



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

THIRD SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TUESDAY 17TH JUNE, 2025

***Sitting of the House of Representatives
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 17th June, 2025***

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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, Information, Disaster Management & Public Administration, Infrastructure and Physical Development, Public Utilities & Civil Aviation and Transportation |
| 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 Co-operatives, Agriculture & Lands, Forestry and Marine Resources |
| Honourable Tevin Andrews, MP
<i>(Carriacou & Petite Martinique)</i> | - Ministry of Carriacou, Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government |
| Honourable Kerryne Z. James, MP
<i>(St. John)</i> | - Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy |
| Honourable Delma Thomas, MP
<i>(St. Andrew North West)</i> | - Minister for Mental Health, Wellness, and Religious Affairs, with a special focus on the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital |
| Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell, PC, MP, JP
<i>(St. George North-West)</i> | - Member |
| Honourable Peter David, MP
<i>(Town of St. George)</i> | - Member |

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Attendance

ABSENT

Honourable Dennis Cornwall, MP (<i>St. Patrick East</i>)	- Minister for Finance (<i>Excused</i>)
Honourable Ron Livingston Redhead, MP (<i>St. George North East</i>)	- Member (<i>Excused</i>)
Honourable Andy Williams, MP (<i>St. George South</i>)	- Minister for Mobilisation, Implementation and Transformation (<i>Excused</i>)
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (<i>St. Andrew South-East</i>)	- Leader of His Majesty's Opposition (<i>Excused</i>)
Honourable. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (<i>St. Mark</i>)	- Deputy Speaker (<i>Excused</i>)
Honourable Kate Lewis-Peters, MP (<i>St. Andrew North East</i>)	- Member (<i>Excused</i>)

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***Prayers
Minutes***

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Let's pray

(House Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Mr. Speaker: This Parliament now convenes.

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

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

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of a proceeding of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, the 13th of May 2025, at 9:00 a.m., be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

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**Minutes
Announcements**

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the House of Representatives held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday, the 13th of May, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 5 – Messages from the Governor-General.
Item 6 – Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I have information in my possession which shows that a number of MPs, Members of this House, are absent because they are on official state business. They include the Honourable Dennis Cornwall, Honourable Ron Redhead and Honourable Andy Williams. They also include the Honourable Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, Emmaline Pierre, Honourable Kate Lewis and Honourable Clarice Modeste-Curwen, all of whom are overseas on official state business.

I also wish to announce in this House that June 30th of this year is World Parliament Day, and the theme for this year's celebration is "Parliamentary Democracy—Building bridges for peace and understanding". Those are my announcements.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 7 – Presentation of Petitions.
Item 8 – Presentation of Papers and Reports from
Select Committees.
Item 9 – Unopposed Private Business.
Item 10 – Questions.

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- Item 11 – Urgent Questions under the Provisions of Standing Order No. 20 (1) (Notice of Questions).
- Item 12 – Statement by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to everyone. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present an update of the work of the Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs; a ministry dedicated to advancing the well-being of our people, reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness and strengthening the system of care across our nation. Mr. Speaker, as a newly created ministry, we have worked steadfastly to put the right structures in place to carry out our mandate.

Cabinet has approved the relocation of the ministry's administrative office from the Ministerial Complex to Archibald Avenue, St. George's. The transition became effective on May 1, and I'm pleased to report that the ministry is now fully operational in its new space. The official commissioning will be by the end of this month.

Key Programmatic Intervention

Disaster Mental Health Training

The ministry hosted a national training in collaboration with Dr. Youssef and the Ichan School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. 80 participants, including Mental Health Professionals, Social Workers, First Respondents, Police Officers and NGO, were trained in Psychological First Aid, Crisis Intervention and Trauma-Informed Care to improve our disaster response capabilities. A graduation ceremony is carded for the end of this month.

A Mental Health Caravan is carded for next week, Friday, the 27th June, 2025, under the theme, "Together We Heal, Break the Silence of Mental Health". The caravan will travel from the National Stadium through Grenville and the western corridor, including St. George's. The initiative will feature praise and worship, motivational talks and distribution of educational materials, creating space for open conversations on Mental

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Health in both faith-based and public settings.

Policy and Legislative Agenda

Mr. Speaker, the ministry continues to review and finalise the National Mental Health Policy with technical support from PAHO. A steering committee will be appointed to lead the implementation. We have also begun consultation to amend the Mental Health Act, to ensure improved care, treatment and legal protection for persons living with Mental Illness. The work is being supported by regional experts, including Dr. Sharma and SGU representatives.

