



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**SECOND SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**SENATE**

FRIDAY 26TH APRIL, 2024

***Sitting of the Senate  
held on Friday 26th April, 2024  
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

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***Attendance***

**PRESENT**

Madam President

Senator the Honourable Dr. Dessima Williams

*in the Chair*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas             | - Minister for Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture   |
| Senator the Honourable David Evlyn Andrew        | - Minister for Education   |
| Senator the Honourable Quinc Britton             | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture with Responsibility for Culture |
| Senator the Honourable Gayton Jonathon La Crette | - Minister for Youth and Sports  |
| Senator the Honourable Gloria Ann Thomas         | - Minister for Social & Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs  |
| Senator the Honourable Norland Cox               | - Opposition Member of the Senate (Deputy President)   |
| Senator the Honourable Neilon Franklyn           | - Opposition Member of the Senate  |
| Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis         | - Member of the Senate (Labour Representative)   |
| Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair        | - Member of the Senate (Farmers Representative)  |

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***Attendance***

**ABSENT**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph | - Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs<br>(Excuse tendered) |
| Senator the Honourable Katisha Douglas  | - Opposition Member of the Senate<br>(Excuse tendered)  |
| Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman    | - Member of the Senate<br>(Business Representative)<br>(Excuse tendered)                            |

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***Prayers  
Minutes***

**The Sitting of the Senate began at 9:10 a.m.**

**(Senate Prayer was said)**

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, please join me in the Lord's Prayer.

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

**Madam President:** Pray be seated.

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 3 – Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a new Senator.  
Item 4 – Confirmation of minutes.

**Madam President:** Leader for Government's Business, Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President, and good morning to my colleagues both sides of the House, and I wish you all a pleasant day. Madam President, I beg to move the Motion that the Minutes of the proceedings of Sitting of a Senate held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th December, 2023, be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes was taken as read.**

**Madam President:** Leader for Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move the Motion that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of a Senate held at the Parliament Building,

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**Announcements**

Mt. Wheldale, St. George, on Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th December, 2023, be confirmed.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 5 – Messages from the Governor-General.  
Item 6 – Announcements by Madam President.

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, a pleasant good morning. Please be advised, first of all, that the following Senators are absent from today's sitting with excuses. Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman is away on private business, far away, believe he is in China. Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph is also out of state on Government business. Thirdly, Senator Katisha Douglas is in the state but unable to attend today. This brings us to the end of absences.

Secondly, I'd like to share with you, since you are addressed, an Independence Day greeting. It reads as follows:

**“Excellency, I am glad to extend my heartfelt congratulations and greetings to you and your colleagues in the Senate on the occasion of the Independence Day of Grenada.**

**Our two countries share very warm and cordial relations, based on mutual understanding and goodwill. I'm confident that our bilateral and parliamentary ties will further strengthen in the years to come. I look forward to working with you closely in this regard.**

**Excellency, I also take this opportunity to wish you good health and happiness, as well as peace and prosperity to the friendly people of Grenada.**

**With the assurances of my highest consideration,**

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**Om Birla**

**Speaker, Lok Sabha**

**India".** End of greetings.

Thirdly, I would like to bring congratulations to the Grenada Tourism Authority for its successful hosting of the Sustainable Tourism Conference 2024, held here in Grenada, just a few days ago, with its focus on People, Planet, Prosperity and Partnership. Not only do we wish to bring congratulations to the whole team who worked very hard and mobilised some of our really outstanding speakers, presenters and otherwise, I'm sure we would also like to thank and congratulate our Minister for Tourism, none other than Senator Adrian Thomas (**applause**), who played an active role in this success for Grenada. Thank you, Senator Thomas.

And lastly, I'd like to announce that through an initiative of ParlAmericas in collaboration with Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWIL) and the Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus (GWPC), a programme entitled Young Women in Leadership was launched on Friday, the 19th of April, 2024.

This programme is geared towards the development of young women to encourage them to take up leadership in Government and elsewhere. All of you, and all Parliamentarians, would have received notices to that effect encouraging you to nominate young women. I think we are looking for a group of about 35 young women, and you already know some in your areas who have potential or interest or both. I would like to encourage you to encourage these young women to apply. The age range is 18 to 25, and it's over several weeks. I think 15 weeks. It's free, it's wonderful, it's building the next generation of young women leaders, and if they apply, they have a good chance of being competitive and selected. Dear patient colleagues, here ends all of my notices. Thank you.

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 7 – Ministerial Statements.

**Madam President:** Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas, Minister for Social

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Development.

**Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President. Good morning to all in this Honourable House. Madam President, I rise to update this Honourable House on some of the many activities that are taking place in the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs.

This ministry is one of the most active ministries in the governance of Grenada, as we provide a wide range of services and support for citizens. Madam President, the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs continues to make great strides in the holistic development and improvement in the lives of all Grenadians, especially the impoverished and the disadvantaged. I want to speak about the response to the fires.

In recent times, we have had some fire-devastated families on the island. Madam President, my ministry was able to respond to the victims of these fires by providing temporary housing in record time, providing appliances, household items, psychosocial support, counselling, school items for the children affected and financial support.

The ministry continues to engage the families to ensure that they are coping with the situation and that life can return to some form of normalcy.

At this juncture, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all individuals and organisations who joined with the Ministry of Social Development to provide so much relief and assistance to the fire victims. My heartfelt thank you to all of you.

**International Family Day 2024.**

Madam President, the International Day of Families is observed on May 15 every year. It was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 with the aim of highlighting the importance of families, promoting awareness of issues relating to families and advocating for their well-being. The day serves as an opportunity to recognise the critical role that families play in societies worldwide.

We know, Madam President, that families serve as a fundamental unit of society

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and are central to social, economic and cultural advancement. Families provide support, care, and nurture to individuals, and so with the positive influence of families, we could have a better society.

And so, Madam President, recognising the importance of family, the ministry has started planning for the observance of Family Day during the month of May. This year's local theme is "Family matters—Step up your parenting game". And so, an invitation is been extended to everyone to be part of our programme of activities, as we celebrate families with activities that highlight approaches that strengthen our families and societies.

Madam President, included in the activities are church services and two days of national prayer for families, which focus on the importance of strengthening the family system. This, we believe, is critical for our children's spiritual upbringing and the holistic engagement of families. We also have a Symposium under the theme, "Strengthening the family". This, we believe, will provide a platform for meaningful discussions, the exchange of ideas, and collaborative efforts towards strengthening family bonds and promoting social cohesion.

Madam President, we will also engage a national community family information session, which will focus on promoting collaboration and emphasising the significance of the collective efforts in creating safer families and communities. These sessions are important as we continue to assist in ensuring that we have functioning families in our societies.

**Child Development**

Madam President, my team and I from the Social Development section of the ministry have undertaken a series of visits to the homes for children on the island. The purpose of the visits was to engage our caregivers and to review the established standard operating procedures at various institutions. Madam President, we also engage the staff to get an appreciation of the concerns and their working condition.

**Father Mallaghan's Home**

Madam President, the reconstruction of Father Mallaghan's Home, which also includes the Brewer's House, will commence shortly. The ministry met with the team from

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the Maria Holder Foundation, along with other stakeholders, to draft the roadmap for the commencement of the project in short. We are in the process of finalising the relocation of the residence to commence the work.

**Juvenile Justice**

Madam President, the Grenada Juvenile Justice policy review has commenced along with the Juvenile Justice Act 2012, and so we welcome the appointment of the Director of Juvenile Justice. Currently, the ministry is endeavouring to adequately staff the unit and is preparing for its relaunch.

**Gender-Based Violence**

Madam President, despite focus and the many efforts by state and non-state actors, collectively and separately, gender-based violence continue to be a pervasive issue that has a significant negative impact on the state. Gender-Based Violence has damaging consequences affecting not just those involved but other families, communities, and by extension, our island.

As part of the ministry's response to Gender-Based Violence, a strategy is being proposed for the period May 2024 to December 2024, and an official media launch of the GBV will take place on the 29th of May, next month. As part of its mandate to address the issue of intimate partner violence and sexual violence in Grenada, the Gender-Based Violence unit has been implementing programmes and projects aimed at preventing and responding to these issues. The strategies have been geared towards empowering women.

Madam President, we recognise that desired change cannot be achieved without engaging the whole society. Men have been involved in the process with the view of changing the power relations between men and women, and victim services have been ramped up. We provide that service through the unit, for both men and women, using a client-centred approach. To this end, a community engagement strategy is being proposed for 2024.

The objectives of this strategy are

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- Raise awareness of the impact of Gender-Based Violence on individual families, communities and society;
- Debunk myths that address the root causes of GBV
- Raise awareness of the laws and resources available to address gender-based violence
- Engage men and boys as agents of change; and
- Strengthen support system through identifying potential change agents within communities with the intention of sustaining engagements.

Our target group is the general population, inclusive of secondary school students.

**Housing and Community Development**

Madam President, my ministry, in collaboration with the Housing Authority, was able to hand over the Chinese-Aided Houses at the Corinth site. Many individuals are now proud homeowners of these units. The delay was due to the upgrading works on these units, where all the units were fitted with kitchen cupboards and closets, to make them more convenient for living.

Our Housing programme continues where citizens with low income are assisted with housing material to repair their homes at minimal costs. The Community Development Division activities are quite visible in every constituency on the island. There is a flurry of activities ongoing.

This, Madam President, is improving the face of communities by providing skills and training to our young people, as well as income generation through jobs created. And so, Madam President, as a ministry, we continue to work with our people to provide meaningful engagement and to empower and lift them out of poverty, as we cannot continue to provide handouts, but a hand up so that they can take their lives into their own hands and explore their own potential. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank Senator Gloria Thomas, Minister for Social Development, for her Ministerial Statement. Thank you. Senator the Honourable Jonathan La Crette, Minister for Sports.

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**Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette:** Madam President, good morning, Senatorial colleagues. Good morning to all of you. From a legislative perspective, Madam President, the Ministry of Youth and Sport will very soon be bringing to this Honourable House the National Youth and Student Council Bill, 2024, so that we can, on a national level, re-engineer and revitalise the student council groups that once used to be functioning across our entire state of Grenada.

Not only that. We want to be able to assist our youth in developing their leadership skills and to ensure that they are a part of building the welfare of the communities that they live in. Student council groups at the secondary level and the primary level aid in that kind of objective.

Additionally, our National Sports policy is currently under amendment, and as a result of that, the National Sports Secretariat has also been working very feverishly to ensure that the National Parish Councils are established.

In fact, consultations across the state, including Carriacou and Petite Martinique, have been completed. There are some minor adjustments that we have to make to the consultations, maybe just one or two more consultations with interest groups. And thereafter, I believe early May, we are going to be starting the elections for the National Parish Councils and the presidents who will sit over these parish councils and also form part of the National Secretariat.

We are excited about that, because we believe that the policy drives the programmatic agenda of any sector, and if you have policies that are robust and very effective, most likely or most often than not, you will also have programme agendas that would be very effective as well.

So from a legislative perspective, those are the two legislations that we will have coming to this Honourable House but, as it relates to our internal policies, we are currently working on what we call an elite programme policy or Elite Athletes Programme Policy, simply because we recognise the need for our elite athletes, especially those who represent us ambassadorial on the international front when they have retired from their craft that they be inducted into this programme, paid of course, and assist us at the grass

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root level in building back some of the sporting disciplines that we currently don't have Senior Coaches for, yes, and striving to provide Senior Coaches for these particular disciplines.

We also... On our agenda, we will be looking at a policy that speaks to the youth and management of playing fields. We don't have that policy currently that we can use, and we recognise that with the inability to use the National Stadium from time to time because of its reconstruction, regarding the National Cricket Stadium, et cetera, we understood the importance over the past couple weeks of community playing fields because those are the playing field, especially those that we categorise at the ministry as major playing fields, secondary as well as minor playing fields. We have a greater understanding, as it relates to the role these playing fields play within the community, especially when your national facility is under reconstruction.

So, as a result of that, the plethora of requests for use of these major playing fields, whether for training in the afternoon, et cetera, it must be managed effectively, and as a result, we need a policy to manage the use of said playing fields so that we don't have to do all that unnecessary repairing thereafter.

And finally, <sup>1</sup>UNESCO in one of its latest articles spoke to the pervasive unemployment and underemployment of youth across the entire globe, and how it is a growing concern for small island developing states, for first world countries as a whole and how they grapple with it from a legislative and policy perspective about youth unemployment and youth underemployment and because we are a small island developing state, and like all of our other counterpart across the entire Eastern Caribbean, we also do have issues with youth unemployment and under employment. The ministry is not going to show off on its responsibility for creating the avenue for our young people to be reskilled and upskilled, and also to gain the necessary expertise that they need so that they can be relevant and marketable on the job market.

So, as a result of that, on June 1, 2024, we are going to have a job fair, and that job fair is going to feature a number of private sector, public sector, and NGO's that have

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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vacancies and are willing to employ youth who come with their Curriculum Vitae, et cetera, and their references, et cetera. They can be employed on the spot or via phone call, a few working days thereafter, once they are interviewed and they sign up based on their particular interests with that organisation.

So I think that the job fair is going to augur well for us. We are looking forward to having a number of our young people employed. And I always say that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has a number of programmes that we embark upon, be it M-Power, be it Yutbiz, be it the National Youth Ambassadorial Programme or the National Youth Parliamentary Programme, et cetera.

My heart's desire, as I shared with my team, is the young woman who may have dropped out in form two due to pregnancy and raised her child and felt as though life dealt her a bad hand and could not find a job thereafter because she doesn't have the academic qualifications or the young man who grew up in a domestic environment where his or her socio-economic environment was not the best and as a result he had to start fishing, and just made it a craft or a lifestyle in order for him to survive. Those are the kind of young persons, as I said to my team, that I want us to be able to craft some kind of programme for us to be able to reach.

It is good to reach the youth coming out of TAMCC. It's good to be able to reach the youth coming out of St. George's University or UWI and we do have programmes to meet the here and meet them here. But, my heart is for the young men and young women who lie at the bottom of the pyramid who feel as though, as one would say to me, "Politician isn't studying the ghetto youth". You understand?

So, as a result of that, we are in the process of partnering with a regional organisation so that they can assist us in putting together a programme that can help us reach youth at that level. So, I'm excited about the work at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and how it's going to benefit our young people.

I am not ignorant of the fact that we may not be able to reach everybody, Madam President, but I believe that reaching a vast percentage of youth can definitely change the demographic of our youthful population. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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**Madam President:** Like Senator Thomas, I'd like to hear your plans. Yes. Thank you. Sorry. I was saying, like Senator Thomas, who spoke of the intention to have home visits regarding the programme on child development, I am glad to hear of some of your plans, for example, the revitalisation of the National Student Council. Well, that was a revolutionary movement in my time, and it should be revived, and I am excited to hear that you are thinking of a National Youth Council at the primary school level. Now that's foresight. I hope I heard you right, but I think the young people, as young as they are, ought to be taught about governance, how to govern themselves and therefore how to govern others later.

