and Sports, Mr. Speaker. A sector that should be the foundation of national development, but instead it has been neglected, abandoned and now exploited for political convenience. You're talking about a mock youth election. No legal authority, just a mock. Youth elections are a continuation of our mock Youth Parliament.

The Government would have us believe that this budget is the turning point for young people and it is filled with new opportunities, new investment and a commitment to their future but let us not be fooled by flashy figures, because for the past two and a half years this current Administration has done nothing or very little to invest in youth development. Even worse, Mr. Speaker, they have dismantled all of the programmes and projects that we designed to empower our young people.

Let's look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. Under our Administration, there are many well-established programmes which provide training, mentorship, and employment opportunities for our young people. We can speak about the new Imani Programme, M-Power, Project FLY, Yutbiz, just to name a few. **(Applause)**

These programmes were making a difference. They were creating jobs. They were equipping our young people with the skills they needed in order to succeed. Yes,

some of them had challenges, and there will always be challenges in any programme. However, these programmes benefited thousands of young people. Today, you can look for them all over in the various sectors.

They are teachers, they are bankers, they are police officers, some of them are entrepreneurs, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)**, but what did the Government do? They shut down the programmes. No real alternatives, not even an explanation, just abandonment, Mr. Speaker. As a result, youth unemployment has skyrocketed.

I remember the Minister for Finance quoted the national unemployment figures. He never quoted the youth unemployment figures conveniently, Mr. Speaker. Our young people are frustrated, demoralised, and they're struggling to find opportunities in a country that should be investing in them.

Mr. Speaker, we continued to advocate on behalf of our young people and after several calls to restore these programmes we saw the return of the M-Power Programme for young men, but at a reduced budget of EC$2.5 million in 2024, and even with a reduced budget they only spent EC$1.1 million underspending on the young man at risk who need that type of info intervention Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** You know what that means? Fewer young men participated in the programme, and that created missed opportunities and even deeper struggles for them, and we wonder today why we are seeing an increase in crime and violence. It's simply because of the under-spending and the under-investing in our young men. Mr. Speaker, our communities are at risk as a result.

In 2025, we have seen the budget move from EC$2.5 million in 2024 to EC$3.5 million. I'm happy. We are just hoping that they are not under-spending again, because what we have seen before the funds were allocated, yes. They were approved for spending, but what happened? It was under spelt, so even failed to deliver then, how do you think we will convince the young men that they will deliver today? That's a question we must ask Mr. Speaker.

I must remind the Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that throughout our years administering that programme, over EC$5 million has been invested in this programme

(applause) because we wanted to ensure we captured every young man who needed that type of engagement, exposing them to a variety of contemporary skills that they needed to function effectively in our country.

Mr. Speaker, for two years, not one new person was taken into the new Imani Programme. Over the past two years, thousands of young people graduated from school, and they had little to no opportunities to enhance themselves. After two years… **(Laughter)** We heard… Almost three years. Well, let us leave it at two and a half years. Three years. They know the facts. **(Laughter)** After almost three years, Mr. Speaker, the programme is thrown out the door. Yes. We did not see. I went through the budget, up, down, front, and centre, you know. I've been looking, not one mention of the new Imani Programme, so it is now thrown out the door, Mr. Speaker. But I heard there is an alternative.

But, let me say to this House, this alternative programme will never **(applause)**, be able to bring the benefits to our young people, as the new Imani Programme did for them. If we look carefully, Mr. Speaker, already when you compare the amount allocated is like chalk and cheese. Over EC$20 million for the new Imani compared to EC$2 million budgeted for this new programme.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, a significantly high number of people are left out of this programme, because number one, they said it's just for females, number two, it is only for those aged 18 to 25. So, when you look at it, we see it as a grave injustice done to the young people of this country. One that reflects the Government's total disregard for their future. For years, a programme that provided real opportunities, training and then empowerment for young people was in place. It gave them hope, creative jobs for thousands of them, developed their skills and set them in the right direction.

Today, just without any cause, it's discarded and replaced with a weaker, underfunded alternative that offers little to no support. Mr. Speaker, our young people are not blind. They know they are being short-changed, so by slashing the funding and replacing a well-established programme with a weaker alternative, this Government is sending a clear message to them, and that is, they are not a priority.

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Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters

Mr. Speaker, where is Project FLY, Fostering Level-headed Youth, another important project just discarded? One that directly benefited the most vulnerable young people among us **(applause)**, our youth at risk. For years, a community-based programme that existed to meet the men and women where they are, on their turf, in their communities, offering mentorship skills training and a lifetime away from crime, violence and hopelessness.

You see, Mr. Speaker, even though they didn't understand the programme they could have asked for help to administer it to the young people because this programme understood the realities of our communities, that work on the ground with our people that was facing such great risk, and yet a Government with its lack of vision and commitment to young people chose to get rid of it. Instead of strengthening the programme and expanding it to make a real difference, they dismantled it, leaving behind nothing comparable. The consequences of this reckless decision, Mr. Speaker, we are already feeling it. More young people are left behind, and our crime rate is rising.

This programme was not just a name on a budget document. It was a direct intervention into the lives of the people who needed it the most. **(Applause)** It met them in their communities, provided mentorship and skills development. When I think about the people from La Poterie, Mt. Rich, Saigon, Gun Battle **(applause)**, all of these communities, Mr. Speaker, they depended heavily on Project FLY.

And I just want to make reference to a young man when we went to St. John to deliver that programme. You know, we met the young man in his community, Mr. Speaker. Do you know where he is today? He is employed with the Ministry of Youth. He is a Youth Parliamentarian and a youth ambassador. **(Applause)** This is just one of the success stories from this programme. Mr. Speaker, while other nations are equipping their young people to compete in a modern economy, this Government is leaving ours to fend for themselves.

Let's look at sports, Mr. Speaker. The same can be said for sports, another glaring failure in this Government's budget. It's continued neglect of the sporting sector for the past almost three years **(applause)**, and every budget comes, you would hear great

announcements of investment in sporting facilities and programmes for athletes' development.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has promised to prioritise sports as a tool for youth development and national pride. But, Mr. Speaker, what really is the reality of the situation? Let's look at it, in 2024, in the approved estimate for repairs to hardcourts were EC$300,000, but only EC$98,771 was spent. This is only 33% of what was approved, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are in 2025 with the same EC$300,000 again. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, in 2024, the budget estimate for the construction of a swimming pool was EC$500,000. Do you know how much was spent, Mr. Speaker? I want you to take a look at the budget document; EC$0 and EC$0.00. Can you help me with the percentage there, Mr. Speaker? **(Laughter)** Yet, last Friday, when it was announced by the Minister for Finance, table breaking like if Tivoli drummers were in the building, you know, Mr. Speaker.

So if you look at it, they did not spend the EC$500,000 last year, but they came back with EC$800,000 to spend this year, Mr. Speaker? How can we believe that? They didn't deliver last year. How can we believe that they will deliver this year? What is it they are going to use to convince Grenadians that they mean what they say and they will do what is in the budget document?

Mr. Speaker, in 2024, EC$1.1 million was budgeted for the lighting of the Cricket Stadium, and they love it when these things are announced. Table breaking. Hand breaking, just because it sounds good, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, how much was spent? Not EC$1 was spent on that, Mr. Speaker, but we are here for 2025 with a budgeted amount of EC$8.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, so for the past two and a half years, they made the promises, the budget was allocated, yet at the end of the fiscal year, the actual spending fell far below what was budgeted. Now, as if they are hoping that we will forget, they return with the same budgeted figures and more, in some cases, expecting us to believe that this time, maybe this time, they will deliver.

Mr. Speaker, our sporting facilities have deteriorated, and I would draw your attention to some of these facilities. I see the member from St. Patrick paying keen attention because he knows the Fur Playing Field, the Vendome Playing Field. We are wondering what is really going on. **(Applause)** Trial and error in Vendome going on? Every time we pass there, we're wondering, well, what's next? It's basically trial and error in Vendome. We cannot forget the Hillsborough Playing Field, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, imagine in 2025, the Mac Donald's College, last Friday, held their school sports, their annual athletics school championship, in Progress Park, St. Andrew. A school from St. Patrick have to come all the way to St. Andrew to have their school sports. So, the reality is, on the ground, not what is said in the Budget Speech, not all the noise they are making, the realities.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the St. Patrick Primary School Parish Sport was held, you know where, Mr. Speaker, in the constituency of St. Andrew North East, at the La Poterie Playing Field. This was only possible, Mr. Speaker, because of the vision and foresight of this Administration, the NNP Administration, to upgrade and expand these playing fields, including their lighting. **(Applause)** I hear people taking up credit for lighting up the community, and the people who live there would just have a good laugh, because we know better.

Mr. Speaker, let me highlight yet another example of this Government's reckless decision-making and disregard for communities, our athletes, and our young people. In the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, I just listened to a Member touting about the debris and everything, the Government had a responsibility to clean up, rebuild and restore normalcy to the lives of the people. Instead, they made an inexcusable decision to use a playing field, a vital space for sports and community engagement, as a dumping ground. **(Applause) (Inaudible comment by Members)**

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear, let me be clear. No one disputes the need for proper debris management after a natural disaster. I'm not disputing that, but there was Dumfries right there. They could have put the debris there, but listen, Mr. Speaker. They chose, the decision was, to store the debris on the playing fields, which is a space meant for

young people, sporting events and community engagements. Mr. Speaker, this is nothing short of short-sightedness and irresponsibility. **(Applause)**

The negative impact of this Government's failure to properly plan for debris disposal has been devastating. By turning this field into a debris site, the Government has destroyed an essential public resource. **(Applause)** The very ground where athletes train, where communities gather for sporting events, and where our next generation of sporting stars play is now unusable.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have heard it right here, and I've seen some social media postings, boasting that the field is being restored, but Mr. Speaker, that is an additional burden on our taxpayers, money that could have been spent on developing sports, rather than fixing an avoidable mistake. **(Applause)** The Government has failed our athletes on the sister isle, and they will never forget this. We do hope, Mr. Speaker, that measures will be put in place to ensure such reckless decisions never happen again.

Mr. Speaker, this budget does not signal a real commitment to our young people. It is a desperate attempt to erase two and a half years of neglect, but the young people of our country remember, they remember the lost opportunities, they remember the broken promises, and they remember a government that turned its back on them when they needed support the most.

Mr. Speaker, this Government loves to boast about sports tourism, but when it truly matters, when the Grenada Invitational Games that would have showcased our national team on a world stage needed additional support, they failed to deliver. The cancellation of an event that would have brought athletes, fans and economic opportunities to our shores. How can they claim to be champions of sports tourism when their inactions led to a major loss for the sporting community, local businesses and our international reputation?

Mr. Speaker, events like these require more than just words. They require real commitments, real investments, and real action. Over the years, we have enjoyed the likes of LaShawn Merritt, Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce, Justin Gatlin, and our very own Kirani

James in those games. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this was a chance for the Government to prove that sports tourism is more than just a talking point in the budget speech.

It was an opportunity to stimulate the economy, to create jobs and inspire our young athletes, yet they sat on the sidelines and watched the Grenada Invitational slip away.

We stand firmly with the young people of our country, and we believe in a budget that truly invests in them, not just in the world, Mr. Speaker, but in action. We believe in restoring and expanding the programmes to provide real training, real jobs and real opportunities. We believe in funding sports development in a way that empowers our athletes, strengthens our community and gives young people a reason to dream again.

Our tracker record is clear, Mr. Speaker. We don't just believe that you know, and we don't just give words. Mr. Speaker, you know, we built two top-class stadiums, and one of them is fully lit. So, they're boasting about lighting the other one, the cricket one. That's okay. The athletic one is already fully lit. Work done by this Administration, the NNP Administration in Government. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, let us look at Housing. Housing, Mr. Speaker, and I want to begin with something that I will never forget. We will never forget the Government's decision to take away the low-income houses and sell them to individuals who can afford bank loans. This was nothing short of a betrayal of the very people who needed the homes the most. **(Applause)** This housing project, a generous donation from the People's Republic of China, was intended to provide shelter and security for Grenada's most vulnerable citizens. Not to be turned into a profit-making scheme for those who are already financially stable.

So it hurts, Mr. Speaker. This move by the Government was an attack on the very poor **(applause)** and working-class families who have been struggling to make ends meet, and instead of helping to lift them out of poverty, the Administration deliberately pushed them further into hardship.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the budget document has an estimated amount of

EC$25 million for Housing. However, half of it is allocated towards the so-called "Project 500". Half of it. That's the intention to sell for those who can afford it, right?

Mr. Speaker, Project 500 is the Government's latest attempt to rename an existing housing programme, while forcefully reacquiring lands from citizens who have already legally purchased them, is nothing more than a blatant exercise of deception and mismanagement. This is not a new initiative. It is simply repackaging an old programme and giving the illusion of progress while wasting public resources. Mr. Speaker, you know they're very good at repackaging and renaming. CBI is now IMA; de-bushing is now beautification; bathroom and toilet are now WASH.

Mr. Speaker, this reckless approach raises serious concerns. How much of our taxpayers' money is spent on rebranding existing programmes? We have to ask ourselves that, Mr. Speaker. But we must remind them that they promised 500 Grenadian-style houses per year under such a project. However, to date… **(Laughter)** And you know, Dunfermline is my backyard, so, Mr. Speaker, I have video evidence on my phone if I need to submit it to the House.

But I would say, the Minister for Finance stated that only 17 houses… They were able to start only 17. Well, Mr. Speaker, because I live right there, and because I know the role of the Housing Authority, before the Government changed in 2022, the Housing Authority was already preparing for the construction of 16 homes in that same area. So they quickly adopted that, renamed it, rebranded it and said "Project 500" because the budget coming up, we have nothing, we are giving you all three months. Do something quick. This is total deception, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)**, and the facts must be put out there.

But, you know, the thing about it, Mr. Speaker, one of the workers at the Housing Authority was so angry. He just walked away. He said, "This is not how they operate. They operate according to procedures and according to rules". So when they're given the mandate to just do things busy, busy, busy, because we need something to show, he said, "No, if you're going to do something, let's do it well". **(Applause)** So, he walked

away. Mr. Speaker, he walked away from the Housing Authority, where he had worked for many years. They will find all the facts.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is quick to boast about Build Back Better, but let us be clear on this. The money that Government is using to Build Back Better is not a result of their planning. It is because of the CCRIF Insurance secured by our Administration while in office. **(Applause)** So, yes, that was geared to, indeed, Build Back Better. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** You have no choice but to build that better because you have immediate finances upon which you can do so, Mr. Speaker.

Without that, they would have had no way of providing the housing assistance needed for the hurricane victims. So instead of pretending that this is their achievement, they should acknowledge that they are merely reaping the benefits, taking on the risk of responsible governance of our Administration. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, without this financial safety net, the rebuilding efforts would have been much more difficult. A government should not just be judged on how it spends money, Mr. Speaker. They should be judged on how they plan for the future. Build Back Better exists today only because planning was done by our Administration. **(Applause)**

The Government is proving that they have no vision of its own. They are simply spending resources that we secured. The question the people of this country need to ask, Mr. MIT, is, "What will you leave behind for the next generation to use in such an instance"? That's the question they should ask.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to Social Development. Mr. Speaker, the true measure of a government is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. Yet, this Administration, after making grandiose promises, the World Bank said that you should not be earning less than EC$650.

Upon coming into office**,** one of the first things they did was to remove EC$150 from the seed beneficiaries. We will never forget this, you know, and I think every budget going forward we should remind them. We ask this Government, what happened to the promise that you made? How can you justify cutting benefits from elderly single-parent and low-income families, while increasing spending elsewhere?

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters

Mr. Speaker, this Government, while they speak about commitment to Social Development, have you noticed, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you come up to St. Andrew again, you know, at every stop, every village, every bus stop, they put some solar lights? **(Laughter)** It is being used in a way it was not intended for, Mr. Speaker, but we have seen an alarming rise in gambling amongst our people and the most vulnerable in our communities; every shop, every abandoned building, every house, every bus stop, Mr. Speaker, is transformed into a gambling house.

Mr. Speaker, what is the plan of this Government to address this crisis? What are the policies they are using to protect families who are watching their loved ones lose hard-earned money to unchecked gambling? Some may make profits under this industry, but there are far too many broken homes and financial instability, **(applause)** and increasing crime. As a result, Mr. Speaker, this Government must take responsibility for the unchecked expansion of gambling because it's harming our communities, Mr. Speaker. We, therefore, call for stronger regulations, greater community support programs and real investment in education and youth development so that all people do not turn to gambling as the only hope, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Education. This Government stood before us boasting, Mr. Speaker, about free tuition. Yet, the reality paints a very different picture in 2024. They approved EC$3 million for this initiative, the free tuition initiative. But in 2024, shockingly, only EC$772,471 of those funds were used up by the students; a mere 26%.

What does this tell us, Mr. Speaker? It tells us that this Government is more concerned about making grand announcements, rather than ensuring real access to education. We ask the question, why was only 25% used up last year? Is it because the system is too complicated? Are there any hidden barriers preventing the students from accessing the support?

We indicated that free tuition by itself will not make education **(applause)** fully accessible. Transportation and meals must complement it for some students, or Mr. Speaker, was it just another empty promise designed to sound good in a Budget Speech

that is never properly implemented? These are the questions we must ask. **(Time bell rings)**

Mr. Speaker, education is the foundation of national development, and if this Government is really serious about it, they would not just throw numbers around. They would ensure that every eligible student gets the opportunity to further their education without any obstacles.

Mr. Speaker, once again, we see the Government taking credit for projects they did not initiate, and they don't have the audacity to acknowledge, decency to acknowledge the work of our Administration. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** They stand here boasting… **(Laughter)** Only now, you know? He knows Government is a continuum, Mr. Speaker.

They stand here boasting about the improvement in school infrastructure and the construction of new schools, but wait, they conveniently fail to mention that the funding for both phases 1 and 2 of the Grenada Education Enhancement Project was sourced by our NNP Administration. **(Applause)**

Let us set the record straight, Mr. Speaker. Schools have already been benefiting from this funding long before this Government came into office. We could speak about Mt. Rose SDA, **(applause)**, the Presentation Brothers College, the Bishops College in Carriacou, and the list can go on and on and on, the Grenada Christian Academy. The Anglican schools in Grenville and St. David had their own challenges, so they were delayed, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the repairs, the expansion and the groundwork for new schools were all part of a well-planned initiative that our Administration worked tirelessly to secure. It was not their vision. It was not their negotiation, and it certainly was not their achievements. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this Government is attempting to rewrite history, presenting these projects as their own while hiding the truth from the public, but the people deserve honesty. If they were truly committed to education, they would not just ride on curtails of

work already done. They will bring new ideas **(applause)** and secure funding instead of rebranding what was already in motion.

So, I asked this Government, what new investment have you sourced? What additional schools will you build beyond what was already planned, or is it your only achievement, repackaging the success of our Administration? The people deserve answers, not deception.

Education is far too important for political games, and we here stand ready and committed to ensure that every child has access to quality learning facilities, not just through our past efforts but through continued advocacy, for real progress.

Mr. Speaker, this Government stood before the nation and proudly announced that school meals will now be free for all students, primary, pre-primary, and secondary school. They made a grand spectacle of removing EC$1 that the parent had to pay, claiming victory for education and social welfare. The question is, what really happened since the grand announcement?

Despite increasing the budgetary allocation in 2025, the reality on the ground is far different. Schools are struggling. There is a lack of resources to supply meals to students daily, and as a result, students are left without meals. The meals they were promised. Instead of benefiting from the so-called "Free Meal Programme", parents are now forced to spend even more money to send their children to school with lunch. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker, because Government has failed to deliver on its promise. This is a classic case of poor planning and mismanagement, Mr. Speaker.

The Government was very quick to make the announcement, but very slow to ensure that schools had the proper infrastructure, the proper staffing, and the resources to provide these meals. What is the point of declaring free meals, Mr. Speaker, if our students still are not receiving it?

Mr. Speaker, removing the $1 contribution without ensuring the sustainability of the programme has done more harm than good. It is not just good enough to make policies for headlines. They must be backed up by proper execution **(applause)**, and this is yet another example of a Government that rushes to make announcements, but fails to

govern responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, we call on this Government to ensure that going forward, schools have the necessary resources and deliver on the promise they made to all students and parents, because right now, the so-called Free Meal Programme is nothing more than a failed publicity stunt. Our children are the ones paying the price.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading a report from the World Bank recently, and they made it very clear that Caribbean education is in crisis, and Grenada is not immune to this situation. Our students have been left behind due to outdated curricula, ineffective teaching methods, and a system that is failing. **(Inaudible comment by Members)**

Mr. Speaker, I am making a point because as a country, we are not immune. I am not casting blame on any administration, but just to bring awareness…

Mr. Speaker: Hello. Hold on. Hold on, Honourable. The Standing Orders demand silence when someone is on the floor. **(Applause)** Proceed, Honourable.

Hon. Kate Lewis-Peters: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our students are left behind due to outdated curricula, ineffective teaching methods and a system that is failing to equip them for the demands of a modern world. If we are serious about securing our children's future, we must act now.

This Government cannot just continue with business as usual. We therefore strongly recommend that the Government engage with global partners to assist in curriculum modernisation, teacher training and digital learning integration. We cannot afford to ignore this crisis, and we in the Opposition stand ready to support any meaningful reform **(applause)** that will truly prepare our students for the future. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I ask the citizens of Grenada to reflect on the theme, "**Towards Vision 75: Grenada-Resilient and Rising**". Let us ask ourselves these questions. Rising for whom, because for the ordinary Grenadian, this past year has been nothing short of a struggle. The reality on the ground is very clear. The cost of living has skyrocketed, making it harder for families to afford the simple, basic things, Mr. Speaker.

Victimisation is at an all-time high. Our people are now afraid to speak or to seek opportunities without fear of political discrimination. **(Time bell rings)** Unemployment… Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg your indulgence for two to three minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Speaker: You have two minutes more.

Hon. Kate Lewis-Peters: Unemployment remains a major crisis, leaving too many young people without hope for a better future. So, I ask again, who is it really rising for? It is not rising for the farmers, not the workers, not the business owners, and certainly not the struggling families.

Mr. Speaker, it will be remiss of me not to extend my deepest gratitude to the wonderful people of my constituency, St. Andrew North East. The men, the women, the young people who continue to put their trust in me as their elected representative. Through every challenge, every hardship, we have stood together. Despite the rising cost of living, despite the neglect from this Government and despite the poor policies that have made life even harder, we remain strong. **(Applause)** We have remained united, and we never lost hope.

Mr. Speaker, I know these times are tough, so I want to say to them, "Do not lose hope, do not give up; better days are coming". We will not be silent; we will not back down. After all, we are unstoppable. When the time comes, we will be right back stronger and better. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, MP for St. Andrew North East, and I now invite the MP for St. Patrick West to take the floor as he makes his contribution.

Hon. Joseph Andall: I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I greet my fellow Members of Parliament on both sides of the House and the listening and viewing public. Mr. Speaker, I will begin on the note on which the Honourable Member for St. Andrew

North East ended. She said that they have to hold on to hope, and I agree, because they have already lost "faith". **(Laughter) (Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the Honourable Prime Minister quoted me. Having quoted… Well, not quoted, but referred to a scripture verse while I was in Petite Martinique, in February. I could not name the chapter and the verse. I knew it was in Proverbs, but I did my homework, and therefore I would like to remind my good friend to pay heed to the counsel of Proverbs 21:23 and also Proverbs 17:28.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here to give my firm support to the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure presented by my colleague, Honourable Dennis Cornwall, last Friday. Before I talk about the work of the ministries for which I hold ministerial responsibility, and the activities in my constituency for the preceding 12 or so months, I would like to take the opportunity to clear the air on some patently false information peddled here, unashamedly without even the pretence of trying to back them up with facts and figures.

Let me talk about the Fur Playing Field, which is located in Mt. Craven, in my constituency of St. Patrick West, Mr. Speaker. Some months ago, renovation work began on that playing field. Apparently, there were some contractual disputes, and because the person who was at the centre of it is not in this House, Mr. Speaker, I will refrain from naming names or from saying or doing anything that would point the finger at, for want of a better word, the culprit. Subsequently, the work was held up, and later, through the intervention of MP Dennis Cornwall **(applause)** and the Ministries of Infrastructure, Sports and myself, the work resumed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable member for Saint Andrew North East to tell us how it is possible to be refurbishing the playing field and still have sports on it simultaneously. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, there is something in Japan called "ginkgo biloba" that is supposedly good for memory. I think the Honourable Member might do well to consume some of that.

The playing field, Cuthbert Peters Park, in Gouyave, has remained unusable for over 10 years under the NNP regime. A contract was given to a body or someone. The field was dug up, and it remained like that. The people of Gouyave had to travel to Victoria

and Beausejour to host sporting events. It was under the leadership of Fitzgrald "Naka" Joseph, the basketball coach, that the Gouyave people took spades, shovels and wheelbarrows and fixed back Cuthbert Peters Park. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I am not as young as I used to be, so forgive me if I have a little memory lapse. I believe that Alston George Park in Victoria suffered a fate, while not quite as long-lasting as Cuthbert Peter's Park, which resulted in several years without that park being able to be used by the residents of Victoria and the surrounding areas. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member shared some interesting light on some of the programmes that she highlighted that were championed by her party when they were in power, and that light was shared unwittingly; again, Proverbs 21:23 should be a guide.

You talk about a programme that holds young people. In fact, in some families, three generations were hostage to EC$700 a month with no chance of escaping, and you're boasting about that as progress. What we have done, Mr. Speaker, we have not dropped the programme. What we have done is to convert those under the Government system from lifelong trainees, that's the first time is see "trainee" was listed as a career, into bona fide workers now being able to access financial services because they have a real job, and nobody's taking advantage of them anymore, for the sake of securing votes by telling them, "If all you don't vote for us the other people will take it away". No threat whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that the numbers in those programmes are dropping or have dropped is a testament to the robust health of the economy of Grenada. **(Applause)** Those programmes were created because there was nothing else for young people to do. Nothing. Nowadays, there are so many job opportunities that we are actually facing a labour shortage in Grenada. **(Applause)**

Just go to the sites that advertise vacancies. Go to Carriacou. Go to Sauteurs and try to get a plumber, try to get a body workman or woman, try to get an electrician, and you will see what I'm talking about. It does not mean that the problem has been solved because we still have elements of structural unemployment and so on, but, Mr.

Speaker, these are systemic issues that cannot be eradicated in two years, three years or five years. If the brilliant minds could not do it in 28 years. I heard them say 23. Did they forget the first five from 1984 to 1990? The first six? **(Applause) (Laughter)** 28 plus years, Mr. Speaker.

And let us get something straight. Since the American invasion of 1983, there have been about nine General Elections in this country. The New National Party has won six of them. The National Democratic Congress has won two, and in 1990, there was no clear winner. The NDC had a plurality, and a gentleman from the constituency of St. John crossed the floor to give them a working majority in Parliament.

So what it means is that no other political party has had more than one term in office consecutively. So if anybody had the opportunity and meant to fix the problems that I hear my good friend highlighting today, those on the "Other Side" are the ones, Mr. Speake. **(Applause)** To come in here and try to pretend that the problems Grenada faces originated from June 23, 2022, is nothing short of laughable.

So, Mr. Speaker, FLY, Imani, "Congaree", whatever they call them **(laughter)**, are not as relevant to this simply because our young people are moving onto bigger things like cybersecurity. **(Applause)**

I heard a former Prime Minister of Grenada saying a few months ago, "Bush all over the side of the road. If the NNP was in power, people would have been able to make serious money". Mr. Speaker, come on. **(Laughter)** Serious money chopping cocoyaya bush by the side of the road, twice a year? Cybersecurity is giving young people the opportunity to earn a minimum of CA$2,000 per month. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, another… Because I am enjoined by Parliamentary Procedure not to use the word "lie", I will not say it. Another falsehood, Mr. Speaker, is that EC$150 was removed from SEED recipients. Member Delma Thomas was at pains to point that out. That EC$150 in question was simply support for COVID-19, and it was due to last for six months. **(Applause)** The NDC Government extended it by a further six. But conveniently, she does not remember that last year, all SEED recipients 65 and over who

were suffering mental or physical disability received an additional EC$200 for support. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the talk about runaway inflation. When we come here to talk about a budget, it's about numbers, so don't come talk about runaway inflation. Runaway inflation at 1.07%? **(Laughter)** Find a way to make me believe that. As the young people say, "I cannot wrap my mind around it", Mr. Speaker. She talked about youth unemployment. Let me give you some real figures from the Central Statistical Office of Grenada.

Youth unemployment, people aged 15 to 24, in 2020 stood at 39.5%. **(Applause)** It declined marginally in 2021 to 38.6%. Now, I know that a particular Minister has made his son the special adviser to the Minister for Finance, so I don't know if that resulted in the slight drop. **(Applause)** One more youth employed. June 2013, another marginal drop to 36.2%, Mr. Speaker. In September 2023, a drop precipitously, to 24.2% **(applause)**, and the last available figures, December 2023, 22.8%. Mr. Speaker, we should not be proud of a youth unemployment rate of 22%. It is unacceptable, but we must put it in its proper perspective in the space of two years, three years. Dropping it from 39.5% to 22.8% is a laudable achievement. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, crocodile tears, I don't know if it induces cataract or what, but it will cause some stinging, Mr. Speaker. When we come here lamenting the prevalence of gambling in the villages, gambling all over the country, Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the Honourable Member for St. Andrew North East that when the Casino Gaming Act was passed in 2014, it was not the NDC in power. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the Honourable Member that we did not bring Blast into Grenada. So to sit and be a part of an entity that introduced something that has led to the very malaise that you are conveniently lamenting now, Mr. Speaker, Jah help us. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this Government has empowered Members of Parliament, not only on "This Side", but on the "Other Side", to the tune of EC$10,000 monthly, and mind you, from personal experience, it's not sufficient. However, it does make a significant difference in the lives of ordinary people. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Joseph Andall

Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak briefly… I have to find my glasses to see the timer. **(Laughter)** I have time. Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I might have to give some of my extra time to somebody else if I finish early. Mr. Speaker…

Mr. Speaker: Just hold on, Honourable. I am hearing some utterances from on my left. Proceed.

Hon. Joseph Andall: I will not be daunted, Mr. Speaker, nor am I easily distracted. But, thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Export Development has stewardship over Grenada's foreign affairs and external trade relationships. Before I proceed further, I wish to take a moment to say a big thank you to the two permanent secretaries in this ministry, as well as senior management, middle management, and all staff. Those working within the ministry, physically as well as those serving in our missions abroad.

We seek to provide trade and investment opportunities for Grenada. When we travel, Mr. Speaker, we do so with reason and with purpose. We do not joyride. In the world of international diplomacy, there are no take-away lunches served. If you're not at the table, you simply do not eat. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, over the past 12 or so months, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Export Development has been extremely busy and well-engaged with our international partners, traditional as well as new. We live in a world of great political and economic certainty. We are faced with a situation where decisions of great import are made seemingly in a whimsical, capricious manner. And therefore, it is extremely important that we be aware of what is taking place and that we find ways and means, strategies to navigate the slippery ground of international diplomacy in this era.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have engaged with a traditional partner, the Kingdom of Morocco, to renew their roadmap agreement. And, Mr. Speaker, people love to talk about credit. I have no problem with anybody claiming or taking credit. My colleague over here correctly stated that the government is a continuum.

If we had decided not to continue with projects that we met, do you know what would have been the cry? **(Member proceeded in a witty tone)**, "Oh, just because it is we, they don't do it". So it appears, Mr. Speaker, as if there is almost a sort of infantile wish that we would have scrapped those programmes just so that they could beat their chest and point fingers at us, but we have bigger than that.

If there is something worthy of pursuing or continuing, you can count on the National Democratic Congress Administration to do just that, **(applause)**, in the interest of our country. Who wants credit, as far as I know, Digicel, Flow, and all of them are still in business. The village shops too.

Mr. Speaker, under this roadmap agreement with Morocco, there is an avenue for cooperation in education. I must admit that we, as a Government, have to be more aggressive in marketing those available scholarships to our general population. **(Applause)** We have to go out to the schools more often. I know that the Ministry of Education has already embarked on that, but we have to be more aggressive.

If we have to transform our country, as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew North East said correctly, we have to invest in the education of our young people. So there are 22 scholarships available under that roadmap programme. I think by now everybody is quite familiar with the fertiliser programme, with the Kingdom of Morocco.

We have signed an agreement on the use of renewable energy, where Morocco has developed quite a bit of expertise, and they are quite willing and prepared to share with us. Health, tourism, these are areas that we are going to continue collaborating with the Kingdom of Morocco so that it can all lay down to the benefit of our country, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, old people in Chantimelle say, "If a crab does walk, it cannot get fat". As a result of Honourable Lennox Andrews and the Honourable Prime Minister's visit to the Kingdom of Morocco, the relationship that was built from those visits put us in a position where without batting an eye, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, readily donated **(applause)**, over EC$5 million worth of relief supplies to our country following Hurricane Beryl.

If you don't go out there and look for it, it won't come here to meet you. It's a competitive world out there. We have to start seeing certain things not simply as expenses, but as investments. **(Inaudible comment by Honourable Dickon Mitchell) (Applause)**

I am reminded by the Honourable Prime Minister that the trip to Saudi Arabia was fully funded by the Government or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks ago, I had the privilege of travelling with the Honourable Prime Minister and my colleague Minister Andrews. By the way, I understand you have a new name. It's a Korean name, "Cho 'Throw' Tie". **(Laughter) (Applause)** We travelled to the People's Republic of China, and there something historic happened; the signing of 14 cooperation agreements **(applause)** with the People's Republic of China covering a wide array of subjects—

- Agriculture;
- Health;
- Education;
- Transportation;
- Ports;
- Renewables;
- Economic Development;
- The Blue Economy.

And I don't want to make some people jealous, but I think I will have to inform the Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister was bestowed an Honorary Professorship by Ningbo University. **(Applause)** So there is nothing wrong with calling him Professor Mitchell. **(Laughter)** Well earned by the way.

Mr. Speaker, Cuba. Cuba continues to be a trustworthy friend and partner. **(Applause)** Not only to Grenada, not only to the Caribbean, but to people and the world over. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, Cuban doctors went as far as Italy to provide services. I didn't hear anybody talk about human trafficking or nothing like that. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we have not just a legal obligation. We have a moral and an ethical obligation to stand by the people of Cuba. **(Applause)** Was it not for the selfless support of Cuba, many of us would not have had the opportunity for further education that we got.

On the "Other Side", the Honourable Member for St. Mark—testament of that. She should give a little table knock for that. **(Applause)** Knock it. The renowned Economist, Honourable "Cho 'Throw' Tie". **(Applause) (Laughter)** Brother Dennis Cornwall and I for a great period. **(Applause)**

Our health infrastructure would collapse without the generous intervention of Cuba **(applause)**, and for that, we must always take a principled stand, and at all costs avoid being opportunistic or transactional as it relates to the relationship between Grenada and Cuba. **(Applause)** So the Prime Minister led a delegation to Cuba on an official visit, and again, a number of very important cooperation agreements were signed. Health, Education, Environment, Culture and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I am going back to travel again. In 2023, the Prime Minister and I attended a very important event in the Bahamas. A-C-T-I-F. I think it's the Africa Caribbean Trade and Investment Forum, and that is where we met the great Nigerian industrialist who was our guest of honour at Independence this year **(applause)**, Mr. Aliko Dangote. There was no way we would have made contact with Mr. Dangote had we not been there. We have already begun to see the fruits of our engagement with him, and this is just the beginning. **(Applause)**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to engage foreign partners to negotiate for scholarships. We have had offers from the Republic of Saudi Arabia, from the Republic of Georgia, from Portugal, and from a host of other countries, and that, Mr. Speaker, can only come about because we recognised that if we sit in St. George's, nothing is going to fall into our laps. **(Applause)**

A hunter doesn't hunt in a cage. It has to go out in the wild **(applause)**, catch the manicou. Mr. Speaker, the malaise of our health system is well known, but we are not just crying about it. We are actively pursuing avenues to remedy the situation, and currently, we are in negotiations with the Nigerian international cooperation agency to

engage the services of a critical medical specialist that we currently lack in Grenada. **(Applause)** Ethologist, Anaesthesiologist, Critical Care Specialist.

Very often, we can only do emergency surgery because the General Hospital has only one 70-year-old Anaesthesiologist. **(Applause)** The poor man wants to retire, but he can't retire because if he retires, a lot of people will die in Grenada. So we are actively pursuing that.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who spent 28 years in power and was interested in lifting the quality of healthcare would not have had his or her country in this state of near collapse **(applause)** of the Healthcare Industry at this point in time. **(Applause)** We have to continue to talk about the 23 and the 28. You all are quick to talk and claim the so-called good things. Claim the ugly baby, too. **(Applause)** You made it. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, every time I think about Palestine, a lump comes to my throat. It seems as if, Mr. Speaker, the world has lost its conscience. We hear about homes being bulldozed in Palestine, and it's just another news item. We hear about a family of 17 that gets bombed at a wedding or at a christening, and it's no big deal.

Mr. Speaker, we are people who go down on our knees and pray and all kinds of things. Do we pray simply because we know how to do it, or because we actually care Mr. Speaker? Yet, in spite of the suffering and the tribulations of the Palestinian people, they are quite prepared and willing to share whatever little they have with us and to that we must say thank you. **(Applause)** Palestinian doctors came to Grenada because of a cooperation agreement.

There is one elderly lady in my constituency, 80 years old, who had cataracts removed from her eyes, and she can now see. **(Applause)** Didn't cost us a cent. The little Jamaican girl said, "Gratitude is a must". Let us show it indeed. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, recognising that no island is an island, and that even those who are of continental proportions, contrary to what they may think they too are not islands. We have set out, quite deliberately, to widen and deepen our diplomatic outreach. **(Applause)** And so we have taken the bold step to set up a diplomatic mission, a high commission in Canada's capital, Ottawa. **(Applause)**

We have gotten permission from the Government of Canada to open the mission, and our High Commissioner-designate, Mr. Sylvester Quarless, has already received an agreement. There are some administrative hurdles that we have to navigate, and of course, with the recent political changes in Canada that have slowed things up, but we are confident that within the next few weeks to a couple of months, we will have boots on the ground physically. **(Applause)**

We also continue to provide opportunities for young people within the Foreign Ministry to grow professionally. We do not ask what party you support. There is one particular young diplomat, and I don't want to make anybody feel jealous in the diplomatic corps, so I won't be giving accolades, but I want to tell that story.

Everybody tells me, "That person's father is a big NNP". That's not my problem. We looked at the CV. I believe that the Prime Minister was even more impressed than I was. We interviewed the person. I would not say whether it is male or female because I don't want to let the cat out of the bag **(laughter)**, all right, and we were convinced that Grenada would be well sorted by that individual. **(Applause)** Up to today, I don't know whether they are NNP, NDC—I am hearing about a new party called PNP. **(Laughter) (Inaudible comment by a Member)** Yes.

Mr. Speaker, the point is, we believe in the goodness of the Grenadian people **(applause)**, contrary to the picture of impending disaster of doom and bloom painted by the "Other Side". We believe in the goodness and in the brightness of our Grenadian people **(applause)**, and we continue to serve and promote that.

We continue to maintain the consulate that we have in Toronto, doing an excellent job. We have recently appointed a Grenadian businessman of Indian origin as Non-resident High Commissioner to India. He went last year to present credentials, and having spent a couple of months in India, he has already opened three trade and economic offices, one in Mumbai, one in Bengaluru and one in Delhi. **(Applause)**

Recognising or financial limitations very often we have to resort to use in on honorary consuls rather than full-fledged diplomats, to get things done that otherwise would be left undone, to represent our citizens if they are in little difficulties, to seek trade

and investment opportunities for us, and to provide general services at minimal costs to the Government and people of Grenada.

I am pleased to announce that we have recently appointed Dr. Eric Peters, a young gentleman from Gouyave, as our Honorary Consul in Barbados. **(Applause)** We have established honorary consulates in Bangkok, Thailand, in Manila, Philippines, and in addition to the Non-resident High Commissioner, we also have an honorary consulate in Delhi, the Indian capital. We have appointed one in Hanoi, Vietnam and another in Dhaka, Bangladesh. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we take these appointments extremely seriously, and the amount and quality of vetting that goes into them is second to none. **(Applause)** The last thing we want is egg on our faces, so if we detect any little blemish, we'll tell you, sorry, we may have to try to find some other way in which you can serve.

Recently, when the due diligence report came back, for someone who wanted a position, my skin nearly dropped off. On the surface, everything was perfect, but that digging. Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important because we cannot afford to compromise the good name of our country. Gone are the days when all kinds of shady transactions were conducted in the name of the people of Grenada, only for us to be left embarrassed down the road. We're very careful about that.

Mr. Speaker, recognising that in order to facilitate business, you have to be able to facilitate, not only the movement of goods, but the movement of people. We have been aggressively pursuing the signing of visa waiver agreements with a number of countries across the globe.

We have recently signed with Ghana **(applause)**, awaiting ratification by the Parliament. You know, recently there was a change in Government, so we expect that there may be a little delay. We have recently engaged Egypt **(applause)**, and it's just a matter of time. We have already signed with the Republic of Benin and with the Kingdom of Morocco. **(Applause)** We are currently in discussions with Qatar, Angola, and South Africa. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, in the last reporting, we have signed and established diplomatic relations with Bangladesh, Cabo Verde, or maybe Cape Verde, some people

might know it, Mauritius, Lesotho and Andorra, the Principality of Andorra and the Kingdom of Jordan. **(Applause)**

All of these signings give us the opportunity to engage with a wider cross-section of people. It gives us more options and, therefore, more leverage and more opportunities. We are currently in discussion with the Gambia, Senegal, Philippines, South Sudan and Mauritania for the establishment of diplomatic relations. **(Applause)**

Our Office of Diaspora Affairs, led by Ambassador Terry Forester, has been doing a wonderful job of staying connected with its diaspora by leveraging the skills, assets and talent of our people in the diaspora. We continue to see the fruit of it through the sourcing of school supplies, medical supplies, food, musical instruments and more recently, following the passage of Hurricane Beryl, the mobilisation of much-needed resources to help alleviate the suffering of the people affected by Beryl.

Mr. Speaker, I must take a moment to talk about something extraordinary. Under normal circumstances, that would be nothing remarkable about it, but our country was ravaged by Hurricane Beryl in the northern parts, at least, on the 1st of July last year. Our Prime Minister was physically steering the ship rather than hiding on one. **(Applause)** He could easily have asked for a CARICOM Summit to move to another island and delay his chairmanship. But knowing that he had the backing of a solid "team of rookies" **(applause)**, he declined the offer to postpone.

In six months in office, marked by its strong advocacy for climate justice, especially for Small-Island Developing States (SIDS) **(applause)**, by a clarion call for reparatory justice **(applause)**, these interventions have not gone unnoticed. **(Applause)**

In Barbados, a couple of weeks ago, the EU Commissioner, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, was publicly called out and had to respond, she had no choice, by our indefatigable, indomitable Prime Minister. **(Applause)** The Prime Minister endorsed and promoted the Regional Digital Resilience Strategy during his tenure. He promoted the creation of a digital skills fund, which is designed to train 10,000 CARICOM youths in Digital Technology. He presided over the launch of the Digi Smart CARICOM Digital

Skills initiative, just to name a few. **(Applause)** Grenada, you are well-led and well served by a wise head on young shoulders. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Trade and Export Development, we have been quite busy and kudos to Prime Minister to Permanent Secretary Clark and the team in the Trade and Export Division, who have been working tirelessly to ensure that we build a sustainable, diversified and resilient economy, who have been working to upgrade their abilities of the Bureau of Standards so that it can better serve the stakeholders.

The Trade Division has consistently organised, and each time it's bigger and better, The Made in Grenada Expo, which is traditionally held around Independence time, sometimes on the Carenage and the stadium or both. They have also taken it outside of the St. George's area by hosting it in Grenville and on two occasions in my hometown, Sauteurs, providing opportunities for people who would not have had the chance to display their wares and creativity otherwise. **(Applause)** I commend them for that.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to events in my constituency. I think by now everybody knows that I had to leave Parliament in a rush in March, almost a year to the day, last year, because of a devastating fire that left about 18 people homeless in my home village of Chantimelle.

I will run the risk of inadvertently omitting some valuable donors, but I think I need to publicly acknowledge the contribution of the following entities and individuals in our effort to re-house the people who lost their homes in a better way.

- The Grenada Co-operative Bank Limited; **(applause)**
- Hubbard's; **(applause)**
- Huggins;
- Renwick & Thompson; **(applause)**
- Grenada Resorts Limited; that is the Chinese project in Levera; **(applause)**
- L&M Industries; Tanty Merle; **(applause)**
- Shelter Solutions; **(applause)**
- The Embassy of the People's Republic of China; **(applause)**
- Ministry of Social and Community Development; **(applause)**

- Gravel & Concrete Corporation

And I wish to also publicly recognise the selfless, untiring efforts of CHANTIVIC **(applause)**, which is a committee that I put together to spearhead the relief and rebuilding efforts; that committee is headed by a retired principal, teacher… Mr. Speaker, I retroactively ask your leave to call names—

- Teacher Faith Phillip; **(applause)**
- Pastor Richard Alexander; and
- Miss Solange Loggie. **(Applause)**

The community has been rallying around the victims, and I'm pleased to announce that of the five houses destroyed, we have already begun construction on three, and I'm advised that by the end of this month, a fourth one will be starting. **(Applause)** One of the problems we are facing, which is a tribute to the strength of the economy, is that we are finding it difficult to get workers. Yes?

Mr. Speaker, we have to applaud the initiative of our people. I wish to point out, or to call out to a young man named Richie Rush from High Street Sauteurs, who runs a car wash business, who dedicated one day's takings from his business to Beryl's relief. **(Applause)** He donated cash and water, and this is a young man, probably in his 20s. We are quick to point out the delinquency and youth, this and youth astray. We have to give them the plaudits when they deserve it. **(Applause)**

Ambassador Richard Nixon has stepped up in a big way both regarding the Chantimelle fire and Beryl. A past student of mine from the Anglican High School, Ms. Sarah Banfield, provided invaluable support to the farmers in terms of having the fields cleared by providing chainsaws and so on. **(Applause)** The Venezuelan Embassy also contributed specifically to St. Patrick, as did the Japanese Embassy. I wish to say thank you to all those entities and any individuals. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, our people are regaining their entrepreneurial spirit. **(Applause)** More and more, when people visit me at my constituency office it is not to ask for ply board, but to ask for a cooler so that they could sell drinks, to ask for a deep fryer, to ask for some material to set up a little parlour, and that is the kind of thing that we have to

encourage. A country cannot be built by half of the people sitting down and expecting the other half to mind them. We have to get rid of that culture, and I'm pleased to say that I'm seeing signs of it in St. Patrick. **(Applause)**

There is a young lady, Ms. Lynette Narine, from Red Mud who has set up a thriving agro-processing business in the nutmeg area, creams, sprays, oils and ointments. The Ministry of Trade has been giving her exceptional support. **(Applause)**

There's a gentleman in Mount Craven, Mr. Egret Fraser, mind you, I'm not taking credit for that, but just highlighting for information purposes, how some people are using their initiative to boost themselves and their communities, consequently. Mr. Egret Fraser is one of the best-known joiners in the St. Patrick area.

