



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FOURTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TUESDAY 20TH JANUARY, 2026

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Table of Contents

Attendance	3
Prayers.....	5
Minutes.....	5
Announcements	6
Presentation of Paper and Reports	7
Questions	7
Personal Explanations.....	16
Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026	20
Adjournment.....	77

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
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on Tuesday 20th January, 2026**

Attendance

PRESENT

Mr. Speaker

Honourable Leo Cato, MP

in the Chair

- | | |
|--|--|
| Honourable Dickon Mitchell, MP
<i>(St. David)</i> | - Prime Minister & Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information & Disaster Management, Infrastructure & Physical Development, Public Utilities, Civil Aviation & Transportation, Information & Communications Technology |
| Honourable Philip A. Telesford, MP
<i>(St. George South East)</i> | - Minister for Health |
| Honourable Joseph Andall, MP
<i>(St. Patrick West)</i> | - Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade & Export Development |
| Honourable Lennox John Andrews, MP
<i>(St. Andrew South West)</i> | - Minister for Economic Development, Planning, and Cooperatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources, the Blue Economy and Marine Affairs |
| Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP
<i>(Carriacou & Petite Martinique)</i> | - Minister for Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government |
| Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP
<i>(St. Patrick East)</i> | - Minister for Finance |
| Honourable Kerryne Z. James, MP
<i>(St. John)</i> | - Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy |
| Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead, MP
<i>(St. George North East)</i> | - Member |
| Honourable Delma Thomas, MP
<i>(St. Andrew North West)</i> | - Minister for Youth and Sports, Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs, with a special focus on the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital |
| Honourable Andy Williams, MP
<i>(St. George South)</i> | - Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation |

**Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026**

Attendance

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

ABSENT

- Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP - Member
(*St. Andrew North East*)
(*Excuse tendered*)

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

*Prayers
Minutes*

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:03 a.m.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order. Order. All rise. The Honour, the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Let's pray.

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, this Parliament is now in session.

(Sound of gavel)

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): 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. I extend Happy New Year to all the Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Minutes be taken as read. Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Monday, December 1, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., and on Thursday, December 4, 2025 and Friday, December 5, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

***Minutes
Announcements***

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

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 the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Monday, December 1, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., and on Thursday, December 4, 2025 and Friday, December 5, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., be confirmed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

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

Item 6 – Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, it's, of course, our first sitting for the New Year, and I wish everyone a very fruitful, productive, happy, and healthy 2026.

My announcements. The Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Andrew North-East will not be with us today. The Honourable Member is out of state, officially on parliamentary business.

I also wish to inform this Honourable House that the 28th Conference of the Commonwealth Speakers and Presenting Officers Conference, which was held in India, was attended by Senator Dr. Dessima Williams, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who delivered the keynote address, in the Parliament of India.

I also want to inform this Honourable House that on the 5th of February, as part of Grenada's Independence celebration, the Houses of Parliament will host an activity celebrating

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Announcements

Presentation of Paper and Reports

Questions

the traditions of Grenada. We invite all MPs to... It's only the 5th of February. We invite all MPs to come and experience that particular activity. We hope to have steel pan music, of course, our national dish, and an included aspect of it would be the Speaker's pot. Those are my announcements.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 7 – Presentation of Petitions.

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

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay the following Papers and Reports before this Honourable House:

1. State-owned Enterprises and Statutory Bodies Statement of Performance Report 2024;
 2. Grenada Authority for the Financial Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) Annual Report and Accounts 2024;
 3. Grenada Ports Authority Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December, 2024;
 4. Grenada Authority for the Financial Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended 31st December, 2024.
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Members, those documents are now laid in the House.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 9 – Unopposed Private Business.

Item 10 – Questions.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Mr. Speaker: MP for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you would have observed that the chair of the Leader of the Opposition is vacant...

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: At this time, she said to say that she had gotten caught up in some traffic over the Grand Etang...

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... so she intends to be here...

Mr. Speaker: All right. Okay.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: But obviously, she would miss this part...

Mr. Speaker: All right. Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the question standing in my name.....

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... of the Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Did you receive answers to those?

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Proceed.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Mr. Speaker, so I am just trying to... If I can get some assistance from this device here, just to find the questions. Sorry. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say while I'm.....

Mr. Speaker: Because Honourable Member, I know you know that in the last Sitting you requested that it be written. You said, "It was okay".

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

Mr. Speaker: He probably responded to it in writing.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: I did, but I have not seen the answers.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: It hasn't arrived. I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that the questions are like a recurring decimal... The questions that are there...

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... because I had asked those questions, and the responses came on November 27, 2023, and most of the questions, at least two of the questions, have not been answered as yet. And so, I don't know if the Honourable Prime Minister would be able to answer it at this time. But I know the Honourable Prime Minister had asked for some information. I say that by way of explanation that these were

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Questions

questions already asked and responses given from the Prime Minister's Ministry. So I think it would not be very difficult to get the information that is there since that was done.

So the date was on November 27, 2023, and I got some responses which said that nothing was happening at the time and that they were looking at it. And I feel that, from the 27th of November 2023 to now, this mattress should have been put to rest. So I don't know what we can do. Would you want to say something on that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I think since in our previous sitting you indicated that you won't mind having a written response. My sense is that the response maybe forth coming. So if you don't mind, I think you can leave a little time to receive the response because quite often the Member has to get his response through the ministries. So that's my take on it, Honourable MP.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But just to refresh memories, I will seek your permission to at least read the questions again, and if the Honourable Member for St. David, the Prime Minister, would want to give some kind of commitment, I will entertain. If not, I would count on you to see how I can get responses to those questions. So just to... This I couldn't... This one I couldn't get, so I'll just use this one. Thank you.

So the question is a three-part question on three different issues:

1. What is the state of progress of work on the Waltham land expansion project for the fishermen?
 - a. If it has not started, can you please provide the reason(s)?
 - b. If it is not started, can you please provide information on the projected start-up time?
2. What is the status of the work at the Victoria Hotel, and how soon will it be ready for occupation by the police?
3. What is the status of work on the Red Mud Farm Road and the Mt. Cenis to Brothers Farm Roads?

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

These are the three questions, Mr. Speaker, so I place them in your hands...

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... to see if some resolution can be added in that matter.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Thank you, Honourable MP, for St. Mark. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you've just arrived, and we are on Questions. Yes. Honourable MP, for St. Mark went before because you were not here yet. So, I'm not sure if you want to intervene now or if we should proceed.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if someone was going to answer. I didn't hear the request you made, whether it's going to be answered before deferred to another time, or if it's going to be answered, and then the next question is going to be asked.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's your time now.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Okay. Thank you. All right. So, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I want to make reference to the list of questions and the Order Paper. You would recognise quite obviously that some of those questions required an oral response.

In keeping with the rules of the Standing Order, which limits to three questions, in light of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to request that the questions that I'm going to ask orally, requesting an oral answer, the other questions be deferred, requesting a written response, because I can only ask three questions according to the rules.

Mr. Speaker: But, my understanding of the Standing Orders is that when the questions are submitted, you have to indicate...

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Right.

Mr. Speaker: ... that you are requiring an oral answer for those.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Right.

Mr. Speaker: Was it the case?

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: I would imagine because if more than three had been submitted, it would have been three for oral and the others for written. So, except there was an administrative error somewhere... But I'm going to proceed to ask three and then to...

Mr. Speaker: No, no. The Standing Orders require you to indicate...

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: No, and that's why I am saying... We can't answer whether...

Mr. Speaker: ... that will require to ask these questions orally.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Right. So, whether it did indicate or not, we would have to go to the request that was sent to you. We can't answer it by looking here.

Mr. Speaker: Right.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: So it would have been indicated...

Mr. Speaker: It wasn't my information that it was requested that the answers be submitted orally.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Right. And I'm saying if that was the case, Mr. Speaker, quite obviously the administrative process would have picked up that only three questions by rule of the Standing Orders are allowed orally per person. So, in that light, I assumed that there was an understanding that some of these questions were for written responses.

But if you want me to ask it orally, and you give me an exception to ask all of them here, Mr. Speaker. I was just trying to...

Mr. Speaker: No. Something is missing, Honourable. I'm repeating myself again, just like the Honourable MP for St. Mark, when questions are submitted, the writer of the questions must indicate that these questions require oral responses.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Of course.

Mr. Speaker: I'm saying to you I didn't get that information before. So when it went to whichever minister, that minister may not have that information that he or she requires to provide oral answers. That's the point I'm making. Right? So, in advance we have indicate what sort of responses we would like to have or how we would want the response, whether written or oral? So I...

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: And, Mr. Speaker, I am with you...

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I suggest that in the absence of this where there was no clarity....

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Okay.

Mr. Speaker: ... that you settle for written responses.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: No, and I have absolutely no problem with written responses.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Actually, I would prefer....

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: ... because of the details of the questions....

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Nice. Thank you. Thank you very much, Honourable MP.

Mr. Speaker: You can proceed. Member.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just getting some clarification...

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: What is a reasonable time to expect a response on questions asked?

Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure. To me a reasonable time would be for the next sitting. Usually, when questions are submitted, you attempt to provide the answers at the next Sitting of Parliament. So, reasonableness has to do with when the next sitting is.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Only? Only?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Because that is my understanding as well....

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes, yes.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Questions

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... but I am confused because of the way these things are handled. I'm just wondering if there's another reasonableness that I am not aware of. So, just so we clarify that here....

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... and so that I can go with an understanding that for the next sitting....

Mr. Speaker: Next sitting, those answers...

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... is either I receive responses before or by the next sitting...

Mr. Speaker: Correct.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: ... I will have my answers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Correct. Correct. Usually, the answers are provided before.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, yes.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 11 – Urgent Questions under the provisions of Standing Order No. 20 (1) (Notice of Questions).
Item 12 – Statements by Ministers.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Personal Explanations

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 13 – Personal Explanations.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter for personal explanation. It is important that I raise this issue in this Honourable House because a lot of it deals with what happened in this Honourable House, not at a formal sitting, but at a Meeting of the House Committee.

And that goes back almost a year, the 14th of February, which would have been Valentine's Day, and we are fast going towards Valentine's Day again, Mr. Speaker. It concerns the Meeting of the House Committee. I recall we looked at a couple of matters, one of which was the issue of the vehicles.

I wish we could put this to rest because it is obvious that those who really wanted it have it, and those who did not want it don't have it. We on "This Side" are the ones who don't have it; we are managing, and we're not complaining. We just stood on a point of principle.

Very recently, the Member for the South was heard to say that at the meeting, which the Member is not a Member of, and was not at the meeting... How did the Member get that information? I don't know, and I have to peruse the minutes of that very meeting. What the Member is alleging is not, is nowhere in the minutes, and I'm sure none of us who attended that meeting have that erroneous recollection.

So, the Member has been known to say that I even said what quality of vehicle I wanted. Mr. Speaker, I don't even know about quality vehicles. The only vehicles I know about are the ones that I have used, and whether they served me well or didn't serve me well. I don't know that there was much discussion on... As a matter of fact, I know. I know. I can categorically say that there wasn't much discussion on the type of vehicle. Somebody might have mentioned it, and it wasn't even thought necessary, and it's not in

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Personal Explanations

the minutes, because I've perused it repeatedly. It is not there, and I need to clarify that because the attack has become personal.

It's even worse when it is untruthful, and it's even worse when the Member is not a member of the committee and was not sitting there. To invent those things to attack me on various, you know, forms of media, I think it is a shame and a disgrace to this Honourable House that we can have a meeting...

I have omitted to say much about the vehicles because I felt we had a committee in the highest level of the state. I felt that, by and large, we should keep what happened in the meeting as private as possible and share it with the Parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, in this very House, I asked not so long ago what happens with recommendations that the committee makes. These are recommendations from my understanding; these remain recommendations from the House until every member in this Honourable House has seen it. It means that the minutes and the recommendations would have had to have been laid in this Honourable House in front of every Member so that the Members can say yay or nay on the final decision. That never happened. The minutes came very late, and I was looking for the date it did not happen, and it happened after we got the information about the vehicles.

So, there were some hiccups. I didn't want to make heavy weather of it because sometimes in a new... This is a new thing that we are getting vehicles, and mistakes can be made and errors, so I am not here to blame. But, I am not asking the Member to rise to say anything, but I think that if we come to an Honourable House of this level, we should not go away giving people wrong information, Mr. Speaker. And I find this is very shameful and very disgraceful, and I trust that other committee members sitting in committees would not have the fear that their contributions will be, first, misconstrued, totally misconstrued. And secondly, that whatever is discussed here in this Honourable House be taken out in the public because all of us can take formation out, but so far I have refused to do it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I beg of you to use your good office, you as the Chairperson of the House Committee, you know what was said and what was done. So, I will just leave

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Personal Explanations

it at that, but I find it very hurtful that I could be accused of saying what vehicle I wanted when the matter was just dropped on us unceremoniously, and there was not much discussion; we let it go. We didn't say no, but we didn't fight for it either, and that is the truth in this Honourable House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. Mark. I urge that Members of this House be discretionary in how we respond, how we react, what we do, and what we say. This is the Parliament, as the Member said, the highest institution in our land, and let us, by the way of our decorum, pay respect to that. Honourable... Whose light? Is it MP for St. Patrick West?

Hon. Joseph Andall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to clarify a couple of things with your leave. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the absence of something from the minutes is not necessarily an indication that such a thing did not happen...