So thank you for those updates, and one question I have for you regarding the job fair on June 1. Will it be on one site? And please don't tell me that one site will be on the Carenage in the parish of St. George or...

**Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette:** No, Madam President. In fact, it is going to be in St. Andrew at the Grenville Car Park. I think that put a brighter smile on your face knowing that it is in the big parish. Many of the job fairs we've have had before was centralised to the St. George area, so as a result we felt it best to... based on our statistics to take the job fair this time to the St. Andrew area and to capture the demographic of youth up there that may be unemployed or underemployed to see if we can provide the jobs that they desire to have to earn a living from.

Additionally, the National Youth Parliament Programme is also going to be brought to the primary school. As we revise the programme from our policy perspective. We recognise that it is time that our fifth graders and sixth graders get involved (**laughter**) in the civil matters of society, and as a result of that, it's a whole revamp of these programmes, Madam President, starting at the primary level because these very same primary school students will filter into the secondary schools in a year or two and as a result of that we want to be able to have them have the kind of training as a... I almost said former educator, but still educating at a higher education level, you do understand the importance of starting at the source. And as a result of that, we have extended these

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programmes to the primary level so that we can have some degree of continuation thereafter.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for the privilege of entertaining me. I'm putting in a little plug lastly for places like St. Patrick. Make sure that those young people can get to the Grenville Car Park or wherever it is they need to get to, because those are deep in the heart of the country, St. Mark, although those places where the young people are languishing. Thank you. Thank you so much.

I see the light of Senator David Andrew... Senator André Lewis? Senator for Labour? You have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you, Madam President, and through you, to the minister, as the focus continues on youth, I want to applaud the initiatives, and I look forward to those plans bearing fruit. I wish to suggest through you, Madam President, that if we can take, as part of the subset of the youth, our young athletes and sort of focus on what I call public engagement, interviews, speaking to the media et cetera, so it falls within youth. So you pull them out as a subset, as a matter of my view, I will say sort of urgency because we are... The world is small, and there is a need, in my view, for that sort of training, role-playing, and engagements. Just as a suggestion.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator La Crette.

**Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathon La Crette:** Madam President, through you, I just wanted some clarity from the Honourable Senator as it relates to whether or not he is speaking about from a public speaking perspective?

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Yes. Because I try to find a way to focus on our athletes. I know you were speaking about youths in general, but the athletes. I am speaking about the young athlete, and many times they are engaged with the media, public speaking, they're being interviewed, and they are engaged in different activities. I

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just taught... we need... because remember, there are our faces, they are our ambassadors, they are representing us. We need to pay particular attention to that line.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. I see Senator La Crette signals that he has taken it on board. Senator David Andrew, you have the floor, or did I miss somebody else? Senator St. Clair, you have your light on. Go ahead, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:**... No, no, no, he wants to make a presentation. I want to just comment on Senator La Crette.... Good morning, Madam President, and morning to everyone here this morning and those on the outside.

I was happy to hear the legislative approach to the student council. I think that was not legislated before, and I think it's a good idea. Of course, when you over-legislate, we also have to know how to execute in line with those regulations, but I think it's a good idea. I think it's a way, as you mentioned, Madam President, it builds the human body to understand all these issues with conflicts and leadership, and all of those things would come out.

I recall in my days at school being the representative for my class of the school body. So you had the executive at the school, but then each form had a representative. And so I recalled being a representative at some time in my life in school, and so all of that helped to develop all of us, and so having it in this way is a good idea. We have to ensure, though, that we have the sort of budgetary support for these types of things because they would involve money, which sometimes can be very limited. So I trust that the dear Senator have that in mind to support the implementation because it is a Government issue. It is not a private sector issue unless the private sector is asked to contribute to some cause.

Which takes me, Madam President, not segwaying too much, but it is something that we need to look at with our whole tax system and have it be more progressive so that persons could have deductibles. Say I would put EC\$5.00 every month from your salary towards the student council or EC\$5.00 to... You know? So, it helps to create those

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things, and then you have tax deductibles downstream for your contribution rather than the Government sometimes asking, "Where will we find the money"? So I think we have to look at those sorts of innovations as the FROC said to reset moving forward. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you for alerting our colleagues to your legislative preparedness to work on reviving and transforming the student council. Pardon me if I note you've been representing long. You've been speaking a long time, then. **(Laughter)** You started this speaking....

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Well, it's a long time.

**Madam President:** **(Laughter)** Thank you, Senator St. Clair. I pass the floor to Senator David Andrew. You've requested the floor? Or before you... Senator La Crette.

**Sen. the Hon. Jonathan La Crette:** Thank you, Madam President. I can see how the participation of the Honourable Senator has helped him in his deliberations, especially in this Honourable House.

I just wanted to mention that upon entering the Ministry of Youth and Sports, I recognised that we had a national sports policy in train of which after reviewing I decided to make some amendments to the policy because we wanted to ensure that the language of the policy is sector related, that it remains relevant and on the cutting edge if someone has to pick up the policy in 2030, that it is flexible enough for them to be able to take the policy up and still drive the agenda of sports.

But I recognise that we did not have a National Youth Policy, and that troubled me because, for me, the Youth Policy dovetails into the Sports Policy from a policy perspective. And as a result of that, based on what the Honourable Senator mentioned and also Senator André Lewis, some of those things, as it relates to the training, re-skilling and up-skilling of youth from a public speaking perspective, will be a part of the National

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Youth Policy.

So we have engaged YRIE, and YRIE is an organisation that involves Youth Inclusion, Resilience and Empowerment to come up with a draft policy for us as it relates to what our Youth Policy should look like in Grenada. Of course, we have to furnish them with the preliminary information and data that they're going to need as to where we want to see youth development and youth empowerment in the next 10 to 15 years. And they have ensured us that by July of this year, we're going to have a first draft, and with that first draft, we can now have national consultations with youth as it relates to what's in the draft, as well as what some of the amendments they would like us to make and include.

Bearing in mind, Madam President, youth empowerment and youth development are not a sector. It's not one organisation or one institution, and that is why we're having the job fair, because we need the private sector on board, we need NGO on board, because the Government will not be able to provide the kind and type of employment for all young persons across the entire state.

So I just felt the need to just mention that a National Youth Policy is coming on board soon, by the end of the year, we're hoping to have it, and so that we can have that policy speak to a very strong and robust policy and programme agenda for youth throughout the state.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Senator Quinc Britton, the young man from the west. Honourable Senator, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton:** Good morning, Madam President, and morning colleagues. I stand here today with a deep sense of honour and gratitude to speak within the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Creative Economy. Primarily, with Culture, I'll just give you a little update as to what has been happening.

We continue our engagement with the different stakeholders as it relates to culture; stakeholders like the Grenada Cultural Foundation, the Museum, Spicemas and other stakeholders as it relates to anything regarding culture, the different parish committees

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and so on that put on festival events, and we continue to support.

As a matter of fact, in recent times we took the decision... well, as part of this year's budget to double the subvention or support that we give to the festival committees, given we know that it will be challenging and so on. It had remained the same for decades, so we decided to double or give additional support to the festival committees.

On that note, let me congratulate on my hometown, St. Mark, where I'm from. Let me congratulate the Festival Committee there, the St. Mark Independence Committee, for their brave move; they host a successful... Because in continuing with the 50th Anniversary of Independence and so on, they sought to engage in a number of activities. One that stood out the most is recognising the contributions of many who have laid the foundation or played a pivotal role towards the development of St. Mark. So they did it in a two-fold event where they recognised persons within the parish in the Independence Parish Award, and one of the historical things that happened last Saturday, where they recognised... There is an area in Victoria known as Heroes Square, and everyone kept asking, "Well, who are the heroes behind it"?

So we sought to... When I say we... As a "St. Markian". **(Laughter)** We sought, you know, to give some value to that by nominating persons. We asked the community to get involved and nominate people whom they consider to be heroes. Part of the criteria was that you had to make a consistent contribution for at least 15 years. Whatever contribution you made must have left a positive or lasting impact on the community, as well as, you had to be recognised nationally, regionally or internationally, hence the reason why we sought to narrow it down, in the first instance, to nominate or to unveil, on a monument that is shaped as a pyramid, at the top of Diamond Street.

We give some semblance to Heroes Square now, so you have names of different persons who have laid the foundation, as I said, and that's just the first 20 names. Going forward, we intend to, as part of National Heroes Day or probably as part of the St. Mark Day Celebration, honour more persons and add their names to that. Hopefully, one day they might see it fitting to put my name on there **(laughter)**, but I just want to endorse that, and the committee is doing a fantastic job up there. This weekend, we are kind of

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winding up our activities, and we have the Food Fest this weekend. Last night was the Bonfire. We have Food Fest this weekend, and the closing ceremony will be on Sunday, God's will.

So a lot has been happening within the ministry as well as in relation to culture, and we continue to give support wherever we can. This weekend, well, in fact, as we speak, my friend from the sister isle would be happy. I am surprised to see him here because big things are happening in Carriacou. The Maroon Fest is happening. They started this morning, and they will continue over the weekend. I expect to see him dancing in the streets tomorrow at String in the City. It is only a pity that I can't get to go up to Carriacou, but you know I have to stay and take care of business in my constituency just the same, but I'll be there soon, my brother, so have no fear. **(Laughter)**

Madam President, we continue to meet with our stakeholders, as I said, and we... Just recently, we had a meeting with Spicemas, looking extensively at ways we can improve the product for this year. Spicemas launch will be next Saturday. The theme of this year's Spicemas is "An Explosion of Culture". So we are trying our best to add some value and to see some things differently. We already expect an increase of over 70% in visitors coming to our shores for this year's Spicemas. We believe it is essential that we ensure we dot all the i's and cross the t's so that people can have a wonderful experience this year's Spicemas.

Pan Expression is this weekend as well on Sunday, God's will. So we continue to give support to those events, and like I said, hats off to all the parish committees who have been doing a wonderful job. In recent times, we had the River Sallee Saraka, which was a successful event as well. And we're doing all of this, Madam President, with very limited staff at the ministry, and I just would like to place on record our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to those especially within the Department of Culture in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Creative Economy.

Creative Economy is still trying to find itself a home. Most of our staff have to work remotely, so it is a lot of challenge for us. It's a new ministry all bound together, but we are trying our best to do whatever we can to make sure that everything goes as smoothly

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as possible. On that note, Madam President, I would like to say thank you for affording me the opportunity to give you a brief update, and you will be hearing from me again. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Of that I am certain. I'm sure we will be hearing from you, and we thank you for the update, Senator Britton. Senator St. Clair, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I always like to get the updates from my good friend Senator Britton. I am very familiar with the happenings in St. Mark because in my substantive work, I have an interest in the community, and as such, from the GCNA standpoint, you know we have a Nutmeg Museum right there on the same street, and we try to collaborate on these, particularly the Food Fest and so on.

But more so, the opportunity that the individuals involved in the food, the support for the agricultural sector, the fishing sector, the variety of dishes and so on. It's a place I try to be as much as I can be. I see my good friend on a regular basis there because I think it's a good place, particularly understanding the whole socioeconomic positioning, if I would say, quote on quote, of St. Mark. I would really want to see the nation rally some more because there are good things happening there.

I didn't hear my good friend mentioned on the eastern side because in Soubise, actually, there is an initiative every last Saturday, I think, it's kind of maybe conflicting with the time, it's something that the two organisations may want to discuss when you look at a Seafood Fest, which is taking up very good momentum. And coming from the east, I think it's something that we would want to invite you over to, to take a look at and see what sort of collaboration and support these folks in this area can be given also.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Senator Britton, you would like to respond?

**Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton:** Thank you, Madam President. Through you, I

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accept the invitation. Tomorrow, God willing, I'll try my best and be there. But you know, as we say, "Burn all tents, the first prize has to stay home". So from there I will go back home. I've heard about it, and as the goodly Senator mentioned, it has been picking up some momentum, so tomorrow I am yearning for that experience to see what it is like.

Also, Madam President, through you, I would just like to thank the Honourable Senator and his team at the GCNA. They continue to add flavour to the tourism product that we offer in St. Mark, as well as the culture, because the food is also part of our culture.

Last evening at the Bonfire event that we had in St. Mark, in Victoria, in particular, GCNA sponsored, for the first time, a component as part of the activity that was happening there, where they had a nutmeg-cracking competition. We had three participants, so GCNA sponsored the nutmegs and so on. So you had a quantity of nutmeg, and the person who cracked the most nutmeg from the quantity they emerged as the winner. So I just like to, through you, Madam President, give the Honourable Senator his appreciation, and we look forward to more support and so on from his company, GCNA. So thank you very much.

**Madam President:** Thank you. I am excited about this West Coast, East Coast, Carriacou nexus and collaboration that will obviously bring fruit to the region. I see the Minister of Tourism smiling. They're doing your work on the ground, Senator. There are no other Ministerial Statements. I thank you all.

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 8 – Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business in the Senate, Senator Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to present the following Papers and Reports from Selected Committees:

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1. Grenada Council for Technical and Vocational Education (GCTVET) National Training Agency (NTA), Annual Report 2022;
2. Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee (FROC) 2023 Annual Report;
3. FROC 2023 Annual Report at a Glance;
4. FROC Annex to 2023 Annual Report.

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, these Reports, these Papers are laid before you for your response, deliberation. I offer the floor to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Honourable Senator Noland Cox.

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I wanted to make a few observations and just a few comments. Probably the first one I will start with is the National Training Agency.

Just in reviewing the report, I noticed that one of their initiatives is the development of a strategic plan for the agency going forward. I think that is a very, very good approach in terms of planning the forward thinking of the agency, but I just want to suggest and recommend that I think one of the areas that the agency may look at in terms of strategic development is in terms of growth, in terms of the scope of the actual training modules that they have if you can start broadening and widening it based on some of the trends, in some of the demands in terms of skills development for young people.

I think it's something which the "Other Side", this current Government, has also spoken about so much in terms of what is lacking for persons in order to be able to access certain job opportunities. So in terms of skills development, I think it's a great opportunity for the NTA to expand in that area and to grow, not just having more, but maybe a higher level, so that people can access jobs outside the country as well.

As regards the FROC Report, Madam President, I just wanted to report. Specifically from the FROC Report at a Glance, that particular document and specifically on page 6. I think it's important to highlight that, and it speaks to the changes, the amendments that were made to some of the fiscal parameters in terms of how we move

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forward and three of those I just wanted to highlight:

1. The Annual Wage Bill in relation to GDP.

It was 9% of nominal GDP; now the amendment has moved it to 13%. I'll make a comment after I speak to the other two areas.