Capital and Infrastructure Development

Carlton House Rehabilitation Project

Mr. Speaker, it is known that the land is already being secured, and fencing has been done. We are now advancing to the bidding and selection of a contractor in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Renovation of Mt Gay Mental Hospital

Phase one is expected to start in the first week of July. We are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, Mental Health is no longer a backroom conversation. It is central to the health, productivity, and peace of our nation. The ministry is determined to ensure that no one walks alone and that every Grenadian has access to the support and dignity they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I move to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to formally announce in this House that Grenada will host the CARIFTA games in 2026. This is a momentous achievement that underscores our Government's commitment to youth and sports development. The CARIFTA games, as we know, are the premier track and field competition for junior athletes in the Caribbean, and Grenada is honoured to once again take up the mantle of hosting this important event. We anticipate that this event will not only showcase our young athletic talent but also significantly boost tourist and national pride.

Mr. Speaker, on another historic note, I am proud to report that the handing over ceremony of the newly rehabilitated national cricket stadium will take place next Monday

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at 10:00 a.m. The event signals a pivotal moment as we mark the official return of international cricket to our shores. Following the handover, Grenada will host a major international cricket match between the West Indies and Australia, scheduled for July 3 to 7, 2025. This five-day match forms part of a renewed effort to position Grenada as a key destination for international sporting events and represents the first of several major fixtures on our calendar.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the rehabilitation of the stadium, none of this will be possible without the unwavering support and strong partnership with the People's Republic of China. I take the opportunity to express sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the People's Republic of China, whose funding and technical expertise make this rehabilitation project a reality. The generosity continues to leave a lasting impact on the development of our national infrastructure.

I must also commend the Government and people of Grenada, whose vision, patience and steadfast belief in the power of sports have brought us to this point. The upgraded stadium will serve not only as a venue for cricket but as a multipurpose facility that benefits youth development, sports, tourism and national unity.

On June 20, 2025, which is this Friday, Mr. Speaker, we are officially launching the National Holiday Programme at Victoria Park in St. Andrew. This timely initiative during the school holiday will bring together communities across the parish and set the tone for what is envisioned to be a recurring national movement that promotes healthy lifestyles, community spirit, and sporting excellence.

Mr. Speaker, the day's activity will commence with a road race starting from 2:00 p.m., beginning from Moya Bridge for the girls, and Tivoli Junction for the boys. This will be followed by a packed schedule of events, including track relay, 4x100 meters, 4x4, mixed relay, football match, featuring Paradise FC versus St. Andrew Football League and a dance exercise session starting at 4:00 p.m., to encourage movement of all ages and abilities.

To motivate participation and celebrate talent, monetary prizes of EC\$500, EC\$400, EC\$200 200 and EC\$100 per division, male and female, will be awarded to the

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***Statements by Ministers
Personal Explanations***

upstanding competitors in the races. Entertainment will be provided after the main programme by the Royal Grenada Police Force.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the staff of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, our community sports leaders and all the volunteers whose tireless efforts brought this initiative to life. This programme is a testament to our belief that sports and recreation are not merely leisure activities, but essential tools for nation-building, youth development, and social cohesion. As we move forward, similar events are planned throughout the year to ensure that no community is left behind. Our mission is to build a healthier, more unified Grenada through sports and recreation. I thank you.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West.

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

Item 14 – Motions. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable MP for St. George... You're standing on item... Which item?

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes. Personal Explanations, 13.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Item 13.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: All right.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I stand just to make interventions on two points.

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Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I've written already on this matter without getting a reply. I submitted several questions over a period of time. Some, I was informed that they'd be answered later, and some were not answered at all. I thought it was strange that that had never happened before. So I make the point, quite strongly, I expect answers to those questions. I wrote concerning that issue, with a list of those questions that were unanswered, and up to today, I've not received any such reply or comments related to my initiative. So, I want to just mention this again.

And, Mr. Speaker, for what it's worth, especially at this time in my political career, when I make statements, I don't make them whether decisions are taken, and I'm given the positive reply. I expect it. But if it doesn't happen, I'll make it more for Hansard. The history. Okay? So, expect me to continue to do this consistently whenever I do not feel that I am being responded to accordingly based on the initiative that I take.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, you just have to look at what's happening here this morning with the Member of the official Opposition. I'm the only one here representing the official Opposition. I think it must be recalled that when we began this Parliament session, that I made the point that we needed to have serious consultation between the Government and the Opposition; that's as far as the Parliament Sittings are concerned, because people have their own individual business, and they have their own life to live outside of being here in this Parliament. And therefore, while the Government Members are working permanently as Ministers, and therefore they have a set position that they have to take with respect to employment and opportunities, that's not the case with Members of the Opposition.

So it's important for us to be able to function properly as Members of the Opposition in Parliament, during Parliament sessions. There must be some consultation. And I think there were debates and discussions on it, and we propose that the Leader of Government's Business, who the Government proposed, and the Honourable Representative for St. Mark, who was proposed by the Opposition, make such contact so

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that we have... So I'm reiterating that position because it's not the best thing. It's not good for the Government. It's not good for the Opposition. It's not good for the Parliament, period. A serious Parliament session, which I expect any Parliament session to be called, will be seen as serious. Because of the schedule of Members prior to the Parliament session, they are unable to attend, and some might not understand the rationale behind it.