Mr. Speaker: Just hold on for me, Honourable MP. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Are you rising on a Point of Order?

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and...

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: ... I wish to bring the House's attention to Standing Order No. 23. "A Member may make a personal explanation at the time appointed under Standing Order No. 16 (Order of Business)..."

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Personal Explanations

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: ... “although there is no question before the House: but no controversial matter may be brought forward, nor may debate arise upon the explanation”.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: I beg your indulgence to observe the Order.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct. I wanted to get exactly what the Member was saying.

Hon. Joseph Andall: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Right? Before I could have intervened.

Hon. Joseph Andall: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm not here to debate any point, but simply to offer some clarification. Before the interruption, Mr. Speaker, I was simply stating that the absence of an item from the minutes is not an indication that the matter was not addressed because, Mr. Speaker, the minutes are not a transcript of the proceedings. And, Mr. Speaker, you chaired all of the said meetings...

Mr. Speaker: Okay. So you're talking about the Meeting of the House Committee?

Hon. Joseph Andall: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. So, I urge you, Honourable Member, to refrain from permitting.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Personal Explanations

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Yes?

Hon. Joseph Andall: Good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to draw the House's attention...

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Yes. Yes. Please do. Refrain from it.

Hon. Joseph Andall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 14 – Motions.

Item 15 – Bills.

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, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026. Thank you.

Clerk (Ag.): A Bill seeks to amend the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Chapter 84A (the "principal Act") to decriminalise the possession and use of cannabis in small quantities; to permit the use, handling and cultivation of cannabis for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific and religious purposes under regulated conditions; to establish protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young persons; to provide for the regulation of such activities; to create new offences and controls relating to the misuse of cannabis; and to provide for consequential amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act for the expungement of criminal records and discontinuance of pending proceedings in respect of minor cannabis-related offences, shortly entitled, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026. Mr. Speaker, Grenada has embarked on a deliberate process of reform to modernise its approach to Grenada's Drug Control Policy, recognising the limitations of a predominantly punitive and criminal justice-centred framework in addressing contemporary public health, social equity, and human rights considerations.

Mr. Speaker, over several decades, the enforcement of criminal sanctions for minor cannabis related offences has contributed to social dislocation, barriers to employment and travel, and a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalised communities without demonstrable deterrent effects emerging international and regional policy considerations.

Mr. Speaker, international and regional policy developments, including CARICOM 2018 *Waiting to Exhale—Safeguarding our Future through Responsible Socio-Legal Policy on Marijuana Report*, have underscored the need for member states within the

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

region to adopt alternative approaches that emphasise public health, education, prevention, and regulation rather than criminalisation. Mr. Speaker, in Grenada, the impetus for reform has been further informed by empirical data, public consultation, and constitutional considerations.

Analysis of cannabis related arrests has shown that a significant proportion of cases involved low-level possession consistent with personal use rather than trafficking of organised criminal activity. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, cannabis continues to be used informally for religious, medicinal, and private purposes, notwithstanding its Schedule 1 classification and prohibited status under existing local and international laws.

Mr. Speaker, we now turn our attention to some global statistics and the impact on the criminal justice system. Mr. Speaker, as a statement of fact, cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug globally. In 2024, Mr. Speaker, around 224 million people aged 15 to 64 reported using cannabis, and that's according, Mr. Speaker, to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2025. This represents around 4.6% of the adult population worldwide.

While most people, Mr. Speaker, who use cannabis do not experience adverse effects, it is noted that cannabis use is associated with a range of harms, including mobility and mortality. According to the Gadsden Report 2022 to 2023, the social cost of cannabis use was projected to rise to \$5.2 billion globally, more than half... Some \$2.8 billion of the projected cost was related to the criminal justice system. The cost on the global criminal justice system, including the cost of imprisonment, the cost of administering community supervision audits, and the negative impacts, Mr. Speaker, on victims of crime.

Mr. Speaker, we know as a matter of fact that cannabis is widely used here in Grenada despite its classification. Like many countries globally, Mr. Speaker, there is a relative cultural acceptance of cannabis locally, with many medicinal benefits attributed to the plant. Cannabis is also a central element of the Rastafarian faith as a religious practice. And Mr. Speaker, as I speak, we notice that some of the Rastafarians are here this **(applause)**, morning along with those on the council, our Chief Medical Officer, and

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

members of the Cannabis Committee.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a global change that, as a small island state, we must pay attention. The availability of cannabis, Mr. Speaker, in the mainstream has been controlled for the most part due to its being classified as a Schedule 1 substance and illegal to possess. The view of cannabis, Mr. Speaker, continues to change globally, with many countries decriminalising and legalising for medical and even recreational use.

Mr. Speaker, just in 2025, December 18 to be specific, Mr. Speaker, the United States president signed an Executive Order to reclassify cannabis to a Schedule 3 drug, moving from Schedule 1 to Schedule 3 in recognition of its reported medical benefits and moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks to decriminalise the use of cannabis and to decriminalise the possession of cannabis in limited quantities for medicinal and sacramental purposes. The most immediate anticipated effect will be increased availability of cannabis for those who choose to use the substance.

Mr. Speaker, the Cannabis Decriminalisation Policy Statement—Government of Grenada 2024, articulates a national policy position that seeks to decriminalise possession of small quantities of the substance for adults. The policy, Mr. Speaker, recognises medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, and religious use under regulated conditions and protects, Mr. Speaker, children and young persons through diversion and rehabilitative responses. Mr. Speaker, the said policy creates pathways for economic development through a future regulated cannabis and hemp industry while remaining consistent with Grenada's constitutional framework and international obligations.

Mr. Speaker, I now propose some arguments for medicinal cannabis. Medical uses of cannabis are varied and evolving, and Mr. Speaker, as we decriminalise the substance, it affords us the opportunity to boldly take on research work into the substance so that we can learn and develop for future medicinal purposes.

In its comprehensive review in 1999, Mr. Speaker, the Institute of Medicine concluded that marijuana may be modestly effective for pain relief, particularly nerve pain. That's 1999, Mr. Speaker, almost 26 or so years ago. It also helps stimulate appetite for

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

people with AIDS Wasting Syndrome, and controls chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting. Mr. Speaker, this is supported by other studies reporting that marijuana may have beneficial effects in treating multiple sclerosis-related pain or pain spasm, appetite, mood, and management of other chronic symptoms. So, Mr. Speaker, the health effects of cannabis or the use of cannabis are well-documented.

And Mr. Speaker, only last year, 2025, I heard firsthand from surviving patients at the Caribbean Association of Oncology and Haematology conference, which was held in Trinidad & Tobago, about how the use of cannabis products was used to treat severe pain. I heard from patients, Mr. Speaker, how had it not been for the substance, having tried so many different medications with excruciating pains, how only after trying the substance, Mr. Speaker, they got relief,. I am talking about cancer patients.

Cannabis intoxication. So, Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, we open up the discussion as a matter of transparency so that you can see, Mr. Speaker, the positive and the negative impact of the substance. Because our policy, Mr. Speaker, is that we should be well educated on the use of the substance. And if we study, research, document, and use it in the right proportion, we can properly monetise the benefits of this important substance.

The interest in and the use of cannabis stem from the psychoactive substance tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and the cannabinoids which it contains. Smoking, Mr. Speaker, is the most common and efficient means of ingesting cannabis. THC activates and modulate cannabinols receptors in the brain, and it is responsible for the intoxicating effects, which include impaired motor coordination, euphoria, anxiety, sensation or slow time, impaired judgment, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, as I read this, I remember the discussion that we had last year in Trinidad regarding the same impairment of judgment, and it had to do with education, Mr. Speaker, moderating the use of the substance, and how it is applied. Cannabis related disorders, Mr. Speaker, encompass a spectrum of conditions ranging from acute intoxication to chronic use disorders and withdrawals, as well as a variety of substance-induced mental disorders.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Harmful effects of cannabis. Cannabis exposure, Mr. Speaker, is well recognised as particularly harmful to certain high-risk groups, including the following: youths and adults under the age of 25. The developing brain, Mr. Speaker, is more vulnerable, and it is said medically that the brain develops well until an adult which is the age of 25 years or thereabout. And so, that's why, Mr. Speaker, it is always advisable that we proceed with caution, not just in the use of this. Young adults... Sometimes, I remember when I was much younger, I thought I knew everything, only to realise that as you grow older, you get wiser. Mr. Speaker, it is said that for young adults, the risk of dependency is higher. It is argued that one in six youths, one in six has the propensity to or maybe develop a propensity to become dependent on substances.

It may also create lasting cognitive issues such as memory loss, ability to maintain how to pay attention, to be focused, and psychosis, schizophrenia, and stuff like that. And that's why again, Mr. Speaker, you would see in the legislative framework how it is patterned to avoid our young people from being exposed to the drug at an earlier age. And, Mr. Speaker, that is one of the main reasons why the focus here is not on recreational use, but on medicinal use, scientific research, and stuff like that.

Pregnant and breastfeeding individuals, and it is important, Mr. Speaker, that people are aware of this. Cannabis use is linked to low birth weight of babies if used by pregnant women, impaired fetal growth, and THC exposure to infants. Mr. Speaker, it potentially negatively affects brain development for people who already have mental issues. Mr. Speaker, it's advisable that those with a history of psychosis and schizophrenia, and so on, and anxiety, and depression, that they consult a medical practitioner before using the substance. For older adults age related changes, existing health conditions, heightened risk for coordination issues, falls, and heart problems, and different problems, and those, of course, who have a family history of substance use disorders, psychosis, and all of that, Mr. Speaker, are likely to increase risk to the individual.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn our attention to the content of the Bill. The Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeks to amend ("the

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

principal Act”) to give effect to these policy objectives: decriminalising the possession and use of cannabis in small quantities, permitting the use, handling, and cultivation of cannabis for medical, therapeutic, scientific, and religious purposes under regulated conditions. Thirdly, establishing protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young people. Fourthly, providing for the regulation of such activities. Fifthly, creating new offences and controls relating to the misuse of cannabis, and finally, providing for consequential amendments to the Rehabilitation of the Offenders Act for the expungement of criminal record and discountenance of pending proceedings in respect of minor cannabis-related offenses. This is structured to Bill.

The Bill, Mr. Speaker, represents an initial but significant step in Grenada’s broader transition towards a public health-oriented, rights-respecting, and economically informed framework for cannabis regulation. The Bill, Mr. Speaker, contains 17 clauses and 1 schedule. Clause 1 provides for the short title of the Bill. Clause 2 provides for the amendment of section 2 of the principal Act to,

- a) revise the definition of the terms “cannabis” and “cannabis resin” to align with modern scientific usage and to include provisions for medical preparations;
- b) revise the definition of the term “child” and “young person” to support the new rehabilitative framework;
- c) introduce new definitions for “qualifying medical conditions” and “medical, therapeutic or scientific purposes” to clarify the scope of activities permitted under the Bill; and
- d) generally restructure and revise other relevant interpretation provisions.

Clause 3, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 4 of the principal Act to exempt from prohibition the importation of cannabis-based medical or therapeutic products by persons certified by a medical practitioner as having a qualifying medical condition, in accordance with prescribed guidelines.

Clause 4, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 5 of the principal Act to permit the lawful production, supply, or offer to supply cannabis or cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, or scientific purposes pursuant to a valid licence or other lawful

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

authorisation.

Clause 5, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 6 of the principal Act to decriminalise the possession of cannabis and cannabis resin in small quantities for personal use by persons aged 21 years old or older, as specified in the new Eighth Schedule. It also exempts possession for medical, scientific, or religious purposes from criminal liability. This clause, Mr. Speaker, also introduces a cross-reference to the newly inserted section 6A.

Clause 6, Mr. Speaker, provides for the insertion of a new section 6A in the principal Act, which establishes protective and rehabilitative procedures for children and young persons found in possession of small quantities of cannabis or cannabis resin. Rehabilitative procedures for children.

Under this new section, Mr. Speaker, such cases are to be handled without arrest, charge, or a criminal record. Mr. Speaker, children (under the age of 18) must be referred to the Child Protection Authority for assessment and, where appropriate, participation in counselling, education, or rehabilitation programmes; and young persons, Mr. Speaker, aged 18 to 20 must be referred to a Minister-approved counselling or education programme. So, Mr. Speaker, underlying policy position is that of counselling and education to help people to understand the dangers and the use of the substance.

Clause 7, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 7 of the principal Act to exempt from prohibition the handling of cannabis and cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, or religious purposes pursuant to a valid licence or other lawful authorisation.

Clause 8, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 9 of the principal Act to clarify that the possession of pipes, equipment, or apparatus fit and intended for the preparation or use of cannabis or cannabis resin for personal, medicinal, therapeutic or scientific purposes or religious purposes shall not constitute an offence.

Clause 9 provides for the amendment of section 10 of the principal Act to permit acts preparatory to the import, export, supply or offer to supply of cannabis or cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic or scientific purposes pursuant to a valid licence or other

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

lawful authorisation.

Clause 10, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 11 of the principal Act to exempt the cultivation of four or fewer cannabis plants from criminal liability and to deem such plants as cultivated for medicinal, therapeutic or horticultural purposes. It also clarifies that multiple households on one premises shall each be treated as separate for this purpose.

Clause 11, Mr. Speaker, provides for the insertion of five new sections 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D and 13E into the principal Act. Section 13A creates broad exceptions for the use, cultivation, importation, exportation, production, supply and possession of cannabis or cannabis resin under a valid licence, permit or other authorisation for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific or religious purposes. Section 13A also empowers the Minister to authorise two adherents of the Rastafarian faith to cultivate and use cannabis for religious purposes and to declare certain events as exempt events for religious observance.