2. The Debt-to-GDP ratio was set at 55%. The amendment moved it to 60% with a target date of 2035 to arrive at 60% in 2035.
3. The primary surplus balance to GDP. Initially, it was pegged at 3.5%, and the amendment moved it to 1.5%.

Madam President, I am just highlighting this to show that the measures, the amendment basically easing the fiscal measures, are an ease for the Government. I don't know, Madam President, I do hope that the easing of those measures in itself will lend itself to maybe the Government being more fiscally prudent. I don't know, but I see that there is something that we have to pay attention to.

As you know, sometimes when we get more leeway, there is a tendency for us not to be as prudent in our management of those resources. And I say this on the backdrop that, in terms of the outlook for economic growth, we see growth taking place, but also at a lower percentage rate. So, for 2024, I think it's going to be like 3.6%; it is projected to be 3.1% for 2025. Albeit those figures may change if the country performs better. But I am saying this on the backdrop that we have made amendments to ease those measures at a time when we believe that we can feel and see that there is slower economic activity.

So I am just raising this awareness for the Government to pay attention to this, while the Government do have a prerogative, we can always change those measures. We can reverse them to make it tighter for us to be more prudent. But I think it is something worth noting that those previous measures that we had were able to help us to get out of a serious economic situation, so it says something about those measures.

We were almost at the 55% Debt-to-GDP ratio just before COVID-19. So it shows that those measures were working. I can't recall what some of the recommendations or justification for easing those measures were, but I just raised them for what they're worth. Madam President, I think it is important to highlight that, while sometimes we don't pay

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attention to them, they play a critical role in how the country performs and how we manage those financial resources.

So I just wanted to highlight those two things which I picked up from the report. While there are other important things, positive things happened in terms of revenue; there was some revenue increase. I believe it is important to highlight those critical measures... those benchmarks for which we measure the country's performance and management of the resources. Thank you very much.

**Madam President:** I thank Senator Cox for those observations and the whole question of economic sustainability, starting with debt sustainability, economic performance and policy measures that accompany those. Thank you for your observations. I offer the floor to Senator André Lewis, Minister for Labour.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you.

**Madam President:** Senator for Labour.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** What am I to say? **(Laughter)** Madam President, in relation to the FROC Report, the continuous reporting and the amendment, especially, to the Wage Bill relative to GDP, Labour wishes to place on record again that this is a continued legislating of free collective bargaining because when you legislate that wages should be relative to GDP rather than discussing those things around the bargaining table, it creates the potential for industrial unrest.

There is no doubt that the FROC recommended in the past that this ratio be increased. It is quite possible that the current Administration, in looking to potentially ease some of the industrial problems that we have been plaguing us for six continuous years, I'm not saying that it may have caused this current Administration to come into office, I'm not saying that, but we all know the challenges that we have.

So I'm just placing on record that we have demonstrated over all the years without

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these legislative restrictions, even when we took no increases for a number of years. My good colleagues, most of the “Other Side” themselves were part of those discussions when they were on our side, not in terms of the opposition, but I am speaking of Labour, and therefore they are aware of our high level of responsibility to the country. This will continue to act as a potential contributor to industrial problems.

So Labour is recording once again that we have demonstrated that there is no need for these restrictions. As a matter of fact, this came in during what we called the Structural Adjustment Programme 2014 to 2016 and “Government Side” has been accusing the past administration, when they were in Opposition, of maintaining most of the restrictions that came in during the 2014 to 2016 period, which exist up to today. So I am placing on record that the current administration, through you, can demonstrate that it sees us as a responsible partner and remove those restrictions and that we can continue to negotiate around the table and reach solutions that are in the interest of the workers and the country. That’s my bit on the matter.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. I'm sure the “Other Side” has heard you. Senator St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you once again, Madam President. I rise to make some comments on these two reports. The first thing I want to do as we read through is to commend the both teams; the Training Agency, of course, and the FROC for having those reports ably prepared and submitted such that we can deliberate, be better informed and not only us but these are public documents so for the public listening they are not documents for myself or Senator Quinc to have in his back pocket or in a bag hiding. These are public documents that they can read and deliberate, go to their MP's, go to the Ministries, go to their different Senators et cetera, and agitate accordingly because those are reports of activities and it also gives us good information for planning. Someone wants to know what their daughter or their son may want to be in the future, what training opportunities, so I just put this as a cover note.

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But I must say, looking at the report and particularly as it relates to agriculture, fishing, agro-processing subsectors, we are seeing the National Vocational Certificate, the CARICOM Certificate. So people have these opportunities to become certified in those areas locally. And I know how this works. Sometimes, you can use what they call experience on the job, prior learning skills, and those can be assessed, and in such a way, we can access jobs and so on. So, in connection with that earlier dialogue by our good friend Senator La Crette in this job fair connect, it might also be good to have a linkage with the folks there, such that even the skill sets that they can be certified for persons seeking jobs can know they can easily connect and get that CVQ or NVQ and be well placed. So that is in that space.

In terms of the FROC, if I may make a connection, one time when you look in the FROC and you look at the whole issue of the work permits that were issued within the period. I don't want to recite all those numbers, but it is somewhere close to 200 with construction and another hundred and something in the hotel sector imported into the country, and I wonder what special skills these individuals have that we in Grenada do not have or cannot develop, and so as we try to develop, we must look at that. Not that you don't need other persons from other countries, not necessarily for the skills, because sometimes we both have the same skills, but they may have certain little techniques, certain little experience, certain cultures they can share. So it is very important to have cross-cultural connections, so I try to say there are opportunities there.

In the broad space in terms of the FROC, it is interesting, Madam President, and I was maybe kind of shocked too when I looked at some of the recommendations in the summary report. If I just get the name right... So... Just for the record, that would be the FROC Report at a Glance. That one. Just around page 21 thereabout a sort of tree graphics.

It is interesting that I saw they were making some suggestions to the legislation in terms of definitions and some things, and I was like, but sometime in November, December, we discussed and passed this Bill, that's the 2023 FROC. So I mean, they didn't get a chance to have a last look to verify some of these definitions and so on. So I

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wouldn't be surprised that maybe in the next few months we may have to come back and have some amendments to that. But it shows, Madam President, we have to be careful, this process called second reading is a very important process in the legislative agenda. Second reading involves not only us, it is my understanding. It involves the stakeholders and other persons, and so there may have been a first reading laid and then another double check. I think those might have been picked up at that stage, and I will speak some more about that later on, not in this segment.

But when you look at the fundamental report, that's the big report, the annual report, specifically as it relates to Agriculture. Of course, the FROC made some very interesting observations because we can say what we want, but we have to look and see what the report says; they are like the masters. They said that we see 2023 a 6% decline in agriculture. Of course, without even reading the report and knowing the specific numbers, we can feel it, you know.

Of course, there was good news; livestock increased by about 2%, nutmeg increased by about 11% but crop declined by about 9% mostly because of a 21% decline in bananas and other vegetables. And of course, in the absence of an important infrastructure such as the MNIB, which buys a lot of bananas, and of course, the passing of my good friend Mr. Harford, who was also involved in bananas. We understand the context of this, notwithstanding, there is discussion about the weather and so on, but the weather doesn't cause that when we know MNIB is literally operating at a minimum.

So longer it takes, we are almost four months into 2024, so the question to me is, Mr. Harford is passed, I don't think he would be resurrected. MNIB is there, and the question is, would it be resurrected sufficiently to regain what we have lost already to catch up before 2024, start?

What is interesting too, Madam President, in the outlook on the FROC a few pages lower down, and this is under the economic sector pushing...

**Madam President:** What page are you on?

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**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** I'm around 46... Page 46... According to the FROC, you know there is a big blueprint at the back, it is page 8, but if you look at your page count in the Acrobat, it's 46.

**Madam President:** Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** ... Sorry about that, and if you go down further, it speaks about the Food Import Bill, and it speaks of the Food Import Bill, which is high because we see the resurgence of the tourist and the cruise arrival, which is still just a few about EC\$25,000 under the 2019 figure, but it's right there. We see an increase in the Food Import Bill, which the FROC has alluded is because the increase of tourism.

And so there is a dire need for us to be able to start producing more of our food and turn this whole decline down, otherwise we cannot keep saying this thing over and over. So the FROC will ask us at some stage what is being done. So there are answers, there is the Food Security Programme based on the World Bank, which the FROC mentioned to come. We are four months into the year. I am not too sure exactly where we are because, to the best of my knowledge, we are still in the same position we were last year. So there is a lot to be done in this process.

And I am saying this, Madam President, when you look at the other aspect of the FROC report, which is... It is in the same at a Glance... No. The other one, which speaks about the Annex, and it speaks about the various pillars, and it speaks about the human capital section that needs to be developed to execute those things. I get worried knowing and understanding the limited human capacity in the Ministry of Agriculture at this stage. So I raise this to say this is an alarm that needs to be put in context, as to catch up before the next tourist season catches us even from August, we have our visitors and so on coming here. So that is that context.

The last point I want to make, Madam President, on that is that if we go back to the same page 21 with the recommendations at a Glance. One of the recommendations there speaks about increasing the linkages between sectors. In fact, they speak about

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linkages in the main report between Culture, between the Creative Arts and Tourism, and then it goes down to the last sentence on page 46, 47, somewhere there that we need to have a greater linkage with Agriculture.

This has been something that has been called for over and over since I didn't even know myself, and they said they are working together. But at this stage, Madam President, I want to make two points as I close. Grenada is yet to have an agro-tourism policy, which is going to create a framework for that linkage to take place. I hear we want to have legislation for the Student Council. It's good, but we need to address this issue in some legislative framework. In fact, the last point, as I close, Madam President, and I close on this.

When I just took up position as a Senator sometime in November 2020, I was young and had a lot more energy than I do today. **(Laughter)** I was shocked when I heard the Minister for Tourism, then my good friend Minister Curwen, another "St. Markian", according to my friend Quinc. She had a big speech marking World Tourism Day, and of course, how they must have increased linkages, I say this sounds nice. I went to the legislation for the Tourism Authority, and then I looked and saw who makes it up, what the regulation says, and nowhere was there any accommodation for fishers or the agricultural sector having an interest representation at the table.

And most people would say, "What happened to you all? You all making so much noise". Why do you want to be there? So immediately I spoke to her, I would have recalled I had a press release actually pertaining to that matter. I had calls from all over the region saying, "You all don't have that"? I say, "Well, we have to". And I was informed a few days ago, a farmer met me and he said, "You didn't see what the Prime Minister did?" I said, "No". Because up to now I haven't looked. He said, "The tourism conference that you have spoken about, the Prime Minister said, "Where are the farmers, where are the fishers"? And the numbers were... I wouldn't say it was zero because I didn't see but I understand he was not very happy.

I really stand with him side by side in this cry that we need to change this legislation to include the fishers, so when those things are happening... You know, sometimes if

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you're not at the table, people don't know you exist, but you need to be at the table. And so we are asking for some legislative change, which I will bring a Motion subsequently to have that included as a condition, such that this linkage that the FROC is calling for is not being overlooked. And this is my contribution on this matter, Madam President. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Let me repeat that the glaring absence of the actors on the ground that sustain tourism was noted by all, led by the Prime Minister, who was so correct. The linkage is called for a repetitive but needs to be acted on, really, in my own view. Okay. That was an editorial. Any other request for the floor on the reports?

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 9 – Petitions.  
Item 10 – Government Notices.  
Item 11 – Unofficial Notices.  
Item 12 – Questions.

**Madam President:** Senator Franklyn has stepped out of the room. Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I don't know if it is prudent that we wait to present the question again, but if that's the case, I can go right ahead.

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**Madam President:** Let us take a very brief recess.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** We are quite familiar with the questions...

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**(Sound of gavel)**

**Madam President:** We will take a very brief recess pending the return of Senator Franklyn.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Okay, Madam President. Thanks.

**Senate adjourned at 10:32 a.m.**

**Senate resumed at 10:34 a.m.**

**Madam President:** Senator Franklyn, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to pose question three the only unanswered question on the Order Paper to the Leader of Government's Business and the question reads as follows: "At the sitting of the Senate on June 6, 2023, the Minister for Health stated, 'So at this particular point in time we did receive a stock of pharmaceuticals last week I believe and we have since distributed that to our General Hospital and also subsidiary institutions and we trust that things are going to be much smoother moving forward', therefore will the Minister for Health, well in this case the Leader of Government's Business inform the Honourable House:

- a. How many containers landed in Grenada with medicine and medical supplies procured by the Government?
- b. What were the landing date(s) of the container(s)?
- c. What were the clearance date(s) of the container(s)?
- d. What medicine and medical supplies were procured?
- e. When were the medicine and medical supplies distributed to the hospital and subsidiary institutions?
- f. What was the cost of procuring the medicine and medical supplies?

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- g. How much money was owed to the OECS Pharmaceutical Procurement Service (PPS)?
- h. How much money has been paid to the OECS Pharmaceutical Procurement Service (PPS) to date?

Thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Franklyn. The floor is offered to the Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, it is with much regret that I have to inform this Honourable House that we made all effort to get this information ready and available to present to the House today. Unfortunately, we did not succeed. They are still putting the information together today to answer the eight questions that have been placed here, or eight parts of the question that have been placed here.

I really and truly want to sincerely apologise to Senator Franklyn for not being able to provide him with that information as yet, but the Ministry of Health is working on it. I had communication with them as late as this morning in regards to that, and I am really hoping that I'll be able to furnish the House with the information before the next sitting.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Leader of Government's Business. Senator Franklyn.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Madam President, this line item does not allow for a debate, so I would not engage in a back and forth. But, again, I see that the "Government Side" has not taken your recommendation, which was given last year into consideration and not even one answer could be given at this time.

Madam President, in my view, that is a clear indication of inefficiency, and I would again respond accordingly in the Adjournment. Thank you, Madam President.

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**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Franklyn. Senator St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise under this section to maybe say it's a clarification and an expression. I know I have a question pertaining to the impounding site. I know the Leader of Government's Business would have said that they were no impounding site at the last sitting.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President.

**Madam President:** Excuse me. Interruption for Point of Order.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes, Madam President. Point of Order. I don't know if I have the wrong Order Paper here in regards to questions, but I am not seeing any...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, I could explain. The commitment was to provide the answer in writing that was the last word of the Leader of Government's Business. So I'm just informing the House that, just in case he might not have gotten the written part yet, I await the written words; that is all. He gave the verbal, but it is a written response, and he said in the last session that the writing would come later. So just a reminder.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator St. Clair.