He invited me to tour his new facility in Mount Craven, Front Street. It's going to be top-of-the-line; office space, space for computers, all different kinds of things that a modern setup requires. He said to me, "I'm getting down in age. I want to leave a legacy. I want something to continue even after I leave," and that is the kind of vision that we have support. **(Applause)**

There's a young man too, in the creative field, David Gordon Jr, for over two years, has been running the Northern Lights Festival, which is comparable to what takes place in Quarantine **(applause)** around Christmas time. My office in Sauteurs has been giving him exceptional support. The Ministry of Finance, the Concessions Desk, they're always very supportive **(applause)**, so I want to thank Minister Cornwall, PS Sylvester and the rest of the staff at the Ministry of Finance. **(Applause)** These are kinds of initiatives we need to push in the rural areas so that Grenada can move forward, everybody together.

Mr. Speaker, after years of neglect, what passes for the infrastructure in St. Patrick has fallen apart. Case in point. About a month ago, I invited PS Alva Browne, from Infrastructure and the Chief Technical Officer to do a tour of my constituency so that they could see for themselves the state of the bridges, many of which are calamities waiting to happen.

We stopped at one in Mt. Rich. We went under it, and they said, "No, Minister. We have to start this one yesterday". I say nothing, because I know better. A couple of

hundred meters down the road, we go up to one in Snell Hall, and they bawl, "No Minister, we have to start on that one day before yesterday". Thankfully, they were able to engage a contractor. The work turned out to be more complex than originally thought, so it had to be paused so that proper engineering advice and guidance could be provided, and I'm advised that the work will resume on Monday, 17th. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I continue to engage my constituents deliberately and regularly, contrary to the narrative you may be hearing out there. I became an MP and a Minister, unfortunately, I did not assume god-like qualities. Even God, when people come together, he's supposed to be everywhere; they say, "Let us invoke the presence of the Lord". So when I'm in Mt. Rich, I cannot be in Chantimelle at the same time.

But it is true that my consistent engagement with the people I get to see first-hand, many of the problems that they are faced with and can take, in many cases, immediate action to rectify them. **(Applause) (Time bell rings)** That is why… Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we have been able to erect protective gatherings on the borderline bridge between St. Mark and St. Patrick, which we call the Chapel Bridge **(applause)**, La Fortune. In Hermitage in Canal Road, we are in the process of having them installed. A contractor has been identified. These are the kinds of things that you see when you move around your constituency.

Mr. Speaker, Red Mud is a little village that is close to my heart. I'm up there very, very often. It is a village brim-full of talent; only a handful of inhabitants, a few families, the Elahie, the Narine, the Williams and one or two others; Fletchers. In spite of having a population barely reaching 200, they have several players representing Grenada **(applause)** and the Windward Islands in cricket at different age group levels. One of the burning aspirations of Red Mud is to have a playing field.

Just last week, I visited with my team to look at a site for a potential playing field, and I'm confident that I will get a support of my colleagues once the deal is reasonable for us to acquire or purchase that piece of land to give the young people of Red Mud the means to recreate themselves **(applause)**, and also develop professionally in cricket.

We are also engaging in the usual retaining wall, road building, and road repairing exercises, right throughout the constituency. Every village has been impacted by it; Prospect Darvey, lit, and we are in the process of installing some more solar lights in some of the more dimly lit areas throughout the constituency. **(Applause)**

I am advised that this will begin this week. Darvey, again, we are currently in negotiation with a family that owns a part of the land that we hope to secure for the establishment of a housing, playing field and a community resource centre. **(Applause)**

I wish to thank my Cabinet colleagues for approving and ultimately purchasing the old Carib Cinema property in Mali, just outside Sauteurs. Very soon, we'll be engaging the constituents in public discussions as to how best to proceed with that facility.

Traffic is a nightmare, Sauteurs. We have already begun with the intervention of MIT and the Ministry of Infrastructure, the construction of a Bypass road linking Mali with Sauteurs, which should help alleviate the traffic congestion. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Breakwater Project is a headache for everyone, and I'm pleased to announce that in December last year, the Caribbean Development Bank approved a facility providing US$10 million for the extension and improvement of that Breakwater Project. **(Applause)** We could have rushed into it, but we recognise, as the old saying goes, "It is better to measure twice and cut once". So, the necessary environmental and social impact assessments were done. Consultations were held with the people in the community who understand local conditions better than any engineer or expert. All of those were incorporated, and we are now in the pre-qualification phase. So I've been assured by the technical people that by the second half of this year, we will see the resumption of that project. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we have repaired the community centres in Chantimelle and Mt. Rich. There are still a few little issues with Mt. Rich, in that the ceiling, which is made of concrete, is sort of shelling, so some more remedial work has to be done there to ensure its safety. I take this opportunity to enjoy my constituents, to please let us take care of our property. **(Applause)** If we damage it, if we use it injudiciously, we will be without it

again for a long time, and it costs money to repair, to maintain, to rebuild. It is ours. Let's take the best care of it.

Mr. Speaker, Education and Information and Communication Technology are of paramount importance to this Government, and it is with that in mind, that I approached the Chinese Embassy and was able to secure enough devices to properly outfit the Information Technology Lab at McDonald College **(applause)**, and that will be for the use, not only of the school, but for, the surrounding communities of Mali, La Mode, and Sauteurs.

Mr. Speaker, we have recently refurbished the Mt. Rich Basketball Court again, through the intervention of the Ministry of Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation. **(Applause)** I've been assured by Honourable Delma Thomas that the lights will be repaired in short order, so you're looking forward to that. **(Applause)**

One of the disappointing things to me has been our slowness in finally putting the Mt. Rich Medical Station back into full use. I am pleased to report that we have finally got to a stage where, very soon, work will begin to ensure that the facility is rehabilitated and put to the use of the residents of Mt. Rich and Snell Hall. **(Applause)**

The Sauteurs Health Complex, which over the years has deteriorated to an extent that, frankly speaking, cannot be called a health facility. It is in need of serious medical attention. **(Applause)** This year, work will begin on the rehabilitation of the Sauteurs Medical Facility. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the community of Snell Hall will be smiling again soon. We have completed the road from the Snell Hall Main Road leading up to the playing field itself **(applause)**, and we have secured funding for the construction of bathroom and changing facilities, as well as a mini pavilion for the residents of Snell Hall. **(Applause)** This should start soon.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Cornwall, and I signed an agreement with the Chinese City of Ningbo, which is located in Shenzhen, China. I'm pleased to announce that the fruit of the agreement will soon be visible to us. A shipment of agricultural, educational, fisheries, and sporting supplies is on its way to St. Patrick. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we also sought, Minister Cornwall and I, and obtained a brand new custom-built ambulance for the people of St. Patrick. **(Applause)** We are furthest away from the capital. The roads are long, transportation is expensive, and often unreliable. Therefore, it is important that we put in place measures to protect and serve the people of St. Patrick. **(Applause)** Minister Kerryne James, I understand that you all borrowed our ambulance. We want it back soon. **(Laughter)** Anyway, it's for all the people of Grenada. I'm just being a little factious here.

Mr. Speaker, will also be engaging in a project to put up signage throughout the constituency of St. Patrick West. That we seem an unimportant task, but try trying to find your good friend, Pedro, not Honourable Peter David, and somebody tells you, "Just go down so, and you're going to see an old truck around a corner, and that's where he is staying". You get there, however, the night before, the Scrap Metal Dealers removed the old truck. **(Applause)** You are lost. So, we are going to take care of that. **(Inaudible comment by a Member) (Laughter)** We are going to take care of that by erecting proper signage throughout the constituency, Mr. Speaker.

We have also done some temporary work to provide better sanitary facilities for the people of St. Patrick, particularly those in Sauteurs or those who visit Sauteurs, by repairing the public toilet at the Breakwater Facility **(applause)**, and also repairing those at the Sauteurs Bus Terminal **(applause)**, which in itself is another story, Mr. Speaker.

After years of nobody paying any attention to it, the vegetable market, the meat market, and the fish market—there's some work being done on the fish market, started by the previous Administration, so take your credit, and the shelter at the bus terminal area. All of these require urgent attention. **(Applause)**

We have identified the public buildings in Sauteurs, and we are going to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure Development to take steps to ensure that, if possible, they are restored. If they cannot be restored, they're demolished and something better put in their place. I'm not saying that these will happen next month, but all of these are things that we are looking at as a means of enhancing the physical beauty of Sauteurs and

providing more and better economic opportunities for the people of the northern parish. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as I close, it would be remiss of me not to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Andrew South East on assuming the position of Leader of the Opposition. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I wish her a very long tenure in that position. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate her for steering the course, like our predecessor. She has shown that she has the stamina to stay for the whole day. **(Applause)**

I would like to say thank you to the hard-working people at the MP's Office for St. Patrick West, located in Sauteurs. Your service to the public has been exemplary. I have never called on you and not got something if not immediately, as soon as practicable; the same goes for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Export Development. **(Applause)** Prime Minister, for reposing confidence in me, to have me function in a ministerial capacity.

My college has been a wonderful team, a wonderful support mechanism that we all are to each other, and most importantly, the people of St. Patrick West, who have put their confidence in me to be your representative in this House of Parliament and whom I will only intensify my engagement in the coming period. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, very much, very much for affording me this opportunity to make this contribution. I wish all Members all the best, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. Patrick West, for your presentation. I now turn the floor over to the MP for the constituency of St. John to make her contribution.

Hon. Kerryne James: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I stand before this Honourable House this evening with deep pride and unwavering commitment to the people of Grenada, and most specifically my beloved constituents of St. John.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kerryne James

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly endorse the 2025 to 2027 National Budget as presented by my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Finance, Dennis Cornwall. Mr. Speaker, this is a bold and forward-thinking budget that secures the foundation for long-term sustainable development. It is a budget that is transformational, one that reflects not just numbers but real, tangible impacts for our people. **(Applause)**

The theme, Mr. Speaker, "Towards Vision 75: Grenada-Resilient and Rising", is timely and relevant. Resilience is no longer an option; it is a necessity. Our country has faced climate threats, economic pressures and infrastructural neglect, yet this Administration has boldly stepped forward with a plan that does not just readily react to crises but actively prepares for the future.

Since assuming the office just two years and eight months ago, Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated what visionary, what strategic and competent leadership looks like. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, where past administrations left behind stagnation and inaction, we have delivered meaningful progress. **(Applause)** Where others fail to invest in resilience, we have made climate action a national priority. **(Applause)**

So this budget, Mr. Speaker, is not just about the present. It is about ensuring real, sustained development for the next 75 years. At score, Mr. Speaker, it underscores the fundamental importance of climate resilience, environmental stewardship and renewable energy as essential pillars of Grenada's sustainable development strategy.

Mr. Speaker, before I delve into my substantive part, in terms of highlighting my ministry, I want to turn to the progress made in my constituency, the constituency of St. John. My people know, Mr. Speaker, that I do not make empty promises. I deliver.

Over the past year, we have implemented strategic, impactful, and community-driven initiatives that are transforming the physical, economic, and social landscape of Saint John. Mr. Speaker, as it relates to infrastructure development, road rehabilitation and transportation network upgrades, we have the Black Bay, for example, a critical road enhancement completed near the Two Rock area, improving commuter safety and access.

We're also seen improvements in Dalton Estate, Power Pack and Douglaston Estate, whereby asphalt and concrete resurfacing was successfully executed, increasing road durability and traffic efficiency, benefiting both Farmers and residents alike.

Mr. Speaker, the Mount Granby to Douglaston Road, also known as "Shortcut", accessibility improvement is being implemented, offering an alternative to well-maintained roads for residents and agricultural businesses.

Mr. Speaker, if we go up to the north of the constituency, Cocoa Town and Florida road rehabilitation initiatives have completed strengthening rural connectivity and supporting economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, in Market Square, slipper drain installation was finalised just at the latter part of last year, enhancing stormwater management and public infrastructure resilience.

As relates to the drainage and flood mitigation initiative, Mr. Speaker, we have seen Loretto community drainage enhancement, a comprehensive drainage improvement including cross culvert installation, completed to mitigate waterlogging and erosion risks.

In relation to elderly friendly infrastructure improvements, Mr. Speaker, we continue to install and construct community footpaths, ongoing initiatives to improve pedestrian mobility, ensuring safer and more accessible workways for our elderly residents and persons with disabilities.

Significant upgrades have been undertaken at the Douglaston Cemetery, Mr. Speaker, to enhance the structural integrity, accessibility, and overall functionality. This includes the installation of a perimeter railing providing reinforced safety and improved aesthetic appeal. Additionally, a new footpath has been constructed to ensure easier accessibility, particularly for the elderly and persons with mobility challenges.

Mr. Speaker, the extensive renovations have been completed on the toilet facilities and open space roof-covered area, enhancing both public convenience and the dignity of the space for visitors and families. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kerryne James

Mr. Speaker, we have also started… It was a controversial road, the Mungo Main Road, Mungo Road. After being broken for over three years, Mr. Speaker, this long-awaited rehabilitation project has commenced and will be completed during this fiscal year 2025 **(applause)**, and Mt. Dor, you are next.

Mr. Speaker, the Grand Roy retaining wall, after over five years of neglect, this critical protective structure is finally set for reconstruction in 2025. We also have, Mr. Speaker, the Maboya Road rehabilitation, another long overdue project that will enhance accessibility and transportation safety for residents and work is due to commence there this year. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to Housing and Social Development, a commitment to my people, 30 new homes have been built on the National Housing Programme, providing safe, modern living conditions. Fifty homes have been repaired. Well over 40 new bathrooms and toilets were installed, significantly improving hygiene and sanitation for households in need. Some of the ongoing projects we have, Mr. Speaker, we have 35 additional bathrooms, 32 more housing repairs and 15 new homes already under construction.

Mr. Speaker, this Government remains deeply committed to fostering community resilience, economic empowerment and social well-being. Through targeted interventions, we have provided direct support to vulnerable populations, businesses, educational institutions, faith-based organisations and grassroots community initiatives.

Some of the key community development interventions that we have been able to assist with thus far, Mr. Speaker, are as follows—

Housing Assistance for Special Victims; a total of $82,362.22 allocated to support individuals and families affected by natural disasters, including landslides, floods and hurricanes, ensuring that those most in need receive critical housing aid during times of crisis and speedily.

Mr. Speaker, we've also had a robust Small Business Support initiative in the amount of $22095.72 provided to entrepreneurs and microbusiness owners to strengthen local economies, create jobs and promote self-sufficiency at the constituency level.

In relation to Educational and Faith-Based Institutional Support, Mr. Speaker. An approximation of $30,000 invested in schools and churches, recognising their pivotal role in education, community cohesion and social development.

Strengthening Community Celebrations and Cultural Events. An allocation of $40,000 to support collaborations between community organisations, sporting clubs and other social clubs, ensuring vibrant, inclusive and meaningful community engagement was also realised.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to Community Infrastructure and Environmental Resilience. We have seen work on the Doctor Bell Pedestrian Bridge rehabilitation, a critical infrastructure for greater enhanced pedestrian accessibility and safety in the community.

The Loretto Community Road Self-help initiative. Our community-driven effort to improve road conditions demonstrates the power of local collaboration and self-reliance.

The Marigot Bay Clean-up, in an approximation of $10,000, Mr. Speaker, invested in pre-hurricane marine debris removal and emergency clearing, directly assisting fishers and securing their vessels and safeguarding the livelihoods before Hurricane Beryl.

Mr. Speaker, it would be a grave omission if I did not take this opportunity to commend this Government, a Government of vision and decisive leadership, for empowering every Member of Parliament, both on the "Government Side" as well as the Opposition Side, with a dedicated constituency allowance. I didn't hear much of it today, but I know we can account for it on "This Side", and certainly, I can for my constituency.

This initiative, Mr. Speaker, revolutionises constituency representation by ensuring that MPs have direct access to financial resources to provide immediate tangible support to the people that we serve. **(Applause)** This allocation, Mr. Speaker, is not just a budgetary provision. It is a bold policy shift that acknowledges a fundamental truth: our constituents should not have to endure endless bureaucratic red tape to receive basic urgent assistance.

Unlike past administrations, Mr. Speaker, that left MPs at the mercy of a slow-moving system, this Government has ensured that representatives can directly respond

to pressing health emergencies. I've heard a story and an example raised by, you know, an innocent child. It can also help us with educational needs and social support requests without unnecessary delays and putting strain on our personal finances.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of Direct Assistance to Vulnerable Individuals and Families. We have been able to give education assistance in over $8,000 spent to provide financial relief to students and families, ensuring access to educational resources, tuition assistance and other academic necessities that can buffer what is already happening underneath the Ministry of Education.

I must big up and boast about two of my young, intelligent, inspiring female constituents, Erin and Kimel. They have benefited, and are currently in the US, now, excelling well, balancing academic pursuits and women's football. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Medical Assistant. We have given medical assistance through that same constituency allowance, in over $10,000, to support individuals facing health-related financial burdens, ensuring that they receive essential treatment, medical emergency care, as best as and as far as it can go.

In relation to Small Business Grants, Mr. Speaker. We have given to date in the amount of $43,321.62, a combination of both constituency allowance, which all MPs get on both the Government and Opposition sides, and Community Development Funds under the Ministry of Social Development. **(Applause)**

We have dedicated ourselves, Mr. Speaker, to empowering micro and small business owners, fostering economic independence and entrepreneurship and helping businesses recover and thrive at the constituency level.

Mr. Speaker, we have also supported utility collections and households provided to assist single parents, elderly individuals and vulnerable families in securing basic utility services such as electricity and water improvements for the standard of living.

In relation to Empowering Communities through Skills Development and Economic Resilience, Mr. Speaker. We have had a Skills Training and Certification Programme for Food Handlers and Mixologists. A workshop. Over $3,000 was invested in enhancing food safety and bartending skills, equipping participants with certifications to increase

employability in the hospitality sector, a programme that was done, Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, under the Nutrition Council.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to our Fisherman Support initiative. We had a Fishermen Voucher Programme. $14,000 was spent to provide local fishers with essential tools, including nets, gears, and other critical equipment, reinforcing sustainable fishing practices and economic security for the sector during the month of June, which is known for our 29-June celebrations, "The Feast of St. Peter and Paul".

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives reaffirm this Government's unwavering commitment to empowering individuals, strengthening families and securing livelihoods. Unlike previous representatives, who viewed social support as an afterthought or political transaction, this MP here, me, I prioritise real and tangible interventions, ensuring that resources flow directly into the hands of those who need the most and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, supporting my constituents to give them a hand up and not a handout.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we have embarked on a solar lighting project. Over 150 solar street lights have been installed in areas such as Bamboo, Power Pack, Marigot Bay, Palmiste and Gouyave to improve security, reduce electricity cost and promote renewable energy use. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this is not just policy. It is action. It is proof that things are happening in St. John. It is governance that uplifts, empowers and delivers. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I would use the balance of my time to turn my focus to the works that the "air hostess", or if I must be diplomatically correct within this House, the works that I have accomplished and plan to accomplish under the Ministry of Climate Resilience, Environment and Renewable Energy.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry stands at the helm of our nation's response to climate change, spearheading efforts to mitigate risk and secure a resilient and sustainable future. This, Mr. Speaker, calls for a whole-of-society approach, one that fosters strategic partnerships across the public and private sectors, civil societies and other communities.

Our mission is to mobilise resources, safeguard life in the hoods, protect ecosystems and enhance economic resilience in the face of climate-related threats. This

year, we have an amount of EC$16.1 million that has been allocated to drive national incentives in Climate Action, Energy Security and Sustainable Development, of which recurrent expenditures amount to EC$2.9 million and capital expenditures EC$13.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to Renewable Energy, there is no greater testament to this Government's bold, unwavering political will than our commitment to transition in Grenada into a clean energy powerhouse. Renewable Energy, Mr. Speaker, is not simply an environmental agenda. It is an economic and social imperative, a driver of national security and a catalyst for sustained prosperity.

For far too long, Mr. Speaker, our nation has been shackled by the volatility of fossil fuel imports, vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices that drain our economic resources. This Administration, Mr. Speaker, refuses to be held hostage by an outdated energy paradigm. Instead, we are executing a decisive, strategic shift that will position Grenada as a regional leader in Renewable Energy, unlocking economic growth, lowering energy costs for our people and ensuring climate resilience and a future.

Through an unprecedented combination of policy reform, direct investment, and international partnerships, we are laying the foundation for a modern energy sector, Mr. Speaker, one that will empower households, businesses, and industries. Our policies are not reactionary. They are visionary, forward-thinking, and are built on the principles of energy sovereignty and sustainability. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, let me be unequivocal. This Government is not merely discussing renewable energy, but we are delivering on it. **(Applause)** From scaling up solar PV installations to advancing a 15 Megawatt Geothermal Energy Project and pioneering an ambitious e-mobility framework, we are turning bold commitments into tangible realities. They asked what we are doing new, so I'm just giving them a little thing. Right. **(Applause)**

The days of dependency are behind us, Mr. Speaker. We are not waiting for the future. We are building it now. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, permit me to now outline some

of the strategic initiatives under Renewable Energy that will propel Grenada toward a cleaner, more energy secure future.

First, the Grenada Geothermal Energy Development Project is making significant strides in advancing the country's clean energy transition. Currently, in the exploration phase, the project aims to confirm the viability of a 15 Megawatt Geothermal Facility, which is expected to provide 45% of Grenada's peak electricity demand **(applause)** and deliver stable renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, we must commend the support we have been given by the UK Foreign Commonwealth **(applause)** and Development Office of over £10 million grant from that facility and US$9.4 million in grant finance from the Caribbean Development Bank. **(Applause)** The total funding for exploratory drilling now exceeds US$22 million. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, key activities completed thus far include Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, Geotechnical Investigations and Stakeholder Engagements.

Phase two, Mr. Speaker, exploratory drilling is currently underway. This initiative underscores the Government's unwavering commitment to reducing fossil fuel dependence and securing Grenada's long-term resilience. The 2025 budget allocation of $3.6 million further demonstrates the Government's dedication to accelerating this transformative project.

Mr. Speaker, one of my biggest highlights for the year 2025 is the Caribbean Efficient and Green Energy Billings Project, recently approved by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors. It is a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and accelerating Grenada's transition to Renewable Energy by addressing the country's heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels and outdated electricity infrastructure. This project, Mr. Speaker, will modernise the energy sector through a retrofitting of over 10 Government buildings with LED lighting, smart energy management systems and efficient cooling technologies to reduce energy consumption and operational costs

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, On-Grid and Off-Grid Solar PV Systems will be developed to diversify Grenada's energy sources, strengthen battery storage capacity for improved stability and implement Net Building Policies to allow access to Renewable Energy to be fed into the national grid.

The project, Mr. Speaker, a new one, will also provide policy and regulatory support, facilitating the development of a national energy efficiency policy, encouraging private sector investment in renewables, and fostering regional collaboration to harmonise energy policies. A significant emphasis, Mr. Speaker, was placed on capacity building and job creation, offering technical training to Government agencies and local professionals, promoting female participation in the energy sector, and generating employment opportunities in solar installation, energy auditing and infrastructure maintenance. All of which can help with the re-educating of our young men and women in this country to take advantage of the opportunities in the new economy. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's participation is supported by a $40 million concessional financing package from the World Bank International Development Association or the IDA, an $8.5 million loan from the Clean Technology Fund, and technical assistance from the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency and the OECS to facilitate pooled procurement and renewable energy technologies. This initiative represents a major milestone in Grenada's journey towards energy sustainability, reducing the nation's reliance on imported fuels while fostering a more resilient and energy secure future.

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Resilience Renewable Energy Infrastructure Investment Facility, it's a mouthful, is another transformative project that the ministry will be engaging in for the year. This initiative aims to accelerate renewable energy investments, enhance energy security, and mitigate climate and natural disaster risks. Spearheaded by the ECCB and the World Bank initiative, it leverages regional synergies to achieve economies of scale while ensuring tailored national implementation.

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's US$35.4 million financing package under this project includes a $10 million IDA credit for equity capital in Risk Mitigation Mechanisms, a

US$21.7 million for Renewable Energy Integration and Infrastructure Modernisation, including a US$15.7 million in IDA credit, and a US$6 million from the Clean Technology Fund. We will also see a US$3 million IDA credit for the Institutional Strengthening of Project Implementation Units.

Some of the key components of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, would be the Regional Renewable Energy units, which would lead to project development, aggregation and tendering. The Risk Mitigation Facility, which will encourage private capital investment through partial credit guarantees and renewable energy integration, would see strengthening national grids for better renewable energy uptake, including battery storage solutions.

We will also see underneath this project, Mr. Speaker, a Contingent Emergency Response, which aims to provide rapid financial support to restore energy in infrastructure after disasters. Mr. Speaker, through a strong collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Resilience Energy, PURC and GRENLEC at the helm, the Government is advancing the development of a utility-scale solar PV project at the Maurice Bishop International Airport under an independent power producer model, to strengthen Grenada's as renewable energy mix and attract private sector investment backed by a US$10 million pledge to the Caribbean Renewable Energy Infrastructure Investment Facility via the ECCB.

This initiative, Mr. Speaker, reflects our unwavering commitments to expanding renewable energy, modernising infrastructure for energy security and fostering clean energy investment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, another key new initiative that this ministry will undertake in this fiscal year is "The Solar For All: Expanding Energy Access". Mr. Speaker, access to reliable and affordable energy is a cornerstone of economic empowerment. The Solar For All Project will provide Solar PV Solutions to the energy-improvised population across Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

This initiative prioritises vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, single-parent households and small-scale agro-processors. Some of the key impacts that we would see on this project are the easier energy access of green solar PV systems for

underserved households, cost reduction, grid-tied solar PV installation to lower electricity expenses, economic inclusion, renewable energy solutions for small businesses and geographic equity, fair distribution of benefits across the tri-island state.

Mr. Speaker, with funding secured from the International Solar Alliance, phase one will benefit approximately 300 individuals in its first year. Over EC$2 million has been identified for this initiative with further expansion contingent on the success of the initial phase.

Mr. Speaker, the Renewable Energy Division has made other significant strides in promoting sustainable energy solutions. A national immobility workshop has successfully organised training for 40 participants to advance electric mobility initiatives. We have also trained 60 importers in the safe use, handling, and storage of refrigerants. We have launched Grenada's Climate and Ozone Protection Programme, highlighting our alignment with international environmental standards.

We have established a Recovery, Recycling, and Reclamation Centre at the Solid Waste Management Authority to support Sustainable Refrigerant Management and reduce ozone-depleting emissions. Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that this is a milestone achievement as we are the first in the region to achieve a Recovery, Recycling and Recognition Centre. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, 30 persons were trained in the use of solar water pumps supporting Sustainable Water Management for agriculture and other sectors. A national consultation was held for solar PV stakeholders, ensuring a broad-based elaboration on renewable energy solutions. The Ministry finalised Grenada's National Energy Policy, establishing a clear framework for our transition to renewable energy. Progress was also made with the drafting of the Energy Efficiency Act and the initiation of the integrated resource and resilience plan to streamline energy planning.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to support for the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority and the arrival of key equipment. As you know, the Ministry is the Line Ministry for the Authority. On December 4, 2024, we welcomed the first shipment of major equipment to Carriacou, signifying a new chapter in our journey towards enhanced,

environmentally sound waste management. **(Applause)** Central to this shipment is an industrial dual-purpose wood shredder, which has been safely transported to the Hillsborough Playing Field for commissioning and has already been commissioned.

Along with the shredder, we also received critical supporting machinery, including a fuel supply trailer, field lights to facilitate 24-hour operations, and safety gear for site staff. This suite of equipment includes a low-speed, high-performance grinder designed for shredding construction timber and large trees accumulated at temporary disposal sites. This machine, valued at approximately US$1.5 million, was manufactured by Verma of Iowa, USA, and is one of only seven such machines distributed globally.

Grenada is proud, Mr. Speaker, to be the first in the Caribbean to acquire this advanced technology. Indeed, this speaks to the way we are leading in innovation and environmental stewardship. Eleven staff members, Mr. Speaker, of the authority underwent comprehensive training provided by the technicians from Verma and Cadwell, which ensured that there was proper operation and maintenance of the equipment at Harvey Vale and Hillsborough.

Additional equipment procured, Mr. Speaker, includes a trommel screen with eddy currents for material recovery and soil radiation, a bailer for metal processing, hook roll on and roll off truck platform with bins for waste transport and distribution, a tractor head and lowboy for major transport, a wield excavator and mini excavator with advanced attachments for loading and processing support.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada has made a historic investment in approximately US$3.1 million towards equipment procurement. This is the single largest investment in the authorities in a waste management infrastructure by any Government in over 20 years. **(Applause)** I don't know how people used to do it.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative and this investment will not only address the immediate waste management challenges posed by Hurricane Beryl, but it will also pave the way for long-term sustainability, waste management and resilience of the authority.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't want to touch too much on the clean-up and all of that because I felt as though my colleague spoke to that in great detail earlier on, and, you know. I

know sometimes we talk, mouth open, words jump out, that was a statement that was made, but when I saw that he actually showed the pictures as to the transformation that happened in Carriacou, the clean-up and the response that we have given to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I really thought persons would have used the little common sense that we have to see that things are really and truly happening following the passage of Hurricane Beryl. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, a comment was made regarding the current use, or the correct and current use of playing fields to sort and code hurricane debris. Mr. Speaker, the Opposition claimed that the Government mismanaged post-Hurricane Beryl debris by using playing fields instead of dumping everything in Dumfries Landfill. It is not only factually incorrect, but it also demonstrates a lack of understanding of international best practices in Disaster Waste Management and Environmental Sustainability. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada, in collaboration with the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority, executed a scientifically sound, internationally recognised approach to hurricane debris management **(applause)**, prioritising efficiency, environmental sustainability and public health. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked why playing fields were used for debris sorting and compacting. Well, I decided to not only take it on my own words because I am just a little girl in the House, so I wanted to bring some examples of why playing fields.

So, Mr. Speaker, playing fields provide the optimal conditions, and I don't think that they understand the magnitude and the amount of debris that we had to deal with, but it gives us the optimal conditions for effective debris management. They offer a large, flat, open space allowing for heavy machinery such as excavators, compactors, and sorting cranes to operate efficiently. They also allow for better air circulation and drying of debris, reducing the risk of contamination, mould build-up, and odour accumulation common in landfills, and I think you know how Perseverance smells.

Mr. Speaker, easy accessibility also allows for a systematic sorting process, reducing landfill overburdening by ensuring that recyclable and reusable materials are separated before final disposal, because we do have some ongoing projects with the

recycling of organic waste under the OECS banner. We also have global best practices as to why we use playing fields or large open spaces, Mr. Speaker, is Disaster Waste Management. Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) both recommended decentralised debris sorting in post-disaster zones as the first step before final landfill disposal.

Mr. Speaker, and I would probably use two case studies due to the time. We have, for example, Hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005, which was the same time we had Hurricane Emily. The US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) used multiple open fields across Louisiana and Mississippi as temporary debris sorting and processing sites before moving waste to long-term disposal facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the question also arose, what would have happened if we had dumped everything in Dumfries? Mr. Speaker, I don't know if they know the size of Dumfries. **(Applause)** I don't think they have ever been there to see the space in Dumfries, but Dumfries Landfill, Mr. Speaker, would have been overwhelmed and eventually collapsed. This is the only landfill that we have in Carriacou for both Petite Martinique and Carriacou, and it has a limited capacity.

Dumping thousands of cubic meters of mixed hurricane debris at once, Mr. Speaker, would have exceeded the land waste processing capacity, causing rapid overfill, increasing the risk of toxic runoff, dangerous liquid contaminations seeping into Carriacou's water table, affecting ground water and marine ecosystems, and we have livestock around the area as well.

It would have created an uncontrollable fire hazard. We saw that happen in Carriacou, whether it was human or chemical, but we saw it happen in one of the landfills, Mr. Speaker. With mixed combustible materials such as wool, plastics, chemicals and metals, raising the risk of spontaneous landfill fires, which are common in overloading disposal sites. Mr. Speaker, if we had chosen to put all of the debris in Dumfries Landfill as well, it would have cut the remaining landfill lifespan in half, forcing earlier closure and requiring costly new landfill development.

And that is the kind of thing that they just say haphazardly in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, to mislead people and to create unnecessary drama and tension and to distract people from what is really happening.

And so, Mr. Speaker, because of the science backed by why we could not have and we would not have dumped all of the hurricane debris in Dumfries Landfill, I stand firmly, Mr. Speaker, in support with the Solid Waste Management Authority, one of the best in **(applause)** in the OECS region, and I might I dear say the best in the world in terms of Waste Management that this Government responds to the cleaning up of both Carriacou and Petite Martinique post-Hurricane Beryl was not just effective, but environmentally responsible based on internationally recognised standards. **(Applause)** We are not an island by ourselves, and we just do not do things.

Mr. Speaker, some of our key achievements in 2024, and I am proud to highlight them. We have, under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, published the citizens' guide to Grenada's National Ecosystem Assessment, integrating science and traditional knowledge for informed decision making through a strategic partnership with the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute. I call them "CARNARI" for short. Grenada has successfully completed its National Ecosystem Assessment, making us the first small island developing state to do so using globally recognised [1]IPBES methodology. **(Applause)**

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we are strengthening synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to enhance the sustainable management of our Marine, Freshwater and Terrestrial Ecosystems. That's what the air hostess travels for, right?

Mr. Speaker, another example of why we travel. We have been able to, under the Division of Environment, mobilise US$3.1 million for Biodiversity Conservation. The Resilience Island Project, Mr. Speaker, Ecosystem-based Reef Restoration in Soubise, shoreline stabilisation, and maybe, it would have been nice to see the Members for

[1] Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services

St. Andrew present and be there… Shoreline Stabilisation and Smart Fisher Facility was completed. **(Applause)** The project, Mr. Speaker, is hailed as best practice with a blueprint for coastal resilience in the region.

Mr. Speaker, we have completed the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan and finalised a Coastal Zone Management Framework to guide future development. Mr. Speaker, the GCF or the Green Climate Fund, enhanced direct access to the project, and I wouldn't spend too much time on it, because earlier on, my colleague made mention of it, in Grenada, has implemented, underneath my Ministry, and has achieved significant progress across its key components:

Strengthening institutions, Mr. Speaker. The project successfully enhanced the capacity of local institutions such as TAMCC. The project completed the construction of the roofs of the Administrative building and the School for Continuing Education, enhancing the institution's capacity to deliver quality education and training. This construction, Mr. Speaker, commenced in January 2023 and was officially handed over in May 2024. This project was valued at EC$339,000.

The Marquis Community Development Centre also serves a dual purpose as an emergency shelter. This project has successfully been constructed with a vital community centre and an emergency shelter providing a safe space for residents during natural disasters and a hub for social activities.

Mr. Speaker, small grants have been awarded to community organisations to implement locally led adaptation projects. Training programmes have been conducted to equip stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills in areas like Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, under one of the components, Component Three.

Mr. Speaker, nature-based solutions have also been a key feature of this project. The project has supported the implementation of nature-based solutions such as Mangrove Restoration and Coastal Protection to safeguard ecosystems and communities in Lauristan Carriacou.

Unfortunately, as a result of Hurricane Beryl, and when the Minister for Carriacou was showing the picture of his jetty and all of that, you would have seen some of the

mangroves there were significantly impacted and damaged. But we are now in the process, Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with the new Ministry, to get plants for the replanting phase. Mr. Speaker, the project has also provided financial support to small businesses to adopt climate-friendly practices. Efforts have also been made to promote investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency, and the project has also provided concessional loans to vulnerable households to invest in climate resilience measures such as home improvement and business adaptation.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague also discussed the project in relation to the Programme for Adolescent Mothers (PAM). The trainings have been completed, including Grant Proposal Writing, Shelter Management Training, Basic First Aid Training, and Empowering Businesses for a Resilient Future, which are all training programmes that were done under that programme.

A key component, Mr. Speaker, of the project is the provision of concessional loans to these vulnerable households and small businesses. The initiative, Mr. Speaker, aims to empower individuals and businesses to invest in climate resilience measures such as home improvements and business adaptation.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of 2024, all funds allocated to this component under the [2]EDA Project have been committed, with a significant portion already disbursed to beneficiaries. Mr. Speaker, a total of 108 loans amounting to US$1.9million have been approved.

These funds are primarily directed towards the following critical areas: structural upgrades, 40% of the loans have been allocated to strengthening homes and businesses against natural disasters, flood and erosion control, 37% of these loans, Mr. Speaker, have been directed towards measures to mitigate the impact of flooding and erosions and renewable energy, approximately 11% of the loans have been used to promote renewable energy adoption.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Climate Resilience, we have seen achievements in the

[2] Enhancing Direct Access

following areas:

- The establishment of a portfolio for the Climate Resilience Project for the Ministry.
- The re-establishment of effective donor agency coordination to facilitate cooperation between Grenada and major climate funds.
- Recorded an increase in grant resource mobilised from multilateral and bilateral donors.
- The re-establishment of the National Climate Change Focal Point Network.
- The revision of the Grenada National Adaptation Plan, which is now going through the validation process.
- Grenada became a signatory as well to the UNICEF declaration on youth and children in climate change.
- We have also commenced work on Grenada's first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) and national communication.

A key step towards small islands doing big things is taking accountability and charting the way forward for a sustainable future.

Mr. Speaker, the key activities of my Ministry will include, but are not limited to:

- Providing improved coordination for climate finance.
- Facilitating and supporting international engagements and negotiations for the advancement of the SIDS agenda within the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement Framework.
- Leading, facilitating, and supporting local stakeholder engagement for climate resilience development.
- Creating, implementing, tracking and updating policies and plans for climate resilience.
- We also aim, Mr. Speaker, to mobilise and negotiate grant climate finance resources for priority climate resilience programmes and projects.
- We aim to guide the development and design of climate-resilient programmes and projects to facilitate and support climate screening of capital programmes and projects within the public sector investment programme.

- We aim to develop, manage and maintain a climate resilient project bank to support the accreditation of the Ministry and other institutions for the accreditation to priority climate finance organisations and funders.
- Mr. Speaker, we also aim to advance policy and legislative process for plastic waste management.

Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with the Rural Development Unit, we are spearheading the construction of a climate-resilience multi-use space at Grand Anse School for Special Education, at an estimated cost of $840,420.23. The contract for this project has been approved by the Public Tender Board, and the project will commence next month.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, two other major climate-resilience projects are being pursued under my Ministry, aimed at building resilience at the community and constituency level.

The first one is the rehabilitation of the Palmiste Digg, a key historical site in St. John and the construction of a Fisherman's Locker in Old Road, providing secure storage for the fishing community there.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate, and I must touch on that part, that in the Leader of the Opposition's rebuttal to this Budget and more so, for the other Members through you, Mr. Speaker, on the "Other Side", who have sought to misrepresent this Government's firm and documented commitment in tackling the sargassum issue.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to her claims of inaction, my Ministry, under Vote 28, has been aggressively implementing a comprehensive Sargassum Valorisation Strategy **(applause)** that not only addresses the immediate concerns of sargassum collection as was alluded to in the presentation earlier, but it also transforms this environmental challenge into an economic opportunity, something that is new. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, sargassum valorisation is big on the Ministry's agenda.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry continues to advance its sargassum initiative as part of a broader effort to address marine environmental challenges while fostering sustainable

economic opportunities. Over the past year, several key activities have been undertaken to accelerate the development of this initiative, Mr. Speaker.

The first being the hosting of a successful, well-attended, internationally recognised Sargassum Conference. **(Applause)** This regional Sargassum Conference, Mr. Speaker, brought together over 300 experts, industry stakeholders, policy makers and researchers to discuss best practices, innovative solutions and potential business models for sargassum management and valorisation.

The conference, Mr. Speaker, highlighted scalable solutions, market opportunities and financing mechanisms to transform sargassum into valuable products such as bio-fertilisers, animal feed and biofuels. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry also engaged with various stakeholders, including the local fishers, entrepreneurs, scientists and private sector representatives, to gather insights on the potential applications of sargassum and the challenges faced in its collection, processing and commercialisation. **(Time bell rings)**

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I have 10 minutes left? So I beg for the next 15 or the next 10 to go with that, please.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP, I would tell you how much is granted at the end of your time.

Hon. Kerryne James: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, these discussions have informed the development of a structured approach to incentivise participation and investment in sargassum valorisation.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the growing need for a coordinated national approach, my Ministry has also established the Sargassum Valorisation Task Force to oversee and guide efforts in research, policy investment, and project implementation. The Task Force, Mr. Speaker, includes representatives from key Government Ministries, scientific institutions, private sector stakeholders, fisherfolk associations and development partners. Its primary mandate, Mr. Speaker, is to develop policy, facilitate partnerships, and coordinate financing opportunities for sustainable sargassum valorisation projects.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kerryne James

Mr. Speaker, a notable part of this Government and my Ministry's significance and political will towards seeing the sargassum issue as not only an environmental issue, but an economic opportunity. We have launched an expression of interest, and I know the "Other Side" has seen it. This expression of interest was launched, Mr. Speaker, to solicit interest from private sector companies, research institutions and entrepreneurs interested in partnering with the Government to develop and scale up sargassum valorisation projects in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry received 31 expressions of interest from both local and international entities **(applause)** with proposals for innovative sargassum solutions. A technical review process is currently on the way, Mr. Speaker, to assess the feasibility of these proposals, particularly their economic viability, their environmental sustainability and alignment with national development goals.

Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming fiscal period, the Ministry will focus on following key actions to advance this sargassum valorisation strategy along with the Ministry of the Blue Economy and Marine Resources. Mr. Speaker, my Ministry remains committed to transforming the sargassum influx from an environmental challenge, as I mentioned, into an economic opportunity, contributing to sustainable livelihood, Climate Resilience and the Blue Economy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also say, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention and place on record our thanks and appreciation to the European Union for all **(applause)** the technical and financial support provided thus far, it is something new as well. Over €300,000, Mr. Speaker, was provided by the EU to advance our efforts in dealing with this environmental opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I reaffirm this Government's unwavering commitment to building a more resilient, sustainable and self-sufficient Grenada. The investments that we have outlined today are not just policies on paper; they are not just ideas without action. They are real, tangible actions, Mr. Speaker, designed to fortify our economy, empower our people and safeguard our environment for generations to come. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Kerryne James

Mr. Speaker, history will judge leaders not by their rhetoric but by the legacy that they leave behind. This Government, under the astute leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, Dickon Mitchell and supported by a Cabinet of bold and decisive policy makers, has chosen the path of transformation. We have abandoned, Mr. Speaker, the statoscope of stagnation and inaction, replacing it with strategic governance **(applause)**, fiscal responsibility and unwavering dedication to the people-first agenda.

And so as I close, Mr. Speaker, I urge all stakeholders across the political aisle, the private sector, the civil society and other international partners to recognise that sustainability is not a partisan issue. It is a national imperative, Mr. Speaker. We are laying the foundation for Vision 75 and beyond, for a Grenada that is self-sufficient, climate-resilient, and a model of sustainable development in the Caribbean. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition claimed that the Budget has a deficit of EC$357 million. It requires, in my view, Mr. Speaker, clarification because it conflates the overall budget balance with the fiscal deficit, and I am to borrow key economic points from my colleague from St. Andrew South West, the economist himself, the Government is not running an operational deficit. It has a current account surplus, and I think it is very key **(applause)** for us to wrap up with this part.

Mr. Speaker, because misinformation or factual untruth spreads more than the truth. So I would reiterate this point, Mr. Speaker. The Government is not running an operational deficit. It has a current account surplus of EC$86.5 million. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the overall fiscal deficits of EC$337 million, the source of confusion here today, Mr. Speaker, while the current account is in surplus, the Government has a projected overall fiscal deficit of EC$337 million because capital expenditures exceed revenue inflows. **(Applause)** Minister, if I am wrong, that is what I get from you. **(Applause)** So I hope that we took the time here, Mr. Speaker, to not score cheap political points because we are trying to satisfy our base, but I want us to take this budgeting process very seriously.

I have been very fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to be in both Houses and the country. It does the youth, young women, and the country an injustice when politicians,

Parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker, create their own misconception, create their own confusion, all because they want to stay politically valid in a country. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this, in my view, is misleading, and it is a deliberate act to misinform, based on their understanding presented to us in confidence and eloquence as a development-driven capital deficit. They have done so as an operational financial crisis, which is incorrect, Mr. Speaker, grossly disingenuous.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as a young woman who looks up at other women who have been here before, who have walked here before, don't allow us as women to be used as political pundits to do the work of persons who would not do it themselves. **(Applause)** We have a brain of our own, Mr. Speaker, we have to learn to read, and we have to learn to pick sense from nonsense and know what truth from what is not truth. All of us represent a different sides, Mr. Speaker, but at the end of the day the business of the country, the business of the people, the planning for a future that would be robust, that can withstand what comes to us, Mr. Speaker, they have to be able to rely on us to hold ourselves accountable and to ensure that we give them proper and correct information, Mr. Speaker.

And so with that, the future is progressive. The future is resilient, and the future is ours to shape as Parliamentarians, as young ones, inexperienced, experienced, economists, and the like. So let us ensure that whenever we present, Mr. Speaker, we present truth and not lies. **(Applause)** We present truth and not misinformation. **(Applause)** And so with that, I wish everybody a good evening. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for the constituency of St. John, for your presentation. It has been a long day. I have listened to very passionate presentations, and I now await the Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be adjourned until tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. Thank you.

Adjournment

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned on Tueaday, 11th March 2025 at 6:39 p.m.

Resumption
Attendance

The Sitting of the House of Representatives resumed on Tuesday, 11th March 2025, at 9:06 a.m.

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, Information and Communications Technology
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 Lennox John Andrews, MP *(St. Andrew South West)*	-	Minister for Economic Development, Planning and Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources
Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP *(Carriacou & Petite Martinique)*	-	Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government
Honourable 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 & 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

House of Representatives Budget Presentation and Debate, 2025
held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Friday 7th, Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th, March 2025

Attendance

Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP *(St. Andrew South East)*	-	Leader of His Majesty's Opposition
Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP *(St. George North West)*	-	Member
Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP *(St. Mark)*	-	Deputy Speaker
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP *(St. Andrew North East)*	-	Member
Honourable Peter David, MP *(Town of St. George)*	-	Member

Prayers
Announcements

Mr. Speaker: Let us 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. This Parliament now convenes.