So I want to restate that position, again, Mr. Speaker, for what it's worth. The simple consultation or call back from the Leader of Government's Business to the Member for St. Mark, and let us know when such Parliament sessions will be called, not necessarily having the agenda, just when it could be called, and so at least it's known that we should prepare ourselves accordingly for those sessions.

Because the Member for St. Marks is not even here because she had a prior engagement, and I would assume that she knew there was a session to be organised, then she would not have given an okay to another activity and bypass the importance of this session that we're having here at Parliament.

So I just want to restate that position for what it's worth. I don't want it to become an issue, a debate or a confrontation. I just mean that I thought it was so basic. So I'm reaffirming that again this morning, Mr. Speaker, for what it is. These are the two statements that I wanted to make today, okay.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for St. George North West. Your statements have been noted. Go ahead.

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

Item 15 – Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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Bills: Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2025

Hon. Philip Telesford: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Banking (Amendment) Bill, 2025, in accordance with section 65 of the Standing Order, be withdrawn. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

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 Banking Holiday (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Schedule to the Bank Holidays Act CAP. 25 to establish the observance of "Emancipation Day" on the 1st day of August as a Bank Holiday in Grenada, rather than the observance of the first Monday in August as "Emancipation Holiday", shortly entitled, Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business

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

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Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2025, contains two clauses. Clause 1, Mr. Speaker, provides for the short title of the Bill and clause 2 seeks to amend the Schedule to the Bank Holidays Act CAP. 25 ("the principal Act") to establish the observance of "Emancipation Day" on the 1st day of August as a Bank Holiday in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this Bill, though very short is one of the most significant Bill that is NDC Government will pass during its time in office because it provides a bridge between our past as descendants of slavery and a link, Mr. Speaker, to our present times where we are as Grenadians and as Caribbean people.

Mr. Speaker, emancipation of slavery, emancipation of slaves, and our emancipation, Mr. Speaker, should not be taken lightly. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is important to identify a specific time in history in which this has happened. Slavery, Mr. Speaker, is a system where individuals are treated as their property, property that is bought and sold and forced to work against their will, often without pay or freedom.

It is a form, Mr. Speaker, of forced labour and restricted liberty where slave owns and control individuals, people like us, Mr. Speaker, but thank goodness, Mr. Speaker, we are no longer slaves, we are free men on this beautiful island of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, throughout history, slavery has existed in various forms across many cultures, and it's now considered a violation of our fundamental rights and freedoms. Slavery, Mr. Speaker, comes about when one group of people sees itself as superior to another group of people and moves to take control over and exercise their selfish ambition and motives for personal and economic benefits, while the other group suffers.

And there are many forms of slavery, Mr. Speaker, there is child labour, conscription, economic slavery, forced marriage, bride buying and wife selling, forced prostitution and human trafficking, just to name a few. But Mr. Speaker, slavery as we

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know it happened between a 300 and 400 year period. The Transatlantic Slave Trade, Mr. Speaker, began in the 15th century after some Europeans started exploring the course of West Africa. At first, the number of enslaved Africans taken was very small, and Mr. Speaker, having done nothing about it, the numbers began to grow. Slaves were uprooted, Mr. Speaker, from their families in Africa and brought to the Caribbean, brought to the American mainland, and brought to South America. Traffickers, Mr. Speaker, enter the homes of families, uprooting and selling off young men and women, and Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons why emancipation is so important.

Emancipation, Mr. Speaker, in my view, should never be a time when we forget about our history, but a time, Mr. Speaker, when we marry our current circumstances with our historical past and find ways, Mr. Speaker, to pull ourselves together and to start making genuine advancements to unite ourselves and develop our countries.

Mr. Speaker, traffickers were indiscriminate as children lost their mothers. They lost their fathers, Mr. Speaker, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts to slavery, leaving families shredded. That was the brutal reality of the day. Mr. Speaker, departing men and women would be slaves, cried out in deep agony to the only God that they knew, Jehovah. Remaining children, Mr. Speaker, they bellowed like sheep as they saw their aunts, their uncles, their mothers and fathers departing to a strange land helplessly, Mr. Speaker.

That, Mr. Speaker, emancipation in our country and in our region should never be taken lightly. And, Mr. Speaker, it should not be just a date. It should be a period, Mr. Speaker, where we teach our children the importance of democracy, the importance of their freedom, the importance of our history and the importance of building our country and making it resilient and self-sustaining, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, and to those spending their very first night on a tiny island called Grenada, I could only imagine, Mr. Speaker, those who know their God will turn to Psalm 137 in their minds because there were no Bible for them to hold unto, but what they would remember, Mr. Speaker, and sing out that Psalm, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land". Some died as a result of beatings, diseases and sicknesses, etcetera.