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**Madam President:** Senators, I'm searching my Standing Order for Guidance on Questions, and you veterans might guide me here. I believe that I am finding them very

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slowly, and I look for them in sections 10 and 11 and so on, because I just want to make sure that we are all following the same set of guidelines as regards asking and answering.

So let me close this section by saying that if you look at your... all parties look at our Standing Order and be guided by sections 16, which start on page 10 in the version that I use. Section 16 right up to section 19, I think we could be guided by that, and I will leave it at that. Thank you.

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

Item 14 – Motions.

Item 15 – Bills.

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business in the Senate.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much. Madam President, I beg to introduce the first reading of an Act shortly entitled, Electronic Communications Bill, 2024.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to reform the law relating to telecommunications in the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority, shortly entitled, Electronic Communications Bill, 2024.

**Madam President:** Senator Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move that the relevant Standard Order of the Senate be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

**Question proposed.**

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**Madam President:** Senator St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Yes. Madam President, before you... I'm not too sure of the procedure, but it is just a question and concern. The extent of the Bill is almost 200 pages, and the persons or stakeholders that can be so affected by this, directly and indirectly... Because, I mean, if you've been following on the ground... My query is knowing that this also was laid about a month ago in the "Other Place". While we want to go through all the stages, it will be helpful, maybe in the other section, maybe the second reading, but I would be interested in knowing what level of consultation took place with this transformational Bill, as the first two lines or three lines of the introduction of the Bill say before reaching here. And that's just a question, and I'm not too sure if it's within the purview of this stage of the reading of the Bill. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Leader of Government's Business.

**(The Clerk conversed with Madam President privately)**

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business. There is a... Is there a question? There's a question from St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

**(Inaudible comments by Senators)**

**Madam President:** Senator...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** No... I'm not even thinking about my question.

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The first reading wasn't even voted on that is what I am saying. I am okay with the explanation in the debate. I don't have a problem. But I just want to put it in the note where it belongs. But we didn't vote to move from all stages, so that is my concern. It's just for procedure. **(Inaudible comment by Senators) (Laughter)** Yes, that is why... Exactly. **(Laughter)**

**Madam President:** We will follow the procedure once you are satisfied.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move that the second reading of the Bill be taken.

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, we are here today for this very important Sitting in the lives of many Grenadians, in the life of a country where we are focusing heavily on transforming our society. And in the midst of this, Madam President, a very important aspect, a pillar in the development of our society today, is the whole issue of telecommunication.

Over the years in the development of mankind, Madam President, telecommunication has become so important that today we live in a world where we cannot function without it, and if we thought that we had communication 20 years ago and it was important, let us fast-track. Today, as we speak, telecommunication 10 years ago has improved maybe 10 times or 100 times more than it was 10 years ago. And, therefore, we believe as a Government that has come for us to transform the

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telecommunication sector.

Madam President, the sector is currently regulated by the Telecommunications Act, Chapter 315C and today we believe that we need to advance that, which is why Grenada has become a contracting party with other OECS Members in advocating and being part of the telecommunication transformation. Madam President, Dominica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are all part of it. And while Dominica and St. Kitts may have done their work already, in terms of moving forward, we are here today to discuss and I use the word "discuss" because I believe that this is so important that it might be practical and maybe wise to us the word discuss rather than debate because at the end of the day this is so important for Grenada to move forward it's unbelievable.

Madam President, the objective of the ECTEL Treaty was to establish the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunication Authority as the regulatory authority for telecommunication to serve the Member States with a commission established in each contracting State. Over the years, Madam President, from the establishment of ECTEL and the enactment of the legislation to the present, there has been significant growth and development in the sector, which has necessitated the reform of the legislative framework. The need for legislative reform in the telecommunications sector was recognised over a decade ago.

And I must stand here, and I know my good friend will be happy when I stand here and give some recognition to the people who were there before. I think the former Administration must be commended for the effort they have made in their contribution to making sure that we have this Electronic Communication Bill taken to Parliament today. I think their voice has been well recorded, and we must acknowledge that.

Madam President, the sector was recognised as I said over a decade ago and in 2009, ECTEL commenced a series of extensive and in-depth public consultations. Public consultations. A very long. When we talk about public consultation, we talk about public consultation throughout the OECS. And I think it's well recorded in the explanatory notes that have been provided to this House and I need my good friend, Leader of the

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Opposition in the Senate, Senator Norland Cox, as Former Minister, I think this was under your portfolio, you will be able to enlighten this House as to the level of consultation that took place throughout the OECS.

Madam President, the first step in the process was to prepare a protocol amending the EECTEL Treaty, which revised provisions of the Treaty with the addition of new definitions and removal of old definitions which are no longer required in order to prepare for the introduction of the Electronic Communication Bill.

Madam President, this Bill that we are going to present here today contains 157 clauses, which are divided into 14 parts and three schedules, and we're going to look at this Bill part by part, Madam President. Part I, which deals with the preliminaries, contains five clauses, and this part, Madam President, is the part that deals with the definitions that were not included previously. It is important that we redefine this subject matter. It is important, and we put new definitions to suit the present time and conditions that we are living in.

Part II, Madam President, outlines the duties and powers of the Minister. And, therefore, it gives the Minister the authority to make regulations very, very important, and those are parts, Madam President, that become essential if we are to move forward with this Bill and this very important sector.

As it relates to Part III, which contains 23 clauses, and this is a very large part, Madam President, because it deals with the National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. And one of the areas under this part, Madam President, is the whole question of making the NTRC, the National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, a corporate body, meaning it has the authority to make contracts, it has the authority to sue and be sued in their own name. It is a statutory body that can stand on its own; that is the direction we want to go, Madam President.

Madam President, there you will find the areas of expertise that are required if you want to be a Member of the Commission, or if you want to be a Commissioner. So you will see that there's a certain background that they are looking for: knowledge of competition, project management, business administration, and regulatory experiences.

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It's no longer a situation where your friend could sit as a Commissioner or inappropriate people, so to speak, may sit as a Commissioner. We are looking for expertise and people with knowledge and skills to bring something to the table.

This part of the Bill, Madam President, also makes an allowance for the use of *ad hoc* advisory committees by the Commissioner. It also outlines the grounds, if necessary, for the dismissal of commissioners. It calls for the issue of protection as it relates to secrecy and confidentiality, and it sets rules in relation to the submission of budgets and work plans. That is a level of accountability that we are looking for under this new bill. Audits are a must. Conflict of interest sometimes plagues our society, and it brings a lot of organisations into disrepute. There will be systems in place to ensure that the conflict of interest is being reduced significantly to the extent that it becomes insignificant, but if we could eliminate it and eradicate it, that is the objective in terms of where the Bill wants to go, Madam President.

And also a very important part of this Part III, Madam President, it expands the scope of the possible exemption from the Act to include, and I will outline here, exemption from a license, for health, and public safety service and for the first time grants authority to the Minister to exempt certain recognised entities like health and fire services. Madam President, I think part III says a lot, and I will encourage my colleagues to pay attention to the legislation as the draft itself gives you more details as we go forward.

Madam President, part IV contains 34 clauses, and it sets out quite clear and detailed procedures for the application, review and grant of a licence and removes this process from the regulation, incorporating it into the draft Bill. Madam President, this part also increases the term of a special license, which was 10 days and has now been moved to 21 days, and there's also a penalty aspect to it.

Part V, Madam President, contains clauses 66 to 68, and here, Madam President, it sets out new provisions and procedures to deal with the change of control and ownership of licence and frequency authorisation. Madam President, we have witnessed in the Caribbean, in Grenada in particular, that organisations change names overnight, file bankruptcy, all sorts of excuses, and at the end of the day, when those things happen,

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the customers feel the weight. This part, Madam President, will put mechanisms in place to ensure that this does not happen in an ad hoc manner.

Part VI, Madam President, contains clauses 69 to 86, and it speaks to the whole question, Madam President, on the issue of the emergence of vertically integrated service providers. Very important. And those of service providers, Madam President, we're going to a situation where they own everything, every aspect of it, from top to bottom. This part includes clear provisions which will allow the NTRCs to determine when and how vertically integrated operators are to provide access to essential infrastructure, thereby eliminating bottlenecks and barriers to market entry and thus enabling competition in the electronic communication markets. Here, Madam President, we want to guard against a situation where a monopoly is being created and sometimes our society is being held at ransom. This new Bill will avoid that from happening.

At the end of the day, consumers will be happy, consumers will be protected, and consumers will feel confident that if the market is opened up and there is no monopoly, we will get more businesses coming on stream, and we may get better offers. I remember signing up in the early days of GRENTEL, and then GRENTEL. I am sure that some of the owners of Flow today may have had relationships with GRENTEL. GRENTEL was Grandad Telecommunication many years ago, many moons ago.

So, Madam President, this part VI will give the customers some comfort in regards to opening the market and allowing other companies to come in and offer services. Better services may follow with that because of the competition, but we do not want to have a situation where we have a monopoly developing in our society.

Part VII, Madam President, deals with the registration and approval, and it addresses the country code level domain and type of approvals and clauses 87 to 88 will take care of that.

Part VIII, which contains clauses 89 to 96, addresses the regulations of competition under this part. New provisions will allow the NTRC to address concerns raised by market consolidation and the rise of service providers with significant market power. It also, Madam President, prohibits anti-competitive conduct such as agreements between

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licensees and concerted practices which have the objective or effect of restricting, preventing or distorting competition within the contracting State.

Madam President, part IX, which contains clauses 97 to 106. It addresses the question of universal services and access under this part and extends the definition of universal service to include access, and allows the USAF to be used to provide access devices and other auxiliary services in support of universal service.

Part X, Madam President, contains clauses 107 to 113, and it deals with offences. And it says, Madam President, these offences were present in the Telecommunication Act, then, but did not have penalties attached, so in other words, the law didn't have teeth. Presently, Madam President, the connection of equipment onto a telecommunication network now carries a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or two years in prison, so there's a penalty attached to the offence.

Part XI deals with investigation, and this will be contained in classes 114 to 117. And then we have part XII, which deals with dispute resolution. Clauses 118 to 128 outline it quite clearly.

But, Madam President, clauses 129 to 145, which are contained in Part XIII, deal with the tribunal, which is a very important aspect of this new piece of legislation. It calls for the establishment of a tribunal, and this is new under the Bill and serves to separate the regulatory function from the adjudicative function. This creates greater transparency as the commission no longer investigates and adjudicates. Some level of transparency, Madam President, and this new piece of legislation, once it is supported by the House, will be a new area to ensure that we have some level of justice prevailing in our society.

Part XIV, Madam President, deals with a number of issues as contained in clauses 145 to 157, the final part of it, Madam President, and there are several issues here which are outlined, including; fees payable by service providers, an inspection of records held by the NTRC, the right to appeal to the High Court, to repeal and savings conditions, transitional provision and the regulation power by the Minister among other things. Madam President, this part also repeals the Telecommunication Act, CAP 315C and establishes the deadline by which every person who is subject to the improved regulatory

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framework must comply within 12 months of the regulation entering into force.

Madam President, this is the Bill in summary, and I now commend the House... I now commend this Bill to the House, and I seek their approval. I thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank the Leader of Government's Business, Senator Adrian Thomas, for the presentation of this Bill.

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Is that André Lewis? Senator Neilon Franklyn, you have the floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to share briefly on the Bill before this Honourable House.

It is well understood, Madam President, especially from an economic perspective, that monopolies are not good for any society or any economy. As we have seen in Grenada, strides were made in the past to ensure the liberalisation of various markets and industries, and in the context of the Bill, we zero in on the telecommunication or the electronic communication industry or market.

From my own assessment of the Bill, of course, I have no major opposition to the proposed Bill. From my own observation, what the Bill seeks to do is to consolidate or compound the efforts made previously to liberalise the telecommunication and the electronic communications market and to ensure that that market remains open for competition. So the Bill, in and of itself, in my view, allows that. The intention of the Bill is clear in that aspect.

However, and I think Senator St Clair, attempted to raise the concern of consultation in the Leader of Government's Businesses' explanation, I did not hear what came from the consultation and whether or not the stakeholders who are prone to be affected have indicated their support or lack thereof or whatever concerns they have. In

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the context of our responsibility as a legislature, I think that these stakeholders have a right to share their views and to share their concerns as they relate to how the proposed legislation will affect them. And of course, Madam President, in consultation with a number of persons throughout the country, I would point out some of the concerns that I myself have, and they have indicated.

Section 31, specifically subsection (3) of the Bill, indicates, permit me to quote exactly what it says, Madam President. **“A person who contravenes subsections (1) or (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to a fine of one million dollars or to imprisonment for a term of ten years or to both.”**

It is understandable that offences would carry fines and prison terms, which is not the issue here, but the amount. Of course, Madam President, we are a small economy, and the countries within the ambit of ECTEL are relatively small countries, possessing small economies, and some may say that EC\$1,000,000 is a steep penalty considering the size of some of the stakeholders that may be affected. Again, this is not me making an excuse, but some clarity or rationale should be given as it relates to why EC\$1,000,000 as opposed to EC\$500,000 or EC\$900,000 or even EC\$1.5 million, but of course, Madam President.

In the context of section 2, specifically the definition of electronic communication, there are concerns, Madam President, that some operators, some stakeholders, specifically, especially in the media fraternity they have concerns as it relates to how they may be affected as it relates to the proposed Bill. Permit me to read the definition of Electronic Communications. And it says, it means, **“A type of transmission, emission or reception and, where applicable, switching or routing of voice, data, text, sound, audio, video, animation, visual images, moving images, pictures, pulses, signals or other information; or a combination of the information under subparagraph (i)”**.

Of course, we live in an age where information is transmitted, published, and disseminated via social media and so on and of course, the people who engage in that type of business have concerns as it relates to whether or not they may be affected or whether or not their operations may be criminalised as a result of them not having a

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license as prescribed in the Bill to operate.

So, too, I move to Part X, specifically of the Bill, which spells out from sections 107-113 the offences created by the Bill. And, Madam President, all of the offences listed under Part X from sections 107 to 113 create strict liability offences, and for the purpose of explanation of what strict liability offences are, these offences do not require knowledge or intent as long as you commit the act, it is an offence. Given the context, Madam President, of who is to be affected, I, in my humble view, propose that the issue of intent and knowledge be considered in these offences. Someone may innocently... as section 107 criminalises connection of a public electronic communications network... if I'm correct...

I want to reference it specifically, Madam President, and read it so that the citizens listening and viewing who may not have a copy of the Bill may know exactly what we are discussing... Right. **“Connection of equipment. A person shall not connect any equipment to a public electronic communications network without the written approval of the Commission”**. Subsection (2) says, **“Before giving approval under subsection (1), the Commission shall take into account recommendations of ECTEL relating to the equipment”**. And subsection (3) sets out the penal clause, **“A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of ten thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of two years or to both”**.