(Sound of gavel)

Mr. Speaker: Good morning to the Honourable Members of this House, and I extend good morning to those in the gallery. I want to begin by saying we would like folks who are carrying mobile phones to ensure that those phones are either turned off or are on vibrate. Please do. I don't want to have the police escort you out of this Chamber. Please do. The proceedings in Parliament are recorded, so we don't want the shrills of the phone in the recording. We want to hear the Members speaking. So if you happen to have a mobile phone, please put it on vibrate or turn it off.

Today, we continue the presentation of the various Members of the House of Parliament with respect to their contribution to this year's Budget Debate. Yesterday we had seven presentations, and from my own observation, I think it was spirited presentations and delivery. I saw very cordial exchanges across the floor, very friendly, and I expect that as we debate and discuss the nation's business, that level of camaraderie will continue. So today, we hope to hear the contributions of the other eight Members who are yet to present.

I now invite the Honourable MP for St. George North East to make his presentation.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Ron Redhead

Hon. Ron Redhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity. I rise today to support, yet another critical National Budget for the development under the National Democratic Congress Administration.

Mr. Speaker, as Grenada continues to grow and evolve as a nation and as we concluded the celebrations of our 50th Independence Anniversary last year, I take pride in the theme chosen and presented by the Honourable Minister for Finance and Honourable Member for St. Patrick East, Honourable Dennis Cornwall, for our Budget 2025, appropriately worded, "Towards Vision 75: Grenada-Resilient and Rising". The theme answers the progressive question of what type of Grenada we met and what type and kind we seek for the future.

We envisioned a Grenada that is not just reactive, but proactive in the face of challenges. A Grenada that equitably distributes its resources and wealth, ensuring the prosperity of all its citizens. A Grenada that upholds principles of freedom and democracy. A Grenada, Mr. Speaker, that is self-sufficient and self-reliant in its operation.

So, notwithstanding the devastation caused by Hurricane Beryl, particularly to our offshore islands and the northern parts of Grenada, as well as severe droughts, bushfires, major flooding, and severe land slippages witnessed in 2024, no challenge was too great for this Administration to face. We remained steadfast in our commitment **(applause)** to recovery and resilience for our country. So, Mr. Speaker, we look ahead with great anticipation to implementing this wonderful budget as we continue to move Grenada forward.

Now, this morning, I would spend some time, Mr. Speaker, linking the two budgets that we have produced thus far in the term, speaking to the post-Beryl era and showing the progression among these critical sectors; namely Education, the Economy, Disaster Management, how it relates to the North East, Carriacou and Petite Martinique specific to Beryl.

However, I want to start by promoting the development of the lovely constituency of St. George North East by first thanking the beautiful people of my constituency for their

continued support, advice and even their complaints and criticisms, all aiming to help me get the job done. As a Member of Parliament, I can report steady strides in this regard.

Today, we have seen an exponential rise in support for young people in education and sports, a testament to our collective investment in the future of the North East.

Small business support and community-building activities are at the levels they ought to be for any serious constituency development programme.

Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, has seen a vast improvement not just in the quality, but also in the strategic reason for its creation. Why are we doing it?

Our flood mitigation focus for 2024, for example, is built on the premise of improving the resilience and sustainability of infrastructure. So we're not just building something for the sake of it. We are ensuring that it is done, Mr. Speaker, with high quality, but the purpose for doing it is certainly clear.

Mr. Speaker, so we've been able to complete and commence many of those infrastructure projects. There were a total of 38 infrastructure projects started last year up until now throughout the entire North East, and there could be more. I am just using the minimal figures simply because, you know, footpaths, you know, some of the smaller roads and so on, I am not really counting that in the amount of infrastructure projects that we were able to lead off, but certainly, some of the larger ones.

We completed and started 11 projects before Hurricane Beryl and 26 afterwards. This was made possible, Mr. Speaker, through my own negotiations and interventions with the Ministry of Infrastructure, Community Development and the ever hard-working Ministry of MIT. Mr. Speaker, two ongoing projects that were critical, that I am very proud of being done over the last 30 years, and I speak specifically to the Tempe Bridge Expansion Project by LA Law and the storm drain now with a pedestrian walk by Choice Bakery in Tempe's entrance. That's by the roundabout right there.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago, the people were clamouring, and now it is finally being done. Again, another testament to our commitment to fulfilling our promises.

Regarding our Social and Community Development agenda. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report in the North East that we have implemented over $500,000 worth of

community development programmes and projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Social and Community Development. **(Applause)** We successfully did that. They include, but are not limited to:

- The introduction of an annual St. George North East food festival;
- We introduced a Hydroponics Training Programme at the Boca Secondary School
- We have assisted several small businesses and provided support for the creation of new ones throughout the constituency.
- We have supported all public schools throughout the North East, meeting almost every request, and have already completed plans to expand the support in 2025, and that support, Mr. Speaker, is going to be extended to the large number of private schools.

Probably, while I am talking about schools, it's important for me to acknowledge the many students here. Young men and young women, one day, some, or if not all of you, should be proud to stand in the Halls of Grenada's Parliament, and represent your various constituencies with pleasure **(applause)** and represent them with pride, serving your country and your constituency.

Mr. Speaker, training opportunities for scores of people across the board. We are not watching colour. We are making sure that we help everybody, one, one cocoa fills a basket, with building materials and more.

Mr. Speaker, in 2023, I first reported to this House about a pilot that we started in the North East with the Foundation Builders Educational Centre. I have the report completed from the pilot. It has been one year since, and with your leave, I would just like to read just some parts of it. I can make the report available to the House, if necessary.

It starts, Mr. Speaker, by identifying that we have been able to assess 32 students ranging from ages seven to 12 years old, who come from grades two to six. Our assessments have revealed the following profiles:

1. Underdeveloped auditory and visual sequential memory skills in each student assessed;

2. Retarded, phonemic awareness and sequencing ability in each student assessed.
3. Reasonable sound blending skills in most students;
4. Very poor ability to spell words in most assessed students;
5. Satisfactory vocabulary levels in most students;
6. Weak handwriting skills, very poor writing skills, and weak fluency of thought.
7. Very poor sentence structure; and
8. Weak imagery for comprehension and writing.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, because this is an intervention programme, which we help support at the level of the constituency. It was piloted at St. Paul's Government School. Thirty-two students have been assessed on all of these challenges, and there are some success stories, one year and some months after completing this programme.

Mr. Speaker, all of the above, based on reports, are known and associated with a specific learning disorder known as dyslexia. However, we have also identified traits of additional disorders among some of the students assessed to this point.

- Developmental Language Disorders (DLD), including difficulties in expressive language and language retrieval;
- Speech impediment;
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD);
- Autism;
- Weak auditory expressions;
- Suspected intermittent hearing loss or hearing difficulties; and
- Very poor vision.

So, Mr. Speaker, this intervention was able to identify some of the impediments that students are facing when they have to go to our public schools and receive their education. And it is something, Mr. Speaker, that is important because it adds, and I am going to talk about this report later when I present on the Ministry of Education, Vote 40. It adds to what this Administration is doing at all levels and stages of education to be able to deal with these matters.

Another 110 homes were repaired in the area of Housing, and 17 new homes were constructed through a combination of the Ministry of Housing and MIT.

We commenced the WASH Programme in the North East, Mr. Speaker, and will complete the first facility in the lovely community of Willis.

In Boca and Ravine, we have begun construction on several homes, including Build Back Better homes, following Hurricane Beryl. A total of nine homes post-Hurricane Beryl were identified through the assessments carried out by the Ministry of Economic Development and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, all of this could not have been possible without my staff at the MP's Office. I want to place on record and express my heartfelt gratitude to some of them who are here this morning, in particular Karena and Deliris, my Community Liaison Officer, and my ever-versatile and reliable Housing Officers. They are very, very reliable, Mr. Speaker, and my SEED Officer. None of the work that we are doing in the North East would be possible without them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on record. One of the things that I have done as a Member of Parliament was to put in place a management team to manage the affairs of the constituency. So I am treating my constituency as a Ministry and so my management team is headed by Brother Ralph James, I want to place on record thanks to him and others, and I have an infrastructural volunteer advisor; Mr. Neville Bain. Thank you for your unwavering support and confidence in my ability to lead the revolution in the North East.

No one, Mr. Speaker, has ever turned away when they come to our office. We help everyone, no matter what your affiliation might be. So I see a constituency and not just an individual as I continue to serve.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to mention that the Bible teaches us that, as the good book, Jesus healed the sick, caused the blind to see, turned water into wine, raised the dead, and when the time came, they still crucified him, and so I am not Jesus Christ. I am making the point to say that we ought not to believe some of the rhetoric that we hear that in two and a half years, a young man could fix and change all of the problems that

he inherited in the lovely constituency of St. George North East. **(Applause)** So patience is indeed a virtue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention now to Education, as mentioned, Vote 40. I want to spend some time showing the linkage between what we met and did and what we are doing now to reform the curriculum and correct some of the systemic problems in the sector.

We heard yesterday this outcry about how we closed down the IMANI Programme, and we this and we that. So I want to give some facts this morning because yesterday was just a lot of fluff and old talk and had really no substance in terms of the evidence of what they are criticising.

So the former Administration, Mr. Speaker, received a report from the UNDP in January of 2021. Right? It read… And just permit me. Now, the report, Mr. Speaker, is available online. It is widely publicised, and the former Administration certainly has it because I saw correspondence when they got the report and how they shared it around. So, I know for a fact they have it, so nobody could say that they were not in possession.

If you would permit me, Mr. Speaker, with your leave to just read some excerpts from it. "This independent technical review assesses and makes recommendations on the main bottlenecks and possible solutions for a successful transition from the current vocational training systems and curriculum, as well as other educational levels to the current and future labour market needs in Grenada, with particular focus on the Blue Economy". The title of the report is "Transition from Education to Employment in Grenada".

The same report also said that the IMANI Programme, while it claims to place 40% of its graduates in the private sector, a significant majority 60% are placed as trainees in the public sector and at the time given the shrinking public sector and limited permanent employment opportunities that existed through the attrition policy of the former Administration, it presented a challenge for IMANI trainees seeking long-term employment, so they were there perpetually.

Mind you, the numbers from the assessment, Mr. Speaker, came from the Ministry itself, even without a professional audit of the programme being done. So those numbers may have been far worse than what was reported. The report, Mr. Speaker, went on to say, "Despite the programme's efforts, employers remained hesitant to hire IMANI graduates without guarantees of a return on investment. This is due to concerns about trainees leaving after training, dropping out of the programme or the potential risk of investing in employees who may not be as skilled as they require".

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it said, "There are concerns about dead weight losses, employees receiving stipends they would have paid for anyway, creaming (only the most deserving benefiting when others might have been sufficient) and substitution, a critical one, employers replacing full-time workers with trainees.

So here we see, Mr. Speaker, this UNDP Report expose the former Administration and their deception. When they instituted the question of the Structural Adjustment Programme, the component which dealt with the… You have to help me here. The Attrition Policy. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The Attrition Policy.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, just forgive me. You know, when you get up early and you go to sleep late, you're kind of slow. So… **(Laughter)** I will make it. I will make it.

So the Attrition Policy. Now, the reason the former Administration instituted the attrition policy. They could not afford to pay the workers. So when you hear all this glorious talk about we had a plan to pay pension, and it would not have been… Well, it was deducted and all of that. Blah, blah, blah. That is just old talk, Mr. Speaker.

The Attrition Policy coincided with the IMANI Programme, which was their aim and intent. What they were doing was taking the unskilled young people, exploiting them in terms of the wages that they would pay to them and having them do Government work for next to nothing. They would not have had to pay them a pension. They would not have had to pay them gratuities. They would not have had to take care of them if, for some reason, they got sick, because under the former Administration, women, for example, once they were under the programme and they got pregnant, they were

removed forthwith, imagine that. When we came in, we changed that policy one time. It was brought forward by your managers. We changed that policy one time.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that was their intent. So when you hear the talk about this whole question of the young people being so happy and we crushed programme and we this and that, how come they didn't vote for you? How come they didn't support you to stay in office to continue getting this pittance? **(Applause)**

As Baraka sang his glorious song, "We're living in slavery." He eloquently described how the IMANI Programme under the former Administration was being used as a bondage on some of the young people, only as a machine, just to get a vote. There was no true and definitive upward mobility; you couldn't really develop under that, and the few, Mr. Speaker, who had the mind-set to develop were only a part of the few, not the majority. You know that for a fact.

So that was the situation we met. Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, we had to identify those gaps and the grey areas in the structure and reconcile them. Not by doing the same thing and expecting a different result. So you can't come and have a new administration and ask them to continue with this FLY and this and that and so on. These programmes, Mr. Speaker, only became relevant because we were not addressing the gaps that existed in our institutions and the weakness for them to be able to train our young men and women and turn them into productive citizens so that they can grow themselves and get a job. That was the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I know first-hand how the IMANI Programme came to Grenada. I spoke to the English couple who gave it to the New National Party Government. Originally, the concept was to have it as an agency to be able to find employment for unemployed men and women, for whatever reason. The New National Party implemented this programme under the now, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, as Minister for Youth then, and instituted this whole question of trainees for life. There was no clear pathway to employment because what they sought to do again was to exploit the young people and keep them as a vote mechanism for them to win general elections. So don't come to this Honourable House and talk about bringing back IMANI. We passed

that, you all are in the past. The country moved forward in June 2022. **(Applause)**

So we started to address the gaps as mentioned earlier. So, Mr. Speaker, that issue of just taking someone off the streets, because I can tell you this, the Minister for Youth is here. One of the challenges with this programme is, Mr. Speaker, when somebody joins these programmes, it is largely politically driven. If an MP goes into their constituency and somebody comes and complains to them, they want a work and thing, you just grab them and place them there.

You know what the issue was? Taking someone who was unemployed and placing them in the programme was not helping them. The reason was that most were unemployed, not because there was no work, you know, but because, Mr. Speaker, they themselves at that level were unemployable. So the issue was, you needed to get them employable before you could put them in any structured programme, before you could tell them that they need to go to work, and you had to be real and honest with them. So the programme had to address that weakness, that gap, Mr. Speaker, but it did not. Therefore, we have identified it and we are addressing it right now.

So the fallout of that policy, Mr. Speaker, that we inherited was that the quality of the labour force was becoming more and more substandard because they were pumping the resources into IMANI, $30 million. At one point, it reached almost $40 million being spent on the IMANI Programme, and the question was, what was the return on such a major investment? They couldn't answer that. That, Mr. Speaker, ultimately led to low productivity levels. That was the problem. So this so-called "flagship youth programme" really was nothing other than institutionalising, underemployment and employability, and that is the fact.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, in the theme when we use the word "Resilient" and "Grenada Rising", there are evidence openly in this Budget which suggests that we are correcting these long standing problems once and for all under, Mr. Speaker, the leadership of the National Democratic Congress and our Honourable distinguished Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell, Member for St. David. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Ron Redhead

Mr. Speaker, the youth unemployment rate up until 2020 was at 39.5% and by December 2023, it fell to 22.8%. That, Mr. Speaker, is a testament to why we needed to pivot. So, they said no new IMANI trainees were added; that is true. Even in the face of that, youth unemployment still fell. The reason why that is so is that we are now regularising some of the IMANIs. We are now regularising some of the IMANIs who are teachers. We are now regularising them in the Government service, giving them honest work, not training for life **(applause)**, and that is the difference.

And so the last Budget that we presented completed the last assessments on those gaps identified in the system, and this Budget is now starting to address them, as mentioned.

We heard the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that while she supports free tuition etcetera, we have to make sure that the children can come to school and so on. That's understandable, but, Mr. Speaker, you can't throw the baby out of the bath water because 2% of our population may be struggling with this and it's a genuine concern that we should not go and institute tuition free and boast about that and we should now focus on the 2% who can't get transport to come to school. That just does not make any sense. You cannot run a country like that because you wouldn't develop.

And so, what we are doing now is expanding e-testing. So, for example, Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Education last year, they were able to successfully introduce, for all secondary schools, to conduct online CSEC examination in 33 subjects, and 20 primary schools utilise e-testing for CPEA. Yes, this was piloted during COVID-19, but there were many flaws. Meaning the concept, Mr. Speaker, of not coming to the classroom, online learning, etcetera.

And so learning from those flaws under the previous Administration, we are now able to correct some of these challenges without any COVID-19, without any challenges at the moment. And so, it's going to help to reduce this question of the need to always come into a classroom and learn, and if you cannot afford it, you're missing classes, you're behind and so on. We're going to find ways to correct that.

But Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that this Administration is also piloting a Transport Initiative. A new transport initiative for students, free buses, will be piloted in St. David and St. George parishes. This pilot, Mr. Speaker, would provide critical information on the whole question of the needs assessment of students who honestly and genuinely need some transportation assistance. I could tell you this. If you just observe the countryside, you would see that they have to travel from a longer distance, and so if we are doing any serious school bus programme, it must, in my view, Mr. Speaker, take shape in those areas. So starting it down here is going to get the critical information we need to help improve it. That's why it's called a pilot.

I almost feel like a political rally, but I have to respect the Honourable Member for St. David, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter) (Applause)** Without him, we would not be here. Without his leadership and guidance, we would have negotiated and passed through the dark times and period of post-Hurricane Beryl.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are now expanding coding in schools. The Ministry of Education is doing so. There is a programme called, Restore a Sense of I Can—RSC Tech Club. They are expanding coding programmes from seven to 17 schools, Mr. Speaker, with plans to add four more. **(Applause)** This programme is aligned with the focus on where the jobs are in the immediate circumstances. **(Applause)** Meaning, Mr. Speaker, we are looking to the future, so we don't need Project FLY. That is not sufficient. That's just a little programme. We need to institutionalise and utilise the structures of our current **(applause)** institutions to build the capacity of our youth.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education is also currently engaged in curriculum development and reform. So we hear the whole question of your universal education. Universal Education, Mr. Speaker, is being strengthened to ensure students transition to secondary education fully prepared. Now, let me tell you this.

Last year, the Ministry of Education ensured that no child was kept back because of poor performance in CPEA. But what was important about ensuring that they were not kept back was that it implemented a structure and mechanism to be able to address, as a remedial programme, those students who did not meet the required standard, almost

immediately. So, while they're in the process of now going into the secondary school, they will be able to go through a very rapid and technical remedial programme to get them up to par. And that's important. In the past, it was just up, up and out. But now, yes, you are transitioning to secondary school regardless of the performance, but you're also being assisted to get up to the level and standard that you should be. That, Mr. Speaker, is transformative.

Mr. Speaker, as relates to infrastructure. Over $550,000 was invested in major repairs at the Mac Donald College Secondary School. Mr. Speaker, it was damaged after Hurricane Beryl, as you know. **(Applause)** The Government certainly put the money where its mouth was. Mr. Speaker, this Administration instituted a school maintenance programme. Mr. Speaker, I don't have the figure right now, but scores of schools all over the country were in deplorable conditions under the former Administration. **(Applause)**

So when they talk about this whole talk, "You met a pregnant treasury". They don't understand that they were looking silly too, by saying you left $500 million and you couldn't fix the schools in this country. **(Applause)** And when we really dive into this talk about "pregnant treasury" that doesn't exist, Mr. Speaker. I don't know who ever said that, but I think that is a figment of their imagination. **(Applause)** As per usual, make-up stuff, and then you banter with that.

Mr. Speaker, nine schools are in this budget. This is the first time in the history of this country that nine schools have been announced to be under construction or repair. **(Applause)** Nine schools. It's important because, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about education, we must agree that yes, the building by itself cannot fix the problems that they face. But, Mr. Speaker, it goes a long way in making the working environment for our principals, teachers and students more conducive for their learning. It goes a long way. This Administration recognises the improvement of the quality of education, both from a curriculum standpoint and from an infrastructure standpoint.

Mr. Speaker, if we turn to the question of regularisation, again, it is tied to the whole question of improving the infrastructure. We are really regularising teachers in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Yes, believe it or not, and the process of

regularising teachers started in 2023, with 111 teachers regularised in phase one **(applause)**, and, Mr. Speaker, an additional 247 teachers are in the process of being regularised in phase two, and it is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, all of this is being done so that we can begin to address these questions of the gaps in our education system. That is why when it comes to Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) we can boast that we have successfully introduced Home Economics and Wood Work in 24 primary schools across the country, **(applause)**, while another model, Mr. Speaker, was implemented in 11 additional schools benefitting over 1,883 students across the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, this is the answer to replacing the IMANI Programme, the vote-getting mechanism that existed under the past Administration, with skills training and development, utilising again the institutions to build the capacity of our young people and rather than creating some ad hoc programme that you only want because you have the numbers. "3000 by 3000, again, what? I'm looking good." You feel you can win your seat with that, and will come after? The election. That's why, Mr. Speaker, when I hear the talk about the election being on the horizon, I just laugh. **(Applause)** I just laugh.

Mr. Speaker, the people elected the National Democratic Congress Government to work **(applause)**, and we have just started. **(Applause)** You said we will make six months. You said we will make a year. Now, when you realise the year has come, you said two years. Now two and a half years going on three, come, you're under pressure and you're saying, "Call the thing. Call the thing". But I want to feed into your whole ego, because essentially, the sting of the defeat hurts, and it really hurts. **(Laughter) (Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, that is why we are doing this whole reform, because it will address those gaps as mentioned. So the Ministry is also looking forward to implementing something additional. Right? The Ministry want to introduce a Skills Training Committee that's going to be like a technical working committee, Mr. Speaker, to further develop the

TVET pathways and monitor the progress towards the planned outcome. So now that we have implemented TVET fully, the expectation is that we would not relegate that only to the Ministry of Education, but now a specific committee will be created to monitor the progress of its implementation and immediately identify the gaps to be able to correct them and address these concerns.

Because, Mr. Speaker, this point is important. When you talk about planning and proactivity, this is a prime example of what we are doing in the education sector to be able to transform the quality of education.

Mr. Speaker, I need not speak about the question of scholarships. Under this Administration, we have seen an improvement and an increase in the number of scholarships available to Grenadians across the board. **(Applause)** We are pleased to talk, Mr. Speaker, for example, about the pilot with Monroe University. This Administration, Mr. Speaker, aims to ensure that at least one person, per household, has a university degree **(applause)**, not two or three people per household under the IMANI programme **(applause)**, receiving EC$700. A university degree, so that they can get substantial money. They could take those resources and invest them back into the state and themselves and their family and build the quality and standard of life that they are currently enjoying.

So, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, the Ministry of Education aims to establish centres of excellence in 2025. New training centres, Mr. Speaker, will be established through a delivery mechanism, and you'll hear more about the delivery mechanism from the Minister for Education in the Upper House. Mr. Speaker, this point is important because in this instance, we are not going to reinvent the wheel. What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is taking some of the existing buildings and those that we have to outfit and probably renovate, and we will convert them into centres of excellence.

Mr. Speaker, we are now looking to implement:

- Tourism and Hospitality;
- Agriculture;
- Specialised Construction;

- Digital Transformation, and Information and Communications Technology, again, that's where the world is headed
- Auto Mechanics;
- Air Conditioning and Refrigeration;
- Creative Industry;
- Allied Health;
- Marine and Fisheries; and
- Centre of excellence.

That is going to be important, Mr. Speaker, because when you compare or rather, when you dive into the policy, as to why we have adjusted the compulsory age to stay in school, we need to understand what we are doing. As mentioned, I am going to show you how we are using each budget so far in our term to be able to move the country along in the direction that we said.

So we adjusted the compulsory age of people staying in school up to 18. But we do accept that there are some young people, young men in particular, that's what the statistics are showing, for whatever reason, could be personal, could be systemic, they don't want school, simple as that. Simply put. And as such, their interest is more along the lines of skills.

So, in addressing the UNDP Report that was sent to the former Administration, Mr. Speaker, and they didn't do anything about it, we are utilising that concern identified and saying that all right, if they don't want the formal aspect of education, let us diversify the education system and introduce skills in a full-on way and ensure that it is available and accessible to those young men and women who just cannot make it in that formal setting classroom mathematics, and those other subjects. Introduce the skills so that they can then still become productive citizens, and that is the importance, Mr. Speaker, of what we are doing. That's the importance. Critical point.

Mr. Speaker, so as we see it, education under this Administration is not perfect, nor is any sector perfect, but we believe in consistent, steady interventions, in consistent policy directions that are going to be able to ultimately improve the overall standard and

quality of education that our people are getting. Note well, we have also been able to introduce, officially, adult literacy training programmes at TAMCC.

You see, Mr. Speaker, because when we talk education, you have to understand that for a student who is in preschool and primary school, if they have to go home to mommy and daddy who have their own difficulties being able to understand or assist them with their homework at home, they are not going to be able to turn out into productive citizens, because the influence at home is a gap again that we need to address. They missed the train when they were growing up, so it was a challenge. So, as parents, too, this is going to be important to sell that you, too, had to get yourself educated so you can assist your children, so that you can take yourself to a different level, get a better job, and improve the quality and standard of life that you are living. That's the opportunities that we are creating. So, Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I want to end on the Education Sector, Vote 40.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the Economy, and just to mention some things briefly. The word "Resilient", Mr. Speaker, in the theme is not just plugged in there. We heard it yesterday that you are just putting words together and putting them in because it has to sound good. **(Laughter)** Well, I mean… I… I have time, man. Let me just stray a little.

Yesterday I listened to a Maiden Speech. Mr. Speaker, in that Maiden Speech, there were just nice-sounding words. And if I have to judge it or give you free advice, it was just a repeat and a regurgitation of the former Opposition Leader and this rhetoric. No substance. We did not hear, Mr. Speaker, for example, from the Leader of the Opposition, through you, what her belief was in the Grenadian economy. Where does she actually intend to take Grenada if, by some chance, she becomes Prime Minister? What is her observation of what we did in the past to take us to the future? Only according to Prime Minister Rowley, "Yeng yeng yeng yeng yeng yeng". **(Laughter) (Applause)** "Travelling this. Where is the money? Health." Only that; a regurgitation of the past.

Now, my good partner just left the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, the Member for the Town of St. George, but I find he would have done a better job; at least he would have

changed the conversation. I don't understand that you served in Government for all this length of time and today you are now serving as leader of His Majesty's Opposition and in your Maiden Speech as Leader of His Majesty's Opposition you cannot tell the nation what your beliefs are about the economy, how you see the thing, what you want to do, etcetera. Only old talk.

But, Mr. Speaker, the budget, so eloquently put it. Grenada, notwithstanding the passage of Hurricane Beryl and some other challenges and the external factors, the economy in 2024 experienced robust growth. **(Applause)** In the near term, Mr. Speaker's outlook remains positive, with real GDP projected to grow by 4.1% in 2025. **(Applause)**

You heard, Mr. Speaker, this whole motion about runaway inflation. Well, I don't want to say the wrong things, so I will behave myself. Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)** I don't understand. Again, you see, if some of us could ease up with the shopping online, and focus on what our duties are when we come to the House, we would be able to talk things with sense. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, according to the Budget, inflation has declined from 2023 levels, with average inflation forecasted to remain low and stable at around 0.9% over the medium term, you know, not short term, the medium term. This Budget, in the context of how it was presented, is not only presented for 2025, but you heard it from the Minister for Finance, it's presented to 2027, and so it gives a global synopsis as to where we need to take Grenada—Grenada-Resilient and Rising. Build the resilience and strengthen the resilience of the country **(applause)** and ensure that it grows, sustainably. That's what we are doing.

The unemployment rate, Mr. Speaker, remains consistently low at approximately 12% and is expected to decline further in 2025. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this Administration believes in single-digit unemployment rates. That is what we are going for. **(Applause)** And if you know anything about this Administration, when we set out a target, achieve it we must; achieve it we shall. **(Applause)**

The Grenadian people, Mr. Speaker, finally deserve leadership that is not egotistic, that is not built around one man and this maximum leader nonsense. This, for years, has plagued our country, and we've seen all of these things being stifled, and I'll give you an example.

Now, to my great surprise, the former Prime Minister, and he's not here this morning although he has to present just now, but in his usual style, he has to get his thoughts together. **(Laughter)** In the Finance Committee Meeting, which we had before this Budget, he couldn't remember something that he did as Minister for Finance and Prime Minister under the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme. He sat there, Mr. Speaker, and attempted to query the figure in contribution of about $75 million that we had to pay to creditors.

He asked the question, "Who all this money for"? **(Laughter)** So the permanent secretary calmly responded, "These are the monies that we negotiated for the pay under the 2014 Structural Adjustment Programme, should the CBI revenues reach a particular level, to creditors". **(Applause)**

But in their usual style, you never imagine that the programme would achieve all these revenues, so you were just winking at the creditors anyhow, just to get the haircut. So you just told them that. So, now, you forget that you **(applause)** sat and negotiated that, and when the reality hit you that this Administration was able to get the CBI Programme to achieve great revenues, you now come on and talk about who all this money is for. You shock. You surprise.

Mr. Speaker, it speaks to this whole question of the emptiness, rhetoric, old talk, good with that **(inaudible comment by a Member)**, and dementia. Well, the Minister for Finance said it. I didn't. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, it shows that if we were to continue with that style and quality of leadership, Grenada isn't going anywhere.

So this Administration was able to work extremely hard under the leadership of Prime Minister, Honourable Dickon Mitchell, to be able to see the CBI Programme achieve record revenues. The same record revenues that the Opposition said, "Well, where all this money going"? **(Time bell rings)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Where is all

this money going? What you plan to do with it? How are you spending it? Spend it on healthcare. Them people need this. All you increasing water. Oh God, they're going to kill us. Where is the money?"

You made an agreement that if the programme achieved certain revenues, they would get a one-off payment. So, Mr. Speaker, $75 million out of that programme had to be paid to the creditors, as a result of the negotiations of the former Administration. If that's not giving away money, in the context of the negotiation, tell me what it is. But you have a problem with this Administration, investing meaningful resources in critical areas.

You're saying that to celebrate 50 years of National Independence is fluff. You're saying that the Ministers should not travel, because for you, you used to travel, you didn't use to bring back anything, so you figure that because we're travelling now, we're not bringing back anything. But as per usual, you're confused. You have not sat down, none of you on the Opposition Side, to look at this Budget and put it into context. Again, from the Maiden Speech from the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, we heard absolutely nothing about the philosophy or vision for the country. All we heard was political rhetoric. A regurgitation of the past. Empty talk and promises.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that we are on the right track, and when we talk, Mr. Speaker, about economic development, we must understand in principle that this is a conversation that we must consistently have. Take, for example, this whole lie about the "pregnant treasury". Mr. Speaker, again, when we got into office, it cost the Government approximately $75 million to pay the pension backlog. Mr. Speaker, when we paid that backlog, the only cost was $75 million, and when you analyse all previous budgets, I don't even know if you saw $100 million in surplus or savings or whatever it is they want to talk about. So the question remains, where did this myth of $500 million come about? Again, empty words. There is no substance to your conversation.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why on June 23, 2022, the people really gave us a mandate to change all of that. **(Applause)** The people, Mr. Speaker, understand that talk is cheap when it is compared to action. I think one of the things that fooled the former Administration, Mr. Speaker, in the context of this Budget, they see so much spending on

stuff, so they believe, boy, that has to be an election. Nah, man, something's wrong. This Administration can't be spending all that money, and they aren't calling an election this year. That has to be an election. So that's how they're behaving. Mr. Speaker, we're doing well on the economic side, and I could allow the Minister for Finance, in his rebuttal, to respond and add wherever I left off.

I want to turn now quickly as I head to Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in the context of Hurricane Beryl. And, Mr. Speaker, for the first time, I'll be giving my experience when I was sent from the Cabinet of Grenada to go and support and assist the Honourable Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Beryl.

It ties into this whole talk about the election coming, the election coming because I want to say to this Honourable House, the New National Party, the current Opposition in this country, must be ashamed of what they did. Mr. Speaker, the former Administration attempted to use **(time bell rings)** Hurricane Beryl to find some kind of way to put the Government under pressure, so that we could have called the general election. Desperate. When we got up there, a former Member of Parliament and Government Minister in the South of the island was on the port passing orders and misinforming people, telling people, "She did this. She organised that, and it doesn't have anything here. It doesn't have any structure for this. It doesn't have any of this. It doesn't have any of that."

When we got up there, Mr. Speaker, the port was an open sepulchre. Some of the Regional Disaster Management Teams mentioned in the meeting subsequently, naturally, when you have a major disaster, two weeks will pass, and you will see absolute chaos, and it's natural because systems are down, etcetera., etcetera. What they sought to do was to immediately go up to Carriacou, rather than offering help, give them food and a portable toilet. **(Laughter)** Draw the parallel. Give me an old food to eat, and you give me a toilet to defecate. **(Laughter)**

Ask yourself the question, if an Opposition vying to become the Government sees that its countrymen and women are hit with a destruction, what should they be doing?

Compare that, Mr. Speaker, with what this Administration did to seriously intervene to stop the slide and to turn the situation into a chaotic scene. Imagine Grenada at the time was registering high gastro numbers, and they sought to bring up food and toilets. Ask yourself the question if that was not deliberate, to destabilise the situation further. But Mr. Speaker, who God bless, no man curses.

The Honourable Tevin Andrews is a hard worker. **(Applause)** When I got up there, I saw the Member of Parliament carrying stuff, doing things, forgetting that his home got impacted, forgetting his family may have needed water, and other stuff. I brought up a generator for the Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and he took it and gave it to the Senior Home.

Imagine the Cabinet gave me a directive to make sure that we could establish communication **(applause)**, and the man took the generator and gave it to the Senior Home? He said, "Forget about me". Mr. Speaker, that really, really touched me. He is my real comrade, and I saw excellent leadership qualities. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, we have to support him. So when we went up there, thankfully, some people from Elon Musk's Company reached out to me while we were in New York. I know... I don't really want to go there. **(Laughter)** But they reached out and they offered a means to assist in the deficit in communication. So they said that they can obtain seven Starlinks satellites for us to be able to get internet immediately and get communication back up and running. The satellite phones, Mr. Speaker, had all but gone uncharged, chaos was ensuing, and we were able to restore communication and also put back up the main communication point, which was one of the radio stations up in Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

That was essential, because, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, what the Opposition was doing was going around and helping to destabilise the question of what was taking place. They attempted it in Petite Martinique, and they also did many of them in Carriacou. But we were able to crush that nonsense. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say this, that when you see the history books are written on some, the Grenadian people would be applauded as to how nice we come and we sit

here, we pretend, how nice we talk, how nice we dress, and when you look at the substance and quality of what we're doing you see next to nothing.

And it's a direct example. Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. This Honourable Parliament empowered all Members of Parliament with an EC$10,000 monthly allowance. **(Applause)** So if sister "x" can't pay her medical bill, can't pay her water bill in your constituency, your role is not to sit down and say, "Well, sister x isn't paying her money. Things are hard in the country." Take the money and go and do your work. **(Applause)** Give it to her to pay it.

You're getting an allowance under this Administration now. For the first time, you served donkey years. God knows what, how and where you used to get money to stay in office. But now, you're getting a direct allowance, and you lose faith, well, something's wrong with you. If you really care about people, you should be happy. You should be the first. We're not hearing an ounce of report.

As Rowley said, "Only yeng yeng yeng yeng yeng yeng yeng". **(Applause)** Unemployment. "Yeng yeng yeng yeng." Take the money and help people. You're getting access to it, so you must utilise it to benefit the nation. The Opposition has a role to play, not only to talk and run their mouth, but to take the resources of the state and ensure that they help their constituency. **(Applause)**

So all the Opposition constituencies and constituents, I want to say to you, clamour to your MPs to assist you. **(Applause)** They have money to help. **(Applause)** It's not a million dollars, but they have money. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** Everybody gets to the same amount. To whom much is given, much is expected. Do all your work. You all will have less time to talk, talk, talk about all these things.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we were up there in Carriacou, when we went to establish… I will end on the Carriacou note because I see my time is winding down. When we went to establish the distribution centres throughout Carriacou and Petite Martinique, to my great surprise, I saw the former Prime Minister driving around, with about four men in a car, only watching and sightseeing. While I was carrying boxes, he made sure to stop and ask, "What are you doing up here"? My response to him was simple, "Hear what to

do, take that vehicle and go and get some people and bring them back to help us, that's what we wanted from you all".

Mr. Speaker, I reached out to Senator Norland Cox. **(Time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker, could I just have one minute to wrap up and wind down, please?

Mr. Speaker: One minute granted.

Hon. Ron Redhead: I am a man of my word. So, Mr. Speaker, I met the gentleman, and we chatted on the port. I said to him, "Give me a name of somebody from the New National Party. You may not want to be the person or the liaison. Give me a name so we can contact the person and we can establish a link between the Opposition and Government to make sure that the restoration and all the work can be done".

He sat there in his usual style, smiling. He said, "Yes. Well, I am ready. I this. I that". I am still waiting. No name. Nothing. But, the first man to go on GBN and say, "Well, the Honourable Redhead reached out to me, but I'm waiting and so on…" To give the illusion that nobody reached out to them.

I even spoke to the Cabinet Secretary at the time because, Mr. Speaker, it was important to consolidate and coordinate the efforts in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and get the support from a wide cross-section. You worked with business people up there in a short month, and something that we spent up there getting and gathering information, and so on, that was the goal and vision. So, when you hear they're coming and talk about Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker, they don't care, and they did not care after the passage of Hurricane Beryl.

So I want to end on this note, Mr. Speaker, thank all my constituents who came up to Carriacou and Petite Martinique from the North East to assist with the recovery. Mr. Speaker, it was really pleasing at one point to see them out assisting with the distributions, assisting with getting people to safety, that kind of thing in the immediate aftermath.

I want to congratulate the NADMA District Coordinating Team of St. George North East for the excellent work, Mr. Speaker, in Disaster Management, and they play the

pivotal role in mobilising the constituency of St. George North East to assist Carriacou in its time of need.

Mr. Speaker, this Administration, so I broke my promise, but, Mr. Speaker, this Administration is keen on ensuring that we do not just talk the talk, but we walk the walk for the development of our country as we continue to move Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique forward. **(Applause)** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and may we continue to be successful as a nation.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. George North East, and next on the floor would be the MP for St. George South. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. The next presenter would be that of… Yes. Sorry. MP for St. Andrew North West.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the 2025 Budget of Revenue and Expenditure presented to this Honourable House by the Minister for Finance and MP for St. Patrick East.

Mr. Speaker, I am guided by the words of Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he". The verse underscores, Mr. Speaker, the significance of visionary leadership and an adherence to guiding principles, which are evident in the Budget presented last Friday.

I also reflect on Matthew 25:40, "And the King shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me'…" This passage, Mr. Speaker, emphasises our duty to serve all citizens, especially the marginalised, with compassion and dedication, and this Government is committed to that. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, before I dive into my presentation, I wish to place on record my sincere gratitude to our beloved Prime Minister for entrusting me with the opportunity to serve in his Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, it's no easy feat taking someone who just ran against you, and who campaigned against you **(applause)**, to be part of your Cabinet, Mr.

Speaker. It speaks about trust, and so I'm dedicated to Mr. Speaker, and I'm committed to working to serve the people of this beautiful Tri-island State of Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on record my thanks to Sister Gloria Thomas, who isn't here in body, because she is out on state business, but her spirit is with us. I would like to thank her for her unwavering support in this journey. I also wish to thank the entire Cabinet who have given me their support and taken me on as one to start with them. Mr. Speaker, I feel like family. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in supporting the Budget, I pause, Mr. Speaker, because the people of St. Andrew North West are coming in the House. In supporting this Budget, I reaffirm my dedication to serving the people of St. Andrew North West. The strategic focus on sectors such as Education, Youth Empowerment, and Infrastructure Development aligns seamlessly with our collective aspirations.

I am in full support of the 2025 Budget, particularly in the area of Youth Development, Education, Skills Training, Sports, Mental Health Awareness and Religious Affairs—pillars that will drive Grenada's future to prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, a holistic approach to Youth Development. Mr. Speaker, our young people are not just the future. They are the present. This Government recognises that truly empowering our youth is not to be stuck in training for life. It's not only IMANI and M-Power, but instead provides our young people with real opportunities across multiple sectors; **(applause)**, education, scores of scholarships, entrepreneurships, sports, governance and leadership.

So, Mr. Speaker, you would hear things, and if you do not know for yourself, you will believe that nothing is happening for your young people, but the truth is, our young people know that things are happening, and they are actively involved.

Mr. Speaker, we are not just talking about youth empowerment. We are making it a reality. Mr. Speaker, while the Opposition complains, we engage our young people. **(Applause)** We have taken new development beyond just programmes. We are taking new development to a higher height, Mr. Speaker. We have gone directly to young people

through a series of YOUth Talks. We have met them where they are, listened to their concerns and discussed real solutions for their future and their present.

We are not stopping there, Mr. Speaker. Starting at the end of March, we will launch more informal engagement in constituencies across Grenada with our young people. We are engaging them, Mr. Speaker, hearing from them and meeting them at their tough.

Mr. Speaker, we are hosting a Youth and Mental Health Caravan in the month of April to engage young people and people alike across Grenada, because we recognise that real empowerment goes beyond just skill training. It includes mental resilience, well-being and holistic development.

This Government, Mr. Speaker, will engage young people with creative and long-lasting training, not training for life, and not just for a programme cycle. We are investing in initiatives that prepare them not only for jobs, but for careers, entrepreneurships and leadership.

Unlike the Opposition, we do not believe that engagements start and stop with a single programme. We believe in continuous meaningful development. This is the difference between political gimmicks and real governance. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this Government, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we hear things like, "You are there before", and you're quoting 2007 or before that. Mr. Speaker, no Member of this team here were ever in Government. The only person is me, who was part of the Government before. This is a completely new team **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker, and we are moving Grenada forward.

Mr. Speaker, in November last, we had a month of activities for young people, and we ended it with a youth rally and celebration of achievement, voices and contribution. This isn't just a one-off event, but a commitment to our young people. We are setting the stage for 2025, where this initiative will continue, and we will continue to engage our young people. While the Opposition may be caught up in old ways, we are forging ahead with a long-term vision for youth development—one that's about sustaining momentum, creating opportunities and ensuring that our young people are ready to lead.

Transforming Educational Skill Training

Education, Mr. Speaker, is the foundation of a strong nation, and we are ensuring that no young person is left behind. The introduction of free tuition at TAMCC and NEWLO has already relieved financial burden on families, saving them over millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So, if there is really an issue as it relates to a small percentage needing assistance, then raise that. We have no problem, because as a Government, we are committed to looking at ways and means to provide support to those who need our assistance. **(Applause)** We understand, and we appreciate that only through education can we remove these people from poverty. We do not want to stick them in programmes for life, but education is more than academics.

It must be relevant and responsive to today's changing dynamics that is why we are not only providing M-Power and the other programmes that was there of the past, but we are expanding digital skill training to include Coding, Cybersecurity and AI. Close to 100 young persons are presently in training and want once successfully completed, are assured secure jobs that pay in excess of EC$5,000 per month, and a new batch will be enrolled this year.

This is not IMANI, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** This is not M-Power, but it is youth engagement. This is a real investment in our young people. This is truly transformative, and it costs the Government, but it isn't captured under the Ministry of Youth. So, Mr. Speaker, when you hear the quote of cuts in the youth budget. There's no cut in the youth budget. There might be cuts under the Ministry of Youth, but there are reassignments because when we provide EC$1.5 million for these programmes, they are for youth engagement. When we provide millions for the cybersecurity training and all the other trainings, these are positive programmes, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Beyond education and sports, we must employ our young people in leadership and economic participation. Mr. Speaker, that is why we had our youth election, and just about a week ago, the youth had their swearing-in ceremony right in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, this is a step in the right direction, and this year we will be bringing legislation into this House for this initiative.

Youth Parliament will be strengthened to give young people a greater voice in governance and policymaking. Economic inclusion programmes will provide young entrepreneurs with funding, mentorship and networking opportunities in agriculture, sports-technology and emerging Industries

The Elevate Her Programme specifically targets young women, particularly those who are unemployed or have dropped out of school, aiming to equip them with financial support, skill training, and opportunities for upward mobility. One of the key innovations of Elevate Her setting it apart from all the old programmes, is that it has a clear exit strategy designed to ensure that participants gain meaningful employment or entrepreneurship opportunities without being trapped in indefinite cycles of training or exploitation. Slavery was abolished, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Why are we keeping our young people in programmes training for life?

Elevate Her is focused on preparing young women for success in the workplace without a defined framework, ensuring that they are not treated unfairly or left to linger in programmes for decades. For a whole decade, there have been trainees who have been in programmes for 10 years. Mr. Speaker, we have to treat our young people differently.

In December, I met a young lady from St. David, I believe, who's part of the Ambassadorial Programme, and she expressed hurt that he finished TAMCC, has her A Levels and was seeking a job as a teacher. She wants to be a teacher, and she was told the only vehicle to take you to that was the IMANI Programme. Mr. Speaker, sad, very sad, but Mr. Speaker, this Government, two and a half years later, are ensuring that young people, once qualified, get the jobs that they require. They do not have to be part of an IMANI Programme training for Life.

Mr. Speaker, the Elevate Her Programme will be launched in St. Andrew on March 27, where 202 young women who are identified to be engaged in the first phase. The much-talked-about IMANI Programme, let me start by saying, it's important to provide facts in the House. This Government has no policy to send home any young person. **(Applause)** So, there's nobody from the IMANI Programme apart from the regular policy

that was sent home. Let me explain to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, because it's important to present facts.

The programme trained young people, and it was supposed to be a two-year training, but we went from cycle to cycle because when the time reached to transition, an election was coming, so we had to keep them over and over, and so, some were there for over 10 years. That is one point, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, the programme, if you get a scholarship when you complete your study cycle, gives you three months and then removes you from the payroll. This is not a removal from this Government. It's part of the policy of the programme from the inception. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, there is another policy that says if you're not engaged, so if you're on a worksite, if you misbehave or there is some issue with you on your worksite, or there's any problem, and you are sent home as a trainee, you will be removed from the payroll until you are placed in another placement.

So, there might be people who were removed from the payroll, but that is part of the programme. That is exactly what the programme was meant to do, from the inception, which has nothing to do with this new Government. The Government has not made any changes. Mr. Speaker, when the Opposition says nothing is happening, what they really mean is that we have not taken a new batch of IMANI, and they are right. Here is the truth, Mr. Speaker.

The IMANI Programme has undoubtedly benefited some people, but here's the truth: adding more young people to a broken system does not fix IMANI. **(Applause)** IMANI was never meant to be a permanent job programme, yet we still have trainees on site 10 years later. **(Applause)** This is not progress, Mr. Speaker. This is backwards. We are going forward ever. **(Applause)** That is stagnation. Instead of trapping another generation, it was cycled on indefinite training; we are focused on the real solutions that create lasting opportunities. We are in the process of transitioning, and we have engaged the private sector, because, Mr. Speaker, scores of our young people are placed in the private sector, 10 years, eight years, seven years, six years, five years, some less, and these people are working. They are no longer trainees. They are full-time workers in the

private sector, but the Government is paying them. What kind of backwardness is that? **(Applause)** Government is paying you to work with the private sector after your training cycle.