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But it must have been Mr. Speaker, in my view, it must have been the hand of God to liberate us from slavery because we were helpless, we were in chains, we were shackled, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, imagine us shackled to our necks, shackled to our feet, shackles to our hands, going unto a massa's plantation, Mr. Speaker, in hard labour. Why aren't we teaching the essence of our freedom and democracy in our schools?

Mr. Speaker, this emancipation should never be a time when we just paint ourselves black, yellow, green or whatever colour, Mr. Speaker, and masquerade in the streets. These are times, Mr. Speaker, when we ought to reflect upon the solemn nature of our democracy and what it means to be Grenadians. This is a time, Mr. Speaker, when we ought to teach our children our history. Mr. Speaker, a time to reflect upon the goodness of God and how he has brought us here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a considerable number of slaves had their origins on the so-called Gold Coast or Slave Coast, imagine that, which is now the West African nation of Ghana and as well as other neighbouring parts of the Windward Coast; Senegal, Gambia Angola, Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Zaire, Namibia. These are times, Mr. Speaker, we must reflect on where we came from and forge a strong relationship with the African mainland. These are times, Mr. Speaker, when we need to reflect on how we can build those bridges, Mr. Speaker, to reconnect with our family.

Mr. Speaker, why is it? Why is it that if we have to travel from South Africa, we must first land in England or America before we can land in Grenada, which is much closer to either of these nations? Why is there no proper connection and trading route between the Caribbean and West Africa? Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that during the slave trade, the route was automatic? It was natural to travel from the Western coast of Africa to the Caribbean and South America. Mr. Speaker, these are the discussions that we need to have, and this new NDC Administration, Mr. Speaker, is focusing on ways to connect back to our motherland.

Mr. Speaker, as I prepare to conclude, I want to draw our attention to something. Back in the day, Mr. Speaker, it was common to see "for sale" notices that read as follows,

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“Negros for sale”. “Negros for sale.” People like myself and my fellow colleagues here, Mr. Speaker. “Negros for sale.” A cargo of very stout men and women in good order and fit for immediate service just imported from the Windward Coast of Africa. Payment terms: 50% cash and 50% in goods. It was common to read, Mr. Speaker, “Notice of a runaway slave, \$100 reward”, and hear the description: “Heavy and stoutly made, dark chestnut complexion, rather sullen countenance”, and you ask yourself why sullen countenance? Why, because that's what he knows. That's what he knows because of the depression that he had to go through, slaving, having been uprooted, Mr. Speaker, from his home and being made to serve on some plantation, somewhere in the Caribbean. We are the descendants of slavery, Mr. Speaker.

But the question that I asked us today is how we respond to emancipation? How do we respond to our freedom? What do we do? Do we teach our children the essence of emancipation? Mr. Speaker, emancipation should never be the same as carnival. Emancipation should be a time when we reflect on where we come from, how we got here, and what we need to do to remain united, strong, and resilient, and how we connect back to our mother country.

So, Mr. Speaker, just in concluding, the abolition of the Slave Trade, I just want to speak a bit on that briefly, Mr. Speaker. The Abolition of Slave Trade Act of 1807 was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed on March 25, 1807, entitled the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Mr. Speaker, that Act ended the trading of people; that's what it did. That's what it did. But the trading of people is still happening, but in a more subtle way. That's another talk for another day, Mr. Speaker.

But it did not end slavery in itself. In other words, you could not trade anymore, but slavery on the plantation remained. It took, Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion, the intervention of Jehovah God to actually end slavery in itself, and that's why my view is, Mr. Speaker, that we should never take our emancipation lightly, but we should reflect upon where we come from and where we go as a people because helpless slaves had no power to end the dark days of slavery. They had no leader. There was no union or government representing them. They did not have a voice around the table of negotiation.

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So the question is, what caused rich plantation owners to leave everything behind? They had the power of their respective European Governments backing them. They had the money and the power. They had a powerful voice, but we had none. People were brought to the Caribbean as slaves on ships who did not own anything here in the Caribbean. But we thank God that we are now emancipated from the dark days of slavery.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is the first and a very noticeable step to not just say Emancipation Day is the first Monday in August, which typically the Grenadians see as a build-up to the carnival, but the emancipation should be a time in history, the first day of August every single year. Mr. Speaker, with this, I want to thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak on this Bill, and I commend this Bill to this Honourable House for consideration. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Leader of Government's Business. Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise in proud and resolute support of the Bank Holiday (Amendment) Bill, 2025. This seeks to declare August 1 as a public holiday in observance of Emancipation Day, a long-overdue recognition of one of the most defining moments in our history as a people.

Mr. Speaker, emancipation was not merely the end of slavery. It was the beginning of a journey towards dignity, self-determination and nationhood. It marked the breaking of chains, not just physical, but psychological and the structure imposed on our foreparents who toiled under inhuman conditions for generations.