From my previous experience working in a law enforcement agency and working alongside other law enforcement agencies like the police force, Madam President, in dealing with or reviewing legislation which sets out penal clauses like these, you seldom see a fixed amount, so you have to pay EC\$10,000. Normally, it allows for discretion up to EC\$10,000 and again, this is something to be considered. And I'm making these points, Madam President, in the absence of explanation by the Government and of course, only the Leader of Government's Business spoke, and I assume that the other Members on the “Other Side” will give clarity. I wish the Honourable AG were here this morning to deliberate on these issues.

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Madam President, similarly, section 108 interference, **“Interception or Destruction of Network. A person shall not use or cause to be used, anything that is capable of causing electromagnetic interference with the normal functioning, or use of a licensed electronic communications network or operation of apparatus, unless that thing is equipped with filters, suppressors or other devices, or is otherwise modified to minimise the interference”**. And subsection (2) sets out, again, the penal clause which says, **“A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable in the case of a first offence, on summary conviction to a fine of fifteen thousand dollars; or in the case of a subsequent offence, on conviction on indictment to a fine of thirty thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of four years or to both.”**

Again, no room for discretion, considering you may have situations where people may unknowingly commit these offences. Again, it's not making an excuse for people to commit offences of the gravity of what is being considered to be watered down. But, again, we are all humans, Madam President, we are not machines and robots that can be programmed, and even machines tend to malfunction sometimes, so you have to leave room for consideration in this instance.

And we see this, Madam President, in sections 109, 110, 111, 112 and 113, and I'll just reference section 109, which speaks to disclosure of personal information. So it says, **“A licensee shall not disclose personal information relating to a retail customer except; (a) With the consent of the retail customer; or (b) Under a court order under this Act or any other enactment”**. And subsection (2) of 109 says, **“A licensee who contravenes subsection (1), commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of four years or to both”**.

In this case, Madam President, I think it is necessary, specifically under section 109, for consideration to be given to intent. What may be the intention for someone to disclose the personal information of a retail customer or a customer generally? And in this case, I would say when intent is considered, the fine could be adjusted upward.

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And if the court, of course, we are not members of the judiciary if the court so finds that person in contravention of the intent, or it is shown in court that... I'm not a lawyer, and again, I kind of miss the AG at this point in time. Two things that are normally considered in criminal matters are 'actus reus' and 'mens rea,' ("the act"), the guilty act and the guilty mind. If the court so shows or if it can be shown before the court that the intent was there to deliberately disclose such information, then maybe \$50,000 might not be sufficient. Again, this is just for consideration, and I'm not knocking the Government because after assessing the Bill on the ECTEL website, 99% of what is in the proposed Bill now is actually what is in that final draft.

And, Madam President, I moved now to section 114 subsection (5) part b, which deals with investigation. So subsection (5) of the Bill says, "**Subject to subsections (8), (9), (10), (11) and (12), an inspector may perform the following during the investigation**". And part B says, "**Request that an officer or employee of the licensee or frequency authorisation holder, or any other person appear before the Commission, for the purpose of ascertaining compliance with this Act, the Regulations, a licence or frequency authorisation;**".

My concern specifically here, Madam President, is the words, "or any other person". I think that should be clarified, or some clarification should be given by the Government side, as it relates to who may possibly be affected, as it relates to the section specifically dealing with investigation under the legislation. And that is that ties back to the reference being made earlier on to people who operate specifically those who disseminate information on social media and so on, internet service providers, and so on, who may be considered as any other person in the context of section 114 subsection (5) part B.

**(Inaudible comments by Madam President)**

**Madam President:** Thank you. You were describing the investigation section, which is Part XII, wasn't it?

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**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Part XI... Section 114 subsection (5) part b.

**Madam President:** 114. Okay, I am on 118. Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** All right. And, Madam President, these are some general concerns as it relates to the legislation. And before I close, one other concern is the granting and refusal of the license. It made mentioned of documents to be provided for the granting of the license and so on to be submitted by the applicant for a license to operate in the context of electronic communications. And of course, one would ask what documents would be considered, what documents would the Commission want in the context of... For example, if I operate an electronic communications agency (or any agency that would be considered within the ambit of electronic communications based on the definition of the Act) and I want to apply, what exactly am I expected to submit?

Of course, again, I would pre-empt the answer would be the regulations would speak to that, or some other public notice would give rise to what documents would be required. **(Inaudible comment by Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas)** The sections that deal with the granting and refusal of a license. If my memory serves me right... Section 39... Yes, section 39. Section 39 deals with that specifically...

So, Madam President, we understand the intention of the Bill. Of course, as a student of Economics, I am inclined to support the intention of the Bill and support the Bill because I do not believe that monopolies should exist. Of course, we have situations where natural monopolies would exist, like airport authorities and so on. However, in the context of electronic communication and even in energy, renewable energy and so on, there should not be the existence often a monopoly. And the Bill seeks to, as I said earlier, compound and consolidate the efforts made, of course, by the previous Government, specifically the New National Party Government under the stewardship of the then Minister Gregory Bowen. And, of course, Madam President, I think the intention of the Bill is good, and it can bring much-needed benefits to all countries under the ambit of ECTEL. I thank you, Madam President.

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**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Franklyn. You have done your homework, giving an analytic review of the Bill. Thank you. Senator David Andrew.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Thank you, Madam President. Warm good morning to you, Madam President, all of the staff of this Honourable House and colleagues on “Both Sides”, and to viewers and listeners wherever you are. It's a pleasure to be able to speak with you and not about you. I am trying to limit my contributions today as I am nursing my throat into recovery, as you might be able to tell. So I would try to be very brief nonetheless. But I rise, Madam President, to give my unequivocal support to the Electronic Communications Bill, 2024.

We will recognise quite easily that the Telecommunications Act, which was born over two decades ago, doesn't quite represent the communication of today's time. And if we simply consider the definition that's offered, and Senator Franklyn articulated it, but I want to read it again, Madam President. The definition offered for electronic communication speaks to something more all-inclusive, more comprehensive, and more reflective of the communication landscape in today's era of technology. And so it's imperative that we adjust the legislation to capture all the communication media and platforms that are available.

So electronic communication means, **“A type of transmission or emission or reception and, where applicable, switching or routing of voice, data, text, sound, audio, video, animation, visual images, moving images, pictures, pulses, signals or other information; or a combination of the information under subparagraph (i) above”**.

Now that is very critical. And in today's era where that's the order of the day, I think revision of the legislation and having a more comprehensive electronic communication and not just telecommunication but electronic communications speaks for an avenue for protection for many of our citizens and I see a huge opportunity for that where we have things that happen and with the click of a button moving images that are just transmitted and all of these things there is a huge avenue for protection of our

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citizenry and the definition captures it well.

There were some questions, Madam President, about the level of consultation, but from my own review, I am very satisfied that there was extensive consultation. In fact, my information suggests that in 2009, ECTEL, which is the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunication Authority, commenced the process of consultation. So it was not in 2013 or any time after it was in 2009 that the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority commenced this process with a series of extensive and in-depth public consultations in all ECTEL contracting States before the Electronic Communication Bill was drafted in its initial State.

A consultation was conducted to ensure the maximum possible opportunities for comments, concerns and input from potential changes to the telecommunication legislation from providers, radio, television broadcasters and other public at large. So this happened almost as early as 2009. Ministries of telecommunication and the NTRCs, among others, were all involved. The consultations were conducted to give stakeholders a chance to comment, to contribute and to develop on the draft Electronic Communication Bill. ECTEL conducted a number of public consultations and published public notices on its website and on the National Telecommunication Regulation Commission in preparation for the legislative reform in this sector. This provided opportunities for all stakeholders, Madam President, to review and comment on the Electronic Communications Bill and regulations.

Various media outlets were also used to raise awareness of the legal reform for the sector. So there were a number of road shows, I understand, that took place and presentations to various stakeholders to increase awareness involving each of the contracting States across the region. At the end of the consultation period, a drafting consultant was engaged by ECTEL to review the representations arising from the consultations and to draft the Electronic Communication Bill.

All of that went down. The exercise was completed in November 2012, as far as I understand. The initial draft Bill was presented to the Council of Ministers in 2013, and by March 2013, for review and approval. The Council proposed that the draft EC Bill be

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reviewed by the legislative drafters and electronic... Sorry. Yes, by the legislative drafters of ECTEL and their contracting States, after which it will be laid before the legal committee of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. So it went to several levels of consultation across the region. So this is something that is pretty much regionally consulted upon at all levels.

With the approval of the Council of Ministers, ECTEL submitted the final version of the Electronic Communications Bill to contracting States on the 13th of September 2019. All these years of consultation across the region for presentation to the prospective Cabinets of Ministers of Government for approval before presentation to Parliament in October 2019. ECTEL engage with the Attorney General Chambers, the legislative drafting unit and considers feedback from the electronic bill consultations.

This feedback we learned provided and assisted the revision and the inclusion of clause 157 in the Bill, which speaks to transitioning, so in case there is an entity that just prior to implementing this new Electronic Communications Act, 2024, they just got a licence, then they can be provided for. So there is a transition clause included in the Bill, section 157 that speaks to that that came directly out of the consultation. I am saying this, Madam President, to suggest that the consultation has been deep, it has been long-standing, which speaks to that which, and it has been robust. So I feel satisfied as a Member of "This Side" that the consultation indeed was very robust. Right.

I want to offer one simple correction. I think my colleague on the "Other Side" mentioned that in Part X, I think my colleague on the "Other Side" mentioned that in Part X when he talked about penalties, Part X under Offences, he talked about the penalty of EC\$10,000, a fixed penalty, but I don't think it's a fixed penalty. It says, "A penalty not exceeding", that's what I see. It's not exceeding, and I know that the legal practitioners would have the discretion to apply as may be determined up to that. I think I saw "not exceeding", and so that remains applicable. Not exceeding EC\$10,000 or two years imprisonment, and I suppose that will rest with them.

So, Madam President, in an era of technology that we live in, any Electronic Communication Bill like this is, 2024, which seeks to foster effective competition, and

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Senator Frankly effectively talked about that and I support that view too, that seeks to foster effective competition in a telecommunications sector, that offers a platform to protect our consumers and our citizenry and increases access to technology and services, is one that I would fully support.

Having said these few words, Madam President, I offer full support to this Bill. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator, for your valuable contribution. All of it. And I do, however, draw reference to your summation around competition, protection, access and so on. Very important summation. Thank you. Senator Roderick St. Clair...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Yes.

**Madam President:** ... from the East.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: (Laughter)** I would like to meet the one from the West. Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to give my contribution to this, what I would say, significant Bill. Because the word communication alone says it, it's to exist, is to communicate. You know, and even if there are many different types of communication, we know. And we know about the telecommunication, speak to people all over the world, do business and so on. And of course, as time has changed, it's more than telecommunication, it's, it's, everything is digital, you know. It's interesting that we didn't say digital communication, and we only said electronic communication. But, I know my good friend in the labour sector, who has many years in that sector, may also teach me that difference in terminology.

Madam President, I want to first respond to my dear friend, and I understand his problem with his throat, Senator Andrew, because I myself, for the past few days, have been going through some struggles, and I hope I don't get as far as he has reached. And I do wish both of us a good recovery with our voices. Notwithstanding that, I was happy

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and delighted to hear his presentation, not only for myself and us, but I think for the public to understand the context of the consultation that took place. I must applaud him and his team, because I know the presentation he gave; he came prepared. He didn't research that while I asked that question. Too much to put together in that short space of time, so eloquently. **(Applause)**

It shows, no, Madam President, that this is the level we have to come to this House with, to show that we're not coming here and just passing Bills and passing legislation because it's prudent to do so, but that there is consultation and there is discussion. And I trust that the learnings of this major Bill and the consultative effort, even if it involves that whole Eastern Caribbean set of countries, that's 2009 to now, and the question might be, what have we lost? Some may say, well, if we did it earlier, customers might get more benefit, more business might have taken place, but I think that at this stage, we shouldn't see a revision in a hurry, because most of the items would have been covered. And I say this to say that we should take that sort of approach with other Bills that would come here, by starting early, and we'll have good discussions, not debate, as my good friend and the Leader of Government's Business says. Have a discussion on it.

So here I go, it's good to see that, because for a lot of people, it's the first time they're hearing about this NTRC. I myself sometimes I'm confused. I interact with NTRC a few times, and they are more like a sort of regulatory group of persons, and in this secretive club, doing something with regulations. Having them become a body corporate, I think, gives them a lot more latitude, more independence, more stature, more accountability and better governance, falling in line. And so, this is commendable in terms of an approach because, what we have to recognised, Madam President, as the OECS, right, Eastern Caribbean, our money, our Eastern Caribbean dollar is a very strong dollar, because of the whole governance and the collaboration among our countries. We might be small, we might be limited in a lot of ways, but I think that we are smart in that way. And if you look at the other type of collaboration that is done, and this one is one of those, where we come together as a region and do things like that, a sub-region, then we'll make great progress. And this here is one example to show what is happening. So I just wanted

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to share this in light.

So a major service, digital communication, electronic communication that affects all of us, particularly in the sub-region, should be better. So we're speaking about managing the rates, and I will go into those things, managing the whole issue of competition. So among ourselves, we can better plan, we can better organise ourselves as a subgroup, versus Grenada alone doing its own thing, in the space of the whole world. So I think we should be happy that we have that cohesiveness among ourselves, as we face the world in a lot of areas.

As we see in this Bill, the whole issue of companies being in different countries, whether it is in St. Vincent or St. Lucia and Grenada, and trying to do cross investment and to the detriment of business, to the detriment of consumers, I see this as a good thing. So, so I want to speak in terms of that. The governance and so on is good, you know its normal commissioner, we use big names, but basically, I interpret this to be basically a board of directors. We call them commissioners, but it's higher level, I guess they may have a bigger podium or money that they would get as a board. But basically, it's a board. Right? And so on the qualifications as a Leader of Government Business mentioned, and of course the Bill mentioned electronics, law, accounting et cetera. These are standard practices, so this is good, to have them well-equipped.

A very important component, Madam President, and the first time I've seen this in a Bill, for the corporate, body corporates. I'm not too sure if this might be something that needs to be flagged as future learning, and I'm not too sure why it was included in that way. It was something specifically to deal with audit, right, and it was interesting, Madam President, on page 48 of this document. That's clause 28, 29, 29 (1), 29 (2) into 29 (3) ... Just one sec. Right, it's essentially saying that the workers, the management, et cetera, need to be providing and cooperating with the auditors, to provide all matters pertaining to financial statements, et cetera, and so on.