In some instances, Mr. Speaker, as a Ministry, we have engaged the private sector, and there are some private sector personnel who have been training their own employees for over 10 years, but are saying to us that we cannot pay them anything. Mr. Speaker, we are removing these trainees from those sites, and we are looking for other permanent engagement, not continuous training, but permanent engagement, or helping them to set up their own business. We are not leaving to be trained for life or to be working under slavery in the private sector without even giving you an EC$500 extra because the minimum wage has moved. People are no longer EC$700 and the Government is giving EC$700 to those in the private sector, but some of these private sector personnel are not giving anything, and so we are removing them. We are transitioning our young people, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud those in the private sector who have decided to employ those trainees who are placed under their watch. You know, as I sat here, the Grenville Credit Union comes to mind, and there are many others, but it comes to mind because it's an institution that takes in trainees for six months, and once you perform, you get placement right there, you find a job. There are other entities that are doing the same thing, M&M Hardware, those are some that I know about off the top of my head. They are taking the trainees and making them permanent. But there are those who continue to keep our trainees in bondage, and we are not willing, Mr. Speaker, as a Government, to continue to keep our youth in bondage.

Mr. Speaker, in 2024, 418 young people were transitioned into permanent engagement. **(Applause)** Some are in the schools as permanent teachers, some in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, some out in the districts, some in the Government system, some in the private sector, some have also graduated and find gainful employment from universities.

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Mr. Speaker, this Government, this National Democratic Government, refuses to mislead the young people with the illusion of progress; instead, we are building real pathways to success for young people. **(Applause)** That's why we are investing in programs like Cybersecurity Training, Youth in Agriculture, and more and more scholarships, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about cutting programmes, we are investing in education, and that is why we have 50 persons so far enrolled at Monroe College. This is progress and development, Mr. Speaker. So when we talk about cutting the youth budget, we are reassigning those monies to get our young people to be engaged in more meaningful opportunities. **(Applause)**

We are helping them to be financially independent and helping them with career advancement. So when the Opposition cries that nothing is happening, they're either not paying attention or deliberately ignoring the fact. This Government is not in the business of keeping young people in stagnation and dependency, but instead we are in the business of creating a future where they can thrive.

The M-Power Programme

Mr. Speaker, it is not where you start, but where you finish, and we hear all kinds of stories about what was cut and what wasn't cut and copycat and all that. Mr. Speaker, contrary to the utterance about how much is spent, we have close to 500 young men engaged in meaningful ways with more oversight, quarterly engagement and an increase in stipend from EC$800 to EC$1000. **(Applause)**

The Opposition is crying copycat about this and other ongoing programmes aimed at youth development. Mr. Speaker, governance isn't about ownership. It's about service to the people who elected you. Mr. Speaker, programmes are not yours to keep, but these are programs for the people, so let's set the record straight. This Government is not in the business of copying. We are in the business of correcting. **(Applause)** What they call imitation, we call innovation. **(Applause)** The truth is, youth programmes should not be about who started them, but about who makes them work, and while they sit back

and let young men cycle through M-Power with no structured pathway beyond training, we are ensuring that every programme, whether existing or new, delivers real results.

So, Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard about an increase in gang activities, violent activities and others. We are saying that it's because these people are not engaged. But, Mr. Speaker, get the statistics and check. Most of the people are people whom we have already trained, in some of these programmes and who are supposed to be gainfully engaged, but because there was no follow-up, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)**, no mentorship, that is why we are seeing some of the things happening. We are not happy about that, Mr. Speaker.

As a Government, we look at ways and means to address those issues. What the Opposition won't admit is that they have failed to evolve M-Power beyond just a training scheme. We are fixing that by strengthening mentorship, improving the transition mechanism, and ensuring that young men don't just pass through a programme, but actually move forward in life. Instead of crying copycat, they should be asking, "Why didn't we get it right the first time"? **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, let the Opposition talk while we deliver. We are not here to play politics with the future of our young people. We are here to empower them for real. If a programme benefits the people, especially our young people, we won't abandon them just to score cheap political points. The difference is, Mr. Speaker, while they use this initiative for scoring cheap political points, we are making them work for the people. Leadership isn't about who did it first, but who did it best. **(Applause)** The Government is about people, not politics; this is why we are moving forward while they are stuck in the past. The programme is now better managed and more impactful. It's merit-based and not MP sending a list of political people.

Mr. Speaker, as a Ministry, we'll continue to provide engagement for young people. We'll continue to provide leadership training. We'll continue to provide more incentives to get our young people actively engaged. We are preparing our young people for life, and as a Government, we are committed to improving the lives of your young people across Grenada.

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Honourable Delma Thomas

Mr. Speaker, I move to Sports. Grenada's athletes continue to make us proud on the regional and international stages. **(Applause)** We are moving beyond treating sports as mere recreation and instead positioning them as a viable industry that can generate employment, investment and opportunities for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, we have launched the Sports Council, and so there are… We have the Parish Sports Council, so in each parish we have a council, and we also approved the sports policy, which is aimed at upgrading sporting activities across the different parishes. We are looking, Mr. Speaker, to have grassroots engagement at the level of the community, because we cannot only look at sports when our athletes like Kirani, Anderson and the others reach the highest height, but we must provide the vehicle, Mr. Speaker, at the level of the community that could engage our young people, where we have more Afy Fletchers, more Kirani James **(applause)**, more Anderson Peters and more Lindon Victor. We will have more people involved in football, cricket and all the other sporting disciplines.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we are looking and have already started upgrading sporting infrastructure across the country. One such example is the Fur Playing Field. We played football here yesterday. Mr. Speaker, I'm the Minister for Youth, and I did not pass the buck. I take full responsibility, acknowledging that there were some delays in the work at Fur Playing Field. However, Mr. Speaker, development sometimes comes with a cost. However, there was continuous communication, and a collective decision was made to proceed elsewhere with Mac Donald College and the other school sports.

But, Mr. Speaker, the issue of Fur Playing Field should not even be mentioned by the Opposition. **(Applause)** The issue of the playing field has been there for years, but more than that, Mr. Speaker, I visited the Fur Playing Field, along with the MP for St. Patrick East, and was in dismay at the condition of the toilet facility. The person who was taking us around said these toilets and sinks were there in the 80s.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, you cannot even repair those things; you have to replace them. **(Applause)** So, more than just the playing field, we had to do extensive work at Fur Playing Field. We have to remove all toilet facilities, all the sinks, windows and, Mr.

Speaker, coupled with that, we had the issue of Beryl removing the entire roof of the Fur Playing Field. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report that a brand new roof was installed **(applause)**, one that can withstand the challenges of sea blast, ensuring durability for years. Mr. Speaker, maintenance of sporting facilities must be part of what we do as a Ministry of Sport to ensure that we take proper care and these facilities last and are up-kept, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to enhancing community spaces and delivering quality infrastructure. We thank the schools for their patience, and we know it was not an easy thing to have to leave St. Patrick to go to Progress Park, which is a one-off. Next year, please God, you will have your brand new, rehabilitated Fur Playing Field that can resume all the sporting activities there.

Mr. Speaker, we are developing infrastructure across sporting infrastructure across the country. I want to… I think I announced in the Honourable House before, but I want to say again that very soon we have a contractor SKM, Patriot Limited, and PRP Associate, John Venture (JV) which is an Indian community who are involving lighting first class facilities, will be, or is the contractor for the National Cricket Stadium, Progress Park **(applause)** and the upgrade of lighting at La Sagesse.

Mr. Speaker, have not only signed the contract, but we have also paid half of the money already, which is close to $10 million, Mr. Speaker, for the lighting; that is the total cost, and we have paid half of that. The team has people on the ground, but they are now mobilising, and so the first set of containers will arrive on the island sometime in March, and we will see real work starting on those facilities from April. We are working, Mr. Speaker, as a Government and are committed to improving sporting facilities and providing first-class lighting.

Mr. Speaker, in Progress Park, we are also looking at complete rehabilitation, but we are taking a phased approach, because we want to ensure that Progress Park is a premier playing field on par with the National Stadium. This year, we will have first-class lighting, and we will have some upgrades to the children's playground. So we will have a state-of-the-art safe playground for our children. Very soon, we'll have to announce the

closure of the one that we have there at the moment for a period of time, where we can clear up, clean up, and put down a brand new children's playground in Progress Park. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the much-talked-about pool. So, I felt moved to share the good news, not just speak for my own, but to share the news as it relates to the pool, because sometimes you hear they say, "Nothing is happening. You announced the pool before, and you announce whatever". But I want to give you this status update from World Aquatics, and Mr. Speaker, would you permit me to read and share with the Honourable House the letter received from World Aquatics? Thank you.

It says, Mr. Speaker,

"*Dear Minister Thomas,*

On behalf of World Aquatics, we are pleased to provide you with an update on the progress of our joint effort towards the realisation of the aquatic facility in Grenada as part of the World Aquatic Pools for our programmes.

We are currently in the process of drafting the Memorandum of Understanding, which will finalise the commitment and responsibility of all stakeholders involved in this important project"

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to say the date, it's dated the 19th of February 2025. **(Applause)**

"*As part of this initiative, we are pleased to confirm the committee's financial contribution from all our various partners, which will be directed towards the payment of Myrtha Pools. For the construction of the facility, the contributions are as follows:*

- *World Aquatics - US$300,000;*
- *PanAm Sports - US$150,000; and*
- *International Olympic Committee - US$100,000;*
- *Government of Grenada - US$63,000;*
- *Grenada World Aquatic Support Programme - US$50,000*

This results in a total financial support of US$663,000 covering the total cost of the pool, which is US$662,679,043".

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Honourable Delma Thomas

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the Government of Grenada's steadfast commitment to this project. Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to turning sod for this project sometime in April. We have our part to play. So, apart from that, because this is just the pool, we will also have a covered pavilion and toilet facilities, and our Government has already committed to that last year.

So, both infrastructural development, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to Sports for Grenada. So we will have first-class lighting at Progress Park, the Cricket Stadium. We will have a pool, and we will have infrastructure development across the country.

Mr. Speaker, through the NAL, the National Lottery Authority will undertake a number of projects across constituencies. There will be playgrounds in most constituencies that do not have one as yet. We will have upgrades to one of the playing grounds in St. John. We will have some in St. Patrick. We give Carriacou priority, Mr. Speaker. These are some of the projects that we will be investing in, Mr. Speaker, investing in our people, investing in sports.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is making unprecedented investments in Youth and Sports Development with $68.9 million allocated in the 2025 Budget. We are committed to ensuring that every young person in Grenada, whether in the classroom, on the playing field, in business or in leadership, is given the tools to succeed.

So, Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of nothing happening for young people is not just laughable. It's insulting to the Intelligence of our young people. But, Mr. Speaker, the truth is they are talking. The truth is, they know good things when they see them, and the young people, Mr. Speaker, are supporting this Government 100%. **(Applause)** They identify that we are prioritising them.

Mr. Speaker, so those cry by the Opposition isn't the principal opposition. Mr. Speaker, it is bitterness, desperation and political amnesia. **(Applause)** But the people are not fools. They remember who did what, and no amount of grandstanding, noise-making, or revisionist history will erase the forward movement. We're going forward, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** We are not going back. Never. I'm sorry my colleague is not there, because I'm saying to him, we are going back, so you have to get on the forward

side. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I need to move on. The Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs is now recognised as an independent ministry. It speaks about the Government's priority: giving priority to mental health, ending stigma and discrimination. The Ministry is listed in the 2025 Estimates of Revenue as Vote 52.

The independent ministry will be able to place more emphasis on the mental health agenda. The Ministry recognises that many people have mental health challenges in the State of Grenada. However, because of the stigma associated with mental health issues, they do not seek help. Mr. Speaker, I could speak first-hand on that, because it's no secret that I've said here, 10 years ago, that my mother has mental challenges. And so, I had to deal with the issue of stigma and discrimination in public life, because of my mother's situation, and that is why I'm committed, Mr. Speaker, to ensuring that as the Ministry of Mental Health, we do what it takes to end stigma and discrimination. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, before I move forward, I'd like to thank my Cabinet team, who, when I said to them, let's go to Mt. Gay and visit with me. Mr. Speaker, you see, when you see and feel what others are seeing and feeling, it gives you a better opportunity to assist and to provide support. So, Mr. Speaker, I recall watching my Member's face in Mt. Gay. There was sadness, and so we, after listening to some of the concerns, each Member of the team agreed, promised and fulfilled their promises to provide one mattress **(applause)** for the patients at Mt. Gay.

And so, I want to thank you, not only for the mattresses, but I want to thank you for the support when I come seeking assistance, when I call on MIT and call on the Ministry of Infrastructure, and I call on other Members. When the caretaker for the Town of St. George and the MP for St. George North East walked with me in Mt. Gay to see those issues and to help, Mr. Speaker, I am thankful.

Mr. Speaker, we have already started to see a decline and improvement in the services. I want to thank our community health nurses and social workers, and the staff **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker, who go out into the community. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank

the Government for approving special support for them so that they can do their work effectively. I also want to thank members of the diaspora for providing assistance to our community health nurses. We provided a brand new vehicle for them, Mr. Speaker, and in every parish they are assisting, speaking to families and providing medications, and counselling support for families, and that is why we saw a decline in the number of admissions at the Mt. Gay hospital.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy mind gives a healthy body. Mr. Speaker, that is why the Ministry of Wellness in 2025 will have exercise and healthy lifestyle engagement at the level of the community. Mr. Speaker, you see, most of us, our jobs are sedentary, so we sit down for eight, nine and 10 hours, and so we have to deal with what you call lifestyle diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes. We have seen an increase in cancer and all that. But, Mr. Speaker, the data tells us that if we eat healthy, a lot of greens and a lot of vegetables, and we exercise daily, that can assist in that regard. So, from the wellness standpoint, our programmes will be taken into the community to encourage and engage people to have a healthier lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, a total of $10,960,302 is allocated in the recurrent side of the Budget for 2025 for the Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs. Under the capital expenditure, a total of $2,030,000 is allocated under the capital budget. Mr. Speaker, $250,000 is allocated toward the implementation of the Religious portfolio and for Wellness $300,000.

Mr. Speaker, as the Government, we are committed to doing more as it relates to Mental Health. Last year, we started. We purchased 10 new specialised beds for Mt. Gay. We already ordered 20 more. We are looking to have a full quota within the Mt. Gay Mental hospital, not only beds, Mr. Speaker, but we also will be improving the entire facility, phase by phase, to ensure that when you have mental health challenges, you are in a comfortable place, Mr. Speaker.

We will be working this year to do a lot of infrastructural work and a lot of training for our staff. Our staff is very vital in that, because if our staff is not healthy, or if our staff is not mentally able, then we have a problem. So as a Government, we have put priority

as it relates to the human resources of our Ministry, Mr. Speaker, that also includes the Ministry of Youth and Sports. My permanent secretary with the Ministry of Sport is here, and so I said to her and the team that we have to work as fast as possible to ensure that we deal with the issue of regularisation of most of our workers, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, to be regularised, you must be performing. So, then if you're not performing, then we cannot say to regularise you.

So we encourage our workers to continue to provide yeoman services. Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Mental Health, I am pleased with what is happening in those ministries, Mr. Speaker, and as a Government, we are committed to providing you with all the support as it relates to human resources.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard someone talk about how we said we were going to do the Carlton and nothing. But, Mr. Speaker, I didn't know if the Opposition caused a different kind of… I don't know. I mean, I don't know what to say or how to put it. But, Carlton Home, in its original sense in St. George, was destroyed over 20 years ago. **(Applause)** This Government has been in office for just two plus years now.

So the fact that we are committed, Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are cleared the site in Mirabeau, the fact that we have given a contract to Mr. Cute Rennie, I think won the bid, and he is now at Mirabeau do the fencing, and we were hoping, Mr. Speaker, that the fencing was done since last year, but, you know, sometimes the process takes longer, but it's happening right now. So, I'm in constant contact with the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Infrastructure, saying that we need to finalise the designs, we need to have costing, and we need to go out to tender by June of 2025.

Mr. Speaker, we are not just talking to talk. We are acting, Mr. Speaker, and so we are committed, Mr. Speaker, to building a Drug and Rehabilitation Centre in Mirabeau in the constituency in which I serve at this time. So, Mr. Speaker, we are committed as a Government, and I will do what it takes. So, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you are in Opposition, you say one thing, and when you are in Government, you do a different thing. But if you didn't build a centre in 20 years, don't talk about it. You have no authority **(applause)**, no moral authority to talk about a rehabilitation centre or some pool or

whatever, because we've been talking about that for the last 20 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to… Let me wrap up on Mental Health. So, Mr. Speaker, in 2025, we will have more training for staff. Last year, we had two staff members sent to Jamaica. We will be sending two more this year, and we are looking to get more trained and specialised doctors. So, Mr. Speaker, as part of the Government's priority, we are hoping that specialised doctors will be part of our scholarships, so that we can have more trained mental health doctors.

Mr. Speaker, you know, in the past, Mt. Gay Mental Hospital was really like a dump site. No money has been put into it, an old dilapidated building since the Revolution, no repairs, nothing. I mean, we hear about bugs, and we hear about all that, Mr. Speaker, we are forging forward to change the dynamics. We are ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that we repair and provide a better facility for those who need our assistance, but Mr. Speaker, we are assured that once we continue with the community intervention, fewer persons will have to go for treatment **(applause)**, at Mt. Gay Mental Health Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we started a number of mental health campaigns last year, and we had a number of trainings for the police, for the nurses, for schools. This year, we will intensify that. We will also have psychoeducation at schools. We started last year in a few secondary schools. We will continue at the level of the community, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that we will deal with the issue that confronts young people, middle-aged people, and old people because mental health issues do not discriminate. So any one of us…

You know, sometimes, we make it look like because your mother is that, then maybe, you're that too? But any one of us… Sometimes we do. Everyone, at some point in their life, will have mental challenges, because when your family dies, and you are depressed, it's your mind that is affected. When you lose your job, you're also affected by your stress. At some point in our lives, we may have particular issues, and we will need particular support. And so, as a Government, we are committed. And so, I want to thank this Government, Mr. Speaker, for putting in and making mental health a priority for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Delma Thomas

Mr. Speaker, Religious Affairs provided grand funding to faith-based organisations to implement small projects in the following areas:

- Education and Skills Development;
- Youth Empowerment and Wellness;
- Agriculture and Security Disaster Management;
- Community Development; and
- Information and Communications Technology.

One project was implemented in each constituency, up to $10,000, except in the constituency of St. David, St. John and St. George South and Carriacou, where we got a maximum of $16,500. Mr. Speaker, we will have more programmes, because we want to engage our faith-based organisation in assisting us in many of the challenges that confront our young people, many of the mental health challenges we help to train them in counselling, so that they can assist us, Mr. Speaker, in that regard. Sometimes, when you feel depressed, the first person you run to is your pastor, and so we want to provide all the necessary support.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on about the work and the upgrade to be done at Mt. Gay and all that, but the time is ticking, and there is more that I can say as it relates to mental health. But, Mr. Speaker, let me go on to the people who elected me and who continue to provide me with the support, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, from Adelphi to Spring Garden, Beauregard, Balthazar, Byelands, my home village, Mt. Horne, Paraclete, La Filette, Lakabarka, Grandlette, Paradise, Dunfermline, and Morne Longue, these are the villages in my constituency, and I want to thank them for their support. I would like to thank them for carrying me with their love, Mr. Speaker, for the support they have given me, even when I transitioned from one side to the other. Mr. Speaker, they appreciate that the transition is aimed at getting away from confusion, Mr. Speaker, and being able to better serve them, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to this Honourable House, yesterday I said to my good friend, I said to him come back home, and he told me that my home is somewhere

else and I do not want to call his name in the Honourable House, but I want to let him know that home is where the heart is. **(Applause)** And so, my home is right here, Mr. Speaker, and I am committed to continuing to serve. So, there are some concerns, you know, that were raised in Opposition that I may have gone where and where. There is no way to go, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I will invite the Honourable Members because he is lonely, on "This Side", in the corner there for himself. I will invite him. There might be a space here for you. **(Laughter)**

So, Mr. Speaker, in St. Andrew North West, we have under-promised and over-delivered. **(Applause)** I am proud. I am proud, Mr. Speaker, that contrary to what you say, the team in St. Andrew North West, and as I look, I see my Community Development Coordinator. We have done work in every village in the constituency. We are people-centred in St. Andrew North West. So, there were engagements, and when the people identified what needed to be done, we acted. So, there's work in Dunfermline. There is work in Lakabarka. There is work in Mount Horne. There is work in Balthazar. There is work in Birch Grove. There is work in Morne Longue; infrastructure work.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide and deal with those infrastructural issues in the constituency, but that is just part of what we do as a constituency. We have training within the constituency. So we hear about national training in the Ministry of Youth.

In the constituency under Sister Gloria's, Ministry of Social and Community Development, we have electrical training, parenting and other trainings. Just recently, we had one Morne Longue. We had a training in Mount Horne. We had one in St. Mary's for the summer programme, so we continue to engage and put our money to positively impact our children, young people, middle-aged individuals, and older adults.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of Education. In St. Andrew North West, we have engaged all the educational institutions, Paraclete Government School, St. Mary's R.C., and Saint Michael's R.C., and before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I want to play a record here. I want to congratulate the St. Mary's R.C. School, which is what you call "an underdog", a small school in the country, for winning the St. Andrew Primary School Sports Meet. **(Applause)** I also want to congratulate Paraclete Government for placing third at the

march past. I want to congratulate the entire sporting body **(time bell rings)** in St. Andrew, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to engage our schools, and in 2024, we have the painting of the Paraclete Government School. We have also started a breakfast programme in the schools in the constituency, so we provide assistance for children who do not have breakfast in the morning. We bring the stuff to the schools, and the principal and staff provide breakfast in St. Mary's, St. Michael's, and Paraclete Government School.

We also provide railing and other assistance for the Byelands School after the advent of Beryl. Their fowl coupe got damaged, and we provided assistance. Mr. Speaker, we have a very good relationship with the schools, so when they have issues, the principals feel free to call to say, "We have that issue and we need your support".

Mr. Speaker, I recall in the past when those things came up, we had to run to Works or run to the Prime Minister's Office then, in another place, but now, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our Honourable Prime Minister for his vision, Mr. Speaker, **(Applause)** EC$10,000 constituency allowance. This is given, Mr. Speaker, to every elected Parliament. And so, Mr. Speaker, I thank him for that, because in St. Andrew North West, we do not only use our money for St. Andrew North West. Sometimes, when there's assistance, we provide assistance to other constituencies based on the nature. We provide medical assistance in our constituency and out of our constituency, Mr. Speaker, because we believe in sharing.

Seven young people within the constituency receive tuition assistance under that fund. We have seven students, Mr. Speaker, or six or seven, I think, who receive monthly assistance for TAMCC. We give them assistance towards paying for bus fare and towards, maybe, having food.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to provide humper assistance to families in need. After Beryl, we provide some support to the Cadorna Home. We provide support to those in shelter, and on a monthly basis, we provide gas support, and we have water connection support. We have six people receiving that assistance. We give support to wiring houses under the programme, and so those sporting organisations come to us for competition

and for uniforms, and we are also able to provide, in short order, that assistance, Mr. Speaker, because of the EC$10,000 constituency funds that we receive because of the vision of our present Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Government that has been in office for two and a half years. I want to stress that. This Government, this current team… In fact, sometimes you hear they say we sell GRENLEC. So who are you talking to? Some of the people on this team were not even born yet. So who are you talking to? This team is a new team. I'm the oldest Member here; nobody else is as old as me, as it relates to representations, so what we're doing now, Mr. Speaker, is moving Grenada forward and moving St. Andrew North West forward. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I can stand right here, in this Honourable House, and say that St. Andrew North West is safely in the hands of the National Democratic Congress, now. **(Applause)** They are fully supporting, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to get into petty politics, but just recently we had a rally, and I tried to figure out what's happening. Even after the rally, my yard is filled with people asking for jerseys.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm cooking on Saturday, and a lady and her husband came in the yard, and she asked me, "Ms. Thomas, where is my jersey"? I kind of watched them, because I was still kind of in shock. Mr. Speaker, I had to be honest, and I said, "I didn't know you wanted a jersey. I know you're supporting somewhere else". She said, "What happened to you? I am seeing the progress of this Government. Do you think I'll stay stuck? Do you think I want to be in confusion"? **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, she appreciates that that is done. That's why I always want to call my brother. We're going forward **(laughter)**, and I know you're just there temporarily because you know that. So we are moving forward with the National Democratic Congress by our Honourable Prime Minister, Dickon Mitchell and his team, and so the people of St. Andrew North West will continue to support them, and in 2025, we'll see more development.

Last year, we had 41 families receiving bathroom and toilet facilities. 46 persons are receiving assistance as it relates to house repair, and 28 new houses are being built.

More will be done for needy families this year. There are a few families who had issues with Beryl and are still waiting for construction. We are preparing to start the construction. We are going from village to village, looking at the issues that affect the people within the constituency and providing support.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have to only sit in the office. We walk through the communities and, Mr. speaker, on Thursdays I normally call what I deem "Taking the office to the people", and so I go house to house meeting the people, seeing the issues that confront them. As a team, we do it together from the constituency of St. Andrew North West. Sometimes, we walk together. Some Sister Gloria goes into one section, and I go into another section, and we identify the concerns that affect our people. We are forging forward.

We are not discriminating. Mr. Speaker, and that is why people feel free to say that I can support you, because they realise that we are not looking for who is green or who is yellow or who is red, we believe in people's development, and we are a Government for all. So, I want to once again thank my team from the constituency. Thank every village within the constituency.

But, Mr. Speaker, please permit me to place on record my thank you to the village that raised me, because yes, so many other villages only knew me when I got into politics. There are others where I taught. There are other children from other villages where I did private classes in mathematics, and they attended the classes, so these people knew me. However, there are the people who carried me, the people who saw me grow, and who are the people from Mt. Horne.

The truth is, I was born in Paraclete. I am a Paraclete girl, as well, but the people who lift me up are the people in Mt. Horne. And so, when I say jump, they ask how high. The majority of them, and so we have full support. And so, I want to thank the guys on the block, where we play mostly every night. I want to thank those in this shop. I want to thank the elderly people who have been praying for me. The prayer warriors, not only in the constituency, but also from the National Democratic Congress.

Sister Joan Purcell and Sister Liz Forsyth, I want to place on record my thank you to you for the support and the prayers that you have been giving me. Sister Foster and my church community, I want to thank you for that. During those difficult periods, you have been there with me, providing all the necessary support.

To my family, my husband, who has been my rock, my children, who have been like little politicians everywhere, Mr. Speaker, sometimes they're like campaigners. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them.

I want to thank my constituent, my manager, and my personal assistant, who's very sick with the flu, who, though mobilised, could not be here this morning. I want to thank my office manager and other office staff: the Housing Coordinator, the Chief Community Development Officer with us, in the audience, our SEED Officer, and the entire Executive of the National Democratic Party in the constituency, who have been supportive at the level of the constituency.

I want to thank those in Adelphi who have formed their own group, Mr. Speaker, and are looking at the issues, not issues that confront them, but issues that confront the people in the area of Birch Grove and who are calling us, Mr. Speaker, and bringing us up to date with some of the issues and getting us to address them. I want to thank everyone, Mr. Speaker, and say to them that I am committed to continuing to serve the people.

In conclusion, I'm confident that the measures outlined in this Budget will not only address immediate needs, but long-term socio-economic development, not only for my constituency, but for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Let us, as stewards of the nation's future, work collaboratively to ensure that the promises of the Budget translate into tangible improvement in the lives of all Grenadians. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West, for your presentation. I invite the Honourable MP for the Town of St. George to now take the floor.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Peter David

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first budget address, as what is referred to as an "Independent Candidate". Meaning, as I said in the last Sitting, independent of the shackles of any party line. **(Applause)** I have no party line to carry, so I will carry what I believe is my honest view on the Budget and the development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the people of the Town of St. George. I want to thank them for their continued support over the years, despite all of the ups and downs and turbulence in politics. They have been with me, and I want to thank them for that. Also, I would like to commend the Member for St. Andrew South East on her elevation to the position of Leader of His Majesty's Opposition and to wish the outgoing Leader of the Opposition well as he transitions to a new role.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting for me to be in this position. It is a unique position to stand here as an independent candidate, but it gives me an excellent perspective on the debate. You know, it gives me a perspective that allows me, I hate using the word, to be what I believe is quite objective. Mr. Speaker, with respect to time, both sides have a team. I am asking you for more time than others because they have a team, but I have to bat, bowl, field, and wicket-keep and everything on my own. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** I know you will give me more time. I make up that bed, I might have to sleep in it. **(Laughter)** I will have to do the batting, bowling, wicket-keeping and fielding on my own, but I was expecting some tolerance, but I know the rules wouldn't permit it. If you see any way to give me an extra minute, I will certainly appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoyed the debate, looking at it from this perspective. It was a debate that was aggressive, but there is one word, one Member used in the course of the debate that keeps coming back to me… Sometimes we sound like we're fighting.

So I want to welcome the students. I saw some of them here, and to assure everybody that they will not be really fighting, it's just the aggressive nature of politics. When you go to the lunch room, you will see everybody sitting there eating and laughing, so please don't take it home, don't take it to your communities that the Parliamentarians are fighting. Sometimes it's a little too much, but it is the nature of the British System.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Peter David

If you listen to the House of Parliament in England when they pound the table, you haven't seen anything yet. In some countries, they actually fight in the room. I've seen it happening in places in the Far East, so I just want to assure the kids don't bring this home.

Mr. Speaker, but one of the things that I want to start by saying and the word that I was referring to that one Member used was my good friend, my schoolmate, my friend for all my life, Honourable Lennox Andrew, is "ideas". I think what we need to have come out of this debate is not… It sounds sometimes, Mr. Speaker, like there is some referee scoring somewhere, you know, I give that side five points, I give this side two points. No. What has to be the result of this debate are some ideas, not only on the budget, but, how we "transform"; the word used by the "Other Side". How do we transform this country?

When my friend used the word yesterday, I said, "Yes, a bulb went off, that's what we need more of. So I hope that at the end of this debate, I'm not very optimistic because I found that there was a little too much rancour, but that we have some ideas. I hope, in my contribution, they wouldn't take it as criticism. Those are my ideas, my friend's words, on how I believe we can develop this country.

One thing is certain, both sides of this House, "This Side" and "That Side", have the interest of the country at heart. I have no doubt about that. They may be different needs, different methods, different personalities, different ideas, but please let us not degenerate into believing you the enemy. Sometimes, and I know it's preaching this all the time, I will continue to preach it until it is said in my funeral that I said it too much, we are not enemies. We are all here elected by the people to do their business.

Mr. Speaker, my overall view of the Budget. Before I get into some details about where I think specific areas need to be dealt with. First of all, there is, in my view, an over-reliance on CBI, not that I'm suggesting we don't use it, but CBI has its own threats. There are countries in this world that have been, for the last 10 years, and sometimes helped by certain local activists, trying to stop the programme.

With the reliance, and it is not something for this Government alone, it is all governments. Please, we need to ensure that CBI, and I will come to CBI in a while, is

sustainable and that we don't put too many eggs in that basket, but this is just some advice.

Additionally, I know we've suspended some of the fiscal rules. It had to be done because of Hurricane Beryl. It was done previously. Let us not make it too long. It is because of some fiscal discipline that we are where we are today. We've gone through charts. I've been around in Parliament for more than 20 years. I've been in politics for a very long time. They want to reveal my age right here, right now, but the fiscal discipline that was exercised, Mr. Speaker, is one of the reasons why we have such a well-managed economy. I'm not suggesting that the Government plans to go beyond what is necessary, just let us make sure we keep that in mind.

We have a trade deficit that is still too high. There's a 2.7%, let us look at that, but that is a difficult challenge. I'm just pointing out some of the issues because you have a reliance on imports. Small island states all have that challenge, reliance on imports, because it is difficult. I heard my friend talking about trying to get sufficient chicken. That is difficult for many reasons. You know, the imports from Brazil are very cheap, feed is expensive, and every Government has tried to reduce it and break the monopoly of the company that now has it. It is difficult. So I understand why we have that deficit, but I'm saying we need to keep trying.

And one thing I found, Mr. Speaker, was a deficiency in the lack of reference to the National Sustainable Development Plan. In fact, I am happy that the present Government rolled it out after it had been developed by the previous Government; a clear way to show that all governments take us in a particular way. The previous Government developed the plan, rolled out by the Prime Minister in a wonderful ceremony, but we need to get our hands around it and also get our people aware of all of the tenets of the plan because the plan goes down into communities. The plan will not work unless it goes into the communities.

As an overarching point, I want to make in my introduction. I think we need to refer more to it. Both sides of the House need to get that done. I believe there was not sufficient emphasis on capacity building. All of us… I noticed my friend from the North

West read a letter where they plan to do this, it's not going to start, but do you plan to start it? All of us know the challenges we have with capacity. We need to have a definite plan for capacity building.

I saw it. As Minister for Agriculture, in particular, I saw it. It was the most prevalent thing because you have all this money in the Budget. You have all these plans, but it's a problem in getting the money spent because you don't have the capacity in your ministries, and you must accept that, because that will come back.

There are many things in the Budget. When I read this year's budget, last year's budget and the budget before, you've promised several things to be done that are not done, not because of body tension, we have issues with our capacity to fulfil the promises that we make, and all of us make for the duration of a tenure as Government Ministers. Believe you me, there will come a day when you'll be in Opposition if you last long enough, and Members here will be in Government. The issue of capacity comes up for all of us. I've been around long enough to understand that.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the overarching issues I have. Let me just get into some specifics. Mr. Speaker, one of the major issues we have is healthcare. Healthcare is a critical issue. There are urgent issues to be dealt with, and healthcare is not just an issue in Grenada; let me not make it out to be believed that this is an issue here. In fact, the US Election sometimes turn on what's happening in healthcare. In Europe, in Canada, there's always a conversation about healthcare, so we should always have a conversation about healthcare. There are some urgent issues.

I have no difficulty with the decision to build a new hospital. I believe there are issues for me to be worked out with its operationalisation because if we can't run the small one, I'm not sure we have the capacity, but we need to build capacity. I heard the Prime Minister just said, or the Minister for Health said, they are working on that, so that needs to be focused on, ensuring that we just don't build a big white elephant, as some other countries in the region have done. So maybe we need to look at the experience of other countries to see how it is done.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Peter David

A new hospital is not a magic wand. A new hospital will not come and solve people's problems tomorrow morning. There's still the cost of getting the health care. There's the issue of access to healthcare. There are a whole heap of issues that need to be dealt with. It is a good decision to improve our hospitals. The only issue I have is to ensure that the hospital does not become an albatross around the neck of the Ministry of Health. Running and financing a new state-of-the-art hospital is something we need to have more discussions about as to its operationalisation, but there are things we need to do today. There are people in the hospital today. There are people facing challenges today. There are people who can't get a test done today. There are people who need to get something done, some medication they can't get today.

So we don't want, while the grass is growing, the horse is starving. So let's keep our focus because you said 2026, and if you say 2026, God forbid, I know it will be maybe an election or two down the road. I grew up at a time when the airport was promising since 1960, it didn't commit to being until 1979, and it took a whole Revolution to get here. I'm not suggesting that will happen, but I'm just saying, while the grass is growing, let us solve some of these problems.

I believe we should focus a lot on preventive care. You know, diabetes, stroke, prostate issues are issues that we all confront every day in our families. There are tests that need to be done, and people have to go to the hospital, coming to St. George's, maybe we need to have more community-based services. I'm sure, maybe the Minister will respond that something is being done; if that is so, then fine. I am simply coming up with some ideas, as my brother said.

You know, men in our society are just afraid to go to the doctor. We need to develop programmes to get them there. Women go all the time, because women always go to the doctor. Men don't test their prostate, and when they hear the doctor say their prostate is enlarged… I have a brother, a friend, actually, who said to me, "Well, my prostate is good. I did a test the other day". When we checked the date on the test, the date on the test was six years ago **(laughter)**, but he was so afraid of the doctor that he wasn't going back, even if the doctor told him he had some challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I'm saying therefore, we need to access preventative care and easier access to it and more education on that, in addition to the fact that we need to have them in the communities. We need more, Mr. Speaker, community-based healthcare. There are ways in which we can get this test out in the rural areas rather than having people come to the hospital for blood tests, etcetera.

We've made a lot of progress in breast cancer testing. I want to commend the associations and the community groups that help with that. It has taken women far away from dealing with the problem of breast cancer. We need to serve the underserved communities in the rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is, I think the Minister for Health admitted that things have deteriorated at the hospital. He said it has not improved since 2022. I told him yesterday, I really respected his comments on that, that it has not improved, maybe he said much, I don't know what the word was, but the point is, Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not come here and say everything is hunky-dory, and I respect that, because that means that he is open to new ideas. I suggest that we get new ideas as to how these tests can be done, how we can improve medication and believe me, there are members on the "Other Side" who can assist in that, if he is open to that discussion.

I heard you say that you're getting an assessment from Mount Sinai, which is good, except to say that I think the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) had done some assessments in the past. Let's not scrap everything that was done before because you want to claim it as yours.

That brings me to National Health Insurance (NHI). NHI was a project started by the previous Administration, and it is one that is going to continue in the new Administration. I don't know the reasons for it, but I do know that there was an arrangement with a group called [3]JIPA, and that it was stopped. You know why it was stopped. I don't know.

So, please don't jump down my throat and come say, "Well, you talking". I simply

[3] Joint Independent Provider Association

said that I believe that some foundational work was done. At the time, I knew there was a very capable group of experts who were involved in that. All I'm asking. I'm not asking you to go back to JIPA. I'm saying, please embrace the ideas and work that was done in getting any NHI to us as quickly as possible, because access to health care through National Health Insurance is something all agree on, and it is something that we all believe will help us. The only issue I have is that we need to get it done. I don't think there's a disagreement about the process, maybe here or there.

The other issue is the statutorisation of the hospitals. I have no issue with that, except to say that the unions should be involved. Again, it may already be. Maybe all of these ideas you are considering, simply say, we've considered, we disagree, we disagree. So, my dear colleagues of this House, I believe healthcare is one of the issues. Those are some of the issues I believe that must be addressed in healthcare urgently. I like the shiny castle on the hill of a new hospital, but I prefer that our people live long enough to see that new hospital and that will be done by dealing with some of the issues today.

Mr. Speaker, Education and I have to move fast because I didn't hear you respond that I have more time, so I'm working with the one hour that you gave the teams. Mr. Speaker, with respect to Education, we welcome, at least I welcome, you see, even the language I have to use now, the school bus programme. I think it's good. I think it's good for several reasons. I represent a lot of people in the court who have difficulties that arise because they have to use public buses. I believe a school bus programme for kids that is safe and secure is something that all of us should embrace, but there are also some other issues in education.

I think we should find ways to align, and I didn't see or hear much of that from the Minister, align our post-secondary education to the needs of our workforce and to the needs of our economy. I'll give you an example, Mr. Speaker. The example of the marine and yachting sector. That is a critical sector. A sector where we can make a whole lot of money. It is a sector that is good because Grenada is furthest in the south. I mean, the Minister for Tourism would have heard that a lot. We're furthest in the south apart from Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago has a strong sector by way of repairs and all

of that with yachts because they are out of the hurricane belt. Grenada has safe harbours and is furthest south. But, Mr. Speaker, we do not have…

There is a strong deficiency in formal training programmes at TAMCC or NEWLO. This short will not only hamper our youth from getting access to training in that regard, but it will also undermine one of our most vital economic sectors. In fact, a study conducted between 2012 and 2013 revealed a net of $130 million as a result of repairs and maintenance, accounting for about 25% of our GDP. It is revealed that nearly 1000 people were employed, underscoring the importance of that sector.

So, I say to the Minister for Education and the Government, that we need to align our education system to what our economy needs, because you see, it forces employers now to seek workers in other countries, so we have to send for workers in St. Lucia sometimes. I know when the hotels were being built, we had to send for tilers to St. Lucia.

There is an importation of workers because of this disconnect between our education system, particularly in the post-secondary vocational training. I think you need to expand TAMCC and expand its reach, and ensure that they are linked with the sector.

For example, research and innovation. We need to do more research. One of the deficiencies in our small islands is research. We have Grenadians who are capable all over the world, and we have Grenadians who live here coming out of secondary school very capable. I think research and innovation should be something that we should look at by way of the post-secondary institution, adult education programmes and community-based learning. Why do I say that? Technology is changing all the time, and there are people who need upgrades in their capacity to use the technology.

I mean, the young people, young kids and grandkids who get quick with the technology, but Mr. Speaker, you and I have to learn this new technology. Even using a cell phone is something that we have to sit and learn. We need to get community-based and adult education programmes so that people can be retooled. People can be retooled to use the technology. Farmers can be retooled to use technology. Technology is being used in all sectors. I think we as a country need to ensure that our…

You know, we talk about the youth all the time, and it's good, but he has a group of people who also need education and training, because the technology has gone and left them, and the community-based learning institution can be good with that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that is also critical is the issue of National Security. I want to commend the Government for the pay and grade for the police, and to commend the construction in some of the facilities that I've seen being improved. **(Applause)** The Minister for National Security hears that. **(Laughter)** I want to commend him. But I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I know we all recognise the critical pillar of National Security.

The fact that tourism is one of our primary pillars of economy relies to a large extent on Grenada being known as a safe place to go. There are countries in the region that downplay their crime statistics because they don't want the world to know that their crime rate is high, as they understand the link between that and the economy.

In fact, we glorify crime. Every week, you see a big crime story on the front page as if that reflects Grenada. It does not. It's a small group, but that goes out there as if that is what Grenada is. Mr. Speaker, it is a critical area, but it not only involves crimes, but it must be an assessment of the risk that we have and the threats and strategies, Mr. Speaker, to respond to those risks and threats. It must involve an assessment of the appropriateness of all of the institutions that we have. I think sometimes we rely too much on the Royal Grenada Police Force to solve all of the issues of National Security.

Mr. Speaker, there is one island in the region that has just established a Minister for Crime Prevention, and I believe that this is an excellent idea that we should look at. The Ministry of National Security crosscuts all social dynamics, national culture, the state of the economy, you know, the state of our youth, all of these things must be looked at on the issue of National Security. We must approach National Security in an all-inclusive way.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that reliance on the RGPF is not sufficient. We should bring parties together, Mr. Speaker. We should ensure that we have a National Crime Prevention Action Plan. A National Prevention Action Plan. We cannot wait until crime

has been committed, which is what was done in the House a few months ago. The House passed legislation to deal with crimes after they were committed, and crimes continue to be committed. I say that, Mr. Speaker, as a Defence Attorney who sees it every day in my life every day. Every day.

Mr. Speaker, we need as a nation, not as a Government, as a nation to find a way to embrace the solutions, that's why I call on the Minister for National Security, and I'm willing to work along with the Minister for National Security. These are some of my ideas on how we can deal with the issue of National Security: a National Crime Prevention Strategy led, Mr. Speaker, by a Minister who is responsible for the Prevention of Crime. That, of course, Mr. Speaker, would involve the areas of the prison services, youth programmes, probation unit, and social services; all of these people must be brought together.

Again, maybe some idea that you've thought of, but certainly, if it is, I support. If not, I urge you, let us consider that we need new ideas. We cannot continue on the old path of believing we're going to execute everybody who commits a crime because we are not going to execute them, and crime will continue. A National Prevention Strategy must be employed, bringing together, not two tribal factions. I am saying this as somebody who stands outside of it now. Let's just come together to deal with a national crisis that is around the corner on the issue of National Security. Not only with respect to crimes that have been committed, but let us find ways to prevent them, and there are enough experts around the world who can help us with that.

Mr. Speaker, Marketing Board. Agriculture in general. On the Marketing Board, I start. Mr. Speaker, we all agree that a couple of years ago, the Marketing Board needed to be overhauled and upgraded in its capacity. I said that when the issue was raised in the last Budget, and I repeat it. I support an upgrading of the Marketing Board, but we also agreed that the Marketing Board plays a critical role, not only in the agricultural sector, but in the economy.

In fact, when the Marketing Board was envisioned in or around 1982, '83, the purpose of the Marketing Board was to help with the exports of our agricultural products,

and I'm repeating for those who were not aware, and the importation of the inputs, the fertilisers, the spades, the tools, the inputs that are used in agriculture and it was hope that could be brought in at a reasonable price.

In fact, sugar was only added to it because sugar came from the previous Government, before the Revolution, as a monopoly for a businessman; those of us who remember that, so sugar was given to the Marketing Board as a means of raising income. It was not meant to be what it developed into, which is a supermarket.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are now in 2025. In fact, when the Member spoke, the Minister for Finance in 2023, he said, "After widespread consultation, we have made the prudent decision to transition out of the MNIB into a largely private sector-led entity. This decision was widely criticised, but it was a decision that was made. He also said, "That at the time, he had received the first draft of the framework for the establishment of the new private sector-led entity, and further, that the entity will be fully operational by June 2014". You ended your comments by saying, "While they talk, we do". That sounds very dramatic. They're talking, we're doing, but it was not done. I'm not trying to be dramatic now. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** I'm saying **(laughter)** June 2024, sorry. June 2024. We are now close to June 2025. I was not done.

Now, I started my comments this evening by saying that there is limited capacity and beware of the promises you make, but you promise. Today, I hear you saying that you're in the process, but you face delays because of some financial statements, but the farmers are waiting. The Marketing Board must be dealt with urgently, as a matter of priority, because it affects the lives of our farmers, and while I understand that there are capacity issues, and not every promise you make will be kept, and we will see others, you have to push urgently to get it done. The farmers are waiting. A few years have passed, and the Marketing Board is nowhere to be seen.

I criticised the private sector-led entity. I think in your comments to the House, Member, you suggested that you're going on a slightly different path, and I think that should be made known to all of us. Remember, these entities are public entities and must be developed and must be overhauled in the public view; nothing can be done without

the farmers, the primary stakeholders, becoming aware of it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I heard no comments made by my friend from South West, St. Andrew, about the commodity boards. I guess that is out of bounds. He did not mention it. I have no update, but commodity boards are important. I know there must still be financial issues. I certainly know there is one commodity board that is facing some financial issues. I would have liked for us to hear more about the state of the nutmeg industry, the state of the cocoa industry, and, in particular, the state of the boards that managed that industry. Maybe, the Member for St. David… Well, no, the Member for St. David is now primarily Minister for Tourism… Sorry. **(Laughter)** Well, the Member will make a public statement on the status of the commodity board.