In declaring August 1 as a public holiday, it's not just symbolic. It's a bold affirmation that the foundation of our modern nation rests on the resistance and strength of those who came before us. Mr. Speaker, across the Caribbean, many of our neighbours have already institutionalised Emancipation Day as a national holiday, from

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Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago, from Barbados to Guyana. Regional recognition on August 1 reaffirms our shared history and strengthens our collective identity.

It is a time for Grenada to take its rightful place among those who honoured that legacy not in passing ceremonies alone but in state-sanctioned commemoration. This is more than a day off work, Mr. Speaker. It is a day for reflection, a day for education, and for inter-generational dialogue. It's a day for cultural parade and national storytelling, and it is especially important for young people to remind them that they are the descendants of greatness, survivors of the builders of nations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Government for taking this historic step, and I urge all Members in this Honourable House to lend their full support to this Bill by passing it. We not only honour our past, but we also inspire our future. Let August 1 stand as a beacon, a reminder of where we came from and a recommitment to Justice, equity and freedom for all. I will wholeheartedly support the Bank Holiday (Amendment) Bill 2025. Long live the spirit of emancipation. Long live the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable MP for St. Andrew North West, and I invite the MP for the constituency of St. John to take the floor.

Hon. Kerryne James: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I rise not simply in support of this amendment to the Bank Holidays Act, but in defence of historical truth and in protest against the quiet erosion of cultural literacy in our society.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues that went before me would have mentioned, this Bill corrects the longstanding anomaly in observing Emancipation Day on the first Monday of August by rightly relocating it to the 1st of August, the actual date that the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 took legal effect in the British Empire, including Grenada. So, Mr. Speaker, this is not symbolic, but it is foundational in every sense.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to also consider and note that historical accuracy is a precondition for cultural value. To misplace the observance of emancipation is to

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misplace the soul of our nation. It sends a message to our people, Mr. Speaker, particularly so for our youth, that history is flexible, that heritage is negotiable, and that memory is malleable. But history, Mr. Speaker, is not what we remember or what we want to remember, but it's actually what happened. So if we continue to distort the dates of our ancestors' liberation for convenience, then what else are we distorting? So this amendment, Mr. Speaker, forces us to pause and to confront the gap between the facts of our history and the way in which we commemorate it.

Mr. Speaker, and perhaps, maybe, I would say something that can be uncomfortable, but I do not believe that many of our people fully understand what emancipation actually means or meant or why, for example, the "Jab Jab" exists in our carnival tradition today. And, yes, we hear slogans like "Jab in Parliament", those people who know me in St. John, they know that's the only part of carnival that I partake in, "Jab". Our Prime Minister, as well, is an avid "Jab Jab Player". And perhaps, Mr. Speaker, some of us on both sides of the House have seen and heard the controversial debates over the past few weeks on the issue of time and place.

Mr. Speaker, "Jab Jab" is not just revelry. It is a living, embodied response to slavery. It is an art form born out of trauma and resilience, but when people take to the streets in June and July, months before carnival, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves, and we must ask ourselves, have we taught them what "Jab Jab" really means? And so the answer, Mr. Speaker, tragically, is no. So, this is what the cost of cultural illiteracy is, and it is fueled, Mr. Speaker, in part by our failure to teach and institutionalise history, not just in the classroom but in our laws, cultural rituals, and public calendars. And so the link the first speaker, the Leader of Government's Business, made between it, I thought it was very prudent for me also to make that contribution towards my support for this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has significant importance in what it means for our identity today. It will be remiss of me if I do not highlight, Mr. Speaker, that changing Emancipation Day to August 1 won't solve all of the cultural challenges that we have, but I believe firmly, Mr. Speaker, that it sends a clear signal that we will no longer compromise historical truths for bureaucratic convenience.

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It tells the children of Telescope, for example, and Gouyave, Mr. Speaker, who learn about slavery for the first time, or perhaps, if they really do, that they are not just, or we are not just, descendants of myth, but we are the heirs of real, recorded liberation. It tells the young man playing “Jab”, Mr. Speaker, that this expression is not just for bacchanal or having a good time, but it is a living archive of our past, our culture.

So, Mr. Speaker, in addition to all of that, this Bill also seeks to or has direct relation with Grenada’s National Sustainable Development Plan or “Vision 75” in terms of our culture and national identity, and it challenges us to move from performative heritage to critical heritage where we don't just celebrate the past but we interrogated, we honour it, and we teach it. To be a culturally sovereign nation, Mr. Speaker, we must not only produce culture but also understand its origins and preserve its integrity. This Bill is part of that work, Mr. Speaker.

And so, in closing, and in supporting this amendment, Mr. Speaker, we are not just simply adjusting a date, but we are resetting a moral compass. We are teaching our children that dates do matter, that truth matters and that freedom deserves to be remembered exactly as it happened.

And I know, for example, Mr. Speaker, for many years there has been a lot of thought leaders whether it be the Chairman of the Reparations Committee, whether it be Grenadian historical scientists, the likes of, Dr. Wendy Grenade, for example, and others, Mr. Speaker, who have so passionately advocated in literature, interviews, commentaries, articles for academic purposes for this date to be accurately recorded.