And if they don't do that, there can be a fine. A commissioner, that's 29 (3), a commissioner, the chief executive officer, any other employee of the commission who fails to comply with subsection 2, which is to cooperate, to provide vouchers, contracts,

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deed, documents to support an audit, commits a crime, and there are charges and so on that they can... And you know I say this, because we all going to chapter 10, section 10, which speaks about offences by persons to the law, but here the commissioners and employees not cooperating to provide auditing statements, commit an offence and can have to pay up to EC\$10,000, or to imprisonment for a term of six months or both. So this, I think, is a good thing and it's a good practice from dominance and is some model that we may want to incorporate, maybe in other types of legislation that involve those sorts of body corporate.

Madam President, if I go further to look at the whole issue of the competition. I think competition, I may want to speak about that a little bit. Competition is in, I think eight section 8. It's section 8, essentially, essentially what that section is, is telling us, is that consumers would able to benefit and I think this was alluded to earlier on by Senator Franklyn. But what I want to specifically add, is that there is a subsection in that, in that section that sort of prevents the formation of what I would call a cartel. There's the anti, anti, its anti-competition ...

**Madam President:** Anti-monopoly.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** ... business conduct, page 105, section 90 (10) to (2) in that section. And I think that is good, because we could speak about competition in an open market, but if you are not careful, you could have collusion, and you could have a cartel being developed. And there are penalties and charges and so on that can be dealt with in this matter. I think though, and maybe I didn't pick it up, because I don't have the maybe the LLB or LLC whatever, behind my name, but we also have to think about, not about the big businesses, the big corporations, but what's about when the big corporations, Madam President, create subsidiaries to do certain type of business in the sector, not necessarily vertically integrating as one company.

But I, so, for example, if I'm in the telecom business and I'm providing different services, but I create a subsidiary, and I start selling telephones. So, and I start offering

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good rates, how do we treat with that, with the whole environment of competition? I'm not too sure. Maybe at the implementation stage, that might be done, but we have to be careful about that, because big companies sometimes do that, they create a subsidiary or they break off an arm, and so they become in the competitive space now. And when you think that you're managing competition **(laughter)**, you really have the competition managing you instead. So, that is the point I wanted to raise here, but I think this is important.

But interesting, Madam President, the premise for the issue of competition, whilst competition will drive things and make things better for the consumers, according to economic and always remember the word theory, and theory is funny because in theory we have to look at what happens in practice, because theories have to be proven, not just so laws. It's perfect when we look at the science, when you say there is a law, Boyd's law, it's a law. Theory is something to be still tested. And so, this economic theory about competition, what is it trying to solve? It's trying to solve monopoly?

And so, I say this to say that, to take the word from my dear friend the Leader of Government's Business, he said, "Monopoly will be created in a society. People must not be held at ransom". I think that is what I hear. Consumers will be happier, you'll be protected. So I asked myself, whilst this is going on, well, we within the agriculture sector, Madam President, want to be happy, we want to feel protected. The feed prices at the monopoly level, animal feed, we need to take the same treatment and have a discussion about that.

And you may say, well, how I end up there? I end up there, Madam President, because when you look at the beginning of this document, it speaks to the well-known famous Treaty of Chaguaramas, which persons before me, such as the Senator Clouden, have agitated so forcefully, is a basis on which we can rely on to address this whole issue of competition and monopoly as it relates to feed for our farmers, so that is the linkages. And so, what we're saying here is that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

But if I keep on that same premise, Madam President, of what is good for the goose

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and what is good for the gander. Just in passing, I heard my dear friend Senator Andrew speak about, over 20 years, the Telecommunication Bill has been around, and you know we need to change, we need to improve it, we need to... things modernise. And I'm not too sure because maybe agriculture is not modernised to the level that we want to be, the crop compensation have over 25, 30 years going now. We still haven't touched it. Maybe we need to call it the digital crop compensation system, and then we may see some change **(laughter)** tomorrow morning.

I'm saying this to say, Madam President, it's the spirit, the principle and the model. Since 2009, we consulting on this Bill. After 25 years, we haven't even started to consult on the crop compensation. The fact is, at least it was started 2009, and we are here today. They said, Madam President, I think they said the longest mile to walk, or longest mile start with a foot. It starts with a footstep. And all I'm calling for in this space of this discussion is for us to translate the same footstep for our farmers.

Madam President, the issue of consumer protection. I understand it's a new section in the Bill. And this is very welcome, because a lot of people, particularly if you speak to the mobile phone operators, consumers, you know, we have a very high rate of almost two phones to one. We have like a hundred and something thousand cell phone numbers recorded for Grenada. So we need to be protected in a lot of ways, not just about our prices and our bandwidth and all this net neutrality, and all of those things but the whole issue of security. You know my cell phone could be here right now, without doing anything to it, and someone could be hacking into it. That is where the technology is. So how am I also going to be protected in this space?

Of course, we could speak about data protection and cybersecurity, et cetera, but there might be an opportunity, if it's not clearly stated here, that these providers and operators in that space ensure that enough protection is there. Look at what has happened to us for the last few months; some people couldn't access their salaries for weeks, using a certain local financial institution because of hacking in the system. And so, whilst they may have their own infrastructure, the question may ask, are our service providers robust enough to stop the entrance from senses that's coming in that pipe, that

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wire that is going under sea, that is connected to this country? This is where I trust that the new commissioners will start looking at it in the next phase of protection.

So with all of this said, we want to encourage the model, encourage it to be translated to other forms. We will support these thousands of farmers, thousands of Grenadians are awaiting this. The electronic communication is an important tool for doing the business. We can use it in extension, we can use it for marketing businesses et cetera and we are saying come with it quickly. And I'm saying come with it quickly, Madam President, because my closing statement is, and I'm subject to correction, that the hurricane season is just around the corner, in June thereabout, and we would have to sit down and lament and discuss sometime around June, July last year, the NADMA Bill. And to my understanding, up to recently, I'm not too sure if that was gazetted and in effect as yet.

So I say this to say, let us act and ensure that a follow-up takes place on this matter, soonest, so we can get the benefits it's been alluded to have. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Thank you for making all your linkages of transferability. The basic principles of the agricultural sector.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** I'll try.

**Madam President:** Senator Andre Lewis. Labour, you have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. And I just want to start off on the aspect of consultation and the robust defence, by the government side, in keeping with the spirit and consultation of the current opposition that was done from 2009, certain 13, 14, 15, 16. And you know when I heard it, in the "Other Place" I say you know our politics is really nice. **(Laughter)** Because here's a need for a common need, here is a need for a common defence. Right? Because it is a regional, because what we are doing here is ticking the boxes. This is not Grenada-specific, as

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we all know, the ECTEL telecommunications et cetera.

And therefore, because we have to fulfil those obligations, and because on these amendments there may not have been that outreach to the parties that may be impacted or other stakeholders in the community, it was necessary for both sides... my dear friend here Senator Cox and my dear colleagues on the "Other Side" led by the Leader of Government's Business to find common ground, right? To praise each other for the in-depth consultation that has taken place. It is noted that we all have common grounds.

Madam President, through you, there's just one matter I'd just wish to highlight. It may be minimal, and then I'll just do some overarching issues here. When we look at clause 30, 29 and 30, I am wondering if there is a potential for, for a little confusion or, or possibly conflict coming to the, coming to the Parliament. And I'll tell you why. Clause 30, sorry, clause 29, I would read the last sentence in the clause, by virtue of clause 29. I'm doing the explanation, explanatory notes.

The last sentence says, that's page 5, that's 5 of the Bill, the last sentence in the paragraph says, the auditor's report is to be submitted to the commission as soon as it's practicable, and in any event not later than four months after the end of the financial year. And that's good if we go to Clause 30 now, it says it provides that the commission is required, sorry. Yes, it says that it provides that the commission is required to submit an annual report, together with the auditor's report, to ECTEL and to the Minister for transmission to the Parliament, not later than four months after the end of each financial year.

The paragraph above gives an extension to the commission to present the auditor's report to the commission, giving the auditors a possible extension of about four months after the end of the financial year. And 30, is still asking for this to be presented to Parliament within four months. Now the question would arise, if in clause 29, the avenue for the four-month extension is utilised, it therefore means that a provision to come to Parliament within four months becomes impracticable. And I just thought I should just flag that, just as an observation.

In relation to the Bill itself and the observation, I wish to address the human aspect.

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I hear the aspect of competition, the aspect of cutting costs to consumers, and that's fine, because many years ago, we had these battles with the then administration. And I'm addressing now in terms of business, because many businesses put profit before people. And in the case of our telecommunication giants, before the advent of Digicel, since about 2000, the year 2000, 2001 to 2002, you would recognise that the workforce within Cable and Wireless, per se, was significantly decreased.

Because what has been done is that the work was contracted out and or outsourced, and these are the nice terminologies that have been used. But even if the workers were sent home, they were still taken back on contract with much less benefits. So under the guise of deregulation, under the guise of opening up the telecommunications industry, and under the guise of indicating that an opening up of the industry will result in a reduction in profits, or a reduction in returns for the shareholders, that's the avenue that these companies have used globally, with globalisation and regionally and locally.

So what has happened is that after moving... There was a time that Cable and Wireless had over 300 workers; now it is down to, in terms of heritage, Cable and Wireless probably has about 10. When you combine that with Columbus Communication, it is probably about 60-something or 50-something workers. But at the same time, the same work is being provided, but the work is provided by some of the very same workers who must have seen a reduction in their benefits. The companies have been able to cut costs by no longer having to pay annual vacation leave, by no longer having to provide pensions, by no longer having to pay for things as sick leave, et cetera, but the work is being done.

And as a matter of fact, there's so much power within these companies that our local contractors are not in a position to negotiate fairly with these companies. So as I said, it is profit before people. And we have no difficulty, and I have no difficulty sometimes with the concept of state monopoly. We must identify what our key industries are. We must also have systems in place to ensure that they can be on equal footing for negotiations by these companies, and under what conditions they have been contracted.

I hear many of our colleagues speaking about the aspect of breaking up

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monopolies, and Senator Roderick St. Clair alluded to the possibility of the formation of cartels, but it does not necessarily have to just be that. What we have found, and the labour movement identified, is that since the late 1990s and early 2000s, deregulation leads to regulation. Because what happens is that, as these companies there is a concept we have to be aware of, as these companies are able to go into mergers and run competitors out of the market, the state loses the ability or gives up the ability to have certain regulations in place, and these companies now come up with their own regulations.

So, for instance, you wake up in the morning and you hear that the price of your services has gone up. Yes, they may have sent out some texts or some notices, but it actually comes to you when you pay your bills. And you recognise that whatever service you may have contracted, for let us say EC\$100 because they've been sold to you at EC\$100, when you go to pay it, it is now EC\$105. If you look at the cost of telecommunications, it has significantly increased over the years, but it has been quietly done. Yes, as I said, they may have sent out notices.

And so the freeing up of the markets, yes, has resulted in more handsets, because the returns or the money is no longer in voice but it is in data. So the handset, which is being used to get entry to consumers... So, this Bill seeks to protect, in some instances, the consumers on the aspect of the potential criminalisation of ordinary people venturing into some form of communication equipment. It is cause for concern, and I ask the state to be guided accordingly.

And why am I saying this? I know a number of guys, youth, men in the different communities who experiment with different forms of communication. And they did that out of just the love for adventure. It is quite possible that as they go into their inventions, it can now be picked up by the authorities or become part of the telecoms or the communications, let me say digital or otherwise communication network. And therefore, they stand the chance of running afoul of this Bill and now the potential of being criminally liable. I do not believe that this is the intention, because I hold our colleagues at the highest level, to be of good repute and wanting to see what is best for all of us, generally

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speaking. But just bearing in mind that there is this potential.

I'm sure most of us here know of some of our colleagues. Some of us who went to school together have had our own little thing running from inside our room, and today, they are some of the better technicians and workers in some of our media houses. So whatever we do, we must always be aware that there is always that desire by, by you know, just the ordinary citizen to seek to do their own inventions. So these are just the issues that I wish to raise.

And to end, by the aspect of whatever we do, we must bear in mind that there are different interest groups within the society; we understand that, but labour is guided always by people before profit. And these deregulations my brother on "This Side" here now on the opposition side, I clearly remember be it in Otway House, be it in wherever those discussions were held, these were the concerns that we had, that at the end of the day these companies will find ways and means of maximizing their profit at the expense of the workers, whose labour that they utilizes, and we'll see a reduction in the benefit to these, to these workers.

And it has come to pass that ... because as we see the expansion of these companies, and I know in our part of the world, in our neck of the woods, we are small players. As a matter of fact, quite a number of these companies have an operating budget that is much larger; these are companies that our national budget supports, and I know many times under what they call corporate social responsibility, they do certain public ventures, right? As a means of trying to project their "good intentions".

But it is our duty as a state to look after the interests of our citizens, and to ensure that we do as much as is possible in this complex world, where companies are larger than us. And companies can use their influence to determine whether or not some of the donor agencies, and whether or not some of our traditional partners will give us grants or concessionary loans, be the IMF or the WTO or the World Bank, because they're interconnected, because it's part of globalization, it's part of trying to make it easier for these global companies to enter our markets.

Because that's what part of this Bill is, that's why it's regional. Right? To enter our

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markets, where they can have common footprints, so that you may not have a Venezuela, you may not have a Cuba standing up and saying the national interests, we stand on our own. But that is another discussion that in 19, I think it's 1983, just as a bit of history, if my memory serves me right and my research is correct, the PIG had sourced equipment from out of the then GDR to set up its own telecommunication system. Because in those days, Cable and Wireless controlled the international market.

So you may not necessarily run them all because it was not about running companies, but providing alternatives from the government end in the interest of the people, so there are possibilities if we are willing. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank Senator André Lewis for raising the spectre of national interest through the guidance of corporate institutions that operate here. Any other, Senator Noland Cox, you have to floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Noland Cox:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I just want to touch on a few matters regarding the Bill before us. Just to, just for clarity, Madam President, you know it is clear that this is a harmonised legislation. And sometimes, we are often... I just want, I don't want to use the word force, but sometimes we are often guided to just follow suit. But from my recollection, individual countries do have an opportunity and a responsibility to treat with certain aspects of those legislations, if there is a difference in philosophy or a particular issue that may be different in the respective country.

So it doesn't, not all the time we will go down that road. So I think it's important that every Member who have raise concerns, in some of those respective clauses or sections of the Bill before us, I think the government side should take some records of it, and to verify whether or not it is substantive enough to go forward, to make some intervention to say look Grenada don't like this and we prefer we have it this way. That is how we want it, in respect to... based on our policies or recommendations. But at the same time, it doesn't interfere with the substantive nature of the Bill and what it seeks to

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achieve.