But another issue I was surprised about, I heard no comment on, is praedial larceny. In fact, when I heard nothing said… I… Well, noting said of substance, I thought maybe we'd solve the problem, but I reached out to a farmer the night we left here, and he said that it still remains the number one problem. Mr. Speaker, I'm simply saying that we need to deal with the issues that confront the farmers. If praedial larceny is one of them, I believe the House should be made aware of what was done from the last Sitting of the Budget because they are budgeted. They are there. It needs to be explained what exactly is done. I see every year we have the same comments. Praedial larceny continues to be an issue, Mr. Speaker, and continues to plague the sector.

But I think the major issue is labour in Agriculture. The first time I became Minister for Agriculture, I was absolutely amazed by the issue of how labour is dealt with in the Ministry of Agriculture. It remains one of the most pressing issues, Mr. Speaker, but not just labour, but trained labour. I come back to the issue I raised about a post-secondary institution, vocational training.

We need to train some young people who specialise in Agriculture. TAMCC has a branch at Mirabeau. It needs to be upgraded. The last time I visited, it was down. We need to ensure that young can people can prune and, young people can deal with the drains for particular crops. We need to ensure that our young people are trained to deal with the sector that is most important to us, and that will be done, Mr. Speaker, by working

with our vocational institution, TAMCC, NEWLO, to train people. I know the importance.

My friend from St. Patrick West talked about the digital economy. The digital economy is fine, but farmers have to plant. We haven't reached planting, where we are playing by digital means. So we need to train our young people because a lot of the older pruners and so on are retiring, and we are not replacing them.

So I urge you to work with TAMCC to utilise TAMCC to ensure that we align our post-secondary education to the needs of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, something else I didn't hear spoken about is the Land Bank. What is the state of the Land Bank? Access to land is critical. What is the state of the Land Bank? Has that project been abandoned? I know that there was some talk about Youth in Agriculture being moved to another area. What is the position? It is in the Budget.

It is mentioned, but I need some details on Land Bank and using Agriculture, because if our agricultural sector is to survive, young people must be attracted it. No young person is going into agriculture now the way their fathers and grandfathers used to do. Let us modernise the sector. I've heard the word being used over and over and over. If you have to modernise it, it has to start with training our vocational institutions, which must be part of that training.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the issue of chicken is one that plagues us. In cheap imports from Brazil, our obligations under the WTO, all these things bar us from making the necessary moves that you need to make. Barbados have made some moves in this regard. They have done it because they have a different arrangement, I understand, with the WTO. The difference is always between what is necessary and what is possible. What is necessary and what is possible, and while we can talk about reducing our chicken imports, how we do it. We need to address that. We need to address the issue of cheaper feeds.

Every administration has come… We must, at some point, come to the conclusion that some things can't be done, and we find other ways of doing it. Every administration for as long as I have been around has tried to do that, but we keep coming back to it, coming back to it, with no new ideas, my friend for St. Andrew South West, no new ideas

on how to get more local chicken on the market. I said it over and over as Minister for Agriculture, and I'm here standing today hearing it again.

The other issue in Agriculture that I was a bit surprised about is Cannabis. Cannabis. Cannabis. Who mentioned it? Somebody mentioned it. I think it is the Minister for Agriculture again, mentioned, "We will be decriminalising", but that wasn't your promise, my friend. I tell you again, be aware of what you promise.

Previous administrations promised decriminalisation, so you went on the campaign and said you were going further than decriminalising, you were going to legalise, your words, not mine. So, there was a promise to legalise. I said, at the time, that there is no way you are going to legalise it.

In fact, one Member of your committee, I bet him $10,000. He can't do it. He promised to get it legalised by the end of last year. It's difficult, and we must admit that some of the promises you made could not be fulfilled, and legalising cannabis is one of them. So now, you've come to the reality. I just use this as an example of don't over promise, just like the position on CBI, we'll come to the CBI in a minute.

So you're going to decriminalise. Let me say this to you. The legislation that you're talking about that they have been reviewing was in the parliament before. So you have the legislation, so don't tell people you're reviewing any legislation. It's already there with everything in. The legislation was presented about five years ago, and it's in the House. I have no issue with that. I'm not saying it is a criticism. I'm just telling you where to find it. I'm just helping you. Ideas.

I urge you to also study the Caribbean Commission's Report. The Caribbean Commission, local churches, and NGOs, in which Sandra Ferguson was deeply involved, had several consultations. While they agree that decriminalising is good for certain aspects of our society, including not getting criminal records for small quantities, there are a whole plethora of things. They were concerned that unless we recognise that there are some people who are negatively affected, just like alcohol. Alcohol is there, everybody inside here, maybe most people take a sip, but there are some people who, if

they take a sip, they're gone off their rockers. We should make sure that we are aware of the effects it may have on certain young people, the negative effects.

That is why I am surprised that I'm not hearing much talk about the Carlton Home, which was another promise you made. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** I know, but it hasn't come to be. It's not there, but we need to have these facilities available when you're making a step like that, which was one of the reasons that it was delayed. You must know. I know it. I grew up at a time when cannabis had just come in. I know. I have colleagues, close friends, who were negatively affected by it. If you attempt, even on one or two of them, you might be negatively affected. When they are with you, you must have the facilities available to be with them, and that must be taken into account.

Do not just announce decriminalisation. Announce decriminalisation with what, and if you look at the West Indian Commission Report on Cannabis, it gives you all of that. In addition to the position of the churches, the Catholic Church were very instrumental. Go back to those reports of these consultations, and you will certainly see these issues being raised.

Mr. Speaker, with limited time, let me run on to Foreign Policy. Let me commend the Member of St. Patrick West on his presentation. I told him he was speaking like the old Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM) Candidate he used to be. **(Laughter)** That's back in the days. Most people wouldn't know what I am talking about, but he is my good friend from a long time. It was a good show of what Grenada can be.

I want to agree with your Africa initiative, particularly. I like the African initiative, it's something that, previously, when I was Foreign Minister, it was something we were looking at; them visiting the country. I want to commend that, and the Canadian Embassy.

I want to commend you on that, except to say that I lamented the failure of the CARICOM—OECS initiative. You know, there was an initiative, and you would know the years when we came together to cut costs, to have these joint embassies in London, Toronto and several places. I know we are still doing anything Morocco and maybe African, I think Kenya has one.

I lament it because OECS is one of the best regional integration initiatives in the world. I mean, you have the bank, the judiciary, and civil aviation. We in the smaller islands of the region have done well to work together. There's a lot that we have achieved. It is sad that we couldn't achieve joint embassies because it helps us not only to cut costs, but also to have a joint foreign policy initiative. I love these discussions, but I want to commend because it failed, it is why we have to have our own, but I still dream of the day when you know… A dream not to share, as far back as T. A. Marryshow, who was a Member of Parliament for my constituency, the idea of Federation, which we became CARICOM. You know, we have the sub-region now with the OECS.

I also commend the strong allegiance of Cuba. It's… I don't know. I can't find the words that I can use in the House to describe the policy, particularly on the Cuban Medical Brigade. I saw a comment by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago, maybe two or three weeks ago, where he defended the right to have relations with Cuba. I also want to say that we must be strong on Cuba's right to determine its own destiny. I think that's all integrated. Cuba's right to determine its destiny. **(Applause)** I think that is something we all can agree on.

In fact, I saw something on Facebook saying that the survey of people who felt you should maintain a relationship with Cuba resulted was 100 %. I'm not sure it's true, but that's what I saw, and certainly I didn't bat an eye because I know that would be the position in Grenada.

However, there is another foreign policy issue I want to address. I think I heard the Prime Minister once refer to the flow of small arms into the region. You know, recently, President Trump imposed tariffs on Canada and Mexico because of the flow of fentanyl. That's the drug: fentanyl. He said, "Fentanyl was flowing over the Canadian border into the US and flowing over the Mexican border into the US". Well, small arms are our fentanyl. Small arms are our fentanyl.

We don't produce small arms. I don't know. I mean, apart from a long time, I know men used to have their little pellet and those things. We do not produce small arms. We must engage, and I think the Prime Minister did indicate that CARICOM is doing it. I

would like to hear the results of the initiatives to engage the US, the way the US is trying to pressure Mexico and Canada to do more to stop the flow. They must do more to stop the flow of small arms into our region.

But, you know, the US believe in… What do you call it? What Amendment is it? Remind me. Is it the Second Amendment? The Second Amendment Right to Arms. That Second Amendment right to bear arms is what is on our streets. So I urge you, Mr. Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, to please talk to the United States with your CARICOM partners, and I'm sure you do it already, to ensure that we don't have that.

Regional transportation is critical, and I also wanted to join the Minister and thank all of our partners, China, Morocco, Cuba, you know, all the countries you mentioned earlier, Venezuela, all of the countries that have helped us in this crisis. I want to thank all of them for their continued support. Grenada will not be where it is if it weren't for the support, for example, of Venezuela during the oil crisis back in 2018, when President Chávez came up with the Petrocaribe initiative. So I want to thank all of them on behalf of the people of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, on Tourism. The Member, again, I guess he had to be brief, mentioned… The only things spoken about were the integration of Tourism and Culture. I just want to say to the Minister that this is an initiative that is as old as Adam. We've always had Tourism and Culture Ministries integrated. Unfortunately, there was separated some time ago, but we need to get them back. I agree with you on that because there is a synergy between Culture and Tourism. In fact… And then you spoke about the festival.

Well, I urge that you speak to my good friend Senator Gill, whom I still call Senator, who started several festivals. The Aunty Tek Spiceword Festival, Camerhogne Folk Festival. You know, he started the Film Commission, the Grenada Fashion Association, and the Fine Arts Gallery. He's a good, resourced person now very much involved in the reparations, but he's a very good resource person to help tourism. I would have liked to hear more about tourism, its impact and plans for the future. I don't see much of that, but certainly, I'm sure you'll have an opportunity later to do that.

Transportation is a baby I have spoken about over and over. I welcome the initiative in that regard, but urge us to do more. You know, when I look at the south of the island, I think we need to come together to develop a plan for the south. The South is developing in an unplanned way. One of the challenges we have in this country is hating to plan. We like to just get up tomorrow morning and say we're building.

For example, the police station on the Carenage. I'm not condemning it, but is it what we plan for the Carenage over the next 15 years? I don't know. I would like to see the police station fit into the overall plan to make it one of the most beautiful places in this country, the Carenage.

I'm saying everything should fit into a five or 10-year plan. That is why I urge us to look at the National Sustainable Development Plan and break it down into pieces so that everything we do is planned. Many of you visited China. Do you see how China engaged in planning? They plan what is going to be built. I went to a place in China where they told me what is going to be built 10 years from now.

So I urge the south of the island, where traffic is becoming difficult, I'm going to the town in a minute, to develop a plan for it so that successive governments don't come into office and dash away these projects and dash away that project because we have all agreed on a plan, which is what the National Sustainable Development Plan is supposed to be, that is why I'm talking about it. We need to plan our development.

The haphazard nature of the development is hazardous; I'm sure the economist in the room could tell you that. My good friend from St. Andrew South West, you were trained in planning, weren't you, when you studied Economics in Havana? It was very much a plane as is my brother Cornwall. So they know about planning its economics, and I'm not suggesting that you go down the road of a fully planned economy, but I'm saying that all businesses, every business in the town, has to have a plan.

Every project has a plan. Physical Planning wants to give you plans, but we also need a plan that everything fits into. Again, my friend from St. Andrew South West, just an idea. Take it or leave it, maybe you've thought about it already.

CBI, just a few words on CBI, Mr. Speaker. I've always argued that we need more local investors in CBI, so I welcome the initiative to give some incentives to local investors. I want to commend Richard Nixon and Oliver Paul. I think they may be the only two, I'm not sure. Maybe the Minister for Finance can help me or the Prime Minister. I think Richard Nixon and Oliver Paul are the two people who have been brave enough to do CBI over the years.

I welcome the initiative, and the details are in the Budget Speech, but I've also said that we should get projects, particularly in agriculture, out of CBI, so that rural communities can understand what the CBI thing is to them. I've said it when I was in the previous Government, and I'll say it again. To the man in the country, CBI is some people coming from foreign and building a hotel in the south or a hotel in St. David. They do not know how it directly affects them; of course, they know how it affects them indirectly. So let us find a concessionary way of putting a CBI Project in Agriculture.

And I also have an idea. I had this idea for years. The York House. I believe, let me say it again, on the record, that the York House in town, the former Parliament, should be developed using it as a CBI Project, making it a national archive, national library and digital library. I know these days they would say it's a digital library with an art gallery downstairs, so people can come appreciate Grenadian Art.

I believe we can get people to invest in CBI. There are people who want to become Grenadian citizens who would love to invest in culture and in art. I think the York House Building, as we call it, the former Parliament, should be used, as I said, we get back the library when we talk about the library, I think I go back the way it was. I think we should move it to the York House, develop it as a national archive and a digital library. That's my idea. Couldn't get it done before, maybe I can get it done now. Maybe I could urge you and the younger generation to see the wisdom of that idea. I believe it's a good idea, but it's a matter for you. You have the full strings and CBI with you.

Mr. Speaker, I'm coming close to the end. Mr. Speaker, so I'm playing **(time bell rings)** a one-man game. All right, Mr. Speaker, I'll go to a committee on the issue.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable. Honourable MP. I expect you to use your appointed time, and if you need more time, you may appeal to the Chair.

Hon. Peter David: I will use my membership in one of your select committees to raise the issues, Mr. Speaker. Unfair of me to raise it in the open House. Much obliged. Mr. Speaker, the Town of St George, let me say this. I welcome again… Somebody mentioned the EC$10,000 as if it were a million we're getting. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Mr. Speaker, the EC$10,000… I appreciate it. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** No. Wait for this. Wait for this. **(Applause)** I am happy because EC$10,000 less is coming out in my pocket. **(Laughter)** Mr. Speaker, I'm fine. More still have to come out when the EC$10,000 done. That is what you know.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Government's efforts, particularly the announcement you made about strengthening the constituency. I believe it is important. I believe it's important that we strengthen the MPs in the constitution. The MPs are elected, not the caretakers. I don't know what a caretaker is. It's a party concept.

So when my friend says they are walking around with a caretaker, I have to go and find out. In fact, I dug into the dictionary to see who fits that purpose. As far as I can see in the constitution, there is nothing called "caretaker", but what has been happening, Mr. Speaker, is that caretakers have been replacing MPs.

I am the Member of Parliament elected by the people of the Town of St. George. So my friend says, we should be grateful for the EC$10,000. I am. But I would be grateful if I could speak like the Member for South East. The Member for South East was talking about slipper drains, and he was talking in his capacity as MP, slipper drains that he built, roads that he fixed, all kinds of beautiful things that I wish I had access to. I am grateful for the EC$10,000. I am not saying I am not, but I am saying I would be grateful if MPs, all, "This Side" and "That Side" are treated in a way that the people of the constituency can see me doing something.

You see, the thing is, there is a danger, and I am not blaming any side. I am in any tribe… You want me to put my table there? I'll put it there. I am raising it as a Member

of Parliament like every other Member. When you come around and bring somebody you have that you want to run in the next election, that's good politics, but it is bad governance because your turn will come, my brothers and sisters. It will come when you are in Opposition and you would be complaining that "This Side" over here is doing things to help their caretakers to win the next elections.

I am just suggesting an idea to my brother that we treat, and I appreciate your efforts, Prime Minister, because you did say you were going to strengthen Parliamentary Offices, you didn't say NDC Parliamentary Offices. I appreciate that and thank you for that, but let us strengthen all of the MPs. So my sister Kate, when you're having a project up there, you go, you ask her to come in and consult. Sister Kate, do you believe that this satisfies the needs of the people who elected you? You understand? It has to be done. You see, who elected her?

The point I am making, and this is not me complaining, I'll be fine. My tenure is way shorter than any of yours inside here, but I am speaking because I have experience of how the system works, and believe you me, I've been on "This Side" and "That Side, "This Side, "That Side". We need to build Grenada. Let us stop drawing the line down the centre here. **(Applause)** This is Grenada. So, Mr. Speaker, I have made the point in that regard. Let me move on.

The River Road Rehabilitation Project. I know you expect me to raise it, but I have not heard it mentioned before I raised it, so if you're expecting me to raise it. I would have expected that I would get a comment before I raised it. We need to get the project completed. The reason why the river came over the bank in the last year is that there are areas that are incomplete. We need to get the bridges done, and you know, I started by saying we have capacity problems. Do you remember that? Capacity problems. But we need to prioritise that project because somebody will go down the river, and somebody will have to account for that.

I mentioned the York House Project. I believe that the project is a good project, not only for the Town of St. George, but for the country. I also believe that the vendors in the Town of St. George. Again, what I will say here is an idea I have had for a long time.

When the new port was built several years ago, there was a whole set of criticisms. You remember that? It was going to mash up Grand Anse beach. I was going to do this, going to do that, everybody was cursing. Typical Grenadian politics. You do, I curse, I do, you curse, and that's how it was.

The port has come, and everybody now welcomes the port because the port, tourism, and cruise ships are doing well with it, and we must be thankful for it. Mr. Speaker, in mentioning that I forgot to mention something on CBI when I spoke about it. We should consider in all of our deliberations that CBI recognises that it is two administrations that are benefiting from CBI. So in all of your comments, I want you to accept the fact that it was the previous Administration that was bold enough to do CBI and let's give some credit there, and the persons you are getting now, all of the files and all of the income are as a result of that work. And I think we should just recognise **(applause)** because it helps us to know that everybody in here does…

Even a stopped clock… Have you ever thought of this? Even a clock that is not working is right twice a day? **(Applause)** He got it. You understand? It is right twice a day, even if it is not working. So don't let it be like everything you do here is bad, and we believe everything you're doing is bad; it's a new perspective.

Anyway, let me get back to the Town of St. George. When that project was done. The port project also had a plan to reclaim the areas beyond the fish market, going up outside of Green Bridge, outside of the stadium. I believe that we should look at that. I'm not suggesting that it should be done next week or next year, but it has to start somewhere to reclaim it. For several reasons.

We need a good parking space in the Town of St. George. Businesses are being stifled because people can't park in the Town of St. George. In addition to that, we need a place for vendors. Our small business men and women, we call them vendors, need a place. If we can reclaim that area, and I am just planting the seeds of thought, as my friend said, an idea. If we can reclaim that area, get a parking lot, maybe replace this bus terminus, put the parking lot there and a bus terminus further up. We can sit and discuss

the details, but the reclamation of that entire area from the present fish market, going up to Cherry Hill, will certainly help us get more land.

One of Grenada's challenges is available land. We're small. Lack of availability of flat lands, which can help us. An idea that may go beyond my time, but certainly an idea that we need to discuss. Mr. Speaker, the traffic in the Town of St. George is hell, so that can help.

With respect to the Youth. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this about our young people. You know, the Ministry of Youth, the other day, there was an activity in Mt. Rush in my constituency, and it was a beautiful activity. The other lady was there, but I can't remember the word you used to describe her. She was there, too, and I was there. **(Inaudible comment by Honourable Dickon Mitchell)** That's the word.

So when my friend said she was walking with somebody, it was the Attorney General. Well, there we go. I understand. **(Inaudible comment by Members) (Laughter)** Yes. She said a lady walked with her, and I am saying it's the same lady. She described her as that, not me. She is my friend, actually, Prime Minister, so she won't take offence. She is my good friend. **(Laughter)** I am just referring to what the Member said over here.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that these youths need, and I know it was spoken about, they want to be businessmen and businesswomen. The big thing now in my generation, we wanted to be rebels. My friend from St. Andrew South West, you know, that. These young people want to be businessmen, my friend **(time bell rings)**, the Member for St. George South is well aware of the young people wanting to do that. As the Member for St. Patrick… Mr. Speaker, can I have just one minute to wrap up? The bell went off. One minute, please?

Mr. Speaker: This is the second bell.

Hon. Peter David: Yes. Well, no. It is the first bell, Mr. Speaker. **(Laughter)** I agree. It's the first bell.

Mr. Speaker: I give you three minutes.

Hon. Peter David: Okay, thank you. As the Member for St. Patrick West said, young people these days want to ask you for some way of establishing a business, which brings me to another aspect of what you said, Member. That we should have training in the communities, and I know some was tried under the former Administration, where there was business… I remember Oliver Joseph and others going to the communities to try to train young people in business.

Because most people just believe they can just buy a couple of things, sell them, they make the money. It is much more complicated than that. You want them to pay taxes. You want them to open a bank account. You want them to have an accountant. You want to do all that.

I believe the communities and the community work that we are referring to should include a level of training, not just bringing them around a pot and we drink and we talk and so on, but to have them engaged in business. And I think that should be done throughout our schools, that we teach them how to become entrepreneurs. **(Applause)** I think that is an idea that can help the young people go beyond where they are. No matter the amount of talk you do, at the end of the day, these people want to make their lives better than their fathers and mothers' lives. Train them to become businessmen and businesswomen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by thanking all of the Members again. I said this is a new position I am in, where I see the world through slightly different lenses, Mr. Speaker, but it's good. Because it shows me that there are good things coming out of "This Side". I think the Members on "This Side" explained their positions. They criticised, which is something that we all have to do. They have critical observations. I think Members on the "Other Side" indicated what they were doing.

At the end of the day, we must leave these Budget Debates better able to appreciate what it is that we have and how we can make it better, not in any sectoral way, Mr. Speaker, but together, and I hope that my contribution helps in that regard. I have

had a long time in this House, Mr. Speaker, and certainly a long time in the political life of Grenada. We have made progress, but not merely enough progress that we would have made if we brought all the ideas together. If we… Not on everything. I don't have an idealistic view that everybody sings Kumbaya and hugs up and loves up, but at least when we come to this House, we try to get the ideas in the mix of the criticism that we have to accept, and so we do.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and thank everybody. Thank you for listening. You seem to have listened well. I know, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to have much pounding on the table because I don't have a team **(laughter)**, but I am fine with that. **(Applause)** There we go. I had to beg for a pound. **(Laughter)** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. God bless you, have a wonderful day. **(Applause) (Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for the Town of St. George, for your contribution to this Honourable House. I now invite the Honourable MP for St. George South to make his contribution.

Hon. Andy Williams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to everyone in the House. Mr. Speaker, while listening to my friend, brother David on the side, I just want to say the motto of the story is, "When you in good house, don't let bad house call you." **(Laughter)** The bad house that called you, right now, is on the verge of collapse. So we sympathise with you. As sister Delma is saying, we have space for you, so you have options. **(Inaudible comment by Honourable Dickon Mitchell) (Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this moment to formally congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on her position. Mr. Speaker, I just hope that the change in guards, Mr. Speaker, would mean we will change the scope of politics from the Opposition and Mr. Speaker, I want to wish her a very long time in Opposition. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that politics is not a sprint, but rather a marathon. So pace yourself because from the likes of it, according to

what we are seeing, I want to reiterate the point that you may be in Opposition for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the report of Revenue and Expenditure for 2025. Just one minute, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking my constituency, St. George South, for the faith that they have placed in me. Mr. Speaker, I take my constituency very seriously and I try my best, Mr. Speaker, to represent the people of my constituency.

So, today I stand before this House deeply humbled and honoured to be the Member of Parliament for St. George South. "The Great South", Mr. Speaker, as I call it, and I am here because of their trust, their belief in me and their unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, when we were victorious at the elections, it was not a victory for me, but it was a victory for every person in the constituency who believed we could build a better Grenada and South. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, when this journey started, I never imagined it would be easy, but I knew it would be worth it. It has been an incredible experience so far, and to my constituents, your voices have shaped my vision for the constituency, and I promise I will not let you down.

Mr. Speaker, to my constituency I say this. This is a moment to reflect on what we have accomplished together. **(Applause)** Also, to look ahead at the work that lies before us. We are more than just a constituency, but we are a community. A community of strong, resilient, and passionate people, and you have chosen me to represent you in Parliament, and I will do so with pride, integrity and with unwavering commitment to your needs.

Together, people of St. George South, we will tackle the issues that matter most to you, whether it be better healthcare, more job opportunities, improved infrastructure or support for local businesses. We would work together to create a constituency that we can all be proud of, and also a constituency where every person can strive. Mr. Speaker, as we continue to focus on building a stronger and more connected constituency, I am proud to report on the significant progress we have made in improving road infrastructure

throughout the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, roads are the lifeblood of our community, enabling better access, growth and development. Under our Administration, we have made sure that our people's needs are met with urgency and commitment. Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to highlight some of the achievements in road construction we have made over the past year. Mr. Speaker, I could tell you about 15 or 20, but because of time, I would break it down to four.

For years, the community of Gwankai was neglected by the previous Administration, but Mr. Speaker, on June 23, 2022, the mamagism ended. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, what was noticed was when elections were close, the previous Administration would go to Gwankai, Mr. Speaker, grade the road, throw some binders, and that's it. And promises were made of a road, and nothing was done. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we are not in an election year. We are about two years away from an election, and to date, we have completed construction on the Gwankai road. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, water is essential and important to life. The people of Gwankai were clamouring for some pipes to be run, Mr. Speaker, so that they can get water in the community for years, Mr. Speaker, more than probably 10 years. Mr. Speaker, the only time the people got the pipes run in Gwankai for them to get water was last year.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the process now, as we speak today, NAWASA is doing the foundation for a big tank to be placed at the community of Gwankai so that they can feed Gwankai and various areas in the South.

Mr. Speaker, let's go to the True Blue road. We always boast about SGU bringing approximately more than 25% or adding to our GDP more than 25%. Mr. Speaker, the state of the True Blue road have been in a deplorable condition for years. Mr. Speaker, this Administration, Mr. Speaker, has just two and a half years in office, not 23, to resurface that road. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, Gairy may be smiling in his grave now. **(Applause)**

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Mr. Speaker, I want you to watch the pattern. Kafe Beau Hill, Mr. Speaker. I remember last election I saw my rival working on Kafe Beau Hill, doing roads, and the people were saying Just because it's an election, you're doing the roads, Mr. Speaker. As soon as the election is done, that's it. Wherever they stopped, that's where they left it. But, Mr. Speaker, if their intention was pure and true, they would have started the road even before the elections, like what I am doing now. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the people of Kafe Beau Hill can boast of a completed road today, and, Mr. Speaker, that is what you call genuine representation. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, there was a project called the United Kingdom Caribbean Infrastructure Fund (UKCIF). The UKCIF Project was dated since 2016. We had a grant of approximately $80 million. It is equivalent to our current account surplus, $80 million, since 2016. Mr. Speaker, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, nothing was done, so what happened? The UK took back the funds. Mr. Speaker, thanks to our Prime Minister, we got it back. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes the "Other Side" is so deceiving because they would go and pretend and make people believe that it was we who lost the funds when it was stated that because we did not use the funds and the UK was unsure of their situation, they took it back.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we got back the funds from the UKCIF, and in just over a year, we are now preparing to do infrastructural works that would involve digging up the road from the St. George area to as far as Maurice Bishop International Airport. And, Mr. Speaker, we anticipate that the main roads would be disrupted, so what do we do as a caring Government and as a Government of vision? Mr. Speaker, we started to work on the Gulf Course bypass roads, so that in the event, Mr. Speaker, that the main roads are disrupted, people can deviate and use the alternative roads to traverse and go where they want to go.

Mr. Speaker, these road projects are just a few examples of the tangible progress we are making in the constituency of St. George South.

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Our focus on infrastructure is part of a broader effort to improve the lives of our citizens, create economic opportunities and build a stronger, more prosperous future for all. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to prioritise the needs of our people and work tirelessly to ensure that every community has the access, resources and opportunities it deserves.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of St. George South is the largest in terms of number of people, and with that comes a great responsibility to ensure that every citizen has access to safe, dignified and secure housing. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that under this Administration, we have made significant strides in addressing the housing needs of our people. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in 2024 alone, we provided over 100 housing assistance to the people of St. George South. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, you see, this is not just about building structures. It is about transforming lives, creating stability and offering hope for the future. But our commitment to housing goes beyond the board and the walls of a home, Mr. Speaker.

We have worked hard to ensure that our people are not only provided with shelter but a liveable, functional environment. Mr. Speaker, before, the norm was that when someone came for housing assistance, you gave them a house, and that's it. But, Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister made it clear that if we are giving someone housing assistance or we are building a house for someone, we must treat them with dignity. Therefore, every house we build, we ensure that they have an inside bathroom and toilet. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, let me go further again. We ensure that the plumbing is taken care of, and we ensure that the electrical is taken care of also, but we also ensure that it is painted so that it looks lovely. If you look and you go and you see the grey and white houses, you would know it came from us.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard to ensure that our people are taken care of in the best possible way. Beyond the construction of our homes, we are also focused on creating jobs and empowering our youth. Mr. Speaker, we have provided employment opportunities for young men in our communities. When I say employment, Mr. Speaker,

I am talking about real jobs, not IMANI jobs, real jobs, Mr. Speaker, not IMANI jobs when you make EC$700 a month for 15 years. That's not what we are talking about. Mr. Speaker, we are giving them the chance to contribute to these projects and develop valuable skills in the process.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak here this afternoon, there is a young man by the name of Johndel Fletcher who is in the audience right here. Mr. Speaker, this young man in his 20s came to me, Mr. Speaker, and we worked with him. Mr. Speaker, I went to Knights Auto, got a ransom, gifted it to the young man and not just gifted it to him, Mr. Speaker, he works to pay back the money **(applause)** that was used to purchase it.

And, Mr. Speaker, this young man right there, Mr. Speaker, is now building houses, doing roads, Mr. Speaker, and he is not a lazy young man. As a matter of fact, he is mobilising young fellas from the Limes community to join him in the efforts. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, that is what you call transforming lives.

Sometimes we blame the young men when they are on the block liming, smoking, and so, Mr. Speaker, but what opportunities are there for them? IMANI. Mr. Speaker, we know IMANI is just a vote. You have nothing to do, so you take them, you put them in a programme and say, "All right, vote for me because I give you something". And you have them working for 10 to 15 years, Mr. Speaker, imagine that, and you say you care for people and safer hands, and you come to rescue us? Mr. Speaker, who are they really rescuing? **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Anyway, we will get to that just now.

Mr. Speaker, over 200 persons were given the opportunity to be placed in various job positions between the ages of 18 and 55 in my constituency. **(Applause)** I am talking about painters, construction workers, electricians, plumbers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are also trying our best to work with the businesses in the South to provide jobs for our people.

Mr. Speaker, our leadership and I want you to listen to that, our leadership has no discrimination. **(Applause)** We believe in teaching you how to fish instead of always giving you a fish. Mr. Speaker, I am motivated by a desire to bring empowerment to all, regardless of their political affiliation or wherever they have been.

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Mr. Speaker, I was so motivated when I saw two Sundays ago, back when I looked at the crowd we had in Beausejour, and I saw how many people that was on the "Other Side", Mr. Speaker, are now seeing the love and are now joining the NDC. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, it's just a joy. My cousin Deslyn, you're welcome. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the young men who are on the block, who might previously have been labelled as time wasters, the youths who were once incarcerated, and the mother who fell victim to teenage pregnancy, the school dropout, the mentally challenged are all part of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, and I want to empower all of them.

Mr. Speaker, let me go a step further. We are now helping young men to grow or to start businesses, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that they have the tools to become self-sufficient and build their future. Mr. Speaker, this is not just about building houses, but also about building opportunities. And, Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. Sometimes we come to the Houses of Parliament, and we get into an argument and debate about ministries and so on. But, Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. We are in the Houses of Parliament, and we were elected by the people, and we are supposed to be working for the people, Mr. Speaker, and with the people. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I intend to address my people of the South first.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that this is a Government that treats its people with dignity. **(Applause)** In the past, many who were left out to wait far too long had their concerns ignored, but under this Administration, Mr. Speaker, we have taken action, and Grenada, you now have a Government that treats its citizens with respect and the care they deserve. Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a lot to do, but I want to assure everyone, Mr. Speaker, that we will continue to work hard. And, Mr. Speaker, the work we are doing today is just the beginning. Together, we will continue to build a future that is brighter and more prosperous for all.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important aspects of any community is ensuring that our people feel safe, particularly in the evening hours when dark falls. Mr. Speaker, as part of our commitment to making the South safer and brighter for everyone, we have taken decisive action to install solar lights in key areas across our constituency.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker, the installation of solar lights in places like Gwankai, Calliste Government School, Grand Anse beach, BBC beach, Grand Anse Vendors Market. Mr. Speaker, after Beryl, I was proud to know that the area of Gwankai, which the last administration neglected, was able to have lights, Mr. Speaker, and it was because the solar lights were installed. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this has been a major step forward in improving public safety and lighting up our communities. These lights not only provide essential visibility in public spaces but also help to reduce crime, Mr. Speaker, improve traffic safety and create an environment where our residents and visitors can feel safer and secure. Mr. Speaker, solar lights are not just a practical solution. They are a sustainable one by harnessing the power of the sun. We reduce our reliance on traditional energy sources, which is better for the environment and helps lower costs in the long run. This is yet another way we are moving forward as a community that values sustainability and progress.

Mr. Speaker, we are not just stopping there. We intend to expand our efforts and install even more solar lights in other areas throughout the South. **(Applause)** We want to ensure that every community has access to proper lighting, every street is safer to walk on, and everyone feels secure in their own neighbourhood. Mr. Speaker, our goal is simple: to build a community that is not only bright with opportunities but also safe and welcoming for all.

Mr. Speaker, for years, the people of the South have been calling out for one thing: the lighting of our playing fields, Mr. Speaker, so that our young athletes, families and communities can come together and enjoy sports and recreation after the sun sets. Today, I am proud to announce that after 23 years… Sorry. After two and a half years of dedicated work, this Administration has made that vision a reality. **(Applause)** We have successfully lit the playing fields at Morne Rouge, Springs and the Limes **(applause)**, three key locations that have long been the heart of our community of sporting activities.

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Mr. Speaker, far too long people have been forced to wait for daylight to engage in their favourite sport or spend time with their families, but now we have night football, we have night cricket at the Morne Rouge, at the Limes, at Springs and I cannot tell you how proud I am to see this fields come to light. Mr. Speaker, this is what progress looks like. This is how we bring communities together.

I also have the privilege of sponsoring six competitions, Mr. Speaker. I am talking about cricket, football, and basketball. Competitions that we had not only brought excitement, but also gave our young athletes an opportunity to showcase their talents on the field. Mr. Speaker, and let me be clear, I have every intention of sponsoring even more completions this year so that our people, especially the youths, can have more opportunities to play and compete and grow. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, after a hard day's work, people no longer have to head straight home or lock themselves in doors, but they can go out, relax and engage, Mr. Speaker, in some good recreational activities. Mr. Speaker, this is what it means to invest in our people. This is what it means to invest in the future and, Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning. We will continue to work hard to push forward and to ensure that every corner of South St. George has the opportunities and resources it needs to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, when I say Gairy may be smiling in his grave, I don't know if you think I am joking. But, Mr. Speaker, for 50 years, the Grand Anse Basketball Court, Mr. Speaker, first in 1973, '74, Gairy was the one who put that court there. Mr. Speaker, for decades, the Grand Anse Basketball Court sat in disrepair. Mr. Speaker, this place was once a vibrant hub for young athletes. It remained unused and deteriorated with time while generations of young men and women missed out on the opportunity to come together and showcase their talents.

Mr. Speaker, but in 2024, this Administration took action. We did not simply talk about change. We made it happen. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that we have refurbished the Grand Anse basketball court, restoring it to its former glory and no longer will it sit in neglect, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, but it stands as a true testament to the power of the community, the resilience and the promise of brighter opportunities for

our youths.

Mr. Speaker, in the past year alone, I have had the privilege to sponsor more than four basketball competitions. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, these events brought together the young men and women from across the community, giving them the platform to showcase their talent, Mr. Speaker, and it was incredible to see the energy, the excitement and teamwork that filled the court. Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning again; we are just starting. I am committed to sponsoring even more, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the Grand Anse Basketball Court is not just a place to play, but it is a place where our young people can build confidence, learn valuable skills and create lasting memories, Mr. Speaker. It's a space where dreams can be nurtured, and probably the next generation of leaders, athletes, and role models can rise. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, we will continue to invest in our youth and communities. This refurbished court is a symbol of what happens when we invest in our people.

Mr. Speaker, for years, the License Centre Building on Dusty Highway has been in a state of disrepair. Mr. Speaker, sometimes you wonder… I mean, I know the last person that was there was Steele, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the steel was too heavy; he couldn't move, but Mr. Speaker, it's just sad.

Mr. Speaker, I make it my duty to get up at six in the morning or five in the morning, and just drive around my constituency to see what needs to be done. Because, Mr. Speaker, I make a commitment to the people **(applause)** that if you elect me, I will do just that. And, Mr. Speaker, originally that space was used as a garage, and the building was left in a deplorable condition, and despite its location being key in the community, it served no real purpose, only to license the vehicle and so.

Mr. Speaker, this building is still being used by the police for licensing purposes, but the condition of the structure is far from acceptable. Last year, the police officers reached out to me, highlighting the poor conditions and the need for urgent assistance. Upon hearing their concerns, I knew something had to be done, so I immediately took action. Mr. Speaker, since then, I am proud to report that the refurbishment of the building

is well underway. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we removed junk, cleaned up the garbage and replaced the roof. Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning again. I want to stress that. Mr. Speaker, but there is more to the story.

After seeing the potential of this building and recognising the growing healthcare needs of our community, I spoke to the Minister for Health to express my vision for turning this place into a proper medical facility. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this facility will serve the people of St. George South, offering a much-needed health service in the area. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, I am sure Doctor Modeste would agree with me that our health is our wealth, and we must invest in it.

Mr. Speaker, we have already taken steps to improve the services at our current medical facility by ensuring that Doctors are available from Monday to Friday. **(Applause)** But this new facility, Mr. Speaker, would be a major step forward in improving the healthcare accessibility for our residents. Mr. Speaker, with this new facility, we would not only provide better healthcare but we will also create a more accessible, convenient and sustainable healthcare option for the people of St. George South.

Mr. Speaker, this is about ensuring that people don't have to travel long distances to wait for medical attention. It is about everyone, regardless of where they live, having access to healthcare, but also, Mr. Speaker, the building is so big that we can even extend the services of having beds there so that people can stay overnight.

Mr. Speaker, the refurbishment of the License Centre is just one part of a larger effort to ensure that the health, safety and prosperity of our community are maximised. Mr. Speaker, I am committed to seeing this project through and ensuring that the people of the South have the facilities that they deserve. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, on July 1, 2024, a disaster struck. Mr. Speaker, that's when we had Hurricane Beryl. When the disaster struck, it was clear that our community, our island, needed more than just words of comfort, Mr. Speaker. We needed action, support and unity. Mr. Speaker, and that is exactly what we saw from this Administration and our Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, what motivated me was the outpouring of love, selflessness and solidarity from our people who came together to assist. Mr. Speaker, to all the volunteers who joined the efforts to clean up after the storm, I want to extend my deepest thanks. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, whether you help clear debris, clean homes, or provide support in any way, I just want to tell them that their actions made a difference in the lives of those who were affected.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone who assisted the people of St. Patrick and St. Mark. Mr. Speaker, those communities were mostly affected, and they face challenges during the aftermath of Beryl; a lot. Mr. Speaker, furthermore, I must acknowledge the remarkable individuals who went above and beyond by travelling to Carriacou every weekend to assist with the cleaning **(applause)** and restoration efforts. Mr. Speaker, to those who did so, I want to say to them that you didn't just give your time, but you gave a piece of your heart to restore what was lost. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this is more than an act of service. What we witnessed was the love for country and the love for our brothers and sisters, Mr. Speaker. It is a reminder that as a people, we stand together in times of difficulty. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, it is proof in Grenada that we are our brother's keeper. We rise to the occasion, and we support each other, and we ensure that no one is left behind, even Peter.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government and the people of the South, I want to say thank you. Thank you for showing what true community spirit looks like. Thank you for making our country proud, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, together we are stronger when we are together, and we will continue to rebuild and restore as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I remember it vividly. I was sitting at the airport in Carriacou after Hurricane Beryl passed, witnessing the devastation that the storm had left in its wake, but rather than feeling despair, I felt. I was filled with a sense of purpose, and I thought, "How can we build not just houses, but something more". Something that would stand the test of time, something that would protect families for generations to come. It was as if the answer came to me through a divine intervention because, as faith would have it, an engineer was sitting right beside me. Mr. Speaker, together we began to discuss how we

could create a solution, a design that would be more durable to withstand the forces of nature. It was right there in that moment, Mr. Speaker, that the concept of Build Back Better was born.

Mr. Speaker, we envisioned a structure that combined the warmth of our own house with the strength and resilience of a concrete frame. We proposed a parapet roof, Mr. Speaker, that would make it hurricane resistant, one that would protect families when the winds came howling and the rains poured down. Mr. Speaker, we knew it wouldn't be easy, but we also knew it was necessary. Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges of land and title issues and a shortage of labour, Mr. Speaker, we press forward. Mr. Speaker, and here we are today having completed, Mr. Speaker, and in construction almost completed, Mr. Speaker, a completion of 98 houses, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** that stands as a testament to the success of this vision. Mr. Speaker, that's not all. We were also able to repair 46 homes, giving those families the shelter they need and the peace of mind they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, through the Build Back Better, we have created more than just homes. We have created opportunities. Over 50 contractors, including builders, painters, plumbers, and electricians, have been employed and given the chance to work **(applause)** and contribute and support their families. Mr. Speaker, but more than that, we have given them an opportunity to grow. Mr. Speaker, by working closely with financial institutions, we are not just building houses. We are empowering contractors to become business owners. Mr. Speaker, they are learning how to attach themselves to financing options that would help them grow their own businesses, build their own legacies and contribute to the economy in a new and sustainable way.

Mr. Speaker, Build Back Better is not just about construction. It is about rebuilding lives, creating jobs and providing a brighter future for all of us. It is about resilience, it is about strength, and most importantly, it is about community. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, we continue to face challenges, but with each challenge we also find new solutions. Mr. Speaker, and together we would keep building back stronger, more

resilient and more united than ever before. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we are our brother's keeper, and this time, Mr. Speaker, it's all about love.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly at this time, Mr. Speaker, show my willingness to offer my support, Mr. Speaker, to the NNP to build back their house even stronger. Mr. Speaker, but the first issue is this: Build Back Better needs nine pillars, Mr. Speaker, they only have four… Well, not four say 3.5 because one is kind of out already. Mr. Speaker, as a caring Administration. We want to assure the "Other Side" that they can count on us for advice and support in whatever way they need, Mr. Speaker. I see my friend Doctor Modeste smiling away; you're welcome.

Mr. Speaker, my Government believes that investing in recreational and community spaces can contribute to the positive social experiences promoting team building, collaboration, and, of course, promoting active lifestyles through sporting and playful activities. This is why, Mr. Speaker, we have invested over EC$500,000 to assist with the repairs of nine basketball courts throughout the island. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, repairs such as court resurfacing, installation of basketball uprights, electrical works and painting were done to the following basketball courts:

- Marquis;
- St. David;
- Cherry Hill;
- Grand Anse;
- Mt. Moritz;
- Willis;
- Boca;
- River Road;
- Morne Jaloux; and
- SASS. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we did this after 23… Sorry, approximately three years in office. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, in addition to a basketball court, the Ministry plans to invest in play parks throughout various rural communities, teaming up with the Ministry of Youth

and Sports. Mr. Speaker, we started collaboration in St. Andrew to see the realisation of a play park at Pearls. To date, the Government of Grenada has invested over EC$195,000 in this park and envisions its completion in the first quarter of this year. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, under the Visible Transformation Project otherwise referred to as the VTP, the MIT has collaborated with key stakeholders including the Ministry of Health, the Royal Grenada Police Force, Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority and Planning and Development Authority to tag over 400 vehicles throughout Grenada **(applause)** and plans to ramp up collection this year to improve not only the aesthetics, but community health and reduce traffic obstruction on our roadways.

Mr. Speaker, according to the data from Solid Waste for the year 2024, 456 vehicles were collected. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, this year the derelict programme has resumed, and a total of 132 vehicles have already been tagged in the parish of St. Patrick. Mr. Speaker, I must encourage at this point our citizens to be more responsible in their efforts and to keep our community clean. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this is a good time, once again, for us to remember why MIT was set up. Mr. Speaker, the MIT was set up to accelerate the implementation of Government projects. The MIT was set up to bring an end to the state of affairs in which badly needed projects were stuck in the pipeline. MIT was set up to unblock the pipeline, Mr. Speaker. As stated before, the people of Grenada were facing the prospect of losing millions of dollars in development aid that were already committed to the state of Grenada, but were going to be lost due to the incompetence of the previous Administration.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand on the record of my Ministry. Mr. Speaker, we have acted in a productive and collaborative way with other Government Ministries and agencies, not just to rescue projects that were at risk, but also to accelerate their implementation. Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of working with a team of talented, dedicated and patriotic Grenadians. Mr. Speaker, I have to repeat that line. I have the privilege of working with a team of talented, dedicated and patriotic Grenadians. **(Applause)**

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Andy Williams

We are a small group, Mr. Speaker, a small group. But guess what—we are punching above our weight. Mr. Speaker, every day we wake up with a deep, renewed sense of urgency to do something meaningful to improve the lives of the people of our country. Mr. Speaker, we come to work with a deep and renewed sense of urgency to shorten delivery times and deliver real help, whether it is housing, health, infrastructure or other areas.

As a Ministry, we are aware that, as a result of our performance, we have been given more work to do. We welcome the challenge, and we are taking steps to expand our capacity with increased training in project management as we are fast-tracking project implementation. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in the coming year, we would improve our ability to compress timelines without adding extra cost in cases where implementation schedules need to be reconfigured, we will do so. Our work would be guided by three words; efficiency, efficiency and efficiency. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, being given the mandate to be the driver for increased effective and efficient project, programme and policy implementation, we remain steadfast in our commitment to elevate through these mediums, the quality of life for the citizens of Grenada. Mr. Speaker, when MIT wins, Grenada wins. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, if you look at this year's Budget, you will see MIT was given approximately six World Bank Projects, and they did not start with us, but again, Mr. Speaker, this is the mandate of MIT. Mr. Speaker, one of the projects is the UBEC Project, which is Unleashing the Blue Economy to strengthen the enabling environment for the Blue Economy, economic recovery and resilience of selected coastal assets.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a project called the OECS Regional Health Project, which, Mr. Speaker, would enable us to help our primary healthcare facilities to boost their capacity.

Mr. Speaker, another Project is called the Data for Decision Making Project, which is designed to enhance the statistical systems of Government within the OECS.

Mr. Speaker, another project is called the GRIP, which is the Grenada Resilience Improvement Project. It is financed by the World Bank, and we are talking about approximately US$15 million. Mr. Speaker, that project entails improving the coastline of Marquis and Soubise. Mr. Speaker, when we have heavy rainfall, the Balthazar Bridge always floods. This project, Mr. Speaker, will be addressing the issue at the Balthazar Bridge. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we have made progress so that work can start on that bridge in October of this year. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we also have the OECS Regional Tourism Project. That is the project at Fort George, Mr. Speaker. Again, that project was in the book since August 2017, and there was no implementation. **(Time bell rings)** Mr. Speaker, I want to beg you for an extra five minutes. 10. No, no. Five extra, after the 10. I am begging now.