Section 13B, Mr. Speaker, prohibits the smoking or use of cannabis in or near public places, workplaces or public conveyances, except where such public places are approved for the smoking or use of cannabis by Order of the Minister.

Section 13C prohibits the smoking or use of cannabis on or near school premises. Section 13D, Mr. Speaker, requires the development of legislation to establish a regulated cannabis industry for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific and religious purposes, and sets out key regulatory features to govern licensing, compliance, monitoring and enforcement.

Section 13E, Mr. Speaker, creates a fixed penalty regime for dealing with the offence of public smoking under section 13B. Instead of being subject to criminal prosecution, Mr. Speaker, a person who commits such an offence will be liable to a fixed penalty of EC\$300.

Clause 12, Mr. Speaker, provides for the amendment of section 21 of the principal Act to delete subsection (5), which is now redundant, and substitute it for a new subsection (5) which clarifies that the provisions of section 21 do not apply to the possession of cannabis or cannabis resin that is otherwise authorised under the Act.

Clause 13, Mr. Speaker, provides for the insertion of a new section 53 in the principal

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Act empowering the Minister, by Order subject to affirmative resolution, to amend the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth or Tenth Schedules.

Clause 14 provides for the replacement of the existing Second Schedule of the principal Act with a new Schedule, revising the trafficable quantities of cannabis and cannabis resin.

Clause 15 provides for the amendment of the Fifth Schedule to insert therein the penalties for the newly created offences under section 13B (smoking cannabis in public places) and 13C (smoking cannabis on or near school premises) respectively.

Clause 16, Mr. Speaker, provides for the insertion of three new Schedules, namely the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Schedules. The Eighth Schedule sets out the decriminalised quantities of cannabis and cannabis resin. The Ninth Schedule provides definitions and special provisions concerning cannabis, including the meaning of “public place”, “public conveyance”, and “workplace” for the purposes of regulating the smoking or use of cannabis. The Tenth Schedule prescribes the form of a fixed penalty notice issued under section 13E.

Finally, clause 17 provides for the consequential amendment to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, No. 25 of 2017 to the extent specified in the Schedule.

The Schedule to the Bill sets out the particulars of the consequential amendment to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, No. 25 of 2017 and inserts a new section 19A therein which provides for the expungement of prior criminal records and the discontinuance of pending proceedings in relation to minor cannabis offences committed before the commencement of the Act and a simplified application process before the Rehabilitation of Offenders Board.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, this new section 19A specifies that convictions involving possession of up to 56 grams of cannabis or 15 grams of cannabis resin, the cultivation of four or fewer cannabis plants or the possession of related paraphernalia shall be deemed spent and expunged from the individual’s criminal record. In summary, Mr. Speaker, as we close. Mr. Speaker, I just want to zoom in at two important impacts of this Bill.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

The first is the economic impact, Mr. Speaker. There is the potential for the Government of Grenada to generate additional revenues from licensing and taxation, and the development of the cannabis industry may contribute numerous jobs, and of course, provide tremendous financial gains to the economy. Mr. Speaker, case in point for reference, is that of Canada who has thriving industry and who has gained significantly from the enactment of legislation and regularisation of the cannabis industry.

The second impact, Mr. Speaker, is that of social justice and criminal justice. A core goal of many legislation is to address historical inequalities in drug enforcement. In our case, Mr. Speaker, two immediate effects one will see is the reduction in arrest for people caught with the substance. Mr. Speaker, we can reference the United States and Canada there have been a massive decline in arrest for simple possession of the substance, which reduces the collateral consequences of criminal records and the impact it has on people's lives—the ability to regain fully employed to get employment and barriers to travel because they have a criminal record and other access, important access.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will help to eliminate the black market. Regulating the industry, Mr. Speaker, will have that impact. As I said in my opening salvo, the reality is that the substance is widely used in Grenada, so if we regulate it, we can control it; when it's not regulated, there's nothing you can control. We dare argue that when you look at the data, the research information that we've been able to amass, alcohol poses a much more significant threat to young people and to people in general than marijuana.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker regulated markets have successfully displaced a large proportion of illicit trade in places like Canada, the United States, Australia and other developed countries. So what we are doing here, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we eliminate or close off the black market as far as possible and seek to regulate the industry. I must say this also the effect on alcohol on people's lives would have been much worse had it not been legalised in Grenada. Had it been a black market substance the effect would have been much worse.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, let us use the opportunity to educate our people. Let us

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

use the opportunity to develop the industry. Let us use the opportunity to research further into the substance and develop proper medicinal benefits for commercial purposes.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Grenada proceeds with caution, and this Bill contains the guardrails necessary to protect our citizens, especially our youthful population. You notice, Mr. Speaker, we sought to open up the discussions and to look at the pose and cause of the substance because we are not in the business of hiding anything from the population. We want them to understand how the drug has to be used, who should use the drug, and why.

Our policy of decriminalisation, Mr. Speaker, will be paired with strict regulations to protect the youth, accompanied by a robust public education campaign and a strong enforcement against intoxication while driving. Medical use remains controlled, and recreational use, as per this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is not permitted. The Government prioritises health and safety over short-term economic gains. Grenada has an opportunity to learn from the experience of other nations and continue crafting policies or laws that protect its people. Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I now commend the Bill for discussion. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Leader of Government Business. I now invite the MP for St. Andrew North-West to take the floor.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and I do so as Minister for Mental Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs, someone who has seen at close range substance use, especially among young people, affecting emotional development, judgment, motivation and long-term well-being.

This Bill represents a careful and responsible shift away from responses that rely on punishment and exclusion towards an approach that places mental wellness, protection, rehabilitation, and prevention at the centre of our national drug policy.

Mr. Speaker, we must be honest with ourselves. Despite prohibition, young people

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

are already exposed to and using cannabis under the legal age. Pretending otherwise does not protect them; what protects them is awareness, early intervention and structured support, and that is precisely what this Bill seeks to achieve. **(Applause)**

From a mental health perspective, Mr. Speaker, early and unregulated use can interfere with brain development, increase vulnerability to anxiety and mood disorders and affect educational and social outcomes. This Bill respond to that reality, but by ensuring that when young people come into contact with cannabis the state's response is protective, supportive and corrective not damaging a lifeline long impact, and particularly encouraged by the new section 6A which ensures that children and young person's found in possession of small quantities of cannabis are not criminalise but are instead guided into assessment, counselling, education and rehabilitation.

Children under 18 will be referred to the Child Protection Authority, while young people aged 18 to 20 will be referred to an approved programme focused on education, coping skills and mental resilience. Mr. Speaker, this is where awareness meets action.

This Bill creates space for honest conversations, evidence-based education and mental health support, especially for those most at risk, while sending a clear message that underage use is not ignored, normalised or encouraged.

At the same time, the Bill strengthens protective barriers, as smoking or the use of cannabis is prohibited in schools, public spaces, workplaces and public conveyances. These safeguards are essential because protecting young people requires not only intervention after the fact, but strong prevention in the environment where they live, learn and develop.

The expungement provision is also deeply important from a mental health standpoint. Carrying a criminal record for a minor offence can fuel shame, anxiety and stigma. By allowing for an expungement, the Bill promotes healing, reintegration and a genuine second chance while keeping firm penalties in place for use and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill respects medical, scientific and religious use under strict regulation, but it does so without losing sight of a primary duty to protect our young people, safeguard mental wellbeing and strengthen families and communities.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

In supporting the Bill, Mr. Speaker, we are saying clearly we will protect our young people, we will address underage use with honesty and care, we will prioritise mental health and early intervention, and we will replace silencing stigma with awareness and structured support.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, with this protection firmly in place, I fully support the passage of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP. I saw the light of the MP for St. Andrew South-West before, so I now invite you, Honourable MP, to take the floor.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, sir. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give full support to this noble Bill, of this meaningful Bill. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are here today because of the actions taken by our Government to put in place a committee that will guide the decriminalisation and then the development of the cannabis industry here in Grenada.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't been an easy task for the committee, and for us as a Government. It required sober thinking, research, visits to places that have gone before us and a clear understanding of the approach that we should take in bringing us here today. And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying this. Marijuana has a soul, and by this I mean that many people and in particular the Rastafari Movement, have given their lives for this plant. Many fathers would have left their homes, never to return, and with no information on their whereabouts. Many children would have had to grow up in the absence of their fathers and not know who their fathers are.

Mr. Speaker, there is a saying, "A man must be prepared to give his life for a cause that is just and dignified. A man must be prepared to give his life for a cause that is just and dignified **(applause)**, for in so doing, he will never die, but live forever". And so, the souls of the many Rastafari men and women who gave their lives for this noble, but meaningful cause, were not in vain, for our presence here this morning discussing the Bill

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

for the decriminalisation of marijuana is the direct result of sacrificing their souls over many years. **(Applause)** Rastaman...

Mr. Speaker: All right. Honourable MP, before you proceed, let me just make this announcement. We do not allow applause from the gallery. Please refrain from applauding. It doesn't matter how you feel about what is said here in the Chamber; refrain. The practice of applauding comes from the floor. Right? I understand the urge to the feeling, but the practice in the Parliament is that it's not allowed in the gallery. Please proceed, Honourable MP.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But let me say this, Mr. Speaker, with all these Rastaman present here, I'm very happy for their presence. I say to you, Rastaman live up. **(Applause)** Rastaman live up. Don't give up. **(Applause)** Today, Mr. Speaker, the cannabis industry is big. It is very big. Marijuana has been studied by some of the finest minds this planet has produced.

I met a young Dominican, a young guy from Dominica, when I visited St. Vincent some years ago. In fact, last year, because every year St. Vincent has a seminar, a symposium on marijuana, and a team from our commission, including our chairman, the finest legal mind, Mr Clouden **(applause)**, was also present together with a few Rastamen. **(Applause)** And that young man from Dominica has an institute based in Jamaica with a team of young, bright Caribbean people, and they are doing research on marijuana, the strain, the quality and so on.

So some of the finest minds, Mr. Speaker, are involved. Millions of dollars are spent every year in research on the medicinal benefits of this plant, while simultaneously millions are invested, and millions of profit are made from the same medicinal products of marijuana. Newsletters are produced every day on developments taking place in this industry, and of course, there is no reason why we in Grenada should not subscribe to them, read them and familiarise ourselves with this very important topic.

Many young people are taking up employment in this industry, so today marijuana

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

has its own lawyers. Peter, I think you're a "Marijuana Lawyer?" **(Laughter)** Today, marijuana has its own pharmacist. It has its own doctors. It has its own engineers. So, while we're in Grenada, we're prosecuting and jailing our young men and women for this plant, others are happily making a mint out of it. **(Applause)** So we must stop that. We must stop this prosecution; it's not good for us.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to just give you some figures about the great United States, which everybody refers to. The 2025 Vangst finding, and Vangst is the leading staffing agency for the cannabis industry in the US, reveals that the US Cannabis Industry currently supports 425,000 employees and two full-time jobs, 425,000 people working in marijuana, and in that same year, the National Cannabis Retail Sales amounted to \$30.1 billion; it's a billion-dollar industry, Mr. Speaker, sir, so we have to get involved with it, and the long-term outlook for cannabis remains incredibly strong.

And so, today, Mr. Speaker, represents a special moment in Grenada's political and economic history. Today marks a transformative milestone in our nation's journey towards a more just, evidence-based and responsible approach to cannabis.

For decades, our approach to cannabis was characterised by rigid prohibition, a system that was prone to causing lasting social damage and disproportionate harm to our young people in particular, and so they will move away from that era of prohibition guided by the exhaustive consultations with the Cannabis Working Committee, our Ministry of Legal Affairs and our fellow citizens.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognise members of the cannabis community here, if you don't mind. They don't have to applaud, but if I want, if I could ask them to take a bow, that will be fine? So, the Chair, please stand and take a bow. **(Applause)** Ms Lazarus, the PRO, please stand and take a bow. **(Applause)** Ms. Antoine, another PRO **(applause)**, please stand and take a bow. Chief Medical Officer, the big brain, Dr Shawn Charles, just like me, Cuban trained, well-educated, please stand and take a bow. Officer Curwen. **(Applause)** Officer Curwen, tell them that with this law, you have more work to do. Some people say that with this law, with this Bill, the police wouldn't have work. Tell them you have more work to do.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Our assistant Permanent Secretary with responsibility for Marijuana... for Cannabis **(laughter) (applause)** PS Natalie Williams. The driving force behind all of this, the Executive Secretary, or Executive Director of the Cannabis Commission **(applause)**, Sister Nandy Noel. Nandy, don't be afraid to stand.

The truth be told, Mr. Speaker, is that these are the people... But what? A. **(Laughter)** I am missing the main man. **(Laughter)** We have in our midst, as part of the committee, a Rastafari. **(Applause)** A Rastafari from Chantimelle. Selassie I! I and I Jah. **(Applause) (Laughter)** Ever living, ever faithful, ever sure. They use their brain cells, painstakingly so, Mr. Speaker; they spent hours thinking, reading, analysing and coming up with this Bill that we have today, in consultation with a lot of people. We got calls from principals, from churches, from individuals, from all over the place, guiding the process and providing their input, their recommendation to bring us here today. So this has been a marvellous job, and I want to commend, profoundly, the Commission for its work in that regard. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, today, our Government is evolving beyond the old ways of thinking. We are replacing a broken system of criminalisation with a modern, well-regulated framework that prioritises the health of individuals and the safety of our youth, while finally unlocking the therapeutic and economic power for all Grenadians.