So this is not just a government wanting to have a trump card. We respect regional integration. We want to ensure that our celebration around Emancipation Day and what it means for us as a people is celebrated within the CARRICOM Region on August 1. There are many people who know the history, understand the history, and understand the culture. We are happy that, as an Administration, we have listened to these conversations and we are actually taking the right steps to make this amendment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want us to leave here today knowing that we should not just let August 1 be a floating Monday of convenience, but a fixed monument to the fact, not the

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myth, of emancipation. And so, with these few words, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this Bill and I urge Honourable Members to do the same. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, MP for the constituency of St. John. I now invite the MP for the Town of St. George to take the floor.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a good day. Mr. Speaker, I didn't intend to because I think a lot was said and a lot of the historic background was well discussed this morning. I want to support the Bill, so I'm starting by saying that. I support it. I think it's making a correction on a historic phenomenon that we all accepted for many years.

But I just wanted to respond to something my colleague on the "Other Side" said. While I support it and while I give immense praise to the Government for it, I think we must not discount the role and the struggles that got us here today. My friend mentioned that, you know, a lot of people don't know. That is wrong, people know. There are those who struggle from Marryshow to Fédon to Bishop to Gairy, we know, our people know. The people in the communities know. There is a history that is well known.

You see the struggle against slavery, you know, there's this picture that we were granted slavery, and we were granted independence. No. There were many people throughout history who fought to get us, and there is no end to that struggle for liberation. So this Act, today, is just another phase in that struggle.

We had Emancipation Day because people fought for emancipation. It's slaves who abolished slavery. Slavery wasn't abolished by some Europeans in Europe. Slavery was abolished because of the struggles of slaves, and we have many examples in Grenada of these struggles. You know, you hear about Fédon. You hear about others, and through the years, you know people like Butler and others who have struggled.

So I just want to pay. As we do this, Mr. Speaker, we must pay tribute to those who have come before us, and every generation has something to do to further that. So sometimes you talk about the youth and next gen, but there are generations before us.

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My brother, Lennox, in GBSS, you remember those years. Struggling! There were setbacks sometimes. I remember we struggled against the jacket and tie. You remember that. Why did we struggle against the jacket and tie? Because we saw it as a symbol of colonial rule, and that engulfed us for many years at the GBSS. Yes, yes, yes. The same tie you are flipping back there. **(Laughter)** You fought against it.

I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that while I understand what my sister is saying, we need to teach the history, but let it not be said that those who came before us did not know. They knew. It was "they" who started the "Jab Jab". It was "they" who toiled in the vineyard to get us dignity, beauty, you know, the expressions of beauty. The Black War Movement in the 1970s, you know, there were struggles throughout. Every generation will play its part, but every generation stands on the shoulders of the previous generation.

And granted, as we grow and evolve, we will become aware. Knowledge is much more accessible now through social media, but do not for one minute discount the role of those who struggle against colonialism in Africa. I mean, we see struggles in Africa today, in the 1970s, those struggles were taking place, and that is why we have that freedom. Do not discount or undervalue those who fought.

So, as I support this today, and this comes on the shoulders of those who got us here... You know, even the idea of beauty. I mean the sisters now... Black people come with purity now—what is now the afro and all these things. You know, there was a time when you couldn't have the afro. They used to measure your hair so that you would not have the afro, and those were the struggles of the '60s and the '70s.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know I've said a lot, but I just felt impelled to say to the generations that came before us, my father's generation and my grandfather's generation, they faced much more, much more odds than we do in their struggles. You know, you remember the times people will tell you about the time when the first black man got a job in a bank, and people used to come down and peek in the bank to see a black man. It's like a phenomenon you didn't see before, because banking jobs... My father didn't get a promotion because he wasn't Caucasian, long story.

The point I'm making is that those who came before us fought against the odds.

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We have an emancipation day that resulted from a struggle. What we are now adjusting is the day on which it was celebrated, but that celebration came as a result of the struggle of slaves, peasants, and workers struggling for emancipation.

So I support it, I pay tribute to those who brought it. That's good. But let us not devalue. Sometimes I think that in all the things that we do, we devalue those who came before us. They did not have social media. They did not drive cars. You know, I remember I used to sit and we used to know when a new car came into the country because P1, P2, P3 and when it reached P... Maybe 200... Mr. McPhail, you are in the audience, you know we have 200 cars now.