In terms of consultation, I did have an opportunity, Madam President, to review feedback from the two largest providers, which are both Digicel and Cable and Wireless or Flow, as we may say it. And both feedback are consistent, in terms of one major issue for them that is major issue. And it has to do with the dispute resolution process. And so, I think it's important that we look at it and spend some time on it, because that is one of the issues. And I think another issue was related to costs, the costs in relation to disputes having a legal process to go through and the time constraint and how that may affect customers. And so, I think those were some of the key things that were pulled out from their feedback.

And in retrospect, in speaking, in responding to the presenter of the Bill, in mentioning the composition of the tribunal. I recall my good colleague Senator indicating that we want to make sure that we have appropriate people, and we don't want to have our friends. But sometimes our friends could be very competent, as well and suitable enough to perform the role. And the question is, how do you define a friend? What is a friend? I don't know in the context, if we have a suitable person or a suitable lawyer who is versed in that sector, in telecommunications, I think you'd want to have somebody there as opposed to having a criminal lawyer. **(Laughter)** So, so...

**(Inaudible comments by Madam President)**

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** So, Madam President, I was just speaking on that and the backdrop of insinuating that you cannot have your friend being, performing a role on the tribunal. And so, it begs the question, your friend, your friend can be professional, you know. So I think, sometimes we just need to remove that part of it and just focus on the person's competencies and professionalism. So I just say that for what it's worth, because sometimes we often, and I think it happens on both sides sometimes, because of a relationship that we have with somebody, sometimes we overlook the person's competencies and who they are as an individual, in terms of them having the ability to do

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their work.

We are in a very small society, and we do have limited capacities with persons to deal with some of these specific matters. So I wanted to raise that. The issue, I just wanted to correct, a correction that was made by Senator **(laughter)** ...I'm not sure if it's the, right response, but I think that's the best way to put it, by Senator David Andrew regarding the fine and the legislation did speak clearly that there is a fine of EC\$10,000, and it didn't say up to. It said there is a fine of EC\$10,000 or two years in prison. So I just wanted to review the legislation that was said.

So my dear colleague Senator was correct.

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Well unless the Bill before, before us is, is, is incorrect...and so Members can bear me on that. That is what was stated; it didn't say anything about up to EC\$10,000 at all. So I just wanted to, for what it's worth, for the record's sake.

Madam President, I just want to speak more specifically to section 38 subsection (5), and this has to do with the whole issue of, and I think it's one that needs to be highlighted. It has to do with the whole issue of the granting and refusal of license. And this section specifically states that ECTEL has the responsibility, after documents are submitted ECTEL, ECTEL have the responsibility to provide a recommendation to the NTRC, who in turn will forward those recommendations to the minister responsible for telecommunications.

However, Madam President, despite the recommendation of ECTEL, the minister may choose to grant or refuse such license. And I think this is where the possibility of some mischief can arise. So one may ask, while the minister, he or she may not have the competencies in terms of dealing with the application to say whether or not an applicant meets the suitable requirements, at the same time, he or she has the express right to refuse or grant that license. I think that is something that is very present in the

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legislation, and I think it calls for a little bit of concern, and a bit of mischief can occur in this regard.

While the legislation provides for an appeal, if you're denied, such persons can make an appeal and or go to some dialogue or so. And it also provides for time, extended time, or a request for additional information. It still bears the fact that the last say is the word of the minister. And I think it lends itself possibly... and I'll be fair towards the drafters and the legislation, they may have looked at it, in the sense that sometimes even for national security reasons, sometimes while somebody may meet the prerequisite for a license, for other reasons beyond that, what the person may know, government may not wish to grant such license.

But what happens there? Because the legislation is not clear. Maybe that could have been stated there, to say if, for some reason, for national security reasons... give some clear indicators, as to how that should be addressed. Why may a license be refused? And I think section, clause 153 dealt with the whole issue of appeals, but it is still not clear as to the process. What are some of the things that one may be refused? On what grounds? And how the appraised process should go, because it is clear that it means that a minister can refuse, because he probably doesn't like you, or he figures for some other reason, I am not granting this person a license. That can happen in this case.

And while there might be other reasons why it is crafted this way, we run the risk of the minister, him or her making a decision for other reasons, other than a license. Persons who may meet the requisite requirements, and who may have gotten a recommendation to be granted their license from ECTEL, but the minister has the final say to refuse such. And I think, for me, I think that is the essence of this, this particular area of the legislation, that bears a little bit of political interference, bears a little bit of personal and other things may happen, can happen in this regard.

We are hoping, we are hoping that is not the case, that that does not happen. As we say, we want to make sure we have good people presiding over this. But the fact remains that the minister can refuse or grant a license. Sometimes ECTEL may say no, don't grant, and the minister has the right to say, "Man, I'm not bothering with ECTEL, go

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ahead and get your license”, and other things may develop. So I think this is a little bit untidy. As I said, there might be other reasons why it has been crafted that way, but I believe that it is something that's worth looking at closely, and maybe persons who may be desirous of requesting or getting into the telecommunication business may want a license, and can be affected by this going forward.

I mean, a lot of this legislation is centred around the larger service providers, but we do have small service providers on the island. And as the sector continue to evolve, it is obvious that we are going to have more, possibly more persons getting involved in the telecommunication sector, and the question is how do we treat with it when we get to that, get to that point. I say this for what it's worth, and sometimes, as I say, I'm looking forward, looking forward. I think if we have a process where, a clear process that you meet with the requirements. It has 10, 12 things that you're supposed to meet; if you meet those, the question is why should you be refused a license? Or why does somebody have to make that final decision, separating you from meeting all those requirements? I think that is the little mischief there that I am very concerned about, and I think that it's one that we should really look at.

I just want to touch on one more thing that my dear colleague Senator Andre Lewis mentioned, in terms of the concern for people as against profit and the whole issue of how deregulation plays a role in creating a disadvantage for workers going forward. I believe that it is probably quite possible that the regulations may have contributed to that, but I think the most significant contributor towards companies changing and evolving has a lot to do with technology, rather than so much regulation. Because technology continues to improve, and as it continues to improve, you find that there is less and less requirement for manpower. So that has a critical role also.

And maybe the union probably need to work probably closer with the Ministry of Labour in some way, in also looking at trends in terms of getting current work, the current workforce, current workers or even prospective persons coming in, in terms of opportunities for them to prepare for the trends that is taking place in the workforce. I think anticipating that look, we're going to need people in AI, we're going to need people

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in that area, so I think that is something that our unions probably would have to start evolving to, to meet what is changing in the marketplace. I think that is something that I would definitely recommend that they look at going forward.

I know that there are some traditional things, in terms of how the union operate, but I think it's important that the union also look to modernise to find ways in which to deal with those things, as the adjustments are made. Find ways to ensure that you protect workers, or as the opportunities change, you're right there to take advantage of them. So I'm just saying this for what it's worth. But I think that is something not only just for this legislation, but for a number of things going forward, even for Agriculture.

There is a wider discussion on the readiness of our people to take advantage of the opportunities that are continuing to evolve and present themselves. Some of the sectors are going to continue to grow, outside of us, and if we are not prepared for it, we are definitely going to have challenges, hence the reason why we see in terms of work permits, it's increasing for various areas. There might be an opportunity for the Government to look at the work permit fees, you know, so, because the demand for those services is going to remain and increase in some cases. That recommendation, that's off the record **(laughter)**. Madam President, I just raised this for what it's worth.

The other issue, in terms of the offences for persons attaching to or providing communication service without a license, I think that is something which probably we have really not looked at, and probably didn't raise it in the context of new and upcoming companies. I think there is an opportunity to maybe look at, maybe in terms of regulations, look at a schedule in terms of maybe the company, the offence and maybe the size of the company, whether the company has the capacity to pay this EC\$1 million, or even to give up 10 years of their life or something like that.

So it is something, but I understand the whole issue of wanting to deter persons from broadcasting without a license. I understand that, but I think there's a possibility that might be a whole issue, the disparity in terms of the offence, as opposed to the fine. For example, somebody driving without a license is, I mean, it's a high risk, you know, you can take somebody's life, you can damage people's property, but if you look at the

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offence, it is not a million dollars if you get caught without driving with a license, and you don't get 10 years in prison.

So, I think that was a little gap there, in terms of looking at it, and maybe it may have implications, in terms of whether or not it is constitutionally right to have such a high fee for an offence that is not as grievous. So it's worth looking after. And so, that is something that I raise. I know that we do have opportunities for amendments going forward, but I think it's important to highlight those things as we address this Bill at this current time.

The very important and critical issue that was raised was the issue of cybersecurity. And now that is evolving that space. I think when we started this process in 2009 or in 2013, the whole issue of cybersecurity was not at the forefront, but now we see that the risk is there. The risk is imminent, and so there may be some separate legislation. I know the NTRC works a lot in the background to ensure that they manage that from a daily standpoint. They have people actually listening all the time, following up to make sure that they do not have unwarranted interferences. So that is something that they need to look at, probably going forward.

So, Madam President, with these few awareness and recommendations, I believe that we, if I'm not mistaken I think that probably the times of the urgency to help Brother St. Clair, my colleague Senator St. Clair, I think probably Grenada's probably on the last to pass this Bill and we may be probably preventing some other follow up action from taking place. Maybe my goodly Senator, Senator Adrian Thomas, could confirm or deny that that is the case. But I do understand the urgency, and when you're in government, sometimes you do have things that you need to do in an urgent manner for the interest of the people. So... **(Laughter)**

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: (Laughter)** That was not in support of **(inaudible comment)**, but just stating the fact, sometimes those things do happen. Because we

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understand. Right? And we are a responsible opposition, as you have seen. So, Madam President, with these few ...

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: (Laughter)** With these few recommendations and interventions, I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important Bill. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator from Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you for following up on the conversation around our national interests, impartiality and so on. Thank you. Senator La Crette, Jonathan La Crette.

**Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette:** Well pronounced, Madam President. I just wanted to inform this Honourable House that, based on legal advice and legal counsel, the concern that Senator Franklyn raised, as it relates to the prescribed amount that's in the Bill EC\$10,000, and whether or not it says up to or the amount up to. Section 58 of the Interpretation and General Provisions Act, according to legal counsel, "Where in any written law, a penalty is prescribed for an offence, unless a contrary intention appears, the offence is punishable by any such penalty not exceeding the penalty prescribed".

So, Madam President, based on legal counsel, although not exceeding is not mentioned, it is to be interpreted as such.

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: (Laughter)** The...

**Madam President: (Inaudible comment)** Exactly. **(Inaudible comment)**

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Clarification please.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Thank you very much, Madam President. I thank the Honourable Senator for giving way. The context in which the statement was made was to show that, in comparison to other legislations which set out penal clauses, there is room for discretion. Of course, the ceiling has already been set, EC\$10,000, and I understand that it would not go over. However, the term “not exceeding” could allow for discretion. So the magistrate in his or her deliberation can say, “Well, EC\$5,000, EC\$10,000, whatever”. And I understand the context in which the reference is being made from the legislation pointed out by the Honourable Senator. Thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Franklyn. Senator Cox, please continue... Senator La Crette.

**Sen. the Hon. Gayton La Crette:** That's a rather hap baptism, Madam President, **(laughter)** of name change. I mean, we're both handsome alike, but... **(Laughter)**

The Global Information and Communication industry, Madam President, has experienced great growth over the past 20 to 25 years in countries such as Ireland. When I look at the Telecommunications Bill that we are endeavouring to pass here today, I recognise that the Caribbean, to some extent, has also been part of this wave of modernisation, and also this wave of regulatory reform, and increased investments in countries, especially in Jamaica and Trinidad.

The result, Madam President, has been expanded access and choice and the emergence of a more robust competitive ethos in the Caribbean. As such, the Bill will ease and also, in my mind, create a space that is equitable in the electronic communications market. Additionally, Madam President, the Bill ensures the facilitation and regulation of secure electronic communications and transactions and promotes the development of the league and business infrastructure necessary to implement such

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electronic commerce. Just wanted to make sure that this contribution was made at this particular time. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator La Crette, for this clarity. And I pass the floor to Leader of Government... No. Senator Thomas, Gloria Thomas, you've got your lights on, madam, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas:** Thank you, Madam Chair... Why do I keep saying "Chair"? **(Laughter)** Thank you, Madam President. Yes, I rise to support the Bill as presented by the Leader of Government's Business in this House, the Electronic Communication Bill.

Madam President, the record shows that the need for legislative reform in the telecommunication sector has been so for the last decade. Therefore, to make this current and more relevant, this Bill must be given some unreserved support. Madam President, in examining the Bill, one will recognise that the Bill offers a wider scope of regulations for the telecommunication and electronic regulation, which is very important in this advanced technological era.

Many other islands, all the other islands have gone ahead and addressed this Bill, but Grenada is still behind. Extensive consultation was held during the drafting of this Bill, gathering a wide range of inputs, making the Bill quite comprehensive.

The reform in the Bill gives the regulatory authorities new tools that are required to address significant changes in the electronic communication sector, making it more updated and relevant for today's society. The Bill will serve as a valuable piece of legislation for the electronics sector in Grenada because the goal of the Bill is to ensure that market failure is avoided.

Critical to the Bill is that it provides the Commission with the power to keep proper records of accounts in accordance with Generally Accepted International Accounting Standards and Principles. It requires the preparation and retention of financial statements in respect of every financial year. This, Madam President, speaks to accountability, a

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very important ingredient needed in all phases of operation in business organisations and government. And so, Madam President, I believe that this proposed deal is one that needs support from “Both Sides”. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Madam Senator. Relevant contribution to relevance and tools. Other... The Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, before I wrap up, let me raise two issues here that may be cause for concern.

The question that was raised by Senator Franklyn, on the issue of documents, I think you were concerned. The question was, “What documents”? And that was coming from section 39 (2)... Well, I looked at section 39 (1) and reference was made here to license and supporting documents from the Commission. And then subsection (2) speaks about requesting additional information and documents, and you were questioning... My interpretation here is that subsection (2) is in relation to subsection (1). They didn't use the word “supporting”, but “additional information”, and obviously, if you get other information, you will want the supporting documents to come along, so I think it's in that context. Yes?

Section 27 and 29 reference was also made to... Let me get to it. I don't know if I misinterpreted it, but I realised that section 27 was talking about the budget and work plan because we had confusion with a month. Senator St. Clair was raising... Yes. In regard to the month... Was it 29 and 30?

**(Inaudible comments Senators)**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes, section 30.

**(Inaudible comment by Senator)**

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**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** “The Minister shall lay a copy of the annual reports submitted under subsection (1) in Parliament within one month of his or her receipt or, if Parliament is not in session, within one month”. Are you talking about the extension there? Yes. I was advised it's a report and not an audit.