So in summary, Mr. Speaker, this Bill we are presenting to this country today for our people is grounded in three main pillars. The first pillar is that of justice—social justice. **(Applause)** It's a Bill rectify the past. We are providing amnesty and the expungement of records for cannabis offences that fall within the specification of the Bill. We believe that a past mistake should not be a permanent barrier to an individual's progress.

Furthermore, we are upholding the constitutional rights of our Rastafarian community **(applause)**, recognising their right to use cannabis as a sacred sacrament within their pieces of worship. As a Catholic, Mr. Speaker, I use incense. We in the Catholic Church use incense, so the Rastaman has a right to use his ganja. Nothing is wrong with that. **(Applause)**

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

The second pillar, Mr. Speaker, is personal rights and public safety. And I want to make this point, Mr. Speaker, loud and clear, and I will repeat it. This is a measured shift, not an introduction to an unrestricted market. It is a measured shift and not an introduction to an unrestricted market. We are decriminalising marijuana to individuals age 21 and above. **(Applause)** We are decriminalising the possession of up to 56 grams of cannabis and 15 grams of cannabis resin for private use.

We are also permitting registered household cultivation of four plants, and this is to ensure that adults can address their personal health needs in privacy without fear of arrest. **(Applause)** Notwithstanding this, Mr. Speaker, we remain very vigilant. We have established a fixed penalty fine system for the public use of cannabis and created a rehabilitative framework for our youth, and I will speak more about that just now.

And to those who intend to exploit our children, be warned. Be warned. **(Applause)** The penalties for supplying minors with cannabis remain severe, and so we choose counselling over criminalisation for our youth **(applause)**, but we also choose strict enforcement for their protection.

And the third pillar has to do with the creation of a Grenadian-First Marijuana Industry. **(Applause)** We haven't reached there yet, but we're getting there. So looking ahead, our good intention, our good intention is to build a national asset.

With the cannabis commission and through its work, we are going to design a legal industry, medicinal agro-processing and research that prioritises local benefits in the Grenadian-First Industry. And I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, that that industry we want to create is part of our Government's effort to expand, to increase, and to widen the economic base of our country, so that more employment opportunities can be provided for our citizens. Therefore, the marijuana industry will serve as a complement to the traditional economic sectors like agriculture, tourism, and construction; that's the vision of this Government.

We first started with the creative economy as a new area of economic activity. Then we have the Blue Economy another new area of economic activities. So we are widening the economies, and when we develop our marijuana industry, we're going to

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

have another new area of economic activity that will increase our employment, our income and our outputs and make our country richer and make every Grenadian richer, so that there'll be no more poverty in this country. **(Applause)** There will be no poverty in this country, they'll be no poverty in this country. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit more time on the real situation facing our young people relative to cannabis, and how this Bill seeks to give attention and to protect our young people, in particular, our young men. We know what's happening with our young men these days. We're not giving them enough attention. They need the attention.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have collected data on the number of marijuana arrests in Grenada for the period 2021 to 2025. I'll tell you. I will tell you. In 2021, there were 243 cases. In 2022, 115. Peter, you know all that because you defended them. **(Laughter)** In 2023, there were 95. In 2024, there were 125. In 2025, we had 71. So, put differently, over the last five years, there have been 649 arrests for marijuana in this country. This figure, Mr. Speaker, underscores the objective necessity of the current Bill in rectifying the social injustices of our past approach to marijuana in this country.

But, I want to go further, Mr. Speaker. Of those 649 cases, 11% or 72 involved individuals caught **(time bell ring)** with less than 56 grams... Mr. Speaker, could I ask for another 15 minutes, please?

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP, the allotted time to Members is 15 minutes according to the Standing Order. I now allow you to go on for another five minutes.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: ... 46%... It is the same 56 grams we're talking about that we're trying to decriminalise... 72 cases. 46% of training cases were classified as simple possession. But hear this, Mr. Speaker. 14%, which is 90 cases, involved children and young people... Involved children and young people. Under this new Bill, these children going to jail, would not be defended by Peter, under this new Bill. Under this new Bill, these young people will be directed to counselling and rehabilitation rather than

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

entering the justice system. Good?

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the kind of counselling that is expected, the kind of education that is expected. Apart from the fact that they'll be taught about the negative impact of smoking at an early age, right, they will also be taught, Mr. Speaker, about the many professions associated with marijuana, and I want to refer to some of them. Cultivation and growing. You could be a grower, a harvest technician, a director of cultivation, a breeder or a nursery assistant because it is an industry.

Processing and manufacturing. You could be an extraction technician, an edible chef, you could be a packaging specialist or an infusion technician. In retail and dispensary, you can be a bud tender, a dispensary manager, or a dispensary buyer. Laboratory and quality assurance. You can be a lab technician, a scientist, a quality control specialist. Distribution logistical cooperation. You can be a delivery driver, a marketing brand manager, a cannabis consultant, or an accountant. And there are some emerging and specialised roles. You could be a cannabis tour operator, yes, a cannabis tour operator, a data analyst, or an equipment technician.

So there are many wonderful professions associated with marijuana. So while some of these jobs may require entry-level training, the majority of them require specialised training and knowledge in horticulture, in biochemistry, and, of course, illegal compliance. So, Mr. Speaker, we are well taking care of our young people in this Bill.

And so, Mr. Speaker, given my five minutes, let me rush to close. And I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, in closing. This Bill represents a paradigm shift, a change in the stethoscope, a break with the past, a new construct, which, when passed in Parliament, will become the new conventional wisdom regarding our attitudes and our approach and our image towards marijuana in this country. Therefore, I call on all of us Grenadians to become familiar with this Bill, discuss it among yourselves, for it will be the basis for the identification and development of a new area of economic activity that will increase our income, employment and output, our gross domestic product.

So the foundation work has been done. I once again thank the members of the Cannabis Committee for your good work, and the time is now for us all to work together

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

to build a country that is just and that is fair, and to make Grenada a better place for all of us to live. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Member for St. Andrew South-West. I now invite the MP for the Town of St. George to make his contribution.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first, let me commend the drafters and all those who worked on getting this Bill to the House. I must say that it's long overdue, and to also say that it's... And when I say that, I mean for many, many years, not last year or the year before. You know, and this has come as a result of the work of many people through the generations, not just us. So while we take credit for it, I agree with my friend from St. Andrew South-West that we must pay tribute.

I agree with you. I look behind me, and I see many people who have worked very hard. I see my good and distinguished friend Mr. Clouden. And I want to say something. Over the years working with Mr. Clouden, my dear friend, Brother Anslem, I should say former Senator in this House, he has always advocated, not in recent... You know, sometimes things come into style—it hasn't been that for him. It has been dedicated years **(applause)** of work.

In fact, in the court, I remember us having discussions about... And I think that is what has happened, because I've always said that we've always followed, and there must come a time when we should leave. Unfortunately, in this case, we have been lagging behind. So, a lot of the commercial opportunities... You know, the opportunities that may have existed years ago, because of the fact that we're always afraid to take actions, and I understand why sometimes because of some of the agreements we've had, some of the regulations with finance and all of that it is difficult, so I'm not suggesting that's it's easy for anybody to do it. But all I must say is that we have lagged behind, but I commend what we have today. Rather than saying we've come to the end, I will submit to you, to all of us, that it is only the beginning.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

You know, yesterday I received a call from a gentleman, and it was an interesting conversation. He said, “Well, if everybody can have an ounce, where are we getting it from?” It takes us to another level, but that’s not for today. It takes us to a different level because we’re now talking about another level of incremental steps. As the Chinese say, “A journey of 500 miles begins with but one step”.

So let us take the steps celebrate it when we take it, but never become complacent in believing that this is the end of the road; this is merely the beginning, and because of the fact that we are lagging behind, we may have to run faster than you can imagine.

So I want to commend all my brethren I see here. The Rastafarian—I don’t want to call names because I’ll have to call all the names, my Brother Clouden, the people in the PR, the people in the committee. I want to join my friend in commending them for the work.

The fact is, the passage of this legislation is the result of what we see behind us, but we must also look at the history and understand where we've come from. Cannabis was not always criminalised; it was not always classified as a dangerous drug. In fact, the evidence will tell you that there was a time back in the early 20th century when it was legal, and our ancestors used it for several reasons, like relaxation and medicinal purposes. So, understand that this was made illegal by persons who came.

In fact, there is some evidence that suggests it was lobbied for. You know, there were these lobbies; these things didn’t just start. There's what’s called “the alcohol lobby”. Remember, you have an alcohol industry and that alcohol industry, it was suggested, I'm not sure, I've not studied the subject, was part of the people who made cannabis illegal, so that cannabis does not compete with the industry.

Because, you see, alcohol requires big capital investments, so the people who have been investing in alcohol are different from the people who can be investing in cannabis—many of the people who can plant: the farmers, the workers, the peasants. So there is a history that we must understand as we move forward.

Our ancestors used it as a herb. I remember a gentle man in Belmont, I don’t want to call names, an old guy who was in his 90s at the time, who was using cannabis back

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

in the 1970s. So, Mr. Speaker, the fact is we are moving towards a new period, and I agree with my friend on that. And what was the result of this? The result of this was the mass imprisonment of working people. Criminal records... And I won't be long because much has been said.

Stigmatisation of the Rastafarian Movement and its use of cannabis in sacrament. You know, I remember years ago, Rastaman, God bless his soul, was around at the time, representing the group when the tabernacle was on River Road, when the police stormed into the tabernacle without absolute disregard for the religious rights, and we had to be fighting that in court.

I remember Mr. Clouden, in many of these cases, making the point. I remember the issue of cutting off the locs. I remember my dear brethren from St. Vincent, Earthquake, a client of mine who was the first person that we stopped cutting off the locs because he was a Rastafarian. Up to this day, I don't think we ever got to judgment on that case, Mr Clouden, it was Justice Benjamin at the time, but at least they stopped cutting Rastafarians hair at Her Majesty's Prison.

So it has been a struggle, as you indicated, my brother from St. Andrew South-West. The working class was disproportionately affected by this; disproportionately affected. The CARICOM Report, I think it was mentioned by one of my colleagues, the CARICOM Report, in a big way, gives us a lot of data. I suggest every one of us get hold of the CARICOM Report because what we're doing here is as a result of the work of a lot of the specialists in this regard, and the report overwhelmingly, in fact unanimously, suggested that we do what we are doing here today. So, I suggest we get a copy of the report, read the report, which gives you a lot of background and a lot of data.

So, where are we today? The fact is, the vast majority of our people... I was surprised when we looked at the data in 2018. The data in 2018 suggest that 61% of Grenadians supported decriminalisation. When I saw it, I was actually surprised because I thought, and we were in front of many of the islands in terms of acceptance of where we are today, and it tells me that the majority of our people have come to the position of supporting where we are today.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

In fact, in looking at the CARICOM Report, it says, “There is now overwhelming support for law reform, moving away from the prohibition on cannabis and consequent criminalisation. This holds true not only from the data, but for the many prominent persons and groups that have lent their voice to this cause from all walks of life, including church leaders, magistrates, judges, social workers, educators, doctors, Chief Justices, DPP, Members of Parliament and senior members of the Bar—all of these groups...

I remember having a consultation, and there were a couple of colleagues here today who were there with the Catholic Church, with the Bishop of the Catholic Church, who is still the Bishop, where that consultation involved a lot of these people. Sister Sandra Ferguson was involved in organising that many years ago. So, today's action is more driven by the people rather than led by politicians, so we must give credit to the people **(applause)** who have brought us here today rather than the politicians.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. The amount... The fact is, whereas in 2018, we had these numbers, I believe the numbers are much higher today. We are seven years on, but we must continue to talk to our people about the issue. Do not just come to Parliament, pass a Bill and walk away believing, bouncing our chest, believing we've done something good. Because while we are calling for reform, the commission accepted that there can be some psychological issues with some young people.

So, I'm happy that the law provides for that. It talks about counselling. It talks about not having people drive while using cannabis; that research is ongoing. We must bear that in mind, and also bear in mind that we must convince all of our people by our actions. This here, today, is not a call to everybody to smoke weed; this is not an announcement.

I mean, I want to pay tribute to the Rastafarian Movement because to them it's a sacrament. We must pay tribute to that also **(applause)**, but what we must do is, for the people who want to smoke, and fall into the categories that are here, should not be criminalised. I think that is the main purpose of the Bill.

In other words, we're not saying to parents, because we have to understand the role and how parents see this. We have to say to them, “We are not in the Parliament

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

today saying everybody in Grenada should go out and smoke”; that is not the purpose of the Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that people are desirable and that their parents have no difficulty with that. We are talking about young people over 21 now; under 21, there is none of that being encouraged.

In addition to that, a lot of the old theories of cannabis have been debunked. A lot of the old theories of it being a gateway drug, of it, you know, sending people mad, of encouraging crime... In fact, Mr. Clouden will say this. The only crime we know associated with cannabis use in the court was the use itself. **(Laughter)** There was nothing that led them...