So, what do we have today? Where we are today, always pay tribute to those who came before us and struggled against serious odds to get us here. So while I pay tribute to this, I pay tribute to those who came before us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Applause)

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP for the Town of St. George. All right. Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon. Dickon Mitchell: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, permit me to say, as I learned for my name's sake, for the record and for the Hansard, I want to be clear that I spoke on what, to my mind, is a simple but perhaps very profound Bill, to say that I support the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the foundation is quite a simple thing. And I think the fact that we are here today seeking the approval and support of the Honourable Members of the House to support this Bill is precisely because we recognise the absolute importance of paying tribute to those who came before us, less those who come after us misappreciate or frankly don't know the significance and the importance of the work and the struggle, the blood, the sweat and tears, the pain so graphically and eloquently and emotionally described this morning by the Leader of Government's Business that our ancestors went through.

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Mr. Speaker, I had the fortunate but unfortunate experience. Fortunate, because I experienced it and I feel privileged to experience it, but unfortunate because I wish no one should have had to even, today, see this monument, the Elmina Slave Castle on the Gold Coast of Ghana that the Leader of Government's Business spoke of. And on TV, you see it, and they say this is the door, so you actually think it's a door, but when you get there, it's not a door. It's essentially a little hole that our ancestors were pushed through out of the castle and into the ships that would take on this dreaded transatlantic journey. And while the statistics vary, because obviously no one was interested in paying attention to what they perceived as cargo, it is estimated that as many as 14 million Africans died crossing the transatlantic, and we're talking hundreds of years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is vital that we understand that in the context of the struggle of our ancestors for basic acknowledgement as a human being and as a state, which was founded on a premise of colonisation and genocide, because I want to make this clear. Before our ancestors were brought to this island, and before our ancestors were brought throughout the Caribbean, the European colonisers killed and destroyed the native populations they met. And having done so, in order to fuel their greed for materialism whether it was sugar, cotton or tobacco, they proceeded to deliberately engage in an economic system that treated people from the African continent as property in the same way you treat a mule, a sheep, a goat or a piece of timber, to build an economic system that continues to give the descendants of Europeans, the White European economic military and technological dominance that even today we as the descendants of ancestors of slavery continue to suffer from.

So, it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we fix the date and that the holiday has meaning and that we make sure that all Grenadians and future generations of Grenadians do not take for granted the fact that... Not just historically, but even today, there are other human beings who believe and, if given the opportunity, will re-enslave others based purely on how they look and where they are born. So, we've talked about liberty and freedom, but I want us to appreciate this.

People don't speak Spanish in Africa because it originated in Africa. They don't

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Speak French in Africa because it originated in Africa. They don't speak English in Africa because it originated in Africa. They speak it because it was imposed through military technological might and through a mind-set that says, based on your skin colour and based on the fact that you come from the mother and the cradle of civilisation, Africa, you should be enslaved.

So, the mark of emancipation here is to ensure we understand the consequences of what our foreparents went through and that we forever have a reminder that ensures that we teach the importance of making sure that we behave in a manner that continues to guarantee our own freedom as human beings. Because you could live in an independent country and be enslaved in it. There are still civilisations that create a caste system where people are locked in based on looks, tribe, location, and within that independent country, you are a slave.

So, when, Mr. Speaker, when we fast forward to 2025 and we talk about reparation and we talk about the need to acknowledge the historic crime of slavery and slave trade and the embodiment of African and people of black or afro descent and even my own people want to dismiss it and ask what you talking about. This notion that some of the Europeans civilised us and civilised our ancestors and gave us English, French, and Portuguese. The big fight still is with our own mental enslavement. This notion that anything that comes from Africa, the developing world, the third world is somehow qualitatively less than that which comes from the developed world is still a fight that we have with ourselves.

So yes, we are a long, long way from 1834 and 1838, but we have a long, long way to go for us to actually accept or own human, God-given natural humanity. We still struggle with the notion of our natural hair. We still feel someone who simply—their hair simply grows the way it grows, we don't want them to come to school because we still haven't come to grips with the fact that that's how we were made. And whether you're African, black, or white, it has nothing to do with you. You don't make yourself. But yet still we judge people on the basis simply of their hair. I can't even call it a hairstyle, because if you simply allow your hair to grow as someone of African or black descent

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that's your hair, and we put our children out of school because for hundreds of years they've told us even if you're a black man you have to try and look like a white man.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a profound and important event that should be marked in a profound and important way. And the education, the collaboration, the engagement by all of us is crucial to make sure that 100 years from now, 150 years from now, 200 years from now we did our little part in furthering and deepening the self-belief and the confidence of the next generation of Grenadians that they too, are human beings, should always be respected and should always have the fundamental human right not to be owned, traded or enslaved by a fellow human being. So, I wholeheartedly support this Bill, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Members...

Hon. Philip Telesford: I just wanted to say thanks.

Mr. Speaker: You go ahead. That's your responsibility. You go ahead.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Honourable Members on "Both Sides" of the House, thanks for their contribution to this Bill, and I now commend it back to you for consideration.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

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Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

House resumes.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Bank Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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Bills: Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025

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

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Grenada Tourism Authority Act, No. 42 of 2013, to empower the Grenada Tourism Authority to collect fees that are required or prescribed under another enactment, shortly entitled, Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Philip Telesford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has three clauses. Clause 1 deals with the short title. Clause 2 of the Bill seeks to amend section 38 of the principal Act, and clause 3 seeks to amend section 39 of the principal

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Act.