**(Inaudible comments by Senators)**

**Madam President:** Senator... Who is speaking over there?

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Sorry.

**Madam President:** Is it Senator Lewis? You have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much. My references were in relation to the clause that's under the explanatory notes, I think under the explanatory, page five, clauses 29 and 30, the last sentence in 29, and in relation.

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes, not in the main document itself. If you go to clause 29... Okay, Madam President. Sorry.

**Madam President:** Please continue, Senator Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Another issue I know Senator Cox was maybe jokingly talking about, friend and competence, but I think the point I was making here is we have to look for competency before loyalty, and it's in that context, but I take it for its worth, Senator Cox, so I don't think you were that serious. **(Laughter)**

All right, Madam President, I enjoyed the debates, I think I valued the contributions

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that were made on the “Other Side”, the observations that were made, and the concerns and we definitely have taken notes, we have heard it, we're going to store it, and we're going to make maximum use of it in the future.

I want to thank you very much for your contribution. I am pleased with the level of support that this Bill has gotten in “This House”, and also in the “Other Place”. I think as politicians we need to tap ourselves on our shoulders as we take the people's business and... What?

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**(Laughter)**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** ... And Trade Unionist and the Farmers Representative I think we must tap ourselves on our shoulders and congratulate ourselves for taking people's business in our hands and presenting it in this House. So, Madam President, I seek the approval of this House. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Thomas.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Electronic Communications Bill, 2024.

**Madam President:** Honourable... Honourable St... Lets see...

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** “The Leader of Government’s Business, Adrian Thomas.”

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**(Laughter)**

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business, Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolves itself into a Committee of the whole Senate to consider the Bill Part by Part.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, I report that the Electronic Communication Bill, 2024, was considered in Committee. All clauses passed without amendment.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move that the Chair's Report be adopted.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to move that the third reading of the Bill be taken.

**Question put and agreed to.**

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

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Electronic Communications Bill, 2024.

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**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 16 – Public Business.  
Item 17 – Adjournment.

**Madam President:** Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, before I move the Motion for the Adjournment, please permit me to inform the Honourable House of the Senate that I am happy to furnish Senator Franklyn some information regarding his question. **(Laughter/ Applause)** And I think this is the best note to leave this meeting on today, as Senator Franklyn and the Senate will be very happy.

I will, Madam President, with your permission, I will ask that I read the information that Members were not privileged to have by electronic copy. I will definitely furnish the Clerk of Parliament with it as soon as I finish.

**Madam President: (Inaudible comment)** ...to read. I am looking for our Standing Order so we are not in breach of the law, but you have promised to submit it in writing so please proceed. Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, these answers are only a reflection of the supplies managed and handled by the medical stores. Items procured by the General Hospital procurement are not recorded here.

"How many containers landed in Grenada with medicine and medical supplies procured by the Government"? In answering this question, it is important to note that most of our shipments are not in the form of containers. Also, we currently do not distinguish in our records containers from other shipments received. As a result, the estimation provided is for the number of shipments received for the year 2023; roughly, 170 shipments of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies were received for the year thus far. Remember, this question was posed prior to December, so it is in that context.

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“What were the landing dates of the containers?” Most shipments are cleared within one week of landing at most, but are usually handled within two to three days. Therefore, an estimated landing date can be obtained by subtracting one week from the received dates in the invoice attachments. The broker should be able to provide you with a more detailed report on handling dates and whether or not the shipment was a container.

“What were the clearance dates of the containers?” I'm following up on the questions. Right. Clearance dates are the dates the items were received at the medical store. Refer to the different invoices within the attachment to see the different dates and shipments. Different invoices were cleared, and the clearance date is the date received.

Madam President, just give me one minute, please.

**(Senator Adrian Thomas and Senator Gayton Jonathan La Crette conversed privately)**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** “When were the medicine and medical supplies distributed to the hospital and subsidiary institutions?” Pharmaceutical and medical... Answer. Pharmaceutical and medical supplies, when procured, are stored at the central medical stores and are requisitioned based on needs by hospitals or other institutions.

We also would order supplies needed by institutions when the item is not a part of our regular inventory or when the supplies are needed for specialised programmes not accounted for in the Budget. The distribution report contains about 70% of the deliveries made for the year. It contains the date the items were delivered, the areas delivered to and a brief description of what was delivered. Note about 5% to 10% of supplies were collected. No collections are recorded in the distribution report.

“What was the cost of procuring the medicine and medical supplies?” The cost of procuring medicine and medical supplies for the year so far was EC\$7,056,000.

“How much money was owed to the OECS Pharmaceutical Procurement Service?” Answer. Grenada currently does not own the OECS, then, based on the last update.

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Based on the report from the OECS PPS Statements of Outstanding Invoices as of 31st October 2023, our total of outstanding invoices was \$1,128,716.43 with an ECCB balance of \$1,130,488... which... \$488. Yes, sorry... which is sufficient to settle the outstanding invoices.

This, Madam President, would have answered most of the questions as far as the data that was sent to me. I will send this to the Clerk so that people will have a little more appreciation in terms of what it entails... With all the documents. Thank you. I now move the Motion for the Adjournment of this Honourable House sine die.

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Let me hear... I see some lights on. Let's do that first. Senator Franklyn.

**Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, of course, I am inclined to respond to the "answers" given by the Leader of Government's Business. Madam President, these questions specifically were posed approximately 232 days ago as of today, 232 days ago. What we heard from the Leader of Government's Business, in my view, is not sufficient to answer the questions posed.

Asking myself to retrieve answers from the broker, the broker is not answerable to Parliament, and it is the responsibility of the Minister for Health and the Leader of Government's Business, the Government generally, to obtain the information from the broker and provide it to the Honourable House. **(Applause)**

As it relates to the mention being made of the distribution report, we do not have the distribution report; therefore, it's incumbent on the Leader of Government's Business and the Government to provide us with the information from the distribution report.

And additionally, Madam President, reference is being made to invoices and subtracting one week from the invoice, which is not the responsibility of the Parliament. We ask questions, and it is the responsibility of the Government to provide these answers

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and the specific information to the Parliament. The questions were specific for a reason: to give the Government an opportunity to explain to the people what has been happening specifically, in 2023.

And the preamble to the question I quoted was the then-former Minister for Health, who is now the Minister for Youth and Sports. So the questions did not come arbitrarily or from the air; they came from comments that the then-minister made. So, Madam President, I have to say, of course, keeping in mind, Madam President, comments that were made at that time by the then Minister for Health that he was in the process of ensuring that answers were provided and he went as far as to say that people should be careful what they ask for in relation to the specific medication because I ask what medicine and medical supplies procured. I did not hear an answer, Madam President. And I can say a majority of the answers to these questions could have easily been provided within one week if the Government truly showed that they cared and they were responsible. 232 days later.

Madam President, I am not satisfied with the responses, and again, I do say the broker has no responsibility to Parliament; it is the responsibility of the Government to retrieve that information. The Distribution Report should be made clear and provide the specific information that was requested in the question. And also the time specifically asked for the landing date and so on, and the clearance date, if they have a formula, Madam President, through you to calculate the date, then that should be done by the Government, and the answer should be provided to this House and to the people of Grenada. I thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Franklyn. Leader of Government's Business. Before you, Senator André Lewis, you have the floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. On the Adjournment, I wish to invite all workers, all of Grenada, to participate with us workers, May 1, that's next week, Wednesday, International Workers Day, which will be

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held in the parish of St. Patrick. We are gathering at the McDonald College ground. We will be marching from that ground along High Street, left onto Main Street, onto the Fond recreational ground playing field, where there will be a rally and addresses by leaders of the various unions and other dignitaries.

It is a very important day in the history and alliance of working people, and I dare say of the world, because many of the benefits that we enjoy today, the eight-hour working day and the seven-hour working day, there were times that our fore-parents worked for 24 hours a day. There were times when our people worked for 18 hours a day. There were times we didn't know what a fixed lunch break, annual vacation leave, or maternity leave was; all of these are part of the struggles. And Labour Day or May Day marks the combination of all the centuries and years of struggles. People lost their lives to get the eight-hour working day, and people lost their lives to ensure that we have some of the conditions that we have today. And on May 1, we come together where we can show solidarity to each other.

And whereas in the past, in the recent past, not too long ago, the word "solidarity" used by the labour movement was a bad word. Today, we hear all kinds of cries for solidarity. Give solidarity to the struggling people of the world. Right. And our solidarity progresses solidarity, that word has now been taken over even by the USA, so that the Salams to Israel, and they continue the murderous rampage in Gaza, it's all part of solidarity, but that's not the solidarity we speak of. We call for solidarity for Gaza.

We call for solidarity for the people and brothers and sisters in Haiti, in Sudan and on this International Workers Day. Let us all come together and make this into a cry for national justice. It is bigger than just the everyday issues, because we're absolutely certain that the vast majority of people who have been killed and are starving are ordinary working-class people.

Those who live behind these walls are hiding away in their bunkers, where no bombs are falling on them. But as we speak, ordinary people continue to lose their lives and are impacted, and you know we are also impacted, because the world has now become one religion. We turn on our television and we see the cries of mothers and

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fathers, brothers, sisters and innocent babies that have been killed. It impacts us; many people can't watch television these days because we feel powerless, because we do not have the guns and ammunition, and we do not have the missiles to send.

It's a fight of might, might is right, but it is part of our working-class struggle; we want a world of peace. We want to be able to go to work and come back and spend it with our families. We want to be able to sit and know that our friends and families throughout humankind in Haiti can live in peace. Haiti, which has led the struggle for the emancipation of our black brothers and sisters taken from Africa, was the first Black Revolution, the first Black Country to be freed from slavery. And that is why Haiti is paying the price that it is paying today by the United States, Canada, and others that are coming as though they want to help Haiti. They are paying the price, and many of our black brothers and sisters have been blaming Haiti and saying that they are poor because they believe in Voodoo, our African culture.

We are struggling in Haiti because we have to pay the price for getting rid of the slavers who sought to enslave us. And for years, and for years, all that we did, and we were able to get in Haiti, we used to pay those who enslaved us. The same fight that we fight today, crying for reparations and the same fight that our Barbadian brothers and sisters are leading today against Duracks. Right. Who has benefited from slavery, right, and they're trying to get the land, and the Barbadians are saying, "Not one cent should be paid, but we should take the land to build low-income houses, for our brothers and sisters". It's all part of the struggle of humankind.

And therefore, we ask you to come out with us on May 1, and many times I wonder if we should be saying May Day because May Day sounds like a cry for help. But let us say International Workers' Day, but we understand the local language and colloquialisms on May 1. Let us all resolve ourselves as you join the working people of Grenada and throughout the world, and I know that in Cuba it will be big, this is a state that on May 1 has this national celebration where millions of workers and the state go out and speak about its solidarity, not only solidarity in Cuba but solidarity to the world. Because there is an international list, and we know what we have benefited from today. Why am I making

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these points? Because we are all related, just as the international community cries, and recently they passed in the United States Congress, aid for Israel to continue killing ordinary Palestinians.

We must speak out for all things throughout the world, or we must not be afraid to speak out, and as a state, we must speak out. I understand the issue of balancing interest, but there are certain things that are bigger than worrying about what The Mighty North will say. There are some principles that are bigger than these that we enjoy today; if many had paid attention to this and were afraid of these, then we would not be in our Parliament today.

Yes. We have to get rid of this that is hanging over you, Madam President. We have to get rid of it, it is part of the process, it is taking us long, but we're having an open discussion, alright. And it is because we can say that today, because those who went before us were fearless and were not concerned about the consequences.

The only consequences that they wanted to ensure are that we can speak with a voice today and we can be free today. It is a long process; we are not yet free. It is still a free process because we are still destitute, and we have to get rid of it. But we have come a long way. We still have a long way to go. And as Black Wizard has said, and I am linking that to a little discussion on the Communication Bill, "I come back again for three more centuries, to rule for three more centuries", and he named them. He named Cable and Wireless, Rex Grenadian, because that's the face, and we must not be afraid to speak out. And therefore, Senator Cox, that's what I want to address under the aspect when I speak of the regulation. Yes, technology will result in workers changing jobs and, in some cases, losing jobs, and it has happened.

The Industrial Revolution saw technological changes, but I dare tell you that the present-day companies that we are dealing with are the Cable and Wireless, et cetera. It is not just technology because the work is still being done, but it is done on a contractual basis; they have reduced the quality and standard of living of our Grenadian workers. They have fewer direct workers, but what have they done?

They have subcontracted the work, and these workers and many others are now

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being employed by the contractor, but the work is still being done. It is not a case, and we understand that technology will change, and some work will follow; that is why the labour movement has been retooling. We have been advising our workers, in organisation training sessions, to retool, to retrain. We have been addressing the aspect of the future of work, but as we address the future of work, there's a present reality: people have to eat, colleagues. So, I encourage everyone to come out and join us on May Day, and if I were permitted, I would have said long live the working class struggle on May Day, but that would be falsely said on May 1st.

Madam President, it would be great to see you there, giving your history of struggle and your family in St. Andrew and the wider community. Someone like yourself, whom many of us have looked up to over the years, remember Merle Collins, and we listened to their poems that helped us survive the invasion and occupation. Long live May Day, thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator Cox.

**Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, just a couple of matters of importance that I think I need to raise. And probably let me just start with this one first.

Madam President, sometime yesterday in the "Other Place" in the forenoon, the Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in responding to a recent tragic incident in Carriacou, young child lost their life, made reference to the Department of Social Development. And in his words, the department is gravely lacking adequate staff. Madam President, I think it's important that sometimes we remind the nation, and sometimes when we do things as leaders, it has repercussions.

Madam President, in 2022, when this Government took office, I mean, I have been hearing about the plan to dismantle the Social Development Department in Carriacou, and that went into strict action. Six people were fired from Social Development, two people were transferred to other departments, and two people were transferred. Madam

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President, could you believe that was a young lady with a degree in Social Work, transferred from Social Development, who does that? Who does something like that? You take somebody who has vested their time and money in an area of care for our people, spend years to attain the requisite training from UWI to hold a degree with honours in Social Work, and you move that person from the Department of Social Services. But you come in today and say that the department is lacking adequate staff, whose fault is it?

I think it is unfair to my colleague on the "Other Side" who is the Minister for Social Development, to say that the department is not adequately staffed when you yourself, but through your own actions and directives, fired people and transferred them. Yes, there might be a need for a specialised person, like a Counsellor or so, but there are Counsellors on the island in Carriacou, they may not be attached to the department, fair enough. There was also a coordinator who sadly passed away, God rest her soul.

So there might be one or two vacancies to fill through the Public Service Commission, but there is no clear justification for eviscerating the department for political reasons, and then you're coming today and saying, "