Alcohol, on the other hand, and it was suggested... Let me tell you. In terms of causation, alcohol is the worst drug. It leads to all... Sister Delma will tell you. In terms of incest... Men getting home drunk in the night, doing all kinds of nonsenses in the house, beating their wife, beating their girlfriend... Alcohol has been the cause of that, but we've taken our focus off of that, and up to a time, we're talking now about cannabis.

So, my dear Members of Parliament, I expect that we will get bipartisan support. I know, on my side, we support because we did present a Bill to Parliament years ago, and we did have consultations when I was in another organisation, and therefore, we presented this Bill. I remember sitting right there and having the Bill presented, so I do expect **(inaudible comment by a Member)** that there will be bipartisan... Well, I am prepared to take credit first. **(Laughter)** I have no difficulty taking credit first. If the credit is mine, well, let that be. **(Laughter)** I have no shame for that. So, I expect that we as a House will do it.

One thing I would have liked is, I must say it, Mr. Speaker, when Bills like these are being presented, we are brought into the picture before we get here, so that we can understand all of the consequences and be able to tell our communities. So, I support the Bill, but quite frankly, the only briefing I've received is the briefing that was given here today. I would have liked to have a discussion.

The truth is, when you do that, and this is my pitch again for bipartisanship, when you do that, I can maybe add something to it, with my experience over the years or lack

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

of it, you never know. The point I'm making is, as we go forward as a Parliament, let us try to understand that there are things that we can agree on, and this, for me, is one of them.

But I want to say something with respect to the Rastafarian community. My brother said it. Over the years, they have been discriminated against, that is the word I'll use. You mentioned Rastafarians who have lost their lives for it, discriminated against for it, and their kids cannot attend certain schools because of the fact that they're Rastafarians. And I think, you know, the police need to be educated on this issue because there is, and regardless of what we say, there is something in the culture about how they operate that says that when they see somebody looking like that, there is some kind of crime being committed or is about to be committed.

I think we need more education in our national security apparatus on this issue, but I want to say something. Because of the discrimination over the years, maybe going forward, I've had this discussion with several of them, and they need to be given some preference, I know people don't like preferential treatment, preference given on the commercial side when that time comes, because of historic wrongs, so that in the commercialisation, in the work to get the cannabis industry up and running, the Rastafarian Movement should be given some serious consideration.

I want to say to my brethren that it would require the Rastafarian Movement coming together. They are stronger together, and I know that there are different Rastafarian denominations, if that's the word you use, but certainly coming together as a group will assist (**applause**) in getting more out of politicians. You approach politicians, united, you get more than if you approach divided; that is a rule. So therefore, I urge you to play your part in getting that done, but I urge our Government, whoever these governments are going forward, to work to assist in correcting some historic wrongs that took place. So, to the Rastafarian community, I hope that you're able to come together and develop programmes. We're far behind. We're lagging behind, but we should develop programmes in order to get going.

In addition to that, to the Government, all governments, there is a group of parents

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

out there that are worried, and they're worried because of what exists. We are in the courts every day. I see magistrates and judges, and I raise this because it was raised in the context of alcohol use on other issues, that we need to invest more into positive programmes for young people. We need to invest more so that when we are in the courts, and we have problems, you're referred to sending kids to counselling, or sending them to programmes. They need to make more investments in that, so that we do not have more alienated youths going forward.

Just yesterday, there was a young man, and the Chief Magistrate and I were talking about what we could do with him. He has a mental problem, and you can't send him to Her Majesty's Prison because he would be a danger to himself and to the other prisoners. If he damages another prisoner, it is you, the state, that has to pay the compensation for whatever injuries, including death, that can be caused. Let us sit as a people and find solutions to some of these problems of the mentally challenged people. There is no secure facility in Grenada for the mentally challenged persons who end up in the Criminal Justice System.

I remembered Judge Mitchell; he died recently. He was in the Court of Appeal, and a gentleman came in front of him, and the gentleman was obviously mentally challenged. That was about 15 years ago. He said to the DPP, "Mr. DPP, this man should not go to Her Majesty's Prison; he's mentally challenged," and the DPP said, "There's no place." He said, "I'll give you a month to find a place for this man." The DPP came back a month later, and the judge said, "Mr. DPP, have you found a place where this man can be safe, and he cannot affect the safety of others?" And the DPP said, "No, we have no place," and the judge looked at the prisoner and said, "You are free to leave, sir. You are now his problem, not my problem".

In other words, we need to find space for that, and it may sound like a... You know, sometimes we don't like to approach these issues because they are issues affecting poor and working people. We need to find solutions.

So, I just thought I'd make that comment here today because the magistrates always say to me, "Mr. David, you're in Parliament, you're part of the problem." **(Time**

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

bell rings) I want to be part of the solution. Mr. Speaker, just one minute to wrap up, if I may?

Mr. Speaker: You have one minute.

Hon. Peter David: Yes, so I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, we support... I support this Bill, **(laughter)** I'm sorry for saying we, I support this Bill, well, myself and others who support, we support this Bill. **(Laughter)** I cannot speak for all Members of the House on "This Side", but I do believe that while it appears as though we've achieved a lot, there is a long way to go.

As I said, the gentleman who called me yesterday said, "Peter, where is the man going to get the 56 grams from?" And that question has to be answered. Well, now we'll find an answer, and there will be work. The point I'm making is, as we go forward, we will have to find the solutions to problems that will arise.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I must say that the experience of the other islands... Because remember, Antigua, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica, all of them have passed legislation, and I'm sure the Prime Minister will agree in his discussions with those leaders in the other islands, they have been no rise in problems, as some people suggest, will occur. So, we have the evidence from the other islands, we have the evidence from all over; countries all over the world. I think this Bill would lead to something good. In fact, I think this Bill can cause us to start thinking more, so, as the Member said, the Member for St. Andrew South-West, and I agree with him in his propositions, that we need to think now how we move forward with this.

I do not believe there is an easy way. We have a small country; it's not going to be an easy solution, but I think if we all come together, and not try to achieve the world in one minute, but move in incremental steps as we are doing today, I think we'll make it.

My learned colleague and I had a bet in the court. He didn't win the bet, but we'll split it 50/50. I congratulate you. **(Laughter)** I'll tell you all the story off the record, but **(laughter)** I want to congratulate you.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

The members in the Rastafarian Movement, members of the committee, all of you, I want to congratulate all of you for work well done to get us here, and I hope the public understands that what we are trying to doing is to help manage this issue, and I hope they come behind us on these issues, but we must continue to educate our people on these issues, and not just leave our discussions in the halls of this Parliament. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, MP for the Town of St. George. From where I sit, is it the MP for the constituency of St. John? I now invite you to take the floor.

Hon. Kerryne James: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much. Before I begin my intervention, I want to take this time to say a special morning to my constituents. I also want to take the time to say a special good morning to the people of the Rastafarian community, who have joined us here this morning, and to wish everyone in this Honourable House a very happy new year. It is our first sitting for the year 2026, and so, I anticipate that we will have very robust and interesting Sitings as the year advances.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, not as a fashionable reform, not as a political stunt, but as a serious, evidence-based, evidence-led, morally conscious adjustment to a policy space, where Grenada has too often relied on punishment, while families have cried out for treatment.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, is built on a simple truth. We cannot police our way out of a public health challenge. We can police trafficking, Mr. Speaker, we can police exploitation, we can police violence, but when it comes to low-level possession and use, criminalisation has often produced social harm without measurable deterrence, barriers to employment and travel, Mr. Speaker, stigma, and a justice system clogged with matters that did not meaningfully advance public safety. That is precisely the policy context reflected in the Government's briefings, the limitations of a punitive approach, and the shift towards public health, prevention, rights-respecting regulations.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Mr. Speaker, this Bill does five major things for us cleanly and deliberately. The first being decriminalising small quantities for adults, while maintaining strong controls against trafficking and harmful conduct.

The second major thing this Bill does, Mr. Speaker, is permit medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, and religious use under regulated conditions. The Leader of Government's Business, through you, Mr. Speaker, has eloquently expressed those. This is not a free-for-all, but it is rather a framework.

The third thing that this Bill does, Mr. Speaker, is protect children and young persons through diversion, not arrest, handled without a criminal record.

The fourth thing that this thing does, Mr. Speaker, is create new controls or misuse, including public smoking restrictions with a fixed penalty, and strict protection around school premises.

Finally. Fifth, it provides expungement; a lawful mechanism, Mr. Speaker, to correct the historic consequences of minor cannabis convictions, including discontinuance of pending proceedings of that type.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak directly and respectfully to our Rastafarian community. For generations, Mr. Speaker, the sacramental use of cannabis was treated not as faith, but as a crime. Spiritual practice was criminalised, conscience was prosecuted, and many of our Rastafarian brothers and sisters bore the brunt of stigma, harassment, and arrest for living their beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, on a light side of things, what the Honourable Member for St. Andrew South-West did not tell you, I believe at one point in his time he was a Rasta. **(Laughter)** **(Applause)** I hope it was not as a result of this stigmatisation that he decided to cut his dreads **(laughter)**, and became a bald head. **(Laughter)**

Mr. Speaker, this Bill acknowledges a truth long denied, that the use of cannabis within the Rastafarian faith is religious, not recreational, spiritual, and not criminal. By explicitly recognising religious use, Mr. Speaker, cultivation and exempt events, this Parliament says clearly, "Your faith is not unlawful". I'll reiterate that. **(Applause)** "Your faith is not unlawful", and that recognition matters not just legally, Mr. Speaker, but

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

symbolically.

This House cannot undo the pain of the past, Mr. Speaker, but today, it can choose justice over silence. And so, we must be honest, Mr. Speaker, about our political history. We agree, and we accept, Mr. Speaker, and I agree with the Member for the Town of St. George, that reform did not begin today, or a few years ago, or a few weeks or months ago. Years ago, Mr. Speaker, under a previous administration, there were public discussions, and even a public signalling around cannabis decriminalisation. I remember committees were spoken of, intent was expressed, Mr. Speaker, but intent alone does not and did not change law; those efforts, alternately, Mr. Speaker, materialised to not.

What makes this moment different is not rhetoric, Mr. Speaker; it is delivery. **(Applause)** This Government, Mr. Speaker, has spoken clearly, and it has also legislated clearly. It has faced, Mr. Speaker, the complexity, the controversy, and the consequences, and brought a Bill to this House. That is the difference, Mr. Speaker, between gesture and governance. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I wish to speak also about a personal truth. Substance misuse is real. Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker, supporting this Bill does not mean denying the risk of cannabis misuse. I do not speak about this reform from an abstraction or from theory; I speak now, Mr. Speaker, as a sister.

My brother has been medically diagnosed with Drug-Induced Psychosis for about eight years. I have watched up close, Mr. Speaker, what substance misuse can do to a mind, to a family, to a community, and overall to hope. I have seen the fear. I have witnessed the instability and the helplessness of loving someone while watching them unravel.

So, when I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, in support of this Bill, it is not because I believe cannabis is harmless; it is because I know that criminalisation does nothing for someone who is already struggling. You cannot arrest someone into recovery. You cannot imprison someone in wellness. So, this Bill finally separates, Mr. Speaker, use from misuse, and justice from treatment, and that distinction also matters. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, if we are also honest with ourselves, the greatest failure of the old

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

system was not enforcement, but neglect. After Hurricane Ivan, Mr. Speaker, I was seven going on eight, the Carlton Home, Grenada's only rehabilitation facility, was destroyed, and for many years, and then I think later on there was a fire as well. For many years, Mr. Speaker, it remained absent; it was not replaced, it was not rebuilt, and it was not prioritised. It took Grenada Co-operative Bank, Mr. Speaker, not the state, not the administration at the time, to begin mobilising financing efforts towards rehabilitation infrastructure.

While in 2018 and 2019, for example, we heard promises, including references during the Budget debate, we were in another place at that time, in the Upper House; that work would have finally commenced on proper mental health and rehabilitation facilities. The reality is that persons suffering from substance misuse remain underserved.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to bring light to a stark reality in that of the Rathdune Block, for example. The Rathdune Block, Mr. Speaker, is a psychiatric and mental health stabilisation unit, designed to provide short-term acute specialised care for persons experiencing severe mental health crises, including psychosis.

After Hurricane Ivan, again, Mr. Speaker, that stabilisation unit that is supposed to, and was housed at the General Hospital, was moved to Mt. Gay, the Mental Health Facility Campus in Mt. Gay, as a temporary move to bring some sort of normalcy to hospital daily routines and operations; but what was a temporary move, Mr. Speaker, became permanent.

So, today, what you see happening now, we have a Rathdune Unit that was not designed to house persons who might be psychotic, not being able to hold them for more than two weeks. So the treatment is inadequate, and the location is not suitable for them because they should not be mixing with other inmates who have much more mentally challenging problems and illnesses, but that is where we are today. And in addition to bringing this Bill to Parliament, Mr. Speaker, it took this Government about 22 years to finally address having a proper rehabilitation facility for our young men and women.

(Applause)

I do not hear, or we have not discussed, rather, any plans of having that block housed

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

in the new hospital that some people call “pie in the sky”, Mr. Speaker. It took this Government to ensure that we prioritise having better care at a temporary stage, to ensure that they have properly suited beds for the inmates, the patients there, and to ensure that we can do rehabilitation work on the Mt. Gay Mental Hospital to ensure that we have enough spacing for those vulnerable citizens. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill does not pretend to solve that alone, but it finally aligns the law with the reality that treatment, not punishment, must be the centre of our response. For the first time, this Government has put their money where its mouth is. **(Applause)** This is not a coincidence; this is policy coherence.