Mr. Speaker: No. Please finish your 10, and come back to me. **(Laughter)**

Hon. Andy Williams: No problem. Mr. Speaker, let me just make a point that the last two budget debates I finished early, so I should be given… **(Laughter)** But, Mr. Speaker, the project at Fort George was on the books since August of 2017, and nothing was done. Mr. Speaker, it took this Administration to move this project. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, there was someone who was involved with the other Administration side, and we all had a meeting, and they said the reason why this project did not move forward was that the previous Administration had said that this project could not be done.

Mr. Speaker, what did we do? We brought all the players together and we discussed how to move this forward. Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about this project ending in June or September of this year. **(Applause)**

I just want to make a point. Mr. Speaker, because I see the Opposition, I know we were having some talks, and I see them attacking MIT left, right and centre, Mr. Speaker, but I don't think they understand the concept of MIT, Mr. Speaker. The same way, Mr. Speaker, last year I could remember we were talking about equity, and so, Mr. Speaker,

and when you hear you get them to talk, I said to myself, "These people do not understand what equity means".

Mr. Speaker, the same way, Mr. Speaker, they are coming to Parliament like they came yesterday, and Mr. Speaker, they don't even understand what it means when we talk about a current account surplus. Mr. Speaker, they said it means nothing. Let me just drink some water on that. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, let me break it down in the simplest form, because I want them to listen, understand, and when they come back to the House, Mr. Speaker, make more sense. My teacher at SGU was one by the name, I don't know if you all know him, Lennox Andrews, and they call him "Toes". **(Applause)** But, Mr. Speaker, imagine you working for EC$3,000, Mr. Speaker, that's your income. Imagine your expenses, your rent, your groceries, and so on, Mr. Speaker. Your expenses are EC$1,000. That's your expenditure. So, Mr. Speaker, your surplus is your revenue minus your expenditure. That's it. **(Applause)**

So let me tell you. Your revenue, or your surplus, is now EC$2,000. Three minus one, EC$2,000. So, Mr. Speaker, let's say over the years you have accumulated some surplus; let's say you have over EC$40,000 in the bank, but I want to buy a vehicle for EC$50,000, Mr. Speaker. Will you go and take all the money in the bank and scrape it up to buy the vehicle? No, Mr. Speaker. What will you do? You say, "Hear what? Let me take a loan to buy the vehicle". Mr. Speaker, the vehicle is called a capital expenditure or what we call "CapEX" in the Budget, Mr. Speaker.

Let's go again. So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the overall deficit, let me tell you what we're talking about. EC$3,000, minus EC$1,000, gives you EC$2,000. If you take the vehicle into consideration, which is the capital expenditure, of EC$50,000 you will get an EC$48,000 deficit. **(Applause)** But, Mr. Speaker, your surplus shows your ability to pay. If you go for a loan at the bank and you cannot pay it, you will not get the loan. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, "Deficit Budget"? Let's look at the deficit budget before grants, Mr. Speaker. In 2015, your deficit was 250 million. In 2017, your deficit was 96.8 million. In

2020, your deficit was 72 million. In 2021, your deficit was 281 million. In 2023, a deficit of 273 million dollars. Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't know that, or the public wouldn't know that, because at that time we had no Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the same way, Mr. Speaker, there are good talkers because if you don't know and you're following them blindly, they will lead you astray. **(Applause)** The same way, Mr. Speaker… **(Applause)** The same group of people was trying to convince workers not to accept the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, people who were working for EC$700 and EC$800 a month doing an 8-hour shift, and you're convincing them not to accept an increase in salary. Why? If you take it, what will happen? Workers will lay you off. All kinds of scare tactics. Mr. Speaker, the minimum wage was passed. What happened?

Let's go again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these are the same people who voted against stiffer penalties for firearm offenders. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, these people say that they have safer hands, Mr. Speaker, and they quote scripture every day. Mr. Speaker, they come to Parliament and I sit down and listen, and they are quoting this and that, and all kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, we saw a number of roads given to one specific contractor. Mr. Speaker, those roads were called "Feeder Roads". Mr. Speaker, tell me when La. Borie Road became a "Feeder Road"; tell me when Willis Road became a "Feeder Road".

Anyway, let's go. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, if I get too raw, tell me. I was trying to take it easy. Mr. Speaker, when anyone bid for the road about $60 million in the 60s, because that was the ceiling, and so on. The Ministry of Infrastructure, at the time, did its own costing.

One company, Mr. Speaker, bid $46.8 million, and they were awarded the contract. Mr. Speaker, you didn't need a Cabinet conclusion for that, you know. It's there, right there. Mr. Speaker, six months after the project amount moved from $46.8 million to $89 million. Mr. Speaker, how? I don't know. Mr. Speaker, these roads included the Willis Road, a number of roads, and La. Borie Road, too. Mr. Speaker, so when I see them

now playing politics with the Willis Road, Mr. Speaker, I say, according to the calypsonian Beast, "Oh Lord, wolves in sheep's clothing". **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I remember in 2021, and I'm glad my friend Doctor Modeste came. You came just in time **(laughter)** because I remember Doctor Modeste was hunting this little "Hot Spot Boy", calling us little children, we didn't know the budget. Right? But today, you see us teaching you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP, I wish to advise that you don't call names.

Hon. Andy Williams: No problem.

Mr. Speaker: Refer to Members by their constituency.

Hon. Andy Williams: Okay, well, MP of St. Mark. Mr. Speaker, the MP for St. Mark was hunting me down, sending me emails at three in the morning because she wanted to know what to remove the VAT from. Mr. Speaker, so they came to me in 2021 to find out what to remove VAT from to pass it in the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, so let me tell you, and you could see for yourself, you don't have anything to be scared about. My biggest seller in Hot Spot was saltfish; VAT was removed from saltfish. Cheese; cheese. Oil; oil, Mr. Speaker. Turkey wings and split peas. Mr. Speaker, those items she came for me. So, Mr. Speaker, we were contributing to the budget long before we were in Government. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, let me make this point again. I thank our Prime Minister for the EC$10,000 parliamentary allowance, but, Mr. Speaker, if you notice, you know, it could be more. Not one Member, Mr. Speaker, on the Opposition Side spoke about what they did for their communities. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, when people go to them, you know what they say, "They are not in office, so go to the people who are in office". **(Laughter) (Applause)** Mr. Speaker, everyone is getting the same allowance. Mr. Speaker, I heard people got

laptops, groceries, gas, and doctor bills. Mr. Speaker, all the time, Mr. Speaker, and that is because my heart is for the people of my constituency, and Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, MIT started with only EC$1.89 million in the 2022 Budget for 2023. Mr. Speaker, today, MIT, two years later, our approved budget for 2025 is EC$47 million. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, do you know why? The reward for good work is more work. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave here today without saying that we continue to deliver on our campaign promises, just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. The payment of the pension, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker's bi-monthly salary payment, which they said, Mr. Speaker, couldn't be done, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, national minimum wage, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, free education to TAMCC and NEWLO, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, cost-effective travel between Grenada and Carriacou, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the creative economy, check. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, and for 2025, let me just name a few because the way they talk it might kind of get lost, because you might kind of suck into what they're saying. Which is not true, Mr. Speaker. 4.1 % increase in GDP, check. **(Applause)** $1.6 million **(time bell rings)** investment in geothermal and solar upgrade, check. **(Applause**) $10 million for Project 500, check. **(Applause)** $50 million for the Housing Soft Loan Programme, check. **(Applause)** $23.6 million for healthcare, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, time check? Can I get five more minutes? **(Laughter) (Applause)** Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable. Honourable MP, five more minutes are granted.

Hon. Andy Williams: No problem. Mr. Speaker, $36.9 million for the Blue Economy, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, $44 million for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, $**32 million for Agriculture,** check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, **$183 million for Education,** check. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, $1.5 million for the Free Tuition Programme, check. **(Applause)** 147 houses under construction under Build Back Better, check. **(Applause)** Millions in concessions for

family check. **(Applause)** Millions for support for farmers, check. **(Applause)** New police headquarters, check. **(Applause)** And not forgetting the police officers who protect us every day, check. **(Applause)** Pay and grade, check. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, and Honourable Members of the House, the Budget we laid before you is not merely an allocation of numbers. It represents our unwavering commitment to the people of Grenada. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, as we embark on this transformative journey, we all call upon our citizens and partners to join with us in the pursuit of this vision **(applause)**, ensuring that our collective efforts lead to meaningful outcomes for our communities. Together, let us continue to forge a pathway toward sustained national development that echoes with the hopes and dreams of every Grenadian. Mr. Speaker, this is our time, a time for transformation, a time to build a brighter and more prosperous Grenada for all. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me, Mr. Speaker, to present in this House today. I want to take this opportunity to thank my parliamentary staff for all their hard work. Mr. Speaker, I'm getting emotional now. Mr. Speaker, my MIT staff, Mr. Speaker, because they all go beyond the call of duty. Mr. Speaker, when you work with me, you could work with anybody else, because I will call you at two or three in the morning once I know you're up. Mr. Speaker, these people, Mr. Speaker, I could tell you. They are not doing it for the money. They are doing it for love. **(Applause)** Even though I get praised at times because, when they see MIT, they think it's And, even though I get the praise, at times, Mr. Speaker, it is the wonderful staff that I have that contributes to my success and our Government's success. **(Applause)** So thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you to the Honourable Member for St. George South. I think we have come to the point. By my watch, it is 25 minutes past one. So we are going to take a lunch break here, I propose. Parliament resumes in this House one hour later, to hopefully complete the presentations and debate in the House. This House is now in recess for lunch.

House adjourned for lunch at 1:25 p.m.

House resumed at 2:32 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Mr. Speaker: This Honourable House now resumes. All right. I trust everyone had an enjoyable lunch, and we are back here fully energised to complete the session today. I now invite the Honourable MP for St. Mark to take the floor and make her contribution.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to say good afternoon to everyone in the Chamber, further afield, and those listening online. Good afternoon to all. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my comments on the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure as presented by the Minister for Finance.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I do, I beg your permission to extend congratulations and commendations to Honourable Emmalin Pierre, who was appointed to the position of Political Leader. I also want to commend and congratulate her on her sterling presentation **(applause)** of the very appropriate response to the budget as presented.

It would also be remiss of me if I did not do a similar commendation to the Member for St. Andrew North East on a very excellent presentation **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker.

In the wake of International Women's Day, which was just a few days ago, again, permit me to commend these two ladies of quality and of class and for what they have done, not only for this Chamber and among us, but for persons listening throughout the tri-island state and further afield, my commendation. I am proud of my sisters.

Mr. Speaker, the speaker before me made some comments, and I will only say that I will not dignify those comments to make a direct response. I really feel that they

are beneath me. I will only suffice it to say that those without character always seek to destroy the good characters they see in us. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I heard and read some inaccuracies in the Budget Presentation as well as in the debate, and I would therefore, in my presentation, seek to debunk them and to set the record straight.

The Member for St. Patrick West spoke about numbers: 23 years in office… Twenty what years in office. Whatever number… In office. Mr. Speaker, I want to state an undeniable fact that, regardless of the number of years NNP in Administration has done a phenomenal amount of work in Grenada. **(Applause)** And persons can sit and feel in the next twenty years I'm going to do everything in Grenada, but those of us with some measure of experience, Mr. Speaker, I have looked back at photos, and I have seen where we upgraded and repaired a building and in a few years, in some years subsequently they need to be redone again or new one needs to come.

So, the perfect ones who are going to fix everything in the period, I dare you to do that in the period that NNP in administration has achieved. I beg you to even think of achieving the phenomenon that we on "This Side" achieved in office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to name a few lest we forget and to remind. When I came into office, there was a project on my side, the Western Corridor, the Western Main Road, a huge undertaking years ago, and that work was done by a company called CCC. It was the Western Main Road and the Eastern Main Road.

The Western Main Road, we all know that it's near the coast and that sometimes the sea gets very turbulent, very rough. The seas used to come onto the road. People had to wait between waves to navigate certain areas. When the NNP led, I wasn't in Government then, by Doctor the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, under his leadership, took on that project, sea defence, to date **(applause)**, even a child can walk across there without being molested.

I want to site a place called, its pronounced "la-soorce", but it's a French spelled like La ReSource, Waltham, River Sallee, and Nonpariel, the Fall Edge area, all those were areas where every time the seas got high the sea used to undermine the road and

there used to be large holes and breakage, and for years we have not seen that, Mr. Speaker. I consider that a great achievement by the New National Party.

That project also included widening of bridges because, then, as children, what we knew was a one-way street. One vehicle had to stop on the other side, and one on the main bridges into Victoria this time had dual carriage, Mr. Speaker, because of the work of the New National Party in office, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Until recent times, the Eastern Main Road was claimed to be one of the best roads, best kept, and best constructed, but it seems to withstand the ravages of the traffic and all of that, one of the best roads. But now, with the demise of road maintenance in Grenada, it is probably like all of the other roads in Grenada, Carriacou, and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, who can forget, and somebody on our side mentioned it, the Cricket Stadium. Now, that is nothing to some people, and even though they talk about sports and sports tourism, the stadium is not important. I don't know where else you would go for it. Maybe there are other stadia or stadiums that are coming, but for the moment, the Queens Park Stadium, the Cricket Stadium and the Athletic Stadium are the best on the islands at this time, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, you know, its one thing to look into a Budget Presentation and to tick off. $50 million, check. $20 million, check. **(Applause)** Everybody could do that. Even a baby could do that, but when we look at the results of what we call the out turn, and those who know economics, and I don't know much, but on one column you see "Approved Estimate for 2024 and 2023", and then on the other side you see the "Allocated Outturn" what was spent in other words in simple layman's language, and in many instances what was spent is millions less than was allocated.

So, I don't know the economist would have a terminology for it. But, if you get a big money… You get $40 million, and you spend $10 million, you know, what are you checking at? What is the glory in this? Instead of that, we should be commiseration, wondering, you know, giving some kind of support to those people who think that that is

a big achievement to have money allocated and do practically nothing with it. I will substantiate in this document, Mr. Speaker, as we go along.

Mr. Speaker, we hear talk about Hurricane Beryl as though it's the worst disaster that has hit Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And for the people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, it is the worst disaster. When Ivan hit us, they were not as, you know, as fully hit as or impacted as the mainland. So, for them, we can understand why they feel it because a significant percentage of the homes and whatever they had were destroyed. But, we in Grenada, on the mainland, we knew what happened, Mr. Speaker. Grenada was decimated, flattened to the ground. 200%, I'm being told, is that of our GDP? 200% of our GDP.

I recall when we had to get to St. George's, we had to go all up to Soubise and those kinds of areas to get to St. George's because Hurricane Ivan completely washed away that chunk of road between Fontenoy and Cherry Hill. There was no vehicular traffic, and people were worrying about how the trucks from Grand Mal, with the fuel, would get to the airport, for example. How will the plains come? How will they be refuelled and all of that?

This man, Doctor the Right Honourable Keith Claudius Mitchell, some may hate him, some may dislike him, but I have extreme pride for that man and respect because I saw how he rallied his troops together and got team NNP working, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** And, in no time, that road became motorable, between Fontenoy… I don't know if everybody who lives… Well, maybe not everybody, but as you leave Queen's Park going up to Fontenoy, that road did not exist, and in no time, he rallied people.

So, at that time, Mr. Speaker, there was no CCRIF Insurance; that is now, with Beryl, because of NNP's intuition **(applause)** to do that. And any attempt to discredit in any way, I say shame on those who are seeking to do that, Mr. Speaker. So, there was no CCRIF. There were no billions in the Citizenship by Investment Programme. We didn't have, and I stand corrected, and the then Minister for Finance could correct me on that, but I don't know that there was over $500 million in a "pregnant treasury" to work with.

Mr. Speaker, and without that, I saw team NNP galvanising into action. The then Prime Minister got a team of competent people, not wild spending of money and taking everybody, every colleague, every activist on a joyride. He got some serious-minded technical people, and they went out of Grenada. I don't know if Doctor Mitchell remembers that, but he should have gone out of Grenada and provided support for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

And so now, what we enjoy today, and what we speak about with so much derision as though it's not important, brought Grenada back on track. **(Applause)** And even with a second hurricane, Emily, we were able to. And I remember the same Prime Minister being invited to several high-level forums; people were amazed, wondering how Grenada did it. This little country. Similar to how people were amazed at how we did it with COVID-19, we must not forget these things because we will teach people to disregard their history, and if you disregard your history, you stand a serious risk, a serious risk of messing up the future as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have enough behind us to be proud and to stand tall **(applause)**, regardless of what is being said. Mr. Speaker, there are many other things, many other projects that were done. I am proud. We don't call it big names, like Project Polaris or Project X. Everything is a project. But, we have done a lot with young people, and you can't take on all, and even the numbers you take on, you would not have 100% success. But I am satisfied when I see.

All they could talk about is the negative and the IMANI, but I've seen the positive. I have seen managers in the hotel **(applause)** sector pulling their weight along with those who are trained among the best. I have seen people getting into their own business as entrepreneurs, people who got through that programme, opportunities to go to tertiary education, to become nurses, to become even doctors, and whatever. So, the IMANI Program opened the skies for young people, so that they could see that the sky was the limit **(applause)**, and they can put themselves to achieve whatever they want to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that there are some strategic focus areas that the Government has repeatedly put up. I'm also well aware that from Budget 2023, Budget

2024, and Budget 2025, we have a recurring decimal. The same thing over and over, which they have not achieved in the 3.5 years. So, when we talk about others and we point at them, remember, a lot of things as I point back at us, and that is for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, going through my documents, I came up with this. I know that these things happened, and I couldn't remember, and this is Exhibit A, Mr. Speaker, that I can have available, that's a magazine from the Ministry of Finance, during my time.

I just want to remind us that in 1997, the then Prime Minister, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, visited Cuba, and relationships were resumed with Cuba. I don't want to go through the long story, but after the Revolution, relationships were broken, and again it took a visionary leader to go back to Cuba and to face a disappointed Fidel Castro Ruz.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in 1998, one year, perhaps even less than that, we had a visit to Grenada by His Excellency Fidel Castro Ruz, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Dr. Mitchell went there and brought him in, and subsequently, in 2014, another visit was made by the then Prime Minister, and I was fortunate to be at that meeting.

But we went to that meeting and we spoke to the leader there, but we went with a list in our hands. We knew what we wanted for healthcare. We knew what we wanted for education, and they sent persons in healthcare, human resource development, **(applause)**, agriculture, works, and sports. I think Grenada benefited in swimming because we had some of them come to train young people in swimming, and that has made a lot of difference in the lives of some young people.

Then, after that 2014 visit, we also negotiated for specialists, and now Grenada has some persons, some doctors who are specialised in various areas, so that they could provide a more upscale service to persons. At one point in time, I wasn't able to check what the present situation was. There were 32 Cuban specialists working in Grenada. 25 of them were healthcare specialist nurses, epidemiologists, psychiatrists, pathologists, anaesthesiologists and a number more, Mr. Speaker. They came, and today Cuba still continues to provide that kind of technical service to Grenada. So if we're short, the agreement has been signed. The goodwill has been there. We do not have to reinvent

the wheel.

I heard about trips and visits to Cuba, but as usual, we do not get a report on what happened, so we do not know. I have never heard that we negotiate with X or XYZ or A to Z. Maybe other people would have heard it, but we never hear, so we do not know. All we know is that the hospital is woefully short of nurses, and based on the figures I have seen in the Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure, this supports it. We know that the hospital is short of doctors, and one of them is an anaesthetist.

Looking at the Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure, I looked at the human resources, the staffing for 2024. There was one anaesthetist approved. But one anaesthetist cannot work efficiently and effectively alone, because they have regular hours of work, plus they have on-call, weekend and other duties, and they also have to take care of intensive care.

But what is amazing is that the "Other Side" and the Government must have known that this was not tenable. In the 2025 Budget, they still put one anaesthesiologist as though "tempting fate"; do what you want with the lives of other people. So put the anaesthetist at risk, because, of course, if they're overworked and they do not get sleep, anything can happen, putting, very importantly, the lives of patients at risk, Mr. Speaker, and these are the people who condemn us today.

Mr. Speaker, bringing His Excellency Fidel Castro Ruz to Grenada was an epic moment for us. Mr. Speaker, I really want to put on record the astounding leadership demonstrated by Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Claudius Mitchell for doing that, because all Grenadians benefit from that. **(Applause)** It wasn't grandstanding. It wasn't just an unnecessary trip with a whole entourage of persons, but it was an important business trip that brought benefits to Grenada.

Not only did we do that, we signed an agreement between Grenada, Cuba and Venezuela. Cuba agreed to provide technical support: the construction people, the design of the hospital for the upgrade, and the expansion. The Venezuelans' fortunes were a bit different then than they are now, and they agreed to fund some of the significant costs of that general hospital. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I call that laying down the foundation. You train people, you bring in people, while these people are out there training, and the people who are coming trained people on the ground as well, you improve on an institution, and you ensure that there are basic supplies, and I'm going to get to that shortly, Mr. Speaker. But I am saying do not reinvent the wheel, the avenue is open. I am going to bring some figures to show that there was money to employ more people, regardless of where they came from, but some of the money was either woefully underutilised or not utilised at all, Mr. Speaker. Yet, we are pounding and we are knocking things that are not in the best interest of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, Cuba has always been supportive of the Grenadian people. They have always been a friend to us, and they have assisted us in critical moments, Mr. Speaker, like health and in other areas. I want to place on record my unwavering high esteem for the Cuban leadership and the people of Cuba, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** They have developed our human resources tremendously.

Mr. Speaker, the 2025 Budget is a tiresome repackaging of the two former presentations of the budget, 2023 and 2024. We almost know it by heart. **(Laughter)**. "Health and Wellness, Education and Training, Agriculture and the Marine Industry, Culture, Energy and all of these things, over and over and over It is in interesting that Health And Wellness, I think it's always at the top, but it seems to me that this is the one that gets, maybe not the least attention, but close to the least attention.

I am very, very, very, and not just me, Grenadians are concerned, and the "Other Side" should be just as concerned or even more concerned because they are the ones that hold the reins at this time. They are the ones who have always postulated that they can deal with everything under the sun. They are the ones responsible at this time, but we on "This Side" are willing to help because Grenadians are Grenadians and health is important to all of us.

So, Mr. Speaker, looking at infrastructure, new market development. In 2024, and up to now, I don't know what this new market development is, but we on "This Side", we can't read. We don't have sense, so new market development, I won't even try to discern

what it is, $2 million approved in 2024. What do they call the actual provision? What it means is what you spend, $0. It's there in the document. I'm not making this up. $0 spent for the new market development, and something was also allocated for 2023, so 2023, 2024, and 2025, we are waiting to see what happens with that.

Ministerial Complex. $1 million approved for 2024, provisional actual, what you spend is 59,450. $1 million. So… It's $59,000, not $500,000. $59,000.

The St. John's River… And I don't know if the Member spoke about that. The St. John's River Project. What was allocated for 2024? $9 million was approved. The actual provision, what was actually spent, is $1,250,125.

I want to repeat that. The St. John's River Project is so critical to that area, the River Road and the surrounding areas, and to save lives. We saw what happened in the flood sometime last year, where we lost lives. $9 million approved; actual provision, what you spent was $1,250,000 and a little bit more. So we could tick off that now in 2025, but we're going to come back here those of us who are alive in 2026, and we will see the same kind of pattern **(applause)**, on this paper, Mr. Speaker.

Gouyave Flood Mitigation Project. $750,000 approved $88,761 was spent. Maybe the flood fixed itself, I don't know. Maybe there were other projects that got priority over that. But I looked at the vast disparity between what is allocated and what is spent, and I am convinced that something is very wrong with the Members on the "Other Side".

Mr. Speaker, but on further perusal, there are two line items where the amount is always higher, one is International Travel, plenty, plenty of money. I don't even make time to put it up there because I can't call these figures and them; International Travel. Even when you travel, you're bringing back something; you must weigh it against other things. I'm going to talk about the other things that travel should be weighed against.

And the other one is Beautification, Empowerment, Sustainability, and Transformation. I'm trying to figure out what that means, but it eludes me all the time. I call it the nebulous line item. You just don't know what it is. Try as you might, you would not know, but what we know is the big amount of money compared to what is approved and what is spent, Mr. Speaker, and we boast about it. So, maybe the project is

completed, maybe all projects are completed, but it's just that the "Other Side", they are wizards with figures, and so the actual cost has become less, I don't know.

But we are dealing with a Government that boasts of record-breaking CBI sales and disaster donations that they got. Over $500 million, and I mentioned that they met in the treasury, but we must not forget that because money has been there, and they do not have much to show for it, Mr. Speaker, the question is, where is that money being spent? If it's spent, with good use on the people of Grenada and Petite Martinique, then that is where it has to be spent, Mr. Speaker.

But what I can see is irresponsible and reckless spending. A lot of things to dazzle people's eyes, make them forget, somebody said the optics, make them forget that their stomach is grumbling, make them forget that they lost their job, because of some perceived affiliation with NNP, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Make them forget that on the morning of the first of the month, they are leaving home to go to work, and somebody meets them and says, "Your services are no longer required". Some little level person, you know, not a manager, or anybody in a position of significance, everybody is important, so don't get me wrong, but you must have somebody to tell you that your job is terminated.

And I heard the Minister for Mental Health say that if you lose your job, you could get depressed, so I am wondering how many more people we have depressed than before the NDC came into administration, Mr. Speaker. That's before and after; we have to compare. But, they gave us the lights on the Careenage to dazzle the eye again, optics, optics, make you forget you're hungry.

And you know what bothers me? The light is good, the light is nice, people like it, but the point is, at the point of service of delivery of health service to people, what are you offering them as a trade-off for the lights? What are we offering them? And I want to propose that some of that money could have been used right there on the Carenage because a lot of people who go to the hospital, they still have to go on the Carenage, Spice Isle Imaging, some who have to have an ultrasound, they still have to go there.

So between the two, I believe we on "This Side" would have chosen to help people

get their blood test done because there are quite a few that are unavailable at this present time and also to get some lactose done, some of which are unavailable at this time. So I would go for the antibiotics. I will go for the painkillers. And yes, a little glitter here, a little glitter there. We have to be proud of 50 years, proud of 51 years, but at the expense of people, and at the cost of their health. **(Applause)**

I understand that some people are saying that some of the doctors they tired of giving prescriptions to in-house patients, lab papers, to in-house patients, so you have to, maybe they do take the sample for you, but you have to go outside elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, I dare say that this money could have been better spent for the people.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go to the drones and more drones because every time I hear, I hear a different figure, a different cost, Mr. Speaker. And yes, drones are good modern technology because if I had drones, I saw some pictures being displayed on the screen there; I might have taken some photos of what I've done in St. Mark to show. So, I mean, I do not have anything against drones. But when you have plenty, plenty, plenty, and they take up on the services that you'll have to deliver to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I have a problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, so three budgets, and in many of these budgets, in all of them, we have not moved from phase one in many of the projects. So, 2023, phase one of the bottle, 2024, phase one of the project, 2025, and the project remains the same, and nothing is done, Mr. Speaker.

But when they came in, they met a hospital that we had the collaboration of, the Cubans and the Venezuelans. I would never say here that it is perfect. I would never say here that it is better than what has been conceived, but I would say that this hospital will hold the fort until we can get the brand new AI Hospital, which starts in June 2026. We will hold on. I will take the General Hospital as is, rather than hold my breath and wait for the AI one that we see.

Somebody called me the last time and they said, "When is the new hospital opening? I saw a nice thing on TV". And everybody feels it. I say well, that's the same glitter, you know, the lights, the how you call it, the drones and all kinds of things, and it's

the same kind of thing. So just fool us. Just fool us because we are stupid. We can't read. We dunce. We don't know economics. We don't know this. We don't know that, but we have common sense.

Mr. Speaker, a number of other things they received, and they say are nothing. Upgrade of Princess Alice Hospital, structurally and equipment. Brand new Poly Clinic in St. John. **(Applause)** It is essentially closed down, because when the doctor goes, the doctor has a few hours to work. Whatever the arrangement is, the doctor does that, and then the poor nurses are left to fend for themselves to deal with patients and to call and find out what to do with that. This is what is happening now, at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to supplies. There's an institution based in St. Lucia called the OECS PPS. Some people say Pooled Procurement Services. Some people say Pharmaceutical Procurement Services, but it's more than pharmaceutical. It's the other things, but all are medical supplies. This institution is a child that belongs to the Eastern Caribbean. They formed it. So, they source medication at the cheapest cost. They check on quality so that they can advise the members, and they try to ensure that with the money they pay, they get the best quality and the best value for money.

So, Mr. Speaker, they are trusting you the medicine, you know. If you don't have it, they're crediting you, but you have to have a good relationship. So, I even Googled the OECS PPS, because I thought maybe they had closed down, and that's why we're having all these difficulties. So I Googled it to see if it's functioning, and according to Mr. Google, it is functioning. So, why aren't we assessing medication for them when they do the testing for us, and they give us the best rate, and they also will wait for us to pay?

And I have one of the papers because Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Claudius Mitchell as Minister for Finance he knew, and I used to go to meetings, and I would encourage my colleagues to do so, and I would encourage the Leader, not of Government's Business, but the Leader of Cabinet, the Head of Cabinet, and all members to get involved. They have to get involved because your life is your family's life, and it is the life, the health, and the well-being of every Grenadian in this country **(applause)**, and for visitors who come as well. So this is one. I came up with two.

This is Exhibit B, and anybody could see it. This says, "In respect of the OECS PPS", and that came from the Permanent Secretary in Finance, "We have paid $2.32 million this year, which includes etcetera, etcetera, etcetera", in the interest of time. $2.32 million, and I hope I get to the figures.

You know how many $2.23 million? Let us give room for inflation, because that was some years ago, maybe the cost would have gone up by now, but even if it doubled, let's say it doubled, $4 million. I could easily look in the Estimate of Revenues and Expenditures and find money that was not used, find areas where the money was wasted, and tell them on the "Other Side", you could have taken that and gotten medication. **(Applause)**

And they don't only give medication, you know. All medical supplies, things like gloves, things for your X-ray to function, scans, and whatever reagents they have to use, these have been sold there. So, I don't know if we're vexed with them. I don't know if they're vexed with us, but I have never heard that name called at any one time.

So, what did I do? I did a bit of research, that's my third exhibit, and it's a fact that people could say anything they want, but the facts don't lie, and anyone could just Google the PPS. It gives us a list of all of the supplies that have, kind of, nobody will take that from me, but they could Google it.

The point is, if they say we have this to offer, you can contact us; they are available. And a whole lot of anti-biotics, painkillers, this, that, reagents for the lab that the lab is missing now, because I heard the Member for St. George South East speak about a department that moved from one area to phase two of the General Hospital.

Who did phase one? **(Applause)** Who did phase one and who did phase two? We not only constructed it, but we also equipped it with CT Scans, state-of-the-art cutting-edge. **(Applause)** Maybe now, after three years, you have more cutting-edge, but then it was cutting-edge. X-ray, all of those sorts of things, and we equipped it, and it is there.

You know, a beautiful hospital we can't argue, but we could argue that if you're going to give us the old hospital and give us medication and give us staff and give us reagents to do certain tests and whatnot, give us that before the AI Hospital, and I would

go for that anytime, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are too many areas of unspent money. And, you know, a low blow was thrown, and I didn't take any offence. You know, sometimes a little picong a little something has to go, but I was, I don't know if it was an accusation that said… Something.

But what I want to say is, you see this letter? It used to go straight to the Ministry of Finance, but I made it my business to know when we owe. **(Applause)** I made it my business to tell the Minister for Finance and the Head of Cabinet that we have to pay some money before things get too bad. So yes, we had shortages, and I know they're going to hit back with that, but I know we have never had shortages, this acute and this long, Mr. Speaker, to threaten the lives of the people, the adults and the children of our tri-island state.

Mr. Speaker, when COVID-19 came, I rolled up my sleeve, and everyone in the nursing fraternity knew it, and this is not a boast. This is a reality, and this is just a measure I'm saying to my friend. Even when you're tired. And health is a big issue. It makes you tired, and sometimes you might say you want a break, and there's nothing wrong with that, but while you're there, you have to do your work. **(Applause)** You have to pull up the sleeves, and every weekend, Saturday and Sunday without fail, I went out vaccinating. I went out testing. I did what I had to do, and I had a team of people, nurses, from the local cohort, and physicians and nurses from St. George's University. We made a formidable team until we had COVID-19 well under control **(applause)**, and the rest is history, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just to say one anaesthetist could never work. It cannot work. Mental Wellness, all I will say is, that since 2023… You have to put people and know it has fewer inmates now, well, I hear that I don't know, but you have to have an institution for people. There was a place in the General Hospital called Rathdune, which is where people who are acute, who are not violent, or so it is supposed to be vacated by now to be replaced, but I'm not the Minister. Who am I to say? But that is what the plan was. I don't know what it is now. But $0.5 million was allocated in 2023 to Carlton House. It was budgeted

for, not a cent spent so far, Mr. Speaker, just a few projects, not one cent spent that far.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention briefly on Housing. I realise the time is going. I just want to say that since the election campaign before, we heard about Project 500, which means 500 houses every year. When I looked at the money allocated, there was money allocated, but up to now, I cannot see any of the houses from Project 500, but money is being spent, and it's not accounted for. And if… You know what I know? If there were any significant housing projects, we would have seen them on TV. There's nothing that they do that is not on TV, so how come nothing on TV? No news release about the houses. Well, we promise 500, we will do 50. From Project 500, we are still waiting to see, but promise made, promise kept. **(Laughter)** These are just some half-baked words to fool people so that we can be quiet. But we are the ones fooling.

Mr. Speaker, we'll just move briefly to the rising cost of living. And I heard the learned ones who deal with figures say the Consumer Price Index gave a figure. I just learned the word and I memorised it, but I don't know it. So who wants to say I'm stupid? Everybody knows that already. I don't care about the consumer index and what it says. I know what I see when I pick up a commodity in the supermarket or when I ask for it at the counter shop, and I know what I pay every time I go there, and I know, and I hear what people are saying in their homes, how they're barely holding on and on the street corners. So I don't want to hear about the consumer index. I want to know about the real price **(applause)** index that people are paying and the real hearts that are suffering in every nook and cranny.

Some of them said they were bawling with their mouths closed. They didn't want to bawl because they knew whatever it was. But the point is, it is getting bad and it is getting worse, and we have a list of 20 items, and I haven't seen any significant change, if at all. I may have missed it all, maybe running through quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move quickly to Tourism Competitiveness. That is the project on the fort, and I heard the Minister representing the South speak about it. We were about to lose it, so we didn't do whatever and whatever and whatever. But you know…. And, I blame myself for not being the kind of photographic person that I see

some people are. You know, they drive a fly. They take a photo and they send it out and everybody says, "Oh great, you drive a fly". **(Laughter)**

But, Mr. Speaker, I was the one, and that wasn't, although it was a tourism project, it was under the Ministry of Finance, and when the people came from the World Bank, and we realised that we were about to lose it. I took those people on a tour up there, and I'm sorry I didn't take all the photos, so now, I could have been showing it. But at that time, I didn't know it had that thing called, how you do that thing again, the dazzling one up in the air? The drone. I didn't know about that, and for that, they have a right to say I'm stupid.

But the point is that we were the ones who conceived the idea. There were three islands, and they didn't lie on that. I won't call the other two, but Grenada was one, and each island chose the project they wanted to do, and we chose the fort. We had the vision to choose that.

Then when COVID-19 came, you know, Beryl is an issue, but COVID-19 is never an issue. One of the things that confronted us to slow us down is never an issue. When COVID-19 came, we had to speak to some of the consultants. At first, nobody talked to us because maybe they thought COVID-19, you catch it by the phone, and then eventually, we did virtual whatever, whatever. And when we met with the people at the World Bank after, you know, the whole heat of the pandemic and so on, they came.

The then Permanent Secretary and I sat with them, and I told them the history of that area, the distant history and the present history. And I begged them, I don't think I went down on my knees, but I begged them to give us another chance. And one week after they came, they wrote to the Ministry of Finance, and the records would show that telling them because they were the cost had gone up because with COVID-19, there was a lot of whatever. Inflation may not be the appropriate word, but the cost of things went up, and they gave us that, and so I had to go back to the Cabinet and ask them to approve the cost overrun. Nowadays, cost overrun is an everyday thing; everything we do, every grass we break, has a cost overrun, but in those days, we were very careful about cost overrun.

And when I satisfied my Minister for Finance that, you know, because of COVID-19 and so on, it was necessary, he agreed. And so if we didn't save it **(applause)**, then there would be no Tourism Competitiveness to be in a pipeline, and I challenge that anytime, bring your facts and bring your dates, there would have been no project they called so. I was the one who was not there in the beginning. But when I saw it was a tourism project, I begged for it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to balance myself here. Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Carriacou who spoke of quite a few glowing things that happened, and, well, I haven't seen all of them. I'm happy for that. **(Applause)** I am happy. However, Mr. Speaker, the CCRIF money was given 14 days after Hurricane Beryl, and, you know, stupid people like me, we're wondering why. Why did the directors from the CCRIF Insurance have to call here and beg us to use the money after they gave us 14 days? After we had enough time to sit down and plan, and the visionaries, I don't know where they were hiding at the time, but they should have used their skills to assist them in coming up with a design and so on and so on and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about the GCREWS Project, which is another favourite of ours. The Grenada Climate Resilience Water Sector Project is valued at $125 million. This project was signed in 2018. The consultant visited in 2019, and I'm always willing to see if I'm wrong, I'm wrong. Then, perhaps, COVID-19 came and we had a break and the project was, how you call it, a six-year project, and so it was in several areas in Mirabeau, in Victoria, and in Saint Patrick. There was also an expansion for Gouyave and Carriacou, and maybe I missed one somewhere, but this was a very important project to bring water to areas that normally would not get **(applause)**, Mr. Speaker, and that was envisaged, the work was done by NAWASA and by the relevant persons in the Government ministry, and today we have that project. **(Applause)** So, whoever is responsible for bringing it thus far, kudos and compliments to you. But remember, it only came in the pipeline because we put it there in the pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to move quickly to the people who have been instrumental in me being here and who have consistently served me because they know, I think they

understand that you can't do everything. I can't do everything. But several projects, the medical station started under us and completed, so that one was completed too short after they came into office for them to steal that one. **(Time bell rings)**

Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, can I ask for five minutes? **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** I have 10 more? Well, I'm good.

Mr. Speaker, yes, so the Medical Station. I want to thank my colleagues for agreeing to purchase the then Victoria Hotel so that we can develop it into an incubator. That's the one I learned. I think that's the word. That is when I learned what an incubator was, and we had plans for that place, and we started to refurbish it.

There was somebody with a contract, and he was doing the work all this kind of slow, too, and the contract was taken away from him. That's the Government's prerogative. I haven't said a word in public about it, because that's the Government's right to take away. But if you take away the contractor, then you need to ensure that there is somebody who can continue the work.

I well remember, in a former NDC time, when we built a daycare centre in Victoria, it was supposed to be a two-story school. So the daycare was on at the bottom, and they were supposed to go up with the library on the top, and elections came, and we lost, and NDC came into office, and they spent five years, and not one nail was put down. The same NDC now with the same philosophy.

You know, I'm surprised that they take on some of the projects that were in our hands, but there are some they won't touch with a 10-foot rod. I don't know if they're going to touch the Victoria Hotel, but they certainly didn't touch that one. We came back and we completed it, Mr. Speaker. So, I don't know what is going to happen to the Victoria Hotel, but at this time, nothing is happening.

Also, and I have… In case they want to say, I have the exhibit here to show, and it's the last one I have to speak about. The time that these were drawn was after June 2022. That project is an NNP Administration, not NPP, not a party, but the Administration's project.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was a contract signed with a gentleman under the Ministry of Infrastructure to expand the Landing Area for the Fishermen of Waltham. A contract was signed, and I don't know what the details were between the contractor and what, but up to now, two and a half years, three years, whatever you call it, it has not been touched.

I asked in the Finance Committee Meeting whether we were going to have it or not, and the Prime Minister, who was chairing the meeting at the time, said he would check. I haven't received an answer. I looked up. I looked down. I looked sideways, and it is not there.

Mr. Speaker, I saw large numbers for the farmers, and I'm happy for that. **(Applause)** But there are farmers who are not getting. And if I… I don't think it's appropriate to call names here, but those who I notice are not getting it are those who are affiliated with NNP. So I hear people say we are nonpartisan. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** Anybody could say that, but it's true. It's true. I can give you a list. I can give you a list, and you can check it out. You can check it out.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting for that. We're still waiting for some people whose roofs got damaged by Hurricane Beryl, and they have not received relief. I know everything takes time, so we're waiting. We are waiting, but I just want to mention that some people have been waiting for housing material for a long time, and they claim that people who came after them are getting it. I don't know. I can't say, but I hope that at some point soon they will have that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the Nutmeg Museum in St. Mark. I am proud of the role I played in supporting and getting it started **(applause)**, and I think it's a wonderful thing for the parish as well as the nutmeg industry, the owners.

I also wish Mr. Speaker, in closing, to extend, I did that already, greetings to all women and girls, and to thank my constituents again and to let them know that my love, my support, my commitment is always with them, Mr. Speaker, and I will do my very best to ensure that they received the best they can receive given the circumstances, and they have to understand that the mandate had been passed, by persons in authority who say you did not get because you didn't tell us who you are or which side you are on.

(Inaudible comment by Members) I didn't say it. I didn't say it. We have it on tape. **(Laughter)** So it means now, I can't tell them to say they are who they aren't. I don't know what to tell them, but they are there and they're Grenadians and they're suffering just like everybody else.

I want to thank my colleagues on the Opposition Side, but we are a force to be reckoned with, because when you have God on your side **(applause)**, and when you care about people, who can be against you? Who can be against you? So, before they say we're calling God's name, I know I'm not calling it in vain because I have seen it myself.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I almost forgot the Bonair Bridge. The designs for the Bonair Bridge were put together somewhere in about 2020. Somewhere in 2019 or 2020, we would see dialogue and community engagement for the Bonair Bridge. What is interesting is that when meetings were held, there were some faces I had never seen. They never came to make an input until their party won, and then they came.

If you're interested in a bridge, you're interested in a bridge. If you're interested in serving the people, then let us serve the people. But, you know, what we do? Lip service. That's where we serve. We serve our own mouths. We serve our lips, and we have our people who are hurting out there. We have people who need support. We have farmers. We have fisherfolk as big as the numbers are on paper. We still have others who need it.

I want to say that if we are really honest about caring for people and loving people, let's do the right thing. Let's do what we have to do and really and truly serve people. Again, I thank St. Mark, and my love is with you. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Mark. Is it the light of the MP for St. Patrick East? **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Is it? I now invite the MP for St. Patrick East to take the floor.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, Honourable MP. Proceed, please.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, again. I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to all Members of this Honourable House who have contributed to the important Motion. I particularly commend those who have engaged constructively in genuinely criticising the Budget, thereby helping to elevate the debate, the consciousness, and understanding of our people.

This debate is a testament to the democratic process and our collective commitment to the people of Grenada. **(Applause)** However, Mr. Speaker, I must take this opportunity to address and correct some grossly misleading statements made by the Opposition. We have no doubt that these statements were made deliberately to hide the truth and keep some segments of our population uninformed.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke of economic decline in the global economy and here in Grenada, citing the World Economic Report as published….

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP. Just come to the bench, please.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please come to the bench. Join us here, please.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Join you?

(Honourable Dennis Cornwall approached the Clerk's Table to discuss with Mr. Speaker and the Clerk privately)

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that the Leader of the Opposition spoke on economic decline in the global economy and here at home, in

Grenada, citing the World Economic Report as published by the IMF. Mr. Speaker, the World Economic Report, however, tells a very different story.

Grenada's economy continues to grow with positive GDP expansion. In layman's terms, Mr. Speaker, the economic pie is growing and not declining. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, we can excuse the goodly lady for being new to the role of Opposition Leader, but what we can't excuse is that she has been around as a senior government minister for many years. Yet, she does not appear to know or understand the difference between economic growth and economic decline or what the intention is. Is it to mislead or to deceive the population?

Runaway Inflation

Mr. Speaker, like economic growth, our friends on the "Other Side" either do not understand the concept of inflation or spread misinformation.

The Grenada Education Enhancement Project (GEEP)

Mr. Speaker, we heard that funding for the St. David's Roman Catholic Secondary School and St. Andrew's Anglican Primary School was secured by the NPP Government, another blatant untruth. The loans for these two projects were negotiated by our Administration and signed by me as Minister for Finance in April of 2024. **(Applause)** I have here with me the evidence with my signature attached of the loan agreement. So, those of you who would want to at least have a look at it, I can make it available to Parliament so you can see that I was the one who actually signed this loan. These loans for the two projects were negotiated under my Administration and signed by me, and I showed you the evidence. Mr. Speaker, permit me to share this document with you.

Fiscal Management and Government Spending

Mr. Speaker, contrary to claims of quantum fiscal mismanagement and fiscal deterioration, our finances are well managed. **(Applause)** This reminds me of the Opposition's claim that the Government will collapse in the first six months after the 2022 elections, then in one year, then in another year and a half, now two and a half years. They have been singing a different tune, yet that tune is unsubstantiated.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the most extravagant of these claims is a budget of over $2.1 million for overseas travel, hosting, and entertainment by the Prime Minister. This is a lie. Mr. Speaker, if I'm permitted to use that word. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Parliament, especially those of us who claim to be religious leaders, should do better. **(Applause)**

That said, official engagement, whether domestic or international, is necessary for securing investments, strengthening diplomatic ties, and advancing Grenada's development agenda. Every trip or every service is for a strategic purpose.

Budget Loan Authorisation and Financing the Deficit

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is trying its best to mislead the nation.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: I hate to stop you, but we need to take a three-minute recess to get the matter resolved.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: I didn't get you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: To get a matter resolved.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Okay.

House adjourned at 3:39 p.m.

House resumed at 3:53 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated. This Parliament once more reconvene. Honourable Members and those in the gallery, you notice I called the recess because

when the Honourable MP for St. Patrick began to address the House, I noticed that neither the Prime Minister nor the MP for St. George North West were around. So I called the recess to create this space to give the two gentlemen a chance to make their contribution to the debate.

If the Honourable MP for St. Patrick East had continued, then the Honourable MP for St. George North West, nor the Prime Minister, would have had a chance to make a contribution to the debate. Right. So, hence the delay. It took me longer than three minutes, but this is where we are.

I am now awaiting the other two Members to make their contribution to the debate. Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and a pleasant afternoon to you. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't see any of the Members of the Opposition present, and the only one who has not contributed to the debate is a Member of Parliament for St. George North West. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** No, I think it's fine. I think I'm being heard clearly.