Just to make a quick mention about section 38, Mr. Speaker, which comes from clause 2 of the Principal Act. Section 38 of the principal Act is amended by numbering the subsection as subsection (1) and by inserting after the subsection a new subsection, subsection (2). Subsection (2) reads as follows: “Without prejudice to subsection (1), the Authority may collect fees as prescribed under any other enactment or authorised under any other legally binding arrangement, for collection by the Authority.”

So clause 2, Mr. Speaker, deals with fees and clause 3 speaks to the funds of the authority and amends section 39. And section 39 is basically amending the principal Act by inserting after the word “this Act” the words, “or under the authority of any other enactment”, to give the authority the ability to collect fees under any other legislation or enactments. Right. So, Mr. Speaker, this is a summary of what the Bill entails. I now commit it to the House. Thanks.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of Government’s Business. Honourable MP for St. Andrew South West.

Hon. Lennox Andrews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sir. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Bill, and in so doing, Mr. Speaker, I want to put this Bill into two major contexts.

The first is that, and I’m referring here to amendment of section 38 of the principal Act 2 (b), which gives the authority, if I may say, use the correct word, “the power” or “the authority” to collect under any other legally binding arrangement. But on the one hand, Mr. Speaker, the GTA has a number of very important sites, you know, under its management. So, for example, you have the Grand Etang Lake, you have the River Antoine Lake, and so on. Good? ... And others. People visit those sites, and as far as I understand, in many cases, no fees are collected. So what it does is that it gives the authority, the GTA, to collect fees under the jurisdiction in which it is established.

But secondly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill has a very important intention that while it does

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not expressly refer to the fees under other jurisdictions, as is the case with the Fisheries Act, the intention of this Bill is to empower the GTA to collect fees under amended official legislation or it could collect fees based on some kind of agreement with other institutions.

So, for example, we have in Grenada a number of marine protected areas. And these marine protected areas came into being under the Fisheries Act of 1986. There was the Marine Protected Areas Regulation of 2011, and those regulations allow for the collection of fees from these marine protected areas. And I want to just say that in Grenada, we have three legally declared marine protected areas, and I think we understand the importance and the value of what a marine protected area is. It is really to protect you know marine life, conservation, and, you know, protect our fish. And, of course, it is done through controlling people's use of that area.

So, even now, we have three legally declared MPAs and these are the Molinere, Beausejour and the Woburn MPAs. We have the Clarkes Court Bay MPA, which was declared, I think, in 2001, and you also have the Grand Anse MPA, which was declared in 2018. But just to say, Mr. Speaker, that we also have the Sandy Island or the Oyster Bed MPA, which was launched in 2010, but is yet to be legally declared. Good.

Now, what has happened is that when the MPA Programme was in place, fees were collected, but that MPA Programme actually ceased to function in 2017, and since 2017, no fees have been collected. The intention of this Act, Mr. Speaker, is to allow for the GTA to enter into some form of arrangement. It could be an MoU, for example, with the Ministry of Fisheries, of which I'm the Minister, to allow the GTA to collect fees from these marine protected areas.

Now, these fees are important because these areas have to be maintained. They have to be maintained, and you need these. You can't always maintain them strictly from Government resources. If people can pay a small fee, and when I say people, I mean both locals and visitors. In some cases, Mr. Speaker, the way in which the law is set is that only foreigners would pay a fee, and the locals won't pay a fee. But in the case of Grenada, I think the way in which the law is set, it is for all of us to pay a fee and which is good because we have to recognise that these areas have to be protected, not just

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protected but they have to be maintained and there's a cost involved and you can recoup some of these cost from those user fees.

So I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, that while the Bill doesn't expressly give the GTA that authority, what it means is that it allows for the GTA to now enter into some form of arrangement, some form of MoU with other jurisdiction which, for example, under the Fisheries Act to hold a discussion with us in the Ministry of Agriculture and come to arrangement in which you can collect free is from our marine protected areas which I have just mentioned.

And it also, Mr. Speaker, means it's a form of revenue for the GTA as well. The GTA gets all its revenue, I think, from Government subsidies, and it will be good if we can find another source of income to support its activities, especially those tourism enhancement sites, such as Fort Frederick, Fort George and the other Grand Etang and so on. Good.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thought I should, you know, put that Bill into that macro context, and in this regard, Mr. Speaker, I rest my case as regards my support for this Bill. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable MP, for your contribution.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

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Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House in Committee.

House resumes.

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

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Grenada Tourism Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 16 – Request for Leave to move the Adjournment of the House on Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

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Adjournment

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the House of Representatives adjourned sine die at 10:44 a.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTERS

Ms. Carlyn Pierre

Ms. Terry-ann Thomas

EDITORS

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Clerk)

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