So, Mr. Speaker, we also heard that there have been attempts and discussions to bring this much-needed Bill to be laid in this Honourable House. Grenada heard the talk before through many personalities under various leadership. The difference today is that this Government has brought the matter to Parliament, with a coherent legislative package; it has law, schedules, offences, protection, and expungement.

The difference is not who spoke the loudest, Mr. Speaker, it is who delivered, and so with all of this, Mr. Speaker, some may come with two familiar arguments, some may say this will encourage use, or others may say this is too soft, but I want to ask this House, Mr. Speaker, through you; what encouraged misuse more, compassionate diversions and education, or decades of stigma and silence? What is softer, creating a clear penalty for public smoking and strict protection for schools, or clogging our Courts with minor possessions, while the real traffickers adapt and evolve?

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, is discipline through new offences and fixed penalties. It is dignity, Mr. Speaker, through religious recognition and expungement **(applause)**, and, Mr. Speaker, it is dignity and direction towards regulation, treatment, and a modern framework.

Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill because I want fewer young men and women entering adulthood with a record for a minor offence, and more young people entering adulthood with education, guidance, and protection. I support this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because I believe faith must be respected, not criminalised, and I support this Bill because

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

I know what substance misuse can do to a family. I refuse to pretend that punishment is treatment, or that stigma is prevention.

I support this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because I know that we have a responsibility, and that this is the House's opportunity to say that we are governing with evidence, conscience, and with humanity. So, I want to commend on "This Side" of the House for not going down into history as revisionist historians, but as action-oriented historians and Parliamentarians. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP, for the constituency of St. John. I think it's the light of the MP for St. George North-East. Please take the floor, Honourable MP.

Hon. Ron Redhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll gladly do so. Mr. Speaker, after listening the presentation of my colleague, sister, and Member for St. John, it tells me that we are indeed making the right decision, that the future of the country understands all of the mistakes of the past related to this specific legislation, and that we are prepared essentially to correcting it, and to rewriting that injustice against Grenada's community. So, Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

A Bill that, in my view, seeks to modernise our legislation as mentioned earlier by earlier presenters. It helps to correct the injustice of the Rastafarian community. Mr. Speaker, for years, and not just in Grenada, but all over the world, the Rastafarian community has endured that injustice, the abuse, and the disrespect, Mr. Speaker, for their faith, their belief, and their call for the herb internationally, to be recognised and respected. Today, by the passing of this Bill, Grenada is attempting to write that round, and join our colleague nations around the world in recognising the Rastafarian community rights to use and work with marijuana or cannabis, as it is titled in this Bill, for their religious sacrament, and for this, Mr. Speaker, we are eternally grateful to be standing on the side of the Rastafarian community. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, most importantly, helps to lay the foundation, and you heard

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

it from the Member for St. Andrew South-West and the Minister for Economic Development for Grenada's first regulated cannabis industry. We believe this industry has the potential to serve two critical, national objectives.

First, it can create a new and viable sector in our economy, generating employment as mentioned; entrepreneurship and investment. Secondly, it opens significant opportunities to harness the medicinal and therapeutic value of cannabis through investment in local research, development, and the creation of value-added products.

I want to spend some time just speaking about it because we heard earlier on by the presenters about the effects and some of the legislation, but in my preamble, I want to talk about where we need to go, because we need to understand the vision as to why we are passing this legislation.

We are not just doing this because it is opportunistic; it has a genuine, deep purpose to be able to build out the future for Grenada's economy and expand our opportunities for our people. So, with the right regulatory framework, Grenada can position itself to begin to market high-quality medicinal cannabis products for export; that is where the value is going to work for the Rastafarian community. Mr. Speaker, as much as they use it for religious purposes, they must have access to training on how to take it now, commercialise it, and benefit, so that they can build their homes, they can continue to educate their children in communities of the Rastafarian practice, and continue to build their future as they see it.

Grenada must not be a place where we are stifling people because, Mr. Speaker, the word immigrants is very popular in the world today; it is something we in Grenada know fully well that we are built up on. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, people who do not subscribe to the norm as everybody else still deserve the right to live, to work, and to build Grenada.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are possibilities. So, phase one is the process of amending the legislation, as we are doing now, which speaks to establishing clarity, safeguards, and legitimacy; and phase two will then require us to build out our scientific regulatory and commercial capacity needed to prepare Grenada for the future in this regard.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

So, I want to start off quickly by looking at the overall purpose of the Bill. As mentioned, historically, Grenada's cannabis laws have focused more on punishment rather than outcomes. That approach, Mr. Speaker, has overcrowded our justice systems and the jails, simply put. It has also led to the damage of some young people, and limited opportunities for Grenadians involved when they get a criminal record.

And when we talk about the damage, it is not to say that the state is responsible for the misuse, it is to say that the state is not doing enough to treat the misuse, and therefore, the neglect, and the need to punish and criminalise people when they misuse it, was the injustice that we needed to overcome.

And so, as it relates to sections 6 and, in particular, the new section, section 6A, it speaks to how this Bill is going to treat the decriminalisation and the rehabilitation of people who get caught with the particular substance.

Mr. Speaker, simply put. It has also led to the damage of some young people, and limited opportunities for Grenadians involved when they get a criminal record, and when we talk about the damage, it is not to say that the State is responsible for the misuse, it is to say that the State is not doing enough to treat with the misuse, and therefore, the neglect, and the need to punish, and criminalise people when they misuse it, was the injustice that we needed to overcome. So, as it relates to sections 6 and in particular, the new section, section 6A, it speaks to how this Bill is going to treat with the decriminalisation and the rehabilitation of people who get caught with the particular substance.

Mr. Speaker, we believe this is therefore a measured and controlled approach to the whole issue of cannabis, not a free-for-all or an open sepulchre. We are not telling people to go out and smoke freely; this has nothing to do with people and their urge to use it for recreational purposes as opposed to medicinal. What we are saying is that we need to put the regulatory framework in place to take it off the black market and put it in something that is now recognised, and we will be able to benefit from it.

There are two areas I want to just highlight from the Bill as I move forward in this discussion. One is that right now, at present, when a child encounters cannabis, there is

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

no clear legal requirement for education, counselling, or rehabilitation; and so, what this amendment seeks to do is to help correct that initial gap under section 6A, where children and young people found in possession of small quantities are not arrested, charged or burdened with a criminal record.

And this is important, Mr. Speaker, but the Bill doesn't stop there. It also addresses the historical pattern or mistakes of the past by criminalising young people or people in general who were caught with small quantities and who hold a criminal record; it would expunge it, and it is doing so, Mr. Speaker, under section 17 and section 19A of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we highlight that because on one hand, we are talking about how to go forward, and on the other hand, the Bill is also seeking to take people who themselves were victims of this gap, and bring them in line with where we expect and intend them to be, Mr. Speaker. Cannabis, essentially, what we are saying is no longer seen as a dangerous drug; we need to bring it under the law to control it, so that people do not have the unfortunate situation of its misuse.

So, it addresses that long-standing discrimination, Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, by recognising the religious rights of the Rastafarian community, section 13A, it allows for regulated cultivation and sacramental use, Mr. Speaker, and permits the declaration of exempt religious events. The only thing I would add, Mr. Speaker, is that while the legislation should not say this, we as a nation must make a public apology to the Rastafarian community, and that is something I think we can continue to speak on.

Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, we still keep the sections of the Bill that prohibit smoking or use in public spaces, workplaces, and public transport. With a fixed penalty system, you heard the Leader of Government's Business talking about it, section 13B addresses this, section 13E also, and section 13C strictly protects school premises and surrounding areas with serious penalties. So, it's critical, it's not again an open sepulchre.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, in talking about this Bill, we recognised, as mentioned, that there may be questions that families or parents may have over the whole situation; it's new to some people, and therefore, we need to express some measure of

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

caution, and we will see challenges when implementing. It will require the education as mentioned, resources, and the key thing, oversight.

So, in relation to the point that the Member for the Town of St. George made, Mr. Speaker, through you, and I want to take him up on it because I think too often we come here, we pass the legislation, and we don't do enough as Parliamentarians to really carry home our role and responsibility beyond just passing legislation.

To the Honourable Member for St. Mark, as well. You know, we often go on a lot of trips, and when we go on those trips the expectation is that we speak about the region, and recently, we were in Trinidad, and we talked about how we can partner. So, I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, through you, there's an opportunity here, let us create, working with the existing committee, an oversight and impact commission now at the level of Parliament or otherwise, right, to do one of three things. One, let's monitor enforcement, right? Let's also have a review system for youth referrals and the expungement outcomes. Let's look at that; let's look at the data as to whether or not it is working. Let's ensure that we publish annual public reports on health, social, and economic impacts; and let us also seek to recommend legislative adjustments based on new data that might become available in the future. Let's commit to that.

We can also go further, and say, as the issue that was mentioned by the Member for the Town of St. George, let us talk about a Cannabis Social Equity and Education Fund. So, when we talk about the cannabis industry, it must not be abstract to what is happening. It must play the part also to safeguard and preserve the safety of our young people by ensuring that we have greater drug education in schools and communities.

Let it also be able to fund and subsidise counselling and rehabilitation services in vulnerable communities. Let's commit ourselves to thinking and talking about that, and let us also see if we could get grants provided for individuals whose records, for example, got expunged, and may now need a new start in life to move forward. Let's talk about how we can make them industrious, notwithstanding that they've had that difficult past, and they are ready to go in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, by supporting this Bill, I think we are going to get to where we

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

need to be, and this essentially is just a start. It is to ensure that we end the unnecessary criminalisation of our young people, that we protect them against future misuse with education and knowledge, critical, that we respect religious freedom, and that the Government of Grenada, at this date, here so says and declares that cannabis is something that we intend to invest in and build up for the future benefits of our country, and our people; Grenadians, Carriacouans and Petite Martiniquians, the world over. So, Mr. Speaker, with these few words, I commend this Bill, and I fully support its passage in this House here today. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Member for St. George North-East; and I now invite the Honourable Prime Minister to take the floor and make his contribution.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and pleasant morning to... Is it still morning? Yes. Pleasant morning to you, Mr. Speaker, to the Members of the House, and persons in the gallery. I take the opportunity, since it's my first time here for 2026, to wish everyone a healthy and successful 2026.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the passage of the Bill through all stages in the House of Representatives for all of the reasons advanced by the Leader of Government's Business, if I may call him that, the Minister with responsibility for Cannabis, the Member of Parliament for St. Andrew South-West. I think, Mr. Speaker, I said to him his presentation was well researched, erudite, eloquent, passionate, persuasive, and demonstrates why, Mr. Speaker, that both himself and his team, the enormous work they've done on getting us here today. **(Applause)** And so, I join with commending the Cannabis Secretariat and the Cannabis Commissioner, for the enormous work they've done in getting us to, what I would call, the first stage of establishing and creating a cannabis industry in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and therefore, there still is a lot of work to be done, but we have to start somewhere.

And, Mr. Speaker, I hope, as the Member for the Town of St. George has said, that we have universal bipartisan support for this Bill because while we brought the Bill, Mr.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Speaker, I think that there has to be a clearance requisition that the trend to reverse decades of misinformation deliberately so, stigmatisation, or criminalisation of the marijuana plant, first and foremost, because it's just a plant just like any other plant; and then the use or misuse of the plant, and the demons and non-demons that have been deliberately associated with it, started quite some time ago. The Minister and others have already singled out, in the context of the Caribbean, the Rastafarian community for their unyielding, unwavering commitment to reversing this heresy. It is a historic moment to be here this morning, and I'm proud to be part of a team **(applause)** that has gotten us to this first stage. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we think there's never a plan or that we are whooping or that things are happening ad hoc.

I want to emphasise that there is a plan because the National Sustainable Development Plan, I always go back to it, the NSDP, 2020 to 2035, has 12 references in it to marijuana, and it starts by indicating that what should happen is that a Marijuana Advisory Committee should be formed or established to advise the State of Grenada on the path that should be taken to implement the recommendations of CARICOM's Marijuana Commission that was done in 2018. The Cannabis Secretariat that we formed, and the Cannabis Committee that we formed therefore, was a direct result of this, that's the first point I wish to make.

Second, Mr. Speaker, we on "This Side," in 2022, in our Manifesto to the public, made it clear that we would pursue the decriminalisation of marijuana. We said, and I'm going to quote from that Manifesto, "Driven by creativity and innovation, an NDC Government will: legalise cannabis and create a legal and regulatory framework for its production and sale." So, this today, Mr. Speaker, is the commencement of a promise made and a promise kept. **(Applause)** This was in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021, there was, in fact, as the Member of Parliament for the Town of St. George said, a draft Bill entitled the exact same thing as this Bill, a Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2021, then prepared by Attorney General Dia Forrester. That Bill was circulated, Mr. Speaker, and for reasons, certainly, I have not yet heard explained, it was not proceeded. I recall emphasising in 2022 because I only got

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

involved in public life in late 2021, that in fact, the Bill should be proceeded because decriminalisation of the use of marijuana as a policy, as a public policy had clearly failed, and the evidence was overwhelming that it had failed.

Mr. Speaker, there's a very tragic incident involving a young man, who I know personally because he taught my son how to swim, from St. George North-West, who was shot by the police, and he effectively lost the use of his arm. The stress arising from that incident escalated, which led to the tragedy where his father was attacked on the street in St. George. Some police officers eventually shot and killed him, and what did this stem from? The suspicion of either marijuana use or possession.