Mr. Speaker, just so that we are clear, if I speak. I will use my prerogative to conclude the debate as Prime Minister. **(Applause)** So I am prepared to seek clarification. I'm not sure whether you were able to ascertain the whereabouts of the Member of Parliament for St. George North West. I'm happy to give him the opportunity to make his contribution to the debate. So if you need to take an additional recess to ascertain that he wishes to do so, I am fine, but if not, I will exercise my prerogative as the Prime Minister, and obviously, we don't want to conclude the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP. I did contact both you and Honourable MP for St. George North West on the issue, and I expect him to be here if you want, you can make this contribution to the debate. I suggest that you proceed.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Dickon Mitchell

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and pleasant afternoon to everyone. I take it, Mr. Speaker, that my time is an hour and a half.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, according to the Standing Orders.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: So, Mr. Speaker, I joined with my colleagues on "This Side" of the House, as well as the colleagues on the "Other Side" and the Independent Member for the Town of St. George in making my contribution to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures as presented by the Honourable MP for St. Patrick East and the Member of Parliament, sorry, and the Minister for Finance under the theme "Grenada – Resilient and Rising".

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by expressing my profound appreciation. I think, first, today, Minister for Finance, the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, the Chief Budget Officer, and other officials at the Ministry of Finance for the enormous work that they've done in presenting the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and in the presentation made by the Minister for Finance. I think they deserve significant acknowledgement. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, they did so bearing in mind that we had a traumatic national event of Hurricane Beryl on the 1st of July, followed by significant rainfall that caused significant challenges to us in November, and also in the midst of the piloting of new financial software, particularly the budget software used for the preparation of the budget. And, as was disclosed in the Finance Committee meeting, it was the first time that the budget software was being used. **(Applause)** It's called Questica, and I want to again thank the team for being able to, with the time constraints that they face, use the software to present the budget. I think, although this is the first time, it certainly makes navigating the

Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, as well as the Summary Report, a lot easier for all of us.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my gratitude to the Minister for Finance and his team and to commend them for the excellent job done in difficult circumstances. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I rise first in my capacity as Member of Parliament for the Virgin Parish, St. David. And I want to start by thanking all of the residents of St. David for the significant support shown to me as MP and shown to Grenada over the last year.

The staff at the parliamentary office, and we've also got some relatively new staff, so both the outgoing and incoming staff.

I also want to thank the members of the National Democratic Congress in St. David, the constituency branch, the polling division groups and all of the social sporting community groups that have worked with me towards delivering and fulfilling the mandate given to me by the people of St. David.

I do want to specially thank the National Democratic Congress, because sometimes we shy away from accepting that we are in office because of a party. It is the parliamentary system of democracy, true political parties that allow us, except when we decide to become independent, to be in parliament. I don't think we have a great history of independence being elected as an independent and coming to Parliament. They tend to come on a party ticket, and then when things get rough, they become dependent.

So I am not going to underappreciate the significance of the fact that we here, on "This Side" of the House, are members of the National democratic Congress and we were elected on a National democratic Congress ticket **(applause)**, and that we were given the mandate in 2022 as party members of the National democratic Congress.

I want to express our profound gratitude to the citizens of Grenada for the last year and a half. We've had a turbulent year. We started 2024 on the high of celebrating our 50th Anniversary of Independence, that joy was quickly robbed with the passage of hurricane Beryl, particularly for citizens of Carriacou, Petite Martinique and St. Patrick, but we navigated those turbulent waters, and the resilience of our people has shown true.

Motions: 2025 Budget Debate
Honourable Dickon Mitchell

I want to thank the Cabinet Office and the team of men and women who sit in a cabinet with me, including our Parliamentary Secretaries, Ms. Francis and Mr. Quinc, and I seek your leave to acknowledge them by name as part of the governance of this country. I could not think of a better group of men and women (applause) to be serving at this time. I want to recognise and thank them for their fearless service, their unwavering commitment, and support to the people of Petite Martinique, Carriacou and Grenada.

MP for St. George North East. I think he summed it up best when he talked about his experience in Petite Martinique and Carriacou, and seeing MP for Carriacou and Petite Martinique himself giving away the generator that was sent for him to the elderly home because we are about putting people first **(applause)**, not ourselves first.

And so. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a people's budget, because we are interested in the people's economy and see. And so, Mr. Speaker, with your leave, since we normally have to go to a reference, this is a book, it's one of the New York Times bestsellers, and it's called the "Deficit Myth". I said before, Mr. Speaker, that if I had to service debt or service the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I would service the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, if you have to borrow to service the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, we will borrow.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance in his presentation made it abundantly clear, as clear as outside is now, that the budget is fully financed **(applause)**, and the Honourable MP for the great south went to some length to explain basic accounting in relation to simple concepts like your current account surplus. But, we are not hiding and generalising. We can refer to the actual budget documents, which all of us have in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance made it clear that of the $357 million deficit in the overall fiscal package presented, that, that deficit is financed, first by a drawdown of $287 million from the consolidated fund. **(Applause)** Now, what does that mean?

It simply means, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of Grenada has in its bank accounts savings of $287 million that it intends to use to finance the projected shortfall

between the revenue it expects to collect in 2025 and the money it intends to spend. So let me say that again.

A budget is a plan. The team at the Ministry of Finance projects the amount of revenue it expects to get. Where does the revenue come from? Basically, from taxpayers' money from the VAT, from customs duties, from property tax, and from income tax.

So if we expect to get $100 from all of this for a year, but we intend to spend $120, there's a deficit of $20. If we have $15 saved in a Consolidated Fund, we can spend the $15, so it gives us $115. There is a $5 difference. Therefore, we will borrow the $5, and we will get the $120 of actual financing that you need.

So when the Minister for Finance says the budget is fully financed, he didn't just say so. He actually pointed to the source of financing. He pointed to the fact that a drawdown of $287 million from the Consolidated Funds will be used. So I want the nation to appreciate that. It means in accordance with the fiscal prudence and the saving for a rainy day, and your understanding that we need to live conservatively, and the sue-sue culture, and putting aside, there is a saving of $287 million that the Government can draw on to finance the budget. I want to commend the Minister for Finance and his team for their fiscal management. **(Applause)**

The part of the financing, Mr. Speaker, comes clearly from the Regional Securities Market (RSM). Again, Mr. Speaker, those things are clearly spelt out in all of the documentation that has been provided to us. This is nothing new or novel. Every year, long before we came into office, the Government raises money on the Regional Security Market, and these bonds are refinanced every year at every budget cycle. So, that happens, and sometimes the amount goes up, sometimes the amount goes down, and there is roughly $50 million of that that is going to be refinanced or raised, so the budget can be fully financed.

That's why I started by calling it the "Deficit Myth", Mr. Speaker, because it's a myth. The Budget is fully financed. The $287 million is in the Consolidated Fund and if or when required, those funds will be used to ensure that the plan expenditure of the

Government can take place. So I wanted to make that clear, Mr. Speaker, because the presentation of the Minister for Finance is clear.

All of the documents which was supplied to each Member of this Honourable House makes that clear. So, Mr. Speaker, really and truly, there is a song and dance about borrowing, and although we have not yet sought to consider the Hospital Loan Authorisation Bill, I will take the opportunity since we speak about borrowing to deal with this one time.

Mr. Speaker, to borrow, we need legal authority, and the legal authority must come from this Parliament. We have made clear that we intend to pursue the construction of a climate-smart new hospital. **(Applause)** To do so, we have to secure the funds for doing so. We're not joking around about this issue. We are serious about it, and therefore, this year, Mr. Speaker, we intend to, if necessary, contract the loan so that we have the financing in place, and hence the reason for coming to Parliament to seek the authorisation.

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, we are transparent. We are clear. We are coming and laying before this House and therefore before the public, any borrowings that we need to do. We are not going and trying to, in some back room, raise borrowings or debt on behalf of the people of Grenada without the people knowing about it. So, again, there is no need for us to believe a lot of noise in the markets about whether or not…

Mr. Speaker: Is it a Point of Order?

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes

Mr. Speaker: Point of Order?

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker

Mr. Speaker: Okay, Dr. Mitchell.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I make a serious Point of Order as to what is really happening in this House at this particular time. I just need clarity because there is clearly a breach of the fundamental rules of the Parliament.

I want to know what this situation is as far as the budget motion mover and who is closing to the debate. I just want to know what's happening, Mr. Speaker…

Mr. Speaker: The…

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: … Because as a serious Member of this House, I believe it is necessary for us to obey the rules of the House.

Mr. Speaker: All right. The question is asked, yes.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I need to know exactly what is happening because that will determine what I do relative to my own situation in this House at this time

Mr. Speaker: Right. The Honourable Prime Minister has decided that he will be the one to close the debate.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Okay. Mr. Speaker, listen. Is it that the Prime Minister may wish to close the debate? The mover of the Motion has to first decide that he has to give the Prime Minister or whoever it is the responsibility to close. So is the mover of the motion agreeing and deciding that he would not be able to speak going forward? Although… Because… Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance got up and started to move the Motion to close the debate, and that is his fundamental right as the Minister for Finance. We are all equals here in this House, you know, whether Minister, Prime Minister…

Mr. Speaker: Doctor Mitchell

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes. Mr. Speaker. This is a serious statement, Mr. Speaker, here, and I really wish… We need to obey the rules of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Doctor Mitchell, the Speaker is on his feet.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, go ahead

Mr. Speaker: Now, let me just read it for the benefit of the House. Right? We're talking about the Standing Orders, and you will see that it is not the Minister, it is the Prime Minister who makes the decision. I will read what the Standing Order says. I will read it for the hearing of everyone.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no, Dr. Mitchell, the Speaker is on the floor. Let me do what I said I am doing.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Well, Mr. Speaker, you're getting mad with me.

Mr. Speaker: No. I'm not getting mad with you.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes. Well, your voice… You're starting to shout

Mr. Speaker: I'm on the floor.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Mitchell, let me read.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Obey the rules.

Mr. Speaker: I'm reading the rules.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, you are an umpire.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Mitchell, I am reading the rules. Allow me to…

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: You are an umpire. You are not a Member of the Government

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Mitchell, don't argue with the Speaker. I am reading the rules.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I am arguing with the Speaker, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Could you please turn off your mic, Dr. Mitchell, and allow me…

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I am. I am not the…

Mr. Speaker: Right, so let me read the rules

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, obey the rules.

Mr. Speaker: The rules say, Standing Order, No. 40 (5). I want everybody to listen. "The Minister finally concluding the debate, whether the Prime Minister, the Minister for Finance or any other Minister designated by the Prime Minister,… 'Designated by the Prime Minister'… may speak for one and a half hours in addition to

his earlier speech on the Budget if he had already so spoken." Designated by whom? The Prime Minister.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker…

Mr. Speaker: So, it's not the Minister's decision. It's the Prime Minister's decision.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Let me just make this point. The Minister for Finance got up already. What are you talking about? That has already gone. We've gone past that. The Minister for Finance got up to close the debate. That is what he did. If this was decided before, then the Prime Minister would get up at the appropriate time, whoever the Minister designate. He has to designate. I don't care who it is. He is the mover of the Motion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Right.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: And therefore, what you're talking about is a decision that the Prime Minister makes. The Prime Minister is no boss in this House. He is just a Member of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Mitchell

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker. He is just a Member of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP, please resume your seat.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I heard the Prime Minister say he wants to…

Mr. Speaker: Please resume your seat.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I heard the Prime Minister say he wants to close…

Mr. Speaker: Please resume your seat, Dr. Mitchell.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, you are always saying "resume your seat".

Mr. Speaker: Resume your seat, please.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: I am your little boy.

Mr. Speaker: Because I am standing and you're standing.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes, because you are not obeying the rules of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I just read it.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: You are not. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** The Minister for Finance… I wouldn't be talking to a little boy.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: The Minister for Finance…

Mr. Speaker: Please resume your seat.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: The Minister for Finance… Listen, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something, 40 years I spent in this House, and you cannot break the rules of the House with impunity. You cannot do that.

Mr. Speaker: Allow the speaker to speak, please.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Well, I've done so, and I'm making a point…

Mr. Speaker: But, you're on the floor. You are not the Speaker.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: The Minister for Finance got up and started moving a Motion to close the debates. Therefore, he has that right. I have never stood up for the Minister for Finance, but in this case, I have no choice because this is the fundamental rule.

And anything else that happens here, Mr. Speaker, I will not be part of this, because my legacy will imply that I stood when these fundamental rules of the House were being broken, and I've participated in this. That… I would… That would not be part of my legacy in the twilight of my representation and services in the Parliament of this country, Mr. Speaker.

I really wasn't looking for this, but it appears that I have no choice. As one who has spent his life in this Parliament, 40 years going on 41, and to see the rules being broken with impunity, I have a difficulty, Mr. Speaker. You can throw me out, you know? That is a simple matter. You can throw me out.

Mr. Speaker: Dr. Mitchell. Honourable MP for St. George North West, can you please turn off your mic?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister, you please proceed.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: So… So… Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Just hold on, Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am rising now on a matter of principle…

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: … and in relation to…

Mr. Speaker: No, no. It's either for clarity…

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: I am rising on the matter…

Mr. Speaker: or a Point of Order.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: … of clarity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The rules are clear.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that one Member of this House started closing the debate. **(Applause)** Mr. Speaker, for some reason, you were notified of a change. Mr. Speaker, you called the Member to you. You spoke to the Member. The Member returned to his seat and continued closing the debate. Mr. Speaker, obviously, you had additional instructions, and so you stopped the Member. You paused the debate of the Member, the contribution, and the closing of the Member. You came to the back, Mr. Speaker, and you engaged with us. Mr. Speaker, and then you came back and you

allowed another Member of this House to start closing again. Mr. Speaker, it would be impossible to sit and partake in this.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard it if we want to leave, leave. That's not the point, Mr. Speaker…

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Mr. Speaker, the point is…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: We started listening to the closure of the debate, and it appears that you had other instructions.

Mr. Speaker: You are repeating yourself. You made…

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: … the point, please take your seat. Right. Honourable Prime Minister, please continue.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take it we should allow the colleagues to depart.

(Members of the Opposition took leave of the Chamber)

(Applause)

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: I will sit to allow my dear friend from St. Mark to take her time. **(Laughter)**

(Inaudible comments by Member)

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: I'd like to invite the Honourable Members for the Town of St. George to take up the position of Opposition Leader **(laughter)**, since there is no one else in the House. But I can do so. But, I would like to thank him for staying and keeping some dignity to the process.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was saying I was elected by the people of St. David, and so I think it's incumbent on me to start by simply reporting on some of the accomplishments in the parish of St. David. Mr. Speaker, over the period we built through the, I want to emphasise this because I heard the MP for the Town of St. George talking about caretaker, and the MP did this. He said he heard the member for the constituency of St. George South East talk about "I did this as MP", and I think he knew what the MP was saying was that through the various Government agencies, vice representation they were able to achieve.

So I want to keep my language discipline by saying through the Ministry of Housing, Social and Community Development, led by our great sister, Senator Gloria Thomas **(applause)**, and the Ministry of Mobilisation Implementation and Transformation led by the Honourable MP for the great south **(applause)**, we were able to build 79 homes in St. David during the period. Housing assistance and material distribution were given to 237 persons.

The WASH Programme continued, Mr. Speaker. We, through a pilot stage, constructed 37 bathrooms and toilets in the village of Belle Isle, and we've since moved to the villages of Berrotte and Belle Plain, where 33 units are under construction. In Corinth, in a small village known as the Coconut, there are another 13 units under construction.

I want to pause for a little, Mr. Speaker, to point out, as the MP for the South said, when we build bathrooms, Mr. Speaker, we are not seeking to give our people the worst. We are ensuring that bathrooms are built they tiled, and painted, and that the faucets, the sink, the toilets, the plumbing, and the septic tank are all done. The bathrooms are painted. They are built with concrete roofs so that people can, in fact, put tanks above the roofs to assist them with rainwater harvesting, and we work with NAWASA through an MoU to ensure that they are actually supplied with water.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the dignity of particularly our women and girls and particularly your senior citizens, we ensure that we move them from a state of open defecation in pit latrines or sometimes people still bathe in rivers. They still fetch water from the rivers. We can't pretend those things are not happening in far larger numbers than they should be, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to compliment the team who are instigating the WASH Programme. Not only in St. David, but the programme has also spread to St. Andrew, St. Andrew North East, North West, and, I believe, South West as well. And the report that I have indicates that in the case of St. Andrew, there are over 40 units that have been constructed.

The WASH Programme is being run through a non-profit organisation that is partnering with the Government and NAWASA, called Nation Builders Inc. It's a pity that the Member of Parliament for St. Andrew South East has followed the leader, leader, leader, and left the Chamber because she inquired from me during the Finance Committee meeting as to whether any subvention had been given to Nation Builders, and I told her I would report back to her. So even though she isn't here, I hope her constituents are listening because the WASH Programme is taking place in a constituency not because of her but because of this Government. Which cares for the people **(applause)** in that constituency.

And so, for the record, Mr. Speaker, I am reporting that over the period, EC$4,535,000 has been allocated as a one-off subvention to Nation Builders Inc. to support the WASH Programme throughout various constituencies. So I hope, at least, that her constituents, who are either following the presentation online or in person, can

hear of the programme, and they can continue to look forward to our support for them notwithstanding the absence of their MP.

Mr. Speaker, street lights. Again, I will point out that through working with the Ministry of Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation, 215 solar street lights… **(Inaudible comment by a Member) (Applause)** The MP seem surprised. 215 solar lights have been installed in various parts of St. David, ranging from Mango Hole, Après Tout, Badia, Coals Gap, Vincennes, Mt. Tranquil, Belle Isle, Syracuse, Corinth House and Scheme, Mon Repos, Marlmount, Belle Vue and Laura Land. So again, to that working team who've collaborated between MIT, the MP's office and constituents of St. David, I want to thank you, and we obviously, as the Minister said, because they are solar lights, we are not consuming any fossil fuels, and it is a sustainable project utilising the God-given natural sources that we have.

We completed the construction of the Vincennes Community Centre on July 25th through the kind sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Church, which allowed us to use the site, and the People's Republic of China in Grenada. I want to commend them both for their support.

We refurbished the Corinth Community Centre in June 2024, and, again, this was done through the auspices of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, led by Senator Gloria Thomas.

We also refurbished the Old Westerhall Community Centre, and largely, this was done through donations from Heng Sheng Property Development Limited, which is the developer that's developing the Levera project and other donations by other supporters. So this was done with no government assistance whatsoever, but it is not the first community centre that we've done in St. David with no Government assistance whatsoever.

We completed the Berrotte Community Centre and the upgrade of the playing field with no government assistance. **(Applause)** And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise that as MP my job is to try and find sources wherever and whenever to support our

residency in St. David without necessarily drawing on the purse-strings of the Government of Grenada.

And so, I want to take the opportunity to thank the Heng Sheng Property Development Group and the Roman Catholic Church, who have been partnering with us in allowing us to use some of their sites. Mr. Speaker, we launched a number of play parks for our young children in St. David, La Sagesse being the largest. I think we could all accept, at the opening of that event, the tremendous joy that we saw from children, parents and grandparents who had the opportunity to use the play park. We've since established in Berrotte and Marlmount. We intend to also have in Bellevue, as well.

Again, this was achieved through a kind of complementary support from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and Grenada. For the record, Mr. Speaker, we intend as a Government to ensure that play parks are constructed throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

The Minister for Youth and Sports and her team are committed to ensuring that this gets done, particularly in places like St. John, Carriacou, Petite Martinique, and St. Mark., because, Mr. Speaker, while we may be a majority Government, we still intend to take care of those constituents who voted for the "Other Side" because as we pointed out, we are the Government for all of Grenada. We put the people of Grenada first. **(Applause)** In addition to the play parks, for example, La Sagesse. We've installed safety railings, benches, tables, and additional green space, including a flower garden, so that our residents can continue to use these green spaces.

A number of infrastructural projects are taking place. In the interest of time, I wouldn't necessarily go through all of them, but I want to highlight the construction of Block Five of St. Dominic's Roman Catholic School, which is being built under the Basic Needs Trust Fund or what is commonly known as the BNTF. The project cost is $1.4 million, and the funding is coming via the Caribbean Development Bank and the Government of Grenada. We expect that the contract will wrap up before the end of the year.

Right next to St. Dominic's R. C. School is the Laura Retaining Wall, which is a major retaining wall because we run the risk of the road collapsing, and so access the Laura as a village is actually threatened, and so we are building a significant retaining wall there at a cost of about EC$500,000.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Agriculture, the Marine Economy, Forestry, etcetera, the Honourable Lennox Andrews and Member of Parliament for St. Andrew South West, has been very keen to ensure that the land… We have a lot of regularisation to do, Mr. Speaker. We have public service regularisation to do. We have land regularisation to do.

And so the La Calome Village… Now, La Calome was the settlement built via the compliments of the Bolivian and the Republic of Venezuela since post-Hurricane Ivan. The homes were built, and persons were allowed to take possession of the homes. But some 20 years later, people are still without title for these homes, and so the Minister and his team, together with the MPs Office is working to ensure that we can quickly regularise the situation and give persons the opportunity to own their homes **(applause)**, and to ensure that they empower and that they can mortgage it. They can improve it. They can sell it. They could pass it on to their loved ones when they depart.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Agriculture and his team distributed in excess of EC$23 million to farmers and fisherfolk in the post-Hurricane Beryl Income Support Programme. **(Applause)** For the district of St. David and St. George South, some 627 farmers receive cheques totalling 3,064,500 in income support. **(Applause)** I have the other statistics that I would simply use because, although I am the MP for St. David, I'm also the Prime Minister, and it's important because I want everybody to appreciate what everyone got.

In the case of St. Patrick, in the north, some 1326 farmers received payments totalling EC$7,029,000. **(Applause)** In the case of St. Andrew, which is known as the Eastern Zone, some 2130 farmers received cheques totalling EC$10,863,000. In the case of the Western Zone, some parts of St. George and St. John, some 522 farmers receive cheques totalling EC$2.7 million for a grand payout of EC$23,899,500.

Nursery managers and agro-processors also benefited under this programme. In the case of agro processors, 44 received cheques totalling EC$202,500 and nine nursery managers received cheques totalling EC$40,500.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about supporting farmers and when we talk about recognising that they would face the hardship brought in by Hurricane Beryl, and when everybody wants to do what happened to the CCRIF money and spend the money, we spend money. We gave it to our farmers, to agro processors, and to nursery managers. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, we have, in St. David, distributed assistance to a number of persons through donations and support from individuals. To underprivileged students, we've distributed 30 laptops. We have distributed over 165 back-to-school supply packages during the September period. We have distributed over 75 post-Hurricane Beryl hampers to persons who were impacted. During Christmas time, we distributed over 800 Christmas hampers totalling a value of EC$100,000. We've executed our kids' tree lighting events in the parish and distributed over 500 toys to children.

We sponsor our sports. All primary and secondary school sports we contribute to as a sponsorship, including the Crochu Primary School, which is in St. Andrew South East district, strictly speaking. So, whether it's the Relay Meet, whether it's the football clubs and the supplies, whether it's support to the Marlmount Fashion Design and Training under the Ministry of Social and Community Development.

I want to spend a little time speaking about this, Mr. Speaker, because this is a training that was organised by a volunteer public servant who had offered her time to organise the training, to get the trainers, to coordinate the programme, to make sure that we can get the NTA approval for certification, to do all of the work necessary without being paid to give young women, middle age women, and senior citizens women the opportunity to learn to sew.

When I went to visit them, one of the older ladies said to me, "Thank you for not having this automatic youth 35 age and under programme." She always wanted to sew, but I never received the opportunity, and now she's probably in her 60s, getting the

opportunity to pursue something that you always wanted to do. I highlight this, Mr. Speaker, because in Grenada, we need to learn to train and retrain and constantly learn. The notion that school and education are only for young people is something that we need to push back against.

So this training is nearing completion and we expect that it would be certified, and I have given a commitment to them that I will support them informing a corporative so that they can actually form a business and offer their services to the public because it is difficult to find someone to alter a pants, a shirt, a shoes in Grenada, and so we need to encourage these women. Many of them, Mr. Speaker, are people who dropped out of school, got pregnant in school, who themselves are still suffering physical and domestic violence and abuse, so we need to be able to support them. We, in fact, have one donor already who has offered to help support the corporative, and they are simply waiting on us to be able to continue to support the women.

Support for life skills and training under the Ministry of Social and Community Development. And I want to highlight projects such as the Stop 'N Think with Dr. Neil Chitan which has been held at the Corinth Community Centre to address young men to ensure that we can enable interventions from young men who are at risk who may have anger management issues to ensure that the risk of them getting into contact with the criminal justice system is minimised. And, yes, to the MP for the Town of St George, we welcome your recommendation that it is about crime prevention and early intervention as early as possible, because by the time it gets to the police, we are dealing with crime and we are dealing with likely criminals, and by then it is too late.

If we think that early intervention, education, and support for young men and women are too expensive, I want to leave this fact with us. There are fewer than 20 young men and women at the Bacolet Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre. In fact, let me get the exact number so that, Mr. Speaker, I don't give inaccurate information, but to house these and take care of 18, so the number 18… There are 18 young men and women at the Bacolet Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre: 15 male and three female. Do you know what the staff count is? Do you know how many staff we employed at Bacolet Rehabilitation

Centre? 65. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Let me repeat that. We have 18 young men and women at the Bacolet Rehabilitation Juvenile Centre, 18, but the staff count is 65.

So, if you think educating our young men and women, if you think early Intervention is expensive, you should try housing them after they have come into contact with the criminal justice system. That's a ratio of staff to these young persons, and I'm deliberately refraining from calling them anything other than a five-star hotel. It is more staff for these young men and women than you get in any primary or secondary school in Grenada.

So, the point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is our criminal justice system, if we continue to wait till people become criminals to intervene is going to cost the state 10 times more than it will cost us to intervene at the early stage to educate them, to give them opportunities to empower them, to deal with anger management issue, to make sure that our schools continue to act as a place for civilising and educating and teaching proper behaviour, etcetera

So, I just highlight this, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister for Social and Community Development has talked about things like teaching parenting skills and making sure that we fund most things. We may laugh, and everybody is supposed to know what it is to be a parent, but that's not the case. That is not the case, and so, we need to make sure that we fund most programmes because they are far cheaper than building juvenile rehabilitation centres and not just the staff. We are not talking about the utility, the food, the security, the ground maintenance, all of that comes with it and perhaps a significant risk that they are not rehabilitated, and at that, they end up fully into the criminal justice system.

So we continue, Mr. Speaker, to emphasise early intervention in areas like sports. We have a programme known as the JOYs Cricket School, Journey of Youth, which is currently based at the Laura playing field, which targets primary school children in St. Dominic's R. C., Corinth Government School, St. Theresa's R.C., where they are trained in the proper techniques of playing hardball cricket, not softball cricket, not windball cricket. I say hardball because we need to build resilience and competitiveness into our

young men and women, and cricket is a professional sport with more opportunities for a professional career than ever before in the history of the sport. **(Applause)**

It is an Olympic sport. It will be at the next Olympic Games. There's an opportunity for Grenada to have its own Olympic team cricket team. And so, Mr. Speaker, we should ensure that we invest significantly in cricket, football, and all forms of sports, to ensure that we give our young men and women as early as possible an opportunity at professional careers in those areas.

So when we are lighting all their playing fields, Mr. Speaker, we are giving families the opportunities to come out and watch their young ones play sport after work, to socialise with them, to get physically fit with them. So there is a plan. That plan, the Member for the Town of St. George, the National Sustainable Development Plan explicitly speaks to those issues. We don't just need the infrastructure, but we need to make sure that the club, the primary schools, the secondary schools, that all of that is taking place, so that when they move from primary school, they can go to secondary school, from secondary school to the clubs at the community level, so that we can actually use the playing field that we are putting up all these lights in.

I am emphasising this, and I'm making an open call to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and our communities. We don't need to play cricket at 2 o'clock in the afternoon when nobody is watching the kids, when the sun is hot, because nobody plays professional cricket at those times anymore. Cricket is played under lights so we can bring the kids at five, six teachers also have kids, we can get the parents involved, we can have the support and we can have the games between six and nine when the entire family can come out support, cheer the kids on and ensure that they are safe and they are not left with any predators or others that will take advantage of them and it forces us to be better families in the country and actually pay attention to children rather than always thinking it's the Child Protection Authority or somebody else who needs to help us with bringing up our children. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I've just highlighted this: whether it is medical donation, whether it is support for glasses and medical assistance, or support for small businesses, we are

doing all of this in St. David.

But I pause here, Mr. Speaker, to say that I may invite the residents and constituents of St. David to come down to the Parliament Building and to protest on their behalf because, as the Prime Minister and the Member of Parliament for St. David, I'm yet to be paid this much-talked-about EC$10,000 constituency allowance. **(Laughter)** And it is not a laughing matter, Mr. Speaker.

I want us to appreciate something. I am the Member of Parliament for St. David. I happened to be in the party that won the most seats and was the political leader at the time, and I was made the Prime Minister. There are three branches of the state: the Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. The Executive is responsible to the Parliament. The Parliament is not responsible to the Executive. **(Applause)** So when the Executive passed into law the last budget, that EC$10,000 constituency allowance should be given to an MP, Mr. Speaker, I don't need to open a bank account to get the EC$10,000, whether it's 10,000 in cash, whether it's 10,000 dollars in cheque, you need to give me the money so that represent and help support the people of St. David. **(Applause)** And I can account for the money, whether it's cash, whether it's a cheque, because it's the same thing everybody else has to do. If I spend it I get a receipt for it.

I noticed there are talks about we appreciated it. I haven't heard a single report as to how this money has been spent by Members on the "Other Side", which they got. 10 by 12 is 120,000. We're going into the fifteenth month, but they aren't coming and saying how they spend the money. The Speaker may have it, but account to your people. Explain to them what you've done with the EC$10,000 that the Parliament passed into law and said you will get it.

So, for the record, I have not receive any funding to support my constituents in St. David, and all of what I've done here is through the kind support and generosity of the private sector, international partners, individuals in the constituency, people in the diaspora and in many cases the Prime Minister salary which goes directly into supporting the constituents of St. David.

So I am saying, Mr. Speaker, since my name is "Sue sue" in my capacity as the

Member of Parliament, if I have to sue the Executive to get my EC$10,000, I will sue the Executive on behalf of the members of St. David. **(Applause)** And time is money, so I hope there's an interest component to it.

I also want to make this point, Mr. Speaker, because this is important, and Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique will bear me out on this. I also repeat this: the executive is accountable to the legislature, the legislature is not accountable to the executive. We have no local government in Grenada, Mr. Speaker. So the executive operates from a centralised bureaucracy, and because of that, in many instances, it doesn't have the capacity, and my friend talked a lot about capacity, to be immediately responsive to the needs of constituents. I'm saying that's a fact, but we cannot not address it. So when someone house burns in St. David, they don't run they don't run to the Ministry of Social Community Development. They come to the MP's Office and the Ministry of Social Committee Development door closes at 4:00 p.m., but whether its 2:00 a.m., when their house is burning, or 11:00 p.m., or 10:00 a.m., fire never seems to happen during the day; it's always in the night. They will call the MP, and you are expected to provide some form of immediate relief, whether it's food, whether it's clothing, or whether it's finding a place for them to stay temporarily, and so if the MP offices are not given resources to address some of those needs, until we get to the point where there's local government, then we will continue as a state to be non-responsive the immediate needs of our citizens. This is a serious matter.

In fact, sometimes the Ministry of Social, Housing and Community Development does tell them to go ask the MP. Well, we don't have an EC$70 million budget. The Ministry of Social, Housing and Community Development has it.

So, the point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that when we talk about strengthening the ability of Members of Parliament, and I'm not seeing on "This Side", I'm saying all Members of Parliament, we need to address those issues.

So, you'd see, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister for Finance wisely proposed that MPs' Offices should have a motor vehicle attached to their offices, because you have to run up and down the constituency to address and meet with the needs of your constituents, but

we don't currently have one.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the reasons why we need to strengthen the ability of Members of Parliament to deliver.

I think for the first time, a meaningful salary of EC$5,000 was offered to Members of Parliament last year by this Government. It blows my mind that their Members serving on the "Other Side" for 20 plus years, not just the…. Well, now former Opposition Leader… The Member of Parliament for St. Mark, the Member of Parliament for St. Andrew South East. The Member of Parliament for St. Andrew North East is now a double server. So was it that difficult then to recognise that you need to empower MPs?

If you don't empower the MPs and you don't give them resources, it affects the quality of people to put themselves up to serve. You see what will happen, Mr. Speaker, is that you will never be able to be unshackled and to speak truth to power because you know if one man controls all the resources and those resources come via the political process because you don't have a salary as an MP, you don't have a constituency allowance then you can say anything. You can't get up and say when you decide not to pay the teachers, what you agreed should be paid to them and they marching up, even though you are a former teacher, even though your children are in Presentation College and are being thought by the same teachers, you cannot stand up as the Minister for Education and do what is right, and say this is wrong, I will not stand for a pay the people let they stop the dispute because you know if you do so you don't have no salary as an MP and you don't have no constituency allowance.

I didn't have to do this, Mr. Speaker. We could have said, you know what, now the shoe turned, let us squeeze them. Let us do exactly what they would have done if they were in our position. But we are here because we recognise we need to strengthen democratic governance, and that starts with the Parliament **(applause)**, and it starts with the relationship between constituents and Members of Parliament.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point made by the Minister for Finance about strengthening governance, particularly at the parliamentary level, is important, and I will say one more point and then move on to this.

Mr. Speaker, I had no Parliamentary Office in St. David for months. Do you know why? I had to go and look for a building as a Member of Parliament. I should not have to do that. I shouldn't have to look for an office as a Prime Minister. The Ministers didn't have to go and look for an office as the Ministers.

In fact, the Constitution only recognises two ministerial positions: the Attorney General and the Prime Minister. Everybody else could be a Minister without a portfolio, or the Prime Minister; if he were mad, he could say no other Minister, he and the AG only, as long as he's assured of the support of the MPs in Parliament, he could run the country.

So for months, myself, and the Honourable MP for St. Patrick East, for example, had no office. Eventually, I had to find a building in Permontemps junction, not the most suited, go up steps, so that senior citizens and physically disabled persons are challenged and downstairs is a supermarket, all kinds of things. This is where people come to see the MP, and we pay rent to a private person, and that is the current situation for almost all of the MP offices.

Mr. Speaker, if the Parliament has a permanent home, MPs' offices should be owned by the state. It should be a permanent home and when you no longer the MP you walk out with your personal belonging and the new MP comes in. **(Applause)** So I'm saying for parliamentary democracy perspective, we're going to all seminars and all these kinds of things, we are learning all about the text and interpretation and so on, but we need democracy in action not just in theory.

So I'm saying there should be permanent state-owned facilities that can accommodate the elderly, the physically challenged, the vision impaired, that are permanent homes for Parliamentarians. It's not yours. You serve. This is the office. You lose the incoming MP, who has the opportunity to do so. It will save more money because you don't have to go and worry about getting the new furniture again every time you have to worry about people, as happened, mixing up the MP's office with a party political office.

Mr. Speaker, even though, as we speak, we have a court case going on. When the former Administration decided to contract out the function of the Parliament by giving a management contract, and the matter is sub judice, so I wouldn't say more than the fact

that court cases are going on. That's the kind of thing we have to deal with.

And I'm saying here, so when I talk about me wanting to ensure that we distinguish between the three arms of the state and the capacity in which we serve it is a strong parliamentary democracy, so those kinds of matters do not occur.

Mr. Speaker, I will spend some time now on the various ministerial portfolios, given that I think I only have 34 minutes left. I don't know with the debacle that happened here, whether the clock was running or not, so if it was running, I expect that I'd be given back my 10 minutes or so. I sat patiently. I did not interrupt because I didn't want to contribute in any way, shape, or form to the bacchanal.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start with the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Security, Information, and Disaster Management. It's a lot, Mr. Speaker. I want to highlight some of the departments that sometimes get forgotten, the Information Department; the Government Information Service.

Mr. Speaker, we spent some time, it took a little longer than we would have liked, seeking to reorganise and build the capacity of the Government Information Service, both by bringing new personnel, new and improved equipment, and by enhancing the terms and conditions of service of the employees of the Government Information Service. I want to comment on the Department of Public Administration, Permanent Secretary McQuilkin and her team, the Press Secretary and the team at the Government Information Service for the fantastic job they did during Hurricane Beryl. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just me living at NADMA Headquarters. The Permanent Secretary, Ms. McQuilkin was living there. The Press Secretary was living there. The Senior Administrative Officer, Ms. Rush, was literally living there, and particularly the men and women who work for the Government Information Service lived at NADMA Headquarters to keep the public informed, both before, during and after the hurricane. I think when we talk about unsound heroes, Mr. Speaker, those are the citizens of Grenada who make a difference in the lives of each and every one of us. I really want to commend them for the tremendous work that they did. **(Applause)**

The team at NADMA, Mr. Speaker, similarly, and we have to appreciate particularly the team at NADMA in Carriacou, that they had no homes too, Mr. Speaker, and they have families too. You know, there was a former Commissioner of Police who was heavily criticised when he said police officers are human beings too in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan, but those human beings stayed the course. They did not abandon their posts, and they continued working for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique in very difficult, personal circumstances where they themselves were impacted by the hurricane.

I wanted to thank them again and thank all of the volunteers who helped with the clean-up process, who donated food, clothing and shelter. They were residents of St. David who went up to support the initiatives and NADMA in Carriacou. It was always smooth sailing. There were clearly times when everybody's nerves were afraid. It was a very stressful period, but at the end of the day, what it was showing, Mr. Speaker, is the resilience of Grenadians **(applause)** and the recognition that when the chips are down, if we come together, we can ride out the storm. So when we talk about resilience, it's not a fanciful word. It is the reality of what many people went through.

So, the National Disaster Management Agency, Mr. Speaker, we are planning to transition into a full-fledged statutory body. We don't want NADMA to be known as the "hurricane response entity". We have to deal with all kinds of disasters. We just had the Dolly C run aground. The potential risk of environmental and ecological disaster, hopefully, has been averted, but we need to have an agency that has a wide, overarching, preventative, proactive and fully responsive ability to cope with all types of disasters.

We had an enormous drought, a 15-year drought in the first half of 2024 and immediately after that, we had the hurricane, and a couple of months later, we had the flooding. So we are going to transition NADMA into a full-fledged statutory body, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Government Printery as well. I want to highlight them because again, these aspects of the Government that many people don't pay attention to, but without the printery, we can't even pass the laws, Mr. Speaker. And again, when we got into office, the printery was a river. When the rainfall the sky literally opened over the

Printery. We were able to quickly address the issue in a meeting with the staff, and they also addressed or raised some of the significant HR challenges that they have.

Again, the Department of Public Administration, Permanent Secretary, McQuilkin in the Ministry and other members of the team have been working on addressing the staff at the printery, and they are all going to be coming as part of the regularisation process. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, many of them would have benefited from improvements in terms of conditions of servicing, including salary increases, etcetera, and so I want to emphasise that these small departments are crucial to the effective functioning of the Government.

The Immigration Department, Mr. Speaker. Again, we recently opened six new kiosks at the airport that allow us to quickly and efficiently process citizens of CARICOM, Grenada, the USA, Canada, etcetera, the UAE by simply having the passports read, and they would be able to go through quite efficiently. **(Applause)** We continue, Mr. Speaker, the drive towards the digitisation of those processes.

Similarly, when it comes to things like citizenship, Mr. Speaker, we are transitioning into a digital system so that we can bring significant efficiencies, reduce arbitrary discretion and ensure that we can have more efficient and timely processing of these services to the public. The Passport Office has always, in recent times, led the way, Mr. Speaker, and we want to ensure that other areas in Home Affairs continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, under Home Affairs, the police and prison obviously take up a significant chunk of the budget. At the risk of being repetitive, because the Minister for Finance eloquently addressed it in his presentation, I want to highlight, Mr. Speaker, that we don't just focus on concrete and blocks. We focus on people because you can build concrete and blocks, and end up with white elephants. You can build new infrastructure. You can build new buildings, but if you're not addressing the needs of the people, Mr. Speaker, you're wasting time.

So again, I go back to this book that talks about "The Deficit Myth and the Rise of the People's Economy". The people's economy, Mr. Speaker, is about the people. So let's take the Royal Grenada Police Force. Mr. Speaker, I discovered on my entry into

policing by a police officer who actually sent a message to me indirectly that perhaps since 1994, I have always liked to say that because in 1994 I graduated from Presentation Brothers College, since 1994 the police were waiting for an adjustment to their pay and grade. Now, what's the excuse for it not being done since 1994? What's the excuse?

We indicated that we will address the issue once we get into office. Mr. Speaker, after we concluded negotiations with the various unions, including the Police Welfare Association, we gave a commitment that we would tackle this issue. It is bittersweet because we are happy that we've been able to tackle the issue, Mr. Speaker, but it is mind-boggling that something as simple as pay and grade would have taken 30 years to be addressed. That's an entire generation of policemen. So if you joined the police force in 1994, when you were 30, you retired now, and it wasn't addressed.

So I want to thank the members of the Police Welfare Association, the Department of Public Administration, and the Ministry of National Security for ensuring that we were finally able to bring resolution to this matter. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, an allocation of EC$6.5 million has been put in the 2025 Budget to address this matter. The average constable, which is the lowest rank, Mr. Speaker, is going to benefit from a pay adjustment in excess of EC$700.00 as a result of this. **(Applause)**

But we didn't do just that, Mr. Speaker. We addressed… I don't know how long the Police Headquarters has been on the Fort. I think even as a little boy, I always wondered how the Police Headquarters could be on the Fort since it's one way in, one way out in a narrow road. To me, if you want to take down the high command, you just have to block the road. **(Inaudible comment by Members)**

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation **(applause)** because he, as part of ensuring the Tourism Competitiveness Project, which involves the refurbishment of the Fort and obviously the Police Headquarters, could not remain there, was instrumental in ensuring that the energy needed to get this going happened.

I also want to thank the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance for supporting this initiative. Because you know what is the easiest thing to do, Mr. Speaker?

Go and rent a building. That's always a solution. Go and rent a building, somewhere that is inappropriate. Go and build another wooden building somewhere that's inappropriate. But the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and his team supported the request for us to, in fact, buy the building, refurbish it and put us in a position to move the Police Headquarters. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. This was not budgeted for in 2024. We did the re-allocations, found the funds, and so I believe the Commissioner of Police and his team are due to have an official handing over ceremony at the end of this month. So again, I am making this point. It is both infrastructure and human resources that would make the police effective. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, there are basic things we've had to address from police uniforms for the SSU and the RRU to the police not even having adequate firearms, even though all the criminals have, to not having the fingerprinting machinery that is required to make sure all of the burglars that my distinguish colleague represents can be given their fair day in court. All of this, Mr. Speaker, we have invested in the police in 2024.

The Grenville Police Station, again, Mr. Speaker, we have moved, we have found a building, we are renovating it so that the police can move. I spoke to the contractor today, and I have asked him to do everything in his power to accelerate the completion of the building so that hopefully by the end of this month, at least the major infrastructure work on this building could be completed. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot more to do. Victoria needs addressing. The Coast Guard base is an absolute must for this year. There was a fire there, Mr. Speaker. The base has never been properly addressed since the fire, and the conditions under which the men and women of the Coast Guard operate are not acceptable. We understand that, and we certainly would do everything to accelerate this happening in this budget cycle, Mr. Speaker.

The Prisons, Mr. Speaker. The Commissioner of Prisons always said, not just this one, but the now-retired Commissioner, that they often feel that they are treated as a stepchild. I have indicated to the Commissioner and his team that they are not

stepchildren and that we appreciate that the prisons, in a sense, are the single biggest security risk to the nation. So we don't underappreciate the significant job that the Prison Officers do. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have begun and have made some progress in identifying within the existing site allocation where a new prison will be constructed. **(Applause)** We have done some very conceptual architectural drawings. We are looking at getting to the point where we can have estimates of what this would cost, and then thereafter, we would have to go through the financing and the procurement process. Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise those things because people talk about there is no transformation, and all you talking, and talking, etcetera.

I want to start off by saying, I am happy to place on record our appreciation for the governance of the country over the last 40 years, and for all those who chose to serve, because it is not an easy thing. We appreciate that it is our turn to serve and that we have to learn from the lessons of the past, and that we have to accept things that were good, learn the lessons from them and continue them. That's easy to do. That doesn't take anything out of anyone, and we are happy to do so. So any project that we met, which we recognise is good and needs to be accelerated or continued, we are happy to do so. **(Applause)** That's why the Tourism Competitive Project is going.

But we also have to accept, Mr. Speaker, that in some instances we fell short of where we needed to be. And so, when you have a prison system and a building that was built God knows when, in the 1800s, serving as the prison today, there is no excuse for not having it addressed earlier. Because, as the Honourable MP said, if you left a pregnant treasury, why did you want the gestational period to be beyond nine months? Why wasn't the prison addressed? Why wasn't the pay and grade addressed? Why wasn't the Police Headquarters addressed? Why wasn't the Grenville Police Station addressed adequately? What we want is to hear your recommendations, having had the experience, having seen where you had challenges, so that if you genuinely believe in Grenada, we can take the matter forward. So I was happy and heartened to hear the MP for the Town of St. George talk about areas where he thinks there could be collaboration, transportation being one of them, and I would come to that.

So, Mr. Speaker, all we are saying is if as the distinguished Foreign Minister said, the Opposition Leader does not want to have an illustrious and distinguished career as Opposition Leader, then what we need are the actual proposals, the visioning, the recommendations for how, where and when we can actually do things better for the development for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, not a set of rah, rah, rah and ray, ray, ray…

Actual ideas or concepts because you have the experience. You've had long experience. You've had the benefit of no opposition, 15 seats. You could have changed the Constitution. You could have do this. You could have do that. You could have given MPs a salary. You could have given MPs a permanent home, etcetera, etcetera.

So we know we would not always get it right. We know that there are significant capacity challenges in Grenada, not just in the Government, and we have to be able to tackle these things together. So if we want to lift the level of the debate, let's lift the level of the debate.