So, Mr. Speaker, all around us, there are real tragedies. A national swimmer, a national coach, who's teaching our children to swim, and simply because of the suspicion of either having in his possession a "spliff", and I'm saying suspicion here because I don't know if it was ever confirmed. He was shot and lost the use of his arm. His father was so broken that he erupted into violence, police officers were injured, and the father himself lost his life over a public policy that had failed and was proven to be a failure.

So, this is not about whether persons have the right to take part, in the case of religious purposes in a sacrament, or in the case of medicinal, or therapeutic uses, medicine to heal or to abate pain, whether for commercial or industrial purposes to be able to make products that have the utility, or whether it is for personal entertainment or recreational use. The question is whether the public policy of criminalising it works, and decades of it have shown that it has failed.

So, we either continue with bad policy, or continue with the tragedies that I've just described, continue with the tragedies that my sister, the Member of Parliament for St. John described, or we recognise that we must pivot and adopt a public policy that is more pragmatic, that addresses the social injustice that has been perpetrated on particular segments of our society for decades, and that we also recognise that there are opportunities for the commercial and industrial medicinal and therapeutic exploitation of a basic plant that grows widely. They call it weed for a reason; it grows very quickly.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, there's always the bright side and the dark side. We did not

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

have an approach that said this is purely about recreational, or purely about the social injustices that have been perpetrated on the Rastafarian community. We also recognise that there are serious medical risks, and that there are serious societal challenges that exist, whether or not the policy of continuing to criminalise the use or possession, or having apparatuses proprietary to the use or possession, or cultivation of marijuana, that these things exist. That is why the Chief Medical Officer was a member of the committee.

That is why the Member of Parliament for St. Andrew North-West, as the Minister for Mental Health and Well Being, would have argued passionately for saying, contrary to what I wished to pursue, that the age for permitting the use should be 21 and not 18; there was passionate debate. We went back and forth. I tend to sometimes be black and white. If you're an adult, you're an adult, 18 is 18. We recognise that at 18, you can drive, you can vote, and you can get married. So, from my perspective at 18, you should be permitted if you so choose, but I was in the minority. **(Laughter)** So, I graciously see to the medical experts, to the mental health advocates who recognise that at 18, a brain is perhaps still developing.

And so, I say this to say, Mr. Speaker, because often times we come in Parliament and I hear that there's been no consultation, and no consultation, and no consultation. Well, the consultation started first with CARICOM's own consultation, of which Grenada was part. It is reflected in our National Sustainable Development Plan, and there's an introductory address in that National Sustainable Development Plan by the former Prime Minister, former Opposition Leader, and Member of Parliament for St. George North-West. So, I hope he wouldn't say he doesn't know what's in his own plan. **(Laughter)** We advocated for it. The Member for the Town of St. George has said, and has gone on record that he advocated for it; the Cannabis Secretariat and Committee have had extensive consultations—town halls. The Rastafarian community itself has sought and obtained permission from the Commissioner of Police and the Minister for National Security to display the plant in public educational sessions.

So, if there's one Bill that has been widespread, extensive, and prolonged, stretching over a decade, discussion, debate, and consultation on, is the question of the

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

changing policy towards Marijuana possession, cultivation, and use for medicinal, therapeutic, recreational, religious, and sacramental purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasise that I've already given instructions even though the Bill has not yet gone through all of its stages, that we need to make the National Rehabilitation Offenders Board aware that the Act, this Act, explicitly amends the National Rehabilitation Offenders Board, and that the board is aware, giving the statistics presented to us by the Minister with responsibility for Marijuana, that at least 649 persons over the last five years, have marijuana convictions. I'm assuming that certain percentage of that is in fact for minor offenses and likely for persons who would've had in their possession in the case of Marijuana itself, 56 grams or less, in the case of the raising 15 grams or less, or who might've had some apparatus, whether it is to smoke pipe or something proprietary, the cultivation use that they will be applying once the Bill is enacted to have their records made clean. **(Applause)** Therefore, we need to make ensure that the Board is properly aware and ready to treat with the applications that would come in sway.

I wish to emphasise that the Cannabis Secretariat is set up so that all and sundry, including Members of Parliament, can have access to it, can make recommendations, and make suggestions as we go forward, particularly with phase two, which is to actually craft the policy and the legislation that would create the framework for the marijuana industry.

I heard the Member for the Town of St. George saying that he wished he could consult with them, and he may have suggestions. Well, that is why the Cannabis Secretariat is set up. It is a public body; you can go to them. We cannot always go and bring things to you. We're accountable to the people, not you. You are accountable to the people, too. Go to the Cannabis Secretariat, make your recommendations, make your suggestions, email them, call them, and give your input as to how we can craft the second phase, which is the actual creation of the industry, the licensing regime, the regulatory regime. I, too, would openly confess that I have a bias for saying that the Rastafarian community should be given preponderance of priority when it comes to the

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

creation of the cannabis industry. **(Applause)** Merely expunging the record for minor possession of the plant or the resin, or apparatus, is not a sufficient atonement for the historical wrong that has been done to the Rastafarian community. **(Applause)**

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to carry on much further, but it's important, I think, for the public to appreciate, and the Minister for Mental Health Wellness, and the MP for St. Andrew North-West, as well as the MP for St. John, and the Leader for Government's Business, the MP for St. George South-East, I think has been at pains to point out that we are not discounting, nor or we ignoring the risk associated particularly with recreational use of marijuana, and in particular on our young people. I do not smoke. I'm not endorsing the recreational use of marijuana, but my personal beliefs or my personal behaviour is not the basis for public policy-making.

Public policy-making has to be based on data, what's in the best interest of the public, and how the state should allocate even scarcer resources into areas of public impact. Spending large quantities of the state's resources, whether it's in the form of manpower, police officers, vehicles chasing other vehicles up and down the place, airports and seaports surveillance, simply to collect, arrest, prosecute, jail, fine, and then destroying large quantities of a plant is not an appropriate use of the state's resources. **(Applause)**

So, when the Member for the Town of St. George says, "Where will someone get the 56 grams?" Our policy is comprehensive, which is why we allow you to grow up to four plants yourself. **(Applause)** He was once the Minister for Agriculture, I believe... **(Time bell rings)** Does that mean I have no time or I have five minutes, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: It means that your allotted 15 minutes has expired, so you may request additional time.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: I did promise I wasn't going to go on for longer, so may I request five minutes, Mr. Speaker?

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Mr. Speaker: Granted.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm making the point that the policy and the legislation are not enacted in silos. We recognised that if one wishes to have small quantities of marijuana for recreational use, they have to get it somewhere, hence the reason why we've said that you can grow your own.

I was making the point that the former Minister for Agriculture, Member for the Town of St. George, would appreciate that you don't need, since he's been around many persons who I'm sure have been arrested and charged for marijuana, large amounts of soil to grow marijuana. You don't need to grow it outside anymore; it is grown in houses, greenhouses, et cetera, et cetera.

So, the policy thing here, Mr. Speaker, is that if people could grow their own, they don't need to buy it from anyone. So, if you are in excess of the prescribed amount, it means you are trying to sell or trade. You are trying to take part in an industry that we will seek to create and regulate a licence, but until that time, grow for your consumption and use only. And if someone... the Rastafarian should be best to say whether four plants... how many grams it would give you, I suspect that it is more than 56 grams. But if you are seeking to bring a friend or a relative, you know the limit is 56 grams, so you should have no more than 56 grams on you.

We have similarly decriminalised or seek to decriminalise the apparatus associated with the use of it, whether it is the pipe, et cetera, et cetera. We have sought to put in the legislation your right to import for medicinal therapeutic uses in circumstances where you are prescribed and permitted to do so.

So, we recognise, Mr. Speaker, that beyond the recreational use, beyond the sacramental use by the Rastafarian community that we also have to permit persons who are genuinely using it for medicinal and therapeutic purposes; whether it's in the form of oils, whether it's in the form of medication; the opportunity to be able to bring in for their use in circumstances as prescribed by the legislation.

We have made it clear, and I want to emphasise this; we are not condoning,

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

supporting, and hence we have criminalised the public smoking of marijuana. **(Applause)** You have your home, you have the homes of your friends; if you have to engage in the recreational use within the limits prescribed, do it in private. **(Applause)**

So, when the Minister and the MP for St. Andrew South-West point out that the police will still have work to do, there is still work to do. We've made clear that, in addition to no public smoking or use. We do not want it around our educational facilities, and we do not want any unscrupulous persons targeting our young men and women. And I am sure the Cannabis Secretariat will spend significant time educating and emphasising to our young men and women about making healthy choices in relation to the use of marijuana.

And it is important to point this out. Oftentimes, when things are criminalised and driven on the ground, and the black market is created, the quality, the circumstances and the health implications become worse for the users. And so one of the advantages of seeking to decriminalise small quantities of marijuana and giving you the ability to grow it yourself is that you have greater control or what if you so choose what you choose to consume. In circumstances where it's coming from the black market, often it's laced with other products that are often quite dangerous and lead to even more dramatic and consequential negative health impacts on our users.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that there are some in our communities who will still be uneasy about this policy shift, but we must be driven by actual data. We can go to Antigua, we can go to St. Kitts and Nevis, we can go to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and other countries that have already begun the policy shift, and we can assess whether their societies are falling apart or not—they are not. And so the data is there to show that this policy shift, when done in a measured, responsible, empathetic and data-driven manner, is a policy shift whose time has come.

I view this, Mr. Speaker, as the courage to finally begin to tackle an issue that has dogged us for decades, which I think we all knew instinctively and I would even say morally was a wrong public policy, but which we simply did not have the courage to do.

So the decriminalisation of marijuana is an idea whose time has come, and I am

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

indeed happy to commend the Bill to Members of this House and to the public and for the public to continue to engage in the discussion and the debates about this matter as we seek to pass the Bill and then move to implementation intervals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to colleague Members. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister, and I now invite the Leader of the Opposition to take the floor.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution on the Bill that is before us this morning, well, we should be in the afternoon now and to say that I deliberately did not interrupt the “Government Side” in their presentations on this Bill, and to go further to say, Mr. Speaker that one of the things that characterises “This Side” of the House is that we don't flip flop on policies, we don't flip flop on critical issues that we take positions on.

So I heard, Mr. Speaker, earlier that this was a thought, this was an idea, but I want to bring a bit of clarity to say that the New National Party Administration, as may have been hinted, brought to this House for first reading a Bill in exactly the same name as the current Bill before us.

Mr. Speaker, our position on this matter has not changed. So, whether it has to do with use for medicinal purposes, whether it has to do with religious purposes, and all of that we discussed, we debated, but one fundamental thing, one fundamental thing, is that we felt that a significant shift, as this one needed to have the necessary widespread consultation with the people of this country. And so what we did was to bring this Bill for first reading only in 2022 and subject it to serious consultation at all levels, including all critical stakeholders, to decide on the next step that the Government should take.

Mr. Speaker, we left office in 2022, and so I would expect that the natural thing that will happen is that the consultation, and all of the engagements on this particular Bill that already came to this House, would have continued and at some point return in this House for continued decision on the matter.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Mr. Speaker, I got a little bit confused when the Member for St. David made reference to “decriminalisation” and then went on to refer to the Manifesto and said “legalisation”, and then he said promise made, promise kept. **(Laughter)** I got a little bit confused there. Because, Mr. Speaker, we can't be saying decriminalised and legalised and mean the same thing, we ought to be able to provide a clear explanation, except we're intending to confuse people.

But, Mr. Speaker, why did I say we don't flip-flop? In the last campaign leading to the last general election, our position was extremely clear: decriminalisation. The now Government promoted legalisation because they felt we were too conservative. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that the process that has led us to what is happening today is one that I believe where judgment did not go off the edge with politics and with passion.

You see, Mr. Speaker, whatever we do while we are politicians, we have to remember that every decision we make, every intention that we have must be grounded in what is best for the nation at the particular time, and that whatever we do, Mr. Speaker, it must be done in such a way that we don't solve a problem creating a bigger problem. **(Applause)** And so we always have to be mindful of this. That is why I say consistency in position, you can judge the New National Party by this. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I would have expected to hear a lot more as it relates to the implementation plans surrounding this very critical issue.

Some very vague references were made that worry me because if we are not clear on where we are going and how we are getting there, we can have problems along the way. We cannot trivialise this issue, Mr. Speaker, because the presentations before clearly highlighted the serious consequences, the serious possibilities that can arise from the misuse and abuse of marijuana. So whatever we do, we have to do it with a level of consciousness that we have lives to protect in the process, that this is too serious to just tick a box and not have a serious framework and plan in place to protect the lives, particularly, Mr. Speaker, of our children and our young people. So let us not get high and excited without thinking of a serious plan of protection.

So, Mr. Speaker, reference was made to what happens when a child is found with

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

marijuana, and reference was made to what happens when a child is found using marijuana. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to hear this morning what some of the guardrails that are going to be put in place to prevent it, because you know the sad story would be when that child is found long after they started using the substance, and I didn't need to say it, it was said by the "Government Side". The serious problems, medical, psychological and other challenges that an individual can be affected by, the consequences, the challenges as they relate to brain development, Mr. Speaker, we ought not to trivialise this.

And so while, Mr. Speaker, I have no reservation as it relates to religious purposes... I remember visiting a Nyabinghi Tabernacle some years ago and the extent and passion they went to explain why this needed to be considered for sacramental purposes. Mr. Speaker, I searched through the definitions, and until now, it is not clear who is considered a Rastafarian, what qualifies you, right?

And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that if we are put in things within the law we want to be able to be guided by the law and I'm just saying this to say whether it's medical, whether it's religious we want to make sure that we protect the groups so we protect the Rastafarian, we protect the people with medical conditions, we ensure that the law protects them and that we don't have a loophole where a child for example or a young person for example is seriously exposed as a secondary user.

So, Mr. Speaker, the education plan and reference was made of that. The plan, as it relates to organisation, where it comes to drug and drug abuse, et cetera, reference was also made to that, but Mr. Speaker, I would love to see us go a little deeper into specifics. So, for example, there was a reference in the Bill to a national organisation. Do we have it yet? Is it functioning? Are we going to set it up? Because, as I said, the beneficiaries, those who are going to benefit from this, we want to make sure, as I said, we protect our children and our young ones, particularly. So how soon are we planning to have these systems that we spoke about as it relates to protection, so we have reform plus protection simultaneously? And I would hope that we hasten to ensure that all of those are in place to ensure that we drive this forward.

Mr. Speaker, the final point I wish to make on this is as it relates to the economic

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

impact. There is obviously no doubt, as I said before, that there are economic benefits that can come from this. But again, Mr. Speaker, all of what has been articulated has been stated, whether it's in the National Sustainable Plan, or wherever it has been articulated clearly, as contained within documents of research in other places, Mr. Speaker.

Reference was made to Canada, and I just want to close by making this fundamental point. It's one thing to refer to another jurisdiction or another place where this has been taken to the point that it contributes to national development, economic development, but unless we have the systems, the structures, unless we put those things in place, Mr. Speaker, it will remain but a dream.

And so, if we are talking about economic impact, the research, the assessment, ensuring that we do the ground work, Mr. Speaker, and not just to look at it from the perspective of a conversation, Mr. Speaker, I hasten to say that there is still a lot of work to be done and I encourage those who are involved to do this with one fundamental thought in mind that we do reform, but we protect at the same time, because we must do nothing that at the end of the day Grenada suffers, our children suffer and so we want to make sure that whatever is done, it's done well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I rest my case to say that I support the passage of this Bill, but I am very concerned that in the presentations before us, we have not had sufficient evidence that we are ready to push this ahead in its current state. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. I think it's the light of the MP for St. George North-West? Now, turn the floor over to you, Honourable MP.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's clear from all that I've heard this morning from both sides of this Honourable House that, clearly, the question of support for this Bill is what everyone wishes to have done. In other words, clearly we are on "This Side" of the House, like the "Government Side" support of the

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

initiative here today and the Bill. So I just want, Mr. Speaker, therefore, to make it clear that all sides of this House have consistently supported the decriminalisation of marijuana.

In fact, it was already said by both sides by some Members that similar legislation was brought for first reading before the 2022 general elections. I recalled vividly that this present Government did campaign on the legalisation of marijuana. However, Mr. Speaker, legalisation and decriminalisation are two fundamentally different things, while the rhetoric of the legislation was another campaign issue.

We do, in fact, applaud the Government for finally coming to terms with what should actually be done and bringing this Bill to its core that would align itself with the principles of decriminalisation. **(Applause)** We also note, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill goes further than the one we proposed for discussion, particularly in introducing the industrialisation aspect of the cannabis industry. So these are all positive things, Mr. Speaker, encompassing medicinal, therapeutic, and scientific purposes and detailed in clauses 4, 10 and in the new section 13D.

Mr. Speaker, while we commend the steps taken towards decriminalisation rather than the campaign promise of legalisation, we would like to caution the Government on two main points. If not managed with extreme diligence and foresight, as was said by the Leader of the Opposition, we can have problems. So the question is, how do we go forward? In other words, the management of this thing and all of us should wish it to be done in a way so that the end product would be in the best interest of the country, for those who use it and for those who do not use it, because it would affect all concerned in the country.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the issue of de-risking from international banks is something that we have to watch, and I make this point. Like many other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Grenada faces significant challenges from de-risking by the international financial institutions because cannabis remains, in a general sense, from a national perspective, a major financial hub like the United States. Local banks in Grenada risk losing crucial corresponding banking relationships if they handle funds related to the cannabis industry.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

In other words, they're saying work still needs to be done; that's the point. This is not a hypothetical scenario; it is clear that the present danger that we face can cripple our financial sector if it's not handled properly. Such a situation inevitably creates a high-cash environment, complicating tax collection efforts and posing substantial risks to business security. We didn't hear much about that today, but I'm raising this because I think it's important.

The success of any cannabis industry, whether regulated or otherwise, hinges on its ability to access banking services and to integrate into a broader financial system. Without a clear pathway to address this, we risk creating a shadow economy for illicit activities and undermining the very goals that this Bill, which is well-intentioned, meant to achieve.

Secondly, the issue of conflict with the International Drug Control Treaties. I make this point—another one I hardly heard anything about. Mr. Speaker, Grenada's shift towards decriminalisation for non-medical use, as evident in the decriminalised quantities for personal use, specified in the Eight Schedule, and the explicit allowance for religious purposes under section 13A, can directly conflict with our obligations under International Drug Control Treaties, specifically, in 1961 single convention and narcotics drugs mandates that cannabis use be limit to medical and scientific purposes only.

Navigating these international obligations while pursuing a national reform is a complex diplomatic and legal task. Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the diplomatic skills of this Government unfold and display on various fronts, and regrettably, the consequences have not been so good.

The potential repercussions of mishandling our international standing on this issue, risking diplomatic isolation or even sanctions, cannot therefore be underestimated. These are just warnings, Mr. Speaker, that's how it should be taken. This requires, therefore, sophisticated legal and diplomatic strategising, something we urge the Government to address as you go forward with serious importance.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, while the Bill addresses public use, sections 13B and 13C include fixed penalties for public smoking, I must suggest the critical inclusion of the

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

driving under the influence clause and associated penalties in this Bill. I think it should be addressed. This is a glaring omission. The safety of our roads and our citizens must be paramount. As was proposed in the Bill submitted by the previous Government, comprehensive provisions for identifying, prosecuting and penalising individuals who operate vehicles under the influence of cannabis are therefore essential.

Mr. Speaker, the point obviously is saying, I've heard a lot of issues raised today on both sides, and I am raising these additional issues because I think they are all very important, and on both sides of the House made those key points today on several aspects and the necessity of why this must come before us. But I am making this additional point because I think it is critical as we go forward.

But as for me, Mr. Speaker, I don't smoke, never smoked a cigarette. Therefore... there is no need. Some friends of mine who I studied with in university used to come to me and say, "Take a pull". So I used to say, "Well, I don't... What is this?" Then, when they told me what it is, I said, "Well, you have to go from one stage to the next, since I don't take cigarettes, I don't see why I should go to stage two".

I make this point for what it's worth, Mr. Speaker, as I end my short presentation here to say that I am happy that it is the twilight of my period in this sojourn political activity that we are dealing with a crucial issue and bringing before this House an important issue which affects the population as a whole. So it is not just about those who use cannabis or who do not use it, because everyone could be affected one way or the other.

So I am very happy that, as I come to the end of my political career, this Bill is coming to the House and I have the opportunity to be part of the passage of this important Bill. So I want to complement all Members who are here supporting this and bringing this. But I urge going forward to make sure that we touch all bases because helping and making sure things are implemented properly would be critical for the country as a whole as we move forward. I wish us all the best as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, too, Honourable MP for the constituency of St. George

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

North-West. Leader of Government's Business.

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

Mr. Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too wish to make my contribution, albeit small, to this very important discussion and this very important Bill that is being discussed here today and to say how very pleased I am that it has come to this stage.

Mr. Speaker, as was said by various Members, this process started a long time ago. The fact is that it was started, and that the New National Party administration played a role. No amount of rhetoric can eradicate the importance of what was done at that particular time. So we must not seek to discredit what was done before because building on what was started before, if there's a foundation, it's easy. You can't start doing a roof just in the air. There has to be a foundation, and one wants to ensure that it is a solid foundation.

And I'm sure all of us in this Honourable House, we care about the youths. No matter what anybody says and no matter what anybody else may have done more for, we all care about the youths, and we care about different groups of persons, different demographics; the Rastafarians and others, the sick persons who need the medications.

I, too, have had my experience with, not personal, but I have had experience where persons needed certain medical intervention in which cannabis would have had to play a role because nothing else seemed to work. So we know, and the data and all of the readings would show us the importance for medical purposes, for identifying and rehabilitating persons who are affected in one way or another.

Because like most other medications, they do have side effects and one, we must make the side effects clear to the users, and I think presenters before, a number of persons on the "Other Side" would have made some of the fallout clear and the need for

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

appropriate interventions, so I will not go too much into it. The presenter of the Bill, the Member for St. George South-East, would have been very elaborate in that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave without making a few comments. One, I just want to underscore that I am proud of the role the New National Party would have taken in starting of this process and I'm happy to see that it was continued whether the pace would have escalated or it would have been steady, whatever positive role persons would have taken it is all for the benefit of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

I remember, and I don't know if that still exists, but our Government would have made some lands available for a group of Rastafarians right in St. Mark, which was done, and so perhaps the Minister for Agriculture could check the history. So it is not any one person's territory; in order to be here, one has to care about the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, no matter what, and so all of us play our role.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of after Hurricane Ivan and 22 years later, I just want to make a contribution to that. The last Hurricane that we had, Beryl, devastated Carriacou, but by and large, the mainland remained intact. That and all due respect to the representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique and to the people of Carriacou, they know that we love them and care about them. I am a half cacabawee.

The point is, it does not compare to the level of devastation that we had after Ivan. And so a number of things may have had to be put on the back burner, but I know one of the things that the New National Party did was to repair, renovate and expand the General Hospital over the past years, and it's not 22 years. Let's check it out, from 2004 to now, it was not NNP alone. So, the maths was correct, but I think the blame game was a little bit misplaced because NNP was not in office from 2004 to 2026. My purpose here is not to lay the blame, but just to correct so that we can check the maths and see what happens when.

So if, after a time of crises and some delay in dealing with anything, a private entity comes up and offers some funds, which will happen under NNP, it will happen under NDC, it will happen. Because I have heard in this Honourable House there have been donations from private entities, from Government, from other organisations, and we

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

welcome it, but let us not let that trivialise what other Governments would have done. That doesn't make any side bigger because we engage in a rhetoric that says we are the ones who move things, because NNP in its own right has done quite a lot for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, be it infrastructure, be it education, whatever, we have done our part.

So, Mr. Speaker, the history would show where the consultation started and what went on, and we are happy for that. The history would show that we have supported this Bill, and I rose to make sure that my voice was heard in support of this Bill because I think it is absolutely necessary and important, and it's a great start, but the journey now starts.

The Bill says that the Minister will be... I'm not sure which Minister, whether it's the Minister for Health who has presented the Bill or the Minister for Agriculture, but it says that the Minister will ensure that there are regulations, and the proper structures are put in place to protect all of the different aspects of the legislation that would have been spoken of. Beautiful words, beautiful commitments, but if we do not put the structures in place, with all due respect, a Minister alone cannot do it.

So whatever entities would have been involved in consultations and I heard a number of groups called; the Rastafarians and others so be it, kudos to everyone who was there but we have to ensure that whatever the spirit of this legislation is, we have to ensure that the structures whether it's the Child Protection Authority, do we have enough staffing there, do we have enough counsellors for the onslaught because I've heard numbers, hundreds who have been taken up by the police and so that we would want to protect and so we have to ensure that our Minister for Health ensures that there is enough staffing. Medication may have to be used so that our Minister and the Government would ensure that there is the medication, the counselling, whatever guidance and education for those people are right in place.

We on "This Side" are not usually engaged or consulted on that, but I am sure we would be willing, and I haven't spoken to the Leader of the Opposition as yet on that matter. But in general discussions, we have all expressed our willingness to be part of whatever the process is. So we would love to be engaged, this is of national importance,

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026

and we would do our part, whatever little bit of knowledge, whatever contributions we can make, we would love to make it, and so, Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation in my full support for the Bill.

I would just love to see the next step where serious committees, knowledgeable committees, are put in place so that we don't miss too much of a step, so that we can fall back to where we were. I commend those who, nationally, the Government for bringing this Bill in a timely manner, or some might say it's a bit late, but whatever it is, we are here to help. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you to Honourable MP for the constituency of St. Mark. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Mr. Speaker, I just want to, in concluding the discussion on the Bill, express my deep appreciation to Members on both sides of the House for their contribution towards this debate. It's truly... Knowledge is power, and today we had a very good exchange of knowledge on both sides, and I think it augurs well for the development of the legislative and the policy frameworks around this very important policy item. So thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I commend the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Leader of Government's Business.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

*Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026*

Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026
Adjournment

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

Question put and agreed to.

**House in Committee.
House 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 (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 20th January, 2026***

Adjournment

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 16 – Request for leave to move the adjournment of the House on matters of urgent public importance.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Siting of the House of Representatives adjourned sine die at 12:56 p.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTERS

Ms. Shanta Joseph

Ms. Terry-Ann Thomas

Ms. Carlyn Pierre

Ms. Natalya Isaac

Ms. Zaria Skeete

EDITORS

Adrian Joseph (Dr.) (Clerk, Ag.)

Ms. Leasha Francis (Senior Hansard Reporter, Ag.)