I want to go on record by saying that I indicated to the Speaker that I was happy to give some time for the Member for St. George North West the opportunity to enter the House so that he could have his contribution. It's one thing if he wasn't on the compound, but clearly, he was on the compound. Mr. Speaker, I could have predicted this was going to happen, you know. **(Laughter)**

I knew this was going to happen because it is always about mauvay langue, wanting to have the last say, get the attention and distraction from the substantive debate. So even though he has conceded and made someone else the Opposition Leader, the attention must still be on him, and if that can't happen, then all hell has to break loose. It's like the little boy playing cricket. When you bowl him out, he takes the stump, and he runs off, and he says nobody else is playing. **(Applause)**

But the cricket pitch was right behind St. David's R. C. School, and I dealt with a lot of fellas who used to behave just like that, and as little as I am, if you have to run them down below the cocoa and get back the stumps and put it back, and the game has to continue. The game has to continue. **(Applause)** So we are here to work on behalf of

the people, and I notice, every time it gets past 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., maybe it's hunger, so some people always want to run home. As I said the last time, it gets colder at night, and that's when your energy should get up so we can work a little longer on behalf of the people who put us here.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to jump to the issue of transportation. I would like to thank the Permanent Secretary, Browne; the Permanent Secretary, Rhonda Jones; the Permanent Secretary, Lorraine St. Louis; the Chairman of the Transport Commission, Attorney-at-Law Francis Paul; the Deputy Chair, Ms. Jasmine Alexander; and the entire Transport Commission team. I want to recognise former President General of TAWU and former President of the Senate, Mr. Chester Humphrey, for being one of the voices that have always talked about the need to address the state of transportation in Grenada. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental issue that, if not addressed, is going to significantly stymie the development of Grenada, and I want to start with a statistic that the MP for the South gave. He said 400… If I am quoting you wrong, sir, you would correct me. 456 derelict vehicles were moved, and you have another 122 that are tagged. So I want to first start with that, and his plea to our citizens to be responsible.

Mr. speaker, this 456 plus another 122 plus, I am sure hundreds more that have become derelict and have to be tagged are simply sitting in Grenada and it is tax payers money that has to be used to pick them up from the road sides, to pick them up in environmentally sensitive areas and to be able to treat with them and be able to get them off the island. I am making this point to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have gone to the point where the ecology, the environment and the roads of Grenada cannot sustain the level of private motor vehicles that are on the road. We can hide. We can worry about whether we talk the truth, people will vote us out, but I was living before I got into politics, and we will all live after politics. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the truth is, and the Minister for Finance has foreshadowed this in his presentation, we cannot continue with the current transportation policy in Grenada. It is not sustainable. It has already led to significant deterioration of the roadways. We've got

significant gridlock, traffic everywhere you go. We have a lot of motor vehicle accidents, and we will end up like a dumping ground, if we are not already that, for fossil fuel vehicles that no longer have any utility for other persons, and they are dumping them here. So, Mr. Speaker, that's one aspect of the policy discussion.

So I welcome you to sit on a committee, and I am happy to invite the former President General to talk about this issue because it has to be addressed. We're either going to say one vehicle per household, or you can't import vehicles five years and under, or maybe even three years and under. **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Or over… Sorry, older, or, we're going to have to find other ways, which is improving the public transportation system.

So we would start with improving the transportation system, and I want to commend the team for the launch of the school bus pilot. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Speaker, obviously, allocations have been made to support this. And I want to emphasise, it's a pilot. So while it is a pilot, it is free, but for it to be sustainable, it has to be financed, and it has to be paid for.

I just want to give some current statistics of the current transportation system in the country, Mr. Speaker, so we understand what we are facing… If I can find it. I will have to go on memory, and if I am wrong, I will ask the Permanent Secretary to correct me. I believe there are a total of 1,563 registered buses in Grenada, serving 22 zones. Of these 22 zones, nine are underserved, meaning there are very few buses actually plying those routes. I am sure we know some of those. The western zone from St. Patrick. The entire western zone is a challenge.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have approximately 22,000 students going to school. That is 20% of the population. We have a situation where the bus fare for students is less than for adults, but it is the same cost to carry a student as it is to carry an adult. It is the same cost to the operator. So, a lot of our operators make the business decision that I need the extra dollar, so they don't take the students.

Now, in fairness to them, we are not paying their loans. So it's easy to moralise and say, well, you are a wicked busman, you leave the children, and you are going after

the adults. But the truth is, if they cannot pay their loan at the end of the month, the bank is not telling you you're a kind busman because you are carrying children, so I'm giving you an extra month or two months. They want their money. So we have to find the balance, Mr. Speaker, and hence the reason for the school pilot. Because we recognise it is not fair for the busmen who have, for the last ten years or so, had to endure the same bus price, while at the same time, dealing with all of the rising costs and the challenge that a lot of the buses that we have in Grenada are obsolete, Mr. Speaker. They are not making them anymore.

So, Mr. Speaker, you will see that the Government has instituted a subsidy policy via rebate to provide some relief to the bus operators rather than agreeing to their request to increase bus fares. Because we recognise that we cannot simply afford to ask people to pay more for transportation at this time. So we are going to continue working with them to ensure that we can address this issue.

As we speak, Mr. Speaker, we are actively pursuing negotiations with a partner to secure as many as 50 electric buses, hopefully coaster size, that we would deploy into the School Bus Programme as soon as the pilot is finished. Obviously, we are looking at electric buses because they are cheaper to maintain, you don't have a combustible engine that has all these parts, and obviously, when they are parked at the schools and so on, they could be charged. We do recognise, however, that we have to accelerate renewables on the grid because if you are charging an electric bus via a diesel generating engine, then you are going around in circles.

So, Mr. Speaker, the transportation sector is something that we significantly wish to pursue from a public transportation perspective in conjunction, and I want to make this clear. The Government is not seeking to replace the private bus owners. We are seeking to collaborate with them, to support them and to help them to become frankly more business-oriented. Because I have said to a lot of them, you can drive bus all your life, if you don't have insurance, NIS, if you don't have a savings plan, if you don't have a retirement plan when your back give way and you can't sit on the bus when you turn 60 or 70, you coming back to the Government to ask for SEED or some kind of assistance.

So we need to get them to the point where they understand that they have to run a business as well, that they have to have health insurance, that they have to have a pension, retirement, and savings schemes, if they in fact form a cooperative as I have been advocating for them to do, it puts them in a position to negotiate with the Government better to even get joint services in terms of mechanics and their servicing and joint procurement of parts and all those kinds of things.

So there is a lot to be done, and we are not here to replace them or to compete with them. We don't have the capacity, but we are seeking to collaborate with them to ensure that we can make this a unique and successful pilot for the people of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, if I may move quickly to the Department of Public Administration. Again, I want to thank the team. Mr. Speaker, we've had this significant disruption of the hurricane, yet still some of the significant accomplishments that we set up have been met by the Department of Public Administration. **(Applause)** We were able to pass the new Contributory Pension Act. **(Applause)**

Now, Mr. Speaker, some never thought it would happen, because they think we operate as the MP said, when they come and they do a busy piece of road for you just before elections, and then they run away. They did the same thing, you know? In 2013 or 2018, they said they would do all kinds of things for the public servants, etcetera. After the elections, they went back to challenging the court cases to not wanting to pay the pension, etcetera.

So I want to emphasise that the new Contributory Pension Act, Mr. Speaker, is a historic piece of legislation. **(Applause)** And I would dare say that since the National Insurance Act is perhaps the most important legislation for pension reform in the history of Grenada, since the National Insurance Scheme was introduced. **(Applause)** And as we said, it is designed not just for public sector workers, it allows statutory bodies to come on, and eventually we believe it will allow private employers who are either too small or don't have the scale to have their own private pension plans to be able to join this plan. And as we said, pensions are a form of saving. It is an opportunity for the funds to be invested and to drive economic activities and employment as well. Again, I want to

commend the team for being able to accomplish this.

But this is linked, Mr. Speaker, to the regularisation process. I just want to emphasise the numbers again because you see when people want to make mischief, they go around and say, "You said it's by the stroke of a pen; with a stroke of a pen you can regularise everybody. With the stroke of a pen, regularise everybody". I never said that. I said there should be one public service, and I would say it again: there should be one public service. You can't have people sitting side by side on radically different terms and conditions of employment and expect them to perform the same.

So, Mr. Speaker, we don't have to hide or not be committed to the issues we said we would accomplish. And I just want to emphasise the numbers in terms of the pension regularisation, Mr. Speaker. So let me just simply get it here again.

You have to repeat things. Lest people forget. First, I would start by saying we paid in excess of EC$75.1 million in retroactive pensions. **(Applause)** And everyone who has retired now has their pensions. If you look, Mr. Speaker, at the expenditure, you would see that pensions make up about 7% of the total expenditure, for this budget, the proposals for 2026 and 2027.

So, Mr. Speaker, the public sector regularisation process has led to 455 officers being confirmed. **(Applause)** Let me repeat that. 455 officers. Phase two targets 1,262 officers holding Public Service Commission contracts, Government of Grenada contracts, Ministry Letters, and daily paid instruments.

And I want to emphasise this, you hear the terms, Government of Grenada contracts, Ministry Letters, and daily paid instruments. Many of these people, Mr. Speaker, could not even enter the door of a financial institution, whether it's a credit union or the Government, with these instruments. So they have been stuck, not being able to utilise their labour to advance themselves. They can't borrow. They can't get a credit card. They can't get a layaway plan because no one is assured that they have continuity of employment, and this has gone on for years, and the regularisation is seeking to address that, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So that group of 1,262 would be 1,100 officers.

There are an additional 224 teachers who are being processed for regularisation

at the end of this month. **(Applause)** If there is a glitch in the system and teachers not getting paid, all kinds of malay in town, but not one word about the fact that the regularisation is taking place. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise that there are still another 3,316 workers who are holding Contracts for Service and who are labelled as IMANI trainees who are to be regularised by December 2025. **(Applause)** And a sum of EC$22.7 million has been budgeted to cover the additional cost of the regularisation exercise. **(Applause)** Let me repeat that. A sum of EC$22.7 million has been allocated to deal with this issue.

So if there is a deficit, who are we giving the money to? The citizens of Grenada. You want a rich Government and rich people, or you want rich people and a poor Government? **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the deficit, this is a simple thing, you know. If the Government is collecting less from its taxpayers and spending more on them, it is for the benefit of the people. It's that simple. So we have to appreciate, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about putting people first and when I say this is the people's economy. Everybody talks about project, project, project, concrete, concrete, concrete, steel, steel, steel. We are investing in our people. When they have the money, it is the same economy that they have to come back and spend it. It is the same goods and services they are buying. It is the same VAT they are paying. It is the same income tax. It is the same property tax, and the Government gets back the revenue, and the economy grows.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are proud that we have taken the time to address some of these most difficult issues in the public service because we recognise that somebody has to put up the white flag and somebody has to extend the olive branch if we are going to improve the working relationship between the policy makers and the public servants.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say it openly, we also need our public servants to become more productive. **(Applause)** And we also need our workers in the country to become more productive. **(Applause)** We are not going to be able to grow the society by saying the Government give me things because the Government has

to get it from somebody, and the only people they can get it from are the people who are working and the people who are productive, and there is no way around this issue.

We have to become more productive. We have to learn to use technology. We have to learn to be skilled, reskill and take on the skills in the areas where there are actual opportunities. Too many of us like to dictate the work we want rather than the work that is available, and we have to start somewhere. I am also calling on our partners, the unions, to also recognise this. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, we are spending significant sums on our workers. The EC$22.7 million budget was allocated for the regularisation. The EC$6.5 million plus for the police pay and grade. The pensions. We can go on and on, but we have to improve our service delivery to our citizens, and we must become more productive.

Mr. Speaker, might I inquire as to how much more time I have?

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please advise. He is keeping the time.

(Inaudible comment by Clerk)

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: What? That's of my original allotment?

(Inaudible comment by Clerk)

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Okay, sir. Thank you.

(Inaudible comment by Clerk)

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: All right. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, if I may turn to the issue of Infrastructure and Public Utilities. I would start with roads, Mr. Speaker. You don't have to bring a Jamaican here to say the roads are smooth. We know the roads are not smooth. We know that they need attending to, but before we fix the problem, we

also have to understand why we are where we are. And so it is important to me as the Minister for Infrastructure to give some context on this issue.

It is a capacity issue, as the Member for the Town of St. George pointed out, and it's not so much a Government capacity issue, because the Government doesn't wish to get involved in road construction. We happily would have the private sector take on most of this, but I just want to give two examples of what we are dealing with.

We wish to have the True Blue road resurfaced. It started in May or June of last year. It hasn't been completed as yet. It is not the Government doing the work. It's a contractor. I am not picking a fight with the contractor, but I am saying openly that I am disappointed with the pace of the work. That contractor controls the quarry, and in simple terms, the quarry is where we get the stones, the base material that is needed to go on the road itself and the material that is needed to mix the asphalt so that we get the asphalt. So this is not an issue about money, about whether the Government is paying the contractor or not. The money is there. The issue is about the contractor's capacity.

And I am saying this is a contractor that has a monopoly on the single quarry that we operate in Mt. Hartman. And this is the same contractor, the name has a different name now, but this is the same contractor who had a monopoly on road construction, God knows, for the last 30 years or so. CCC or CCCI or whatever name you want to call them, which meant that very few other private persons invested in the capacity to build and construct roads in Grenada, which is the uncontroverted fact. So they got the contract to redo the True Blue Road. It is significantly delayed. I am not going to pull a President Irfaan Ali because I might be a lot more indecent than he was.

It is the same contractor who has the contract for less than a mile of road between the Cliff and Woodlands. That project started in April. There have always been all kinds of excuses, whether it's Gravel and Concrete, or something at the port. The fact is, the pace of the work is completely unsatisfactory.

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Chief Technical Officer, the Consultant, and the Advisor in the Ministry, I have made it clear to them that the pace has to be picked up significantly this month, or there would be consequences.

But I want to point out something. The contractor has a monopoly on the quarry and, therefore, a monopoly on asphalt supply, and that is the same contractor we have to rely on to provide asphalt to the Ministry of Infrastructure to fix all of the potholes we have all around the country. We simply do not have asphalt, but we are not just complaining. We've invited other private sector persons to get involved.

And so you would see that there is a plant that is being set up. We are waiting on two parts. It is a private sector plant. We are simply, in an attempt to get this matter dealt with, offering a space to put the plant. We were originally trying to get the plant to Pearls; this is why you have to understand the challenges we have with our infrastructure. The plant couldn't pass through the Paradise Bridge because it is too large. The only other attempt to get it would be to barge it around Telescope, which then creates all kinds of safety challenges. So the plant had to sit in Lagoon Road for two months until we figure out if there is sufficient space at Beausejour. Hopefully, the parts come soon, and we are good, but then you have the plant, and now you need the aggregates.

Who controls the aggregates? A competitor. So you would have issues about whether you will even get the aggregates and the price at which you would get them. So, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case, we will have to import the aggregates. Now to import aggregates in large enough quantities to make a difference… if it has to come through the Port of St. George, then it will be problems, then you would have to have huge trucks hauling to get to Beausejour; traffic and environmental challenges. It therefore means, Mr. Speaker, we have to find a way to barge this via sea up to the Beausejour area.

So a lot of us talk and like to make mischief, and I want to segue a little because road construction is not cutting cheques to farmers. It is complex, difficult, and dirty work. You need to import the bitumen. The contractor is not importing bitumen in quantities that allow us to have any sustainable asphalt. It may have cash flow problems, I don't know. We don't have control over this. We have talked at the Ministry about how we now import bitumen ourselves to see how we can help the contractor to be able to address this issue, and that is just two little roads.

We now need to resurface the entire Eastern Main Road, from Maurice Bishop International Airport to the Sugar Mill Roundabout, from the Sugar Mill Roundabout to the Woodlands Junction, or what is sometimes called the "Stinky Bridge". The Woburn Road is probably going to have to get some work after the heavy traffic that it is enduring because of the stoppage of access to the roads from Woburn. If you take from the Cliff all the way to Egmont Junction, it is as bumpy as they come, and that's just the eastern part. We are not talking about the Grand Anse Main Road, which needs to be completely resurfaced, but there are other complications, Mr. Speaker.

We wanted to resurface Grand Anse since last year, but we have the Southern Water and Sewerage Project from the UKCIF, which means we would have to run significant new water pipe infrastructure, and unfortunately, there are no easements. We know a lot of these homes are literally in the road, and so the pipes would have to be run in the road.

I think we would all understand that if we resurfaced the road last year and then started in April or May this year, we see coming and digging and ripping up half of the road to lay pipes, everybody would ask if we are mad and if we can't plan. So to some extent, Mr. Speaker, we have to await this project. We had a debriefing yesterday. We are hoping that construction, such as the actual laying of the pipes, could start in April. This is a nine-month project, so there is going to be significant inconvenience on the Grand Anse main road if it starts in April for the next nine to ten months before we can resurface the entire road. We are hoping, nonetheless, that we can get the Maurice Bishop to Sugar Mill part done and the Sugar Mill to Woodlands part done.

The Mabouya area in St. John; we've talked about it. Now that we have completed the Molinere Bridge, it still has to be properly surfaced, and the reason it is not properly surfaced again is that we don't have asphalt. So we could do a little cold mix in Pearls, but that is not adequate for the main roads in particular.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we are facing here, as alluded to by my friend, is significant capacity issues. Having said that, we intend to find innovative ways to address this issue. So working with the Ministry of Finance, we have agreed that we would put out

expressions of interest inviting private persons to express interest in designing, building, maintaining and I want to add this maintenance part because what has happened in the past, Mr. Speaker, people have gotten contract for the roads and there is no maintenance component of it and then financing. So let me repeat that.

We are going to ask persons to express interest in financing the road construction, designing it, building it and maintaining it. Why financing? Because, Mr. Speaker, the budget doesn't even account for the cost of what would be involved in rebuilding the roads. The Woburn to the Cliff piece alone is EC$20 million. So by mere deduction to rip the road up, build sidewalks and get us up to let's say Egmont Point is going to run us into EC$100 million.

So we are going to say to someone, if you bring your financing and the terms are favourable, and we go through a procurement process, then we would ask you to go. And for us to get there and get there in a quick enough time, Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are things that we would have to do. It means that we are looking right now at reopening the Telescope Quarry because we simply cannot allow the state to be held ransomed by an inefficient or ineffective quarry at Mt. Hartman.

So you would also notice, Mr. Speaker, that there was a lot of talk about a site in Woodford in St. John, and all kinds of attempts are being made to somehow associate the MP for St. John with the issue as if she has land in Woodford and she is setting up a cement plant or asphalt plant in Woodford. It is private property, Mr. Speaker, where a private investor is seeking to invest in the very same capacity that we don't have on the island to address issues like road construction.

A lot of noise was made, the MP, to her credit, went to a Town Hall or village meeting organised by concerned citizens, the advisor in the Ministry, as well as the PS in the Ministry of Infrastructure, went to hear the concerns of the persons. The private owner's representative was present, and I believe meaningful, purposeful, and sensible discussions were had. We understand that the environmental impact assessment is being done and that it will be delivered to the Planning and Development Authority, and that the commissioning of the site will not occur until there is final approval by the Planning

and Development Authority. But I am saying, we are too quick often to just jouk mauvay, bacchanal and all kinds of mauvay langue when we need the capacity in the country to address the infrastructure challenges.

So we also have a bridges package, Mr. Speaker, that we need to address in infrastructure because I'll just talk about Paradise Bridge as an example. We have bridges that simply cannot accommodate the 40-foot and 20-foot containers or the larger pieces of equipment, or frankly, two regular vehicles on our road. So there is also that package.

MP for the Town of St. George, let me just say… Mr. Speaker, I would ask now if I can have an extra 10 or 15 minutes. This whole thing threw me off, so I see it's 1:40 p.m. I am not sure when my time is supposed to end because I haven't heard a bell ring. I know normally we have a ringing 10 minutes before the due time, so would I be permitted to go until…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Prime Minister, you have three minutes left on our appointed time. I now grant you an additional 10 minutes.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker: All right.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: So the River Road issue, Mr. Speaker. I have given instructions that the road should be paved at a minimum but, Mr. Speaker, building a bridge wouldn't stop the flooding, and I suspect that with the wall that was built, there is water now not just coming from the river, but from all of the houses and so on that is ending up in the road as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we are seeking to get expert advice to see what can be done to the river upstream to either create larger catchment basin areas so that we could slow down the velocity of the water and the pace at which it comes down. I assume that the

original intent was to address the flooding and not just concrete structures. **(Inaudible comment by a Member)** So we have to address this issue upstream to at least increase the mitigation measures up there, especially in light of the damage done to the forest by Hurricane Beryl, to address the flooding. So, at a minimum, the road certainly should be paved, but we need to get the asphalt to do so.

I would admit we had some back and forth and some potential indecisiveness over the bridge originally, about the cost of the concrete bridges, and we were looking to see whether steel bridges would work. The expert advice is that the road would have to be lifted much, much higher to accommodate the steel bridges. So, in light of that, we would have to go back to concrete bridges and make sure whether we need two or we need one to make a firm determination of that, so at least, I think the one up at Steele's entrance would definitely have to be lifted and replaced.

So that is where we are, MP. I will certainly try my best to keep you abreast, but I certainly think that the road has to be addressed just as we have to address some of the other concerns in the road.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasise, Government buildings, because we still are significantly challenged with the state of Government buildings and the maintenance of them. In 2024, we contracted out the maintenance of schools to the Ministry of Education so that you have contractors assigned to districts and particular schools so when there are issues in the schools, routine maintenance, preventative maintenance the principals and so on, together with the supervisors, can work on this directly because the Ministry of Infrastructure simply doesn't have the capacity to do it.

We are subject to further discussions, hoping to do the same for a number of Government buildings outside of the immediate vicinity of the town centre of St. George's. So whether its things like Magistrates Court, police stations… If we don't have these preventative maintenance done, the buildings deteriorate very fast, and then people are made to work in highly uncomfortable, often unsanitary and unhealthy conditions. Mould is one of the major challenges that a lot of buildings face.

We have, Mr. Speaker, to take the Financial Complex Limited and rename it as

"The Facilities…" I have to recall the proper name. I think it's "The Facilities…" I would call it The Facilities Management Company for now, and bring it under the Ministry of Infrastructure because it was previously under the Ministry of Finance and give it a mandate to maintain certain pre-agreed Government buildings to make sure that they can continue to build their capacity and respond faster, rather than having them try to do everything. They were trying to do police stations, schools, and Central Government buildings, but they were not being effective, and they did not have the resources necessary to do all of that. So that is one of the other issues that we have to address under the Ministry of Infrastructure.

I do need to repeat because I think both the MP for St. George North West highlighted the schools that we expect to start… **(Inaudible comment by Members)** Sorry. The MP Ron Redhead, St. George North East. What did I say? North West? **(Laughter)** Well, there are some things you have in common, so we may have to run you over there. Did you use to play cricket? You have to earn to play cricket first. **(Laughter) (Applause)** So… and you're in the boundary, and the last time I heard, some fellas were trying to move some fellas from North West into North East to try and see if they can get help.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise a couple of points that I heard today, one of which was the question of over-reliance on the Citizenship by Investment Programme as part of the financing of the budget. We wish to emphasise, Mr. Speaker, that we are not over-reliant on Investment Migration Receipts or Citizen by Investment Receipts.

Prior to what I call the Russian Rush, which is 2023 and 2024 CBI receipts were roughly around 12% of the total receipts received by the Government because of the sanctions and the outbreak of the Ukraine war, of course, there was a surge of persons of Russian origin seeking citizenship under the Migration Programme and when we announced that we were stopping that probably accelerated people rushing. And so for 2023 and 2024, there would have been an above-average revenue intake almost exclusively as a result of that Russian Rush. And the Russian Rush has come to an end.

So, Mr. Speaker, you will see that for this year and for the next three years, as part of the medium-term project, we expect that investment migration receipts will go back to around 12%. Therefore, that is factored into the budget. So there is really an over-reliance on investment migration revenue. But I also want to emphasise the point presented by the Minister for Finance that we are seeking to tweak the Investment Migration Programme so that more local Grenadian developers and citizens can get involved in the project by reducing the fees and so on associated with approved project status etcetera, so that we can try and ensure local Grenadians can use this as an opportunity to get financing to support their own project.

So I wanted to make that point because I think if left unanswered, it may give the wrong impression that somehow we are over-reliant on the Investment Migration Programme. The Minister for Finance, in his speech, adequately addressed how we are seeking to strengthen the programme at this time.

I also wish to just briefly speak, Mr. Speaker, about healthcare because I think a number of comments were made about healthcare, and the Minister for Health is obviously not in a position to respond; conversations about the NHI and JIPA and why don't we… the reference to PAHO and so on… The statutorisation of the hospital and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out something, and the Minister for Health was honest in saying this. The challenges of our healthcare system are not going to be solved overnight; we accept that. We have a human resource capacity issue, as in inadequate numbers, and this means that we will have to train, train up and educate more people to actually see the healthcare sector as a career. That's one.

The management structure of the hospitals and the Ministry of Health has to change. There is simply no accountability. That's the truth, and people have to become accountable, and people have to understand that there is nothing to be feared from becoming accountable. If there is an allegation that someone died at the hospital, there is no reason to panic, but we need to know what happened. So if something went aright the next time, it can be corrected, and this is simple and straightforward.

The medical professional's legislation requires doctors, for example, to have health insurance. There is a reason for that. It recognises that, like any other profession, you may sometimes fall below the standard expected, which is why you have the insurance. So if you're carrying out surgery, Mr. Speaker, and you had 14 needles, you know that at the end of the surgery, you have to account for the 14 needles. So, when the surgery is finished, and you are counting and you get 12 needles, it means there is a high probability that two of the needles are in the patient. Now, if you don't tell the patient, we can't find two of the needles because there is a lot of blood or what have you, and the patient goes home, and while sitting to urinate, a needle drops out of her, what do you think the patient is going to do? I am not making up this story.

Now this may sound incredible, but this is quite routine in surgeries; needles are left, gauze is left, all kinds of things are left. That is why you have insurance. That is why you have protocols, because surgeries are high-pressure. That's why it is not just anybody who becomes a surgeon. That's why they say the surgeons are the Gods of the medical profession.

But the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that you have to professionalise it. You have to be accountable. You have to have your protocols. We need to make sure we are following our protocols so that if something goes wrong, it is not because we want to prevent the doctor from working again or anything like that. We want to improve the systems. We want to know where we are going wrong, but if people are hiding the files, or they don't want to talk, or they are pretending that nothing goes wrong when surgeries happen, we are not going to have an improvement in our outcomes at the hospital and the reputation of all of us and Grenada. It is not going to improve.

So the hospitals, our medical centres, have to become accountable. We have to understand that when we are asking to shine the light and asking for information, it is to improve.

And so when Mount Sinai did the gap assessment, it was to ensure that we begin to address those issues. So, for example, if you have to reduce the rates of transmission of diseases within the hospitals and there is a protocol for washing your hands, and you

do not wash your hands, we need to know that, so somebody could say, "Wash your hands".

If there is a protocol for how you dress or how you put on the gown, we need to know that is happening. If there is a protocol for how you inform patients or loved ones of the passing, we need to know that protocol is happening.

So, Mr. Speaker, these challenges and the culture are something that requires disruption. We are not going to change it by simply talking. It is not just about money. It is about the management culture. It is about accountability. It is about the relationship between the Ministry of Health, our hospitals and the structure. If the structure is not working, we have to be able to address it.

So the gap assessment by Mount Sinai and the work being done by the Ministry of Health and the Project Polaris team, which is the team that is leading the work on the new hospital, is designed to address this very issue that the Honourable MP raised. We know that building a new hospital, the structure, isn't going to improve healthcare in and of itself. The culture, the management practice and all of those things are what we are working on now, so when we get to the new hospital, we will have put all of those things in place, and so I want to emphasise that.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Finance and his team still retain the EC$500 monthly additional payment to our nurses and the EC$1,000 additional monthly payment to our doctors **(applause)**, and I want to commend him and the team for doing so.

So, Mr. Speaker, National Health Insurance, I just quickly wanted to say this. The Cabinet took the decision to terminate the contract with JIPA for the simple reason that we were not satisfied that we were getting value for money. And for the record, when we got into office, JIPA's contract with the Government was in abeyance. After several rounds of discussions and negotiations, we decided to give them a second chance at this, and so we amended the contract and resigned. Having done so, and after months of looking at the progress, we were not satisfied that we were going to get a system that

would actually lead to the establishment of National Health Insurance that was suited to Grenada, and so we terminated the contract. The Minister for Health is walking back in.

The University of the West Indies did enormous work on this for us before. We are not throwing out the baby with the bathwater. We intend to go back to the University of the West Indies **(applause)** and their consultants to help us in actually implementing the National Health Insurance, which is going to be a key part of the transformation in healthcare when we get to the construction and operationalisation of the new hospital.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the question of the statutorisation of the hospital. All of those are pieces that are linked towards getting to the point where we can begin to transform healthcare. I want to finally say that we view healthcare as an industry and an opportunity, and as Grenadians to actually be employed, have careers in, and to improve our healthcare in the meantime. **(Time bell rings)** So, Mr. Speaker… Is that the end, Mr. Speaker, or just the warning? **(Inaudible comment by Mr. Speaker)**

All right. So, in light of that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasise that the development of a country… And I want to thank you for allowing me to wrap up, Mr. Speaker. The development of a country is not about things. It is about the people. You will have no development if the people do not pursue knowledge. There is no country, small, big, intermediate, medium, that has become successful if you do not have a knowledge-based society. Although, we didn't get a chance to talk about education, the Minister for Education is going to do so.

If we do not pursue knowledge even in the most religious of societies, even those that are run by a theocracy, they pursue knowledge. If, as a people, we do not pursue knowledge, we are not going to grow and develop, and that means knowledge in all forms.

And so when we emphasise things like education and healthcare and the pensions and our people, it is because we want to incentivise them. When we talk about ensuring that people have the opportunity for training and skills training and the cyber security and the coding and the centres of excellence for skills, it is because we recognise, Mr. Speaker, that if we don't encourage our people to pursue knowledge and to pursue their

own development, you could vote me in, you could vote somebody else in, your life would not change or improve **(applause)** because the Government could only do so much.

So I want to emphasise, Mr. Speaker, that we owe it to speak the truth, particularly to young Grenadians, that you have to pursue knowledge, you have to work hard, and you have to care about your community if you want to ensure that this country continues to rise.

And so to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique in particular and those impacted by Hurricane Beryl, rest assured that we will continue to support and encourage you to continue rising. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister, and this concludes the debate before us. I now put the question.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Minister for Finance.

Hon. Dennis Cornwall: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the following.

RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 9(5) OF THE FISCAL RESILIENCE ACT, NO. 11 OF 2023.

WHEREAS section 9(1) of the Fiscal Resilience Act, No. 11 of 2023 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") provides that the Minister may, subject to negative resolution, suspend the public debt target and primary balance rule under section 8 of the Act, at any time during a fiscal year where any one or more of the events specified in section 9(1)(a)(b) or (c) occurs, if the Minister determines that implementation of the public debt target and primary balance rule in the fiscal year would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic or financial stability;

AND WHEREAS on the 1st day of July 2024, Hurricane Beryl devastated parts of the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS on the 1st day of July 2024, the Prime Minister declared a disaster by Statutory Rules and Order No. 21 of 2024 made pursuant to section 55(1) of the Disaster Management Act, No. 2 of 2023;

AND WHEREAS that declaration constituted a major economic shock within the meaning of section 9(1) of the Act;

AND WHEREAS it was prudent that the Minister exercise his power under section 9(1) to suspend by Order the public debt target and primary balance rule under section 8 of the Act;

AND WHEREAS by virtue of the Fiscal Resilience (Suspension of the Public Debt Target and Primary Balance Rule) Order, SRO No. 25 of 2024, the public debt target and primary balance rule under section 8 of the Act were suspended for the fiscal year ending on the 31st day of December 2024;

AND WHEREAS the Fiscal Resilience (Suspension of the Public Debt Target and Primary Balance Rule) Order, SRO No. 25 of 2024, was accompanied by the memorandum required pursuant to section 9(2) of the Act;

AND WHEREAS section 9(5)(b) of the Act further provides that if the Minister is satisfied that resumption of the application of the public debt target and primary balance rule suspended by an Order under subsection (1) would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic or financial stability, the Minister may extend the period for the Order under subsection (1) by a second or subsequent Order subject to affirmative resolution made concurrently with the presentation of the national Budget for the new fiscal year;

AND WHEREAS the Minister is satisfied that resumption of the application of the public debt target and primary balance rule that was suspended by the Fiscal Resilience (Suspension of the Public Debt Target and Primary Balance Rule) Order, SRO No. 25 of 2024 would be unduly harmful to the public finances and macroeconomic or financial stability;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that the Fiscal Resilience (Suspension of the Public Debt Target and Primary Balance Rule) (Extension) Order, 2025, which seeks to extend the suspension of the requirements referred to in section 8 of the Act for a further period of one fiscal year, be approved by the House of Representatives;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to section 9(5) of the Act, the Fiscal Resilience (Suspension of the Public Debt Target and Primary Balance Rule) (Extension) Order, 2025, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution, is hereby approved by the House of Representatives.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Deputy Clerk: Item 15 – Bills.

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, Appropriation (2025) Bill, 2025.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to make provisions for the appropriation of a sum not exceeding One Billion, Nine Hundred and Twelve Million, Eight Hundred and Seventy-Two Thousand, and Fourteen Eastern Caribbean Dollars (EC$1,912,872,014) to the service of the State of Grenada for the period January 1st to December 31st, 2025, shortly entitled, Appropriation (2025) Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you. Mr. Speaker. 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 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 put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Appropriation (2025) Bill 2025. Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill contains two Clauses and one Schedule. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks to make an appropriation for the expenses of the State of Grenada for the period 1st January to 31st December 2025, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of EC$1,912,872,014.

Mr. Speaker, in this Schedule, it provides a detailed list of the various Votes and the amounts allocated under recurrent and capital expenses, and so, Mr. Speaker, I draw attention to the Schedule and I invite any comments on the Bill. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put it this way. Given the fact that we've had significant discussions in the Motion over the past couple of days, it means that we would have captured the essence of this Bill because this Bill seeks to cement the discussions that happened over the past few days. Therefore, I wish not to prolong the discussion on this particular item because of the substantive debate we've had over the past couple of days.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Member, just approach the bench. Please approach the bench.

(The Leader of Government's Business, Honourable Philip Telesford and Mr. Speaker conversed privately)

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.
House in Committee.
House resumed.

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: 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, Appropriation (2025) 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, 2025 Budget and New Hospital Project Loan Authorisation Bill, 2025.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to authorise the Minister for Finance to borrow specified amounts of money from various sources to finance the 2025 Budget and to finance the new Hospital Project with teaching facilities, shortly entitled, 2025 Budget and New Hospital Project Loan Authorisation Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. 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. Sorry. Prime Minister.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: I just wanted to rise, Mr. Speaker, to extend my support to the Bill and to point out that first of all, as we said, Mr. Speaker… Well, first of all, I want to say this. The authorisation to borrow does not mean the borrowing will necessarily happen. It's a legal requirement that for the Minister for Finance to borrow, we must seek Parliamentary approval. And so in this case, we are being prudent by ensuring that we seek the approval. If we do get to the point where a negotiated term sheet is agreed upon and the loan is contracted, then obviously the loan will be laid back in Parliament so that we can see what the terms are.

Mr. Speaker, we would see that the Schedule, in fact, leaves blank the interest rate to be negotiated, the terms and repayment to be negotiated, and the fees to be negotiated. It highlights some of the potential lenders:

- The International Development Association, or what is called IDA, which generally supports the Government with very, very generous concessionary loans, sometimes at less than 1% interest rates or certainly under 2% with 10-year moratoriums and 30-year repayment periods;
- The Caribbean Development Bank, which is our own development bank in the region, from which we do a lot of our capital projects financing;
- The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank;
- The Regional Government Securities Market and I made reference to that in an earlier presentation by saying we currently have bonds that we have already raised, and that often times these are simply refinanced, and if necessary, from other companies, banks, and financial institutions.

I want to point out, though, that a significant portion, almost half of this, is air-marked for the New Hospital Project because, as I said, we have a very aggressive timeline to try and break ground on this project in 2026. We have already secured the

land, and so we need to secure the financing to do so. So if we get to the point where…

The Minister for Finance led a delegation to the Gulf States or the Middle East, including, I believe Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates—Dubai and the team is speaking with, what's is called, the "Islamic Donors", and we expect that the business plan, in fact, as we are here, Mr. Speaker, we anticipate that the business plan for the New Hospital Project, which is being done by Deloitte Touche, will be shared with the Cabinet as well as some of the other studies prefeasibility studies so that we can have some discussions so that those could be shared with our potential lenders.

To the MP's point for the Town of St. George about making sure that there is widespread consultation and people understand what's going on, the Project Polaris team has been mandated to, in fact, retain a communication firm so that they can help with some of these engagements and the discussions that are required on this issue.

But I want to emphasise, Mr. Speaker, we are living in some interesting times, and we have to appreciate that the potential for growth, economic growth, globally is in large markets; Africa, Asia, the Gulf States—Asia includes China, the Indian subcontinent. It's not just India. It's India, Malaysia, and Pakistan; these are very populous countries. South and Central America, and if we do not forge deliberate, strategic economic partnerships with these regions, the Caribbean and Grenada will struggle.

So it is highly unlikely that we will get traditional financing, and I'm saying traditional here as in World Bank, or IMF, or North American, Canadian or European to finance this kind of development project. To them, your economy is too small, the risks are too great, you've got hurricanes, and you've got small markets, etcetera. They are not going to finance this. It is through the innovation and the ingenuity of the [4]PRG that the airport was built, and the significant collaboration with the Republic of Cuba. The Minister for Foreign Affairs would have already spoken on the situation with Cuba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise that for us to do this, we are going to have to be innovative. We are going to have to seek partnerships from our friends far and wide, and are going to have to keep an open and innovative approach to how we finance

[4] People's Revolutionary Government

the construction of the hospital, and how we finance the management and the operations of the new hospital, because no one wants this to be an albatross around the state, and so we need to have significant private capital and private money into what I call the health sector.

The same way Tourism is a sector, the same way Agriculture is a sector, the same way Healthcare is a sector and we have to move beyond the idea of a "Government Hospital" where the Government every year comes with a budget and says, "This is the hospital", and then we have to struggle to meet the basic needs of our people.

There is enormous money in Healthcare from the health insurance perspective, from the employment opportunities, from the health tourism perspective, from the wellness aspects of tourism, which we can't underestimate, to the cosmetic side of healthcare and then to the traditional clinical side of healthcare. So we have to look to explore these opportunities, and the opportunities are in Africa. They're in Asia. They're in India, that's a fact.

Most of the health challenges that we face in the Caribbean, they face it in Africa, and most of the research and development that is done by Western countries is done on people who don't look like us, who don't have the same genetic makeup as us and oftentimes what is prescribed does not work. So you'd understand that a lot of the medication that is done for people with diabetes and so on simply does not work on people of African descent or of Asian or Middle Eastern descent because the research was not carried out on them.

We have the university already. We have [5]WINDREF. We have significant economic advantages. And, so, Mr. Speaker, we will not borrow unless we absolutely need to do so. We are also going to seek to put as much skin in the game as much equity as possible and you'd see, the Minister for Finance, as indicated US$25 million is already been set aside in a special fund at the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank as part of our financing, or helping to finance this hospital project and we anticipate that on an annual basis we will set aside funds as well to ensure that we reduce the debt burden on the

[5] Windward Islands Research & Education Foundation

state if it comes to that point, but we are going to be very aggressive in seeking private equity.

So, I don't want… I know it's going to happen. They going to take the Bill not that they are here and see a Bill to borrow EC$800 million was passed, but as I said, we are not actually, at this point in time, borrowing the EC$800 million, we will have to see whether we need to do so, and if we do then obviously the terms will come back to Parliament and we will lay it. So, I wanted to make that point very clear. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister. MP for the Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know it's late and everybody… We've been here for two days, but I think this is an important Bill that needs to be addressed. I am happy that the Prime Minister did rise to make some clarifications and to indicate at least the commitment that there's going to be more discussions on the issue, not only of the loan, not only of the financing, but generally on the hospital.

I agree with him when he talked about, you know, our need to look to the non-traditional sources. The fact is, many of the traditional sources will not be able to help in some cases, having their own difficulties, but it is also because of the synergies that are developing. For example, the rise of the BRICS, you know, the BRICS countries, is a very powerful arrangement that's developing. Countries like Grenada must move in the direction of developing these relations with Africa because the fact is, the African countries, many of them, are doing very well, and there's a lot, not only can we get from them, but there's a lot we can learn from them and their relations. So I want to endorse that.

With respect to that issue… That is why when I spoke earlier, I said that the assessments, and so, I know we looked at Mount Sinai, and Mount Sinai is a well-known

hospital in North America, but… We must ensure, and I think the Member of St. David said it, that what they are proposing is in synergy with what we in these small islands and people of African descent, and so on, need to have.

So, as I indicated earlier, there are other assessments done by PAHO. PAHO is the Pan American Health Organization. They are quite active, but I'm not saying do not proceed with the Mount Sinai arrangements. I am simply saying, there are other assessments that may have been done when you get to Mount Sinai, one you can look at the PAHO one, PAHO being a regional organisation that we can look at. So I agree with that position, and I appreciate the fact that he's indicated that if it comes to the point of borrowing, there should be further discussion on that, because by that time you will have the terms and you will have all the arrangements that need to be in place as a country for borrowing a substantial amount.

In addition to that, I think, and I just want to say this in closing, we need to have much more discussion on the operationalisation of the hospital because if we don't, I believe it could become a white elephant if not done properly with the input of the people. The people have to buy into this project, just as they bought into the International Airport Project. The International Airport Project was a project people bought into. In fact, people went down to the airport, had rallies, meetings, and they embraced it so much.

So, I am not standing here opposing this or opposing the construction of the hospital, but I am standing here for more participation and more input to make sure it is bought into and to make sure that we do it properly. A lot of money is going to be spent not by the Government, but by the people of Grenada, so the people of Grenada need to know more, and all of the MPs in this House need to know more about it. But I appreciate the assurance made by the Prime Minister, and I think we can work with that. So I have no difficulty. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, MP for Town of St. George.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, 2025 Budget and New Hospital Project Loan Authorisation Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolve 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 resumed.

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. 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. 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, 2025 Budget and New Hospital Project Loan Authorisation Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Mr. Speaker, we've had a long two days. I therefore beg to move that this House be adjourned *sine die*.

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, just a word on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead. Go ahead, Honourable MP.

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, just very short. Don't look so worried that I'm going to keep you long. During the debate, Mr. Speaker, I don't see my friend from South West here, but I told him I'll do this. He told me not to, but I'll do it.

I did comment in my remarks that he had not made many comments on the issue of praedial larceny. I was corrected, because apparently I was not in the room when he said it, and I want to express my absolute horror that I offended my friend for St. Andrew South West. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to withdraw that portion that he did apparently say a lot about praedial larceny, so I will go read it, and if I have to say anything on a next occasion, I will, but I do apologise to the House, and I apologise to him for saying something that was absolutely incorrect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is it.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member for the Town of St. George. Honourable Prime Minister.

Adjournment

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because it's not… This is, I think, the second or third time that I noticed the Opposition is simply walking out on the House during debates when the Speaker makes a ruling.

I mean, the rules are clear. On any point that we may disagree on, or a Member may disagree on, the Speaker has the authority to rule, and we cannot continue to sanction, in my view, respectfully, Mr. Speaker, the proper decorum in the House, if every time the Honourable MP for St. George North West feels that the Speaker is making a ruling that doesn't go in his favour that we encourage, not just him walking out, but all other Members of the Opposition walking out and we keep countenancing this.

So I am in fact giving fair warning that if the Member for St. George North West does not want to sit in the House, then say so. Simply retire, give up the office of MP, have a by-election and let someone else do the job. There has been a persistent pattern of absences **(applause)**, a persistent pattern of if the schedule doesn't fit his schedule, of trying to throw the entire Sitting into disarray and making up all kinds of stuff about the process and the fairness, a consistent pattern of any time he's asked to take a seat… It's basic courtesy. My friend knows that if, in court, I'm on my feet and he stands, I sit. If the Speaker stands, you sit, and you can't be talking over the Speaker and repeating over the Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying this because, you know, the rules are very clear about the disciplinary powers of the House, and if we continue a situation where… And I'm saying this because, as the Prime Minister, I don't want any ill-discipline to creep in on my side. I don't want any ill-discipline to creep in on our side. I don't want the House to deteriorate to a point where the minute someone disagrees, the Speaker makes a ruling that someone does not agree with, they figure they could just get up and walk out. And I don't want it on my side, and I certainly don't see why we should be tolerating it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am just putting on record that as the Member of Parliament for St. David, this is not the kind of behaviour we should be countenancing, and to me, at some point in time, something has to be done about it.

Particularly for the other Members who have no quarrel with you, and who are not

objecting, they have already spoken, and, Mr. Speaker, I paused you. I came back to the House. We were sitting here for a while. You took a while to come back in. Even when I took the mic, I recognised that there was one other person who did not have the opportunity to speak, and I was quite happy to take my seat and give the MP for St. George North West an opportunity to debate, because at the end of the day procedural rules aside, I have no difficulty with saying substantively you want persons, in the interest of fairness, to get an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

I could have told the Minister for Finance to close the debate, in which case he didn't speak, I didn't speak, that won't bother me. I have the opportunity to continue speaking. I could go and call a town hall in Beausejour, Happy Hill, Point, or Fontenoy, and we can talk about the budget perhaps better because I won't have the restriction of an hour and a half.

So I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, we can't have a situation where a mere difference of views over a procedural matter leads to this kind of storming out, you know, with a mother hen and the three chicken hens following in a row. **(Laughter)**

We have to do better than that, Mr. Speaker, and I am simply putting it on record because I think if this continues, it will send the wrong example to our junior parliamentarians we are training right now. It will send the wrong example to the school children who are here. You have to appreciate that sometimes people have the right to make the decision, and when they make the decision, you persuade, you persuade, but if after they said they aren't changing your mind… You have that in court all the time, you talk from now till thy kingdom come, the judge sits, they rock, they sleep, and they wake up and they say, "Mr. David, you talk good, but I'm sending your client up". And you have to sit down and be respectful.

So I don't understand how we in Parliament have someone who has been an MP for 40 years, uninterrupted, and is behaving this way simply over a ruling with the Speaker. So, I'm just putting this on record, Mr. Speaker, because I've tried to stay out of it, but I think it's getting to the point where now we need to rise the thing.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you saw what went on in the Bahamas, where an Honourable MP took the Mace and physically threw it out the window, and the police and

all of that had to get in. It turned into a complete fish market in Nassau. And if we don't stem this, this is what it's going to lead to, because if it is not walking out, one day, you might take the bottle out and throw it at me. **(Laughter)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm putting this on record because I think somewhere someone has to talk some sense into the new Leader of the Opposition and into the old Leader of the Opposition so that this sort of behaviour doesn't persist. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Hon. Peter David: Mr. Speaker, if I may? The Member is in the House, so I hope Members conveyed to him my apologies for the statement. The Member for St. Andrew North West.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Peter David: Sorry for interjecting like this, but…

Mr. Speaker: That's all right.

Hon. Peter David: … He is in the House. I just wanted to tell him to his face.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that's all right.

Hon. Peter David: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister, for your comments. I take it it's time for us to close.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned *sine die* at 6:38 p.m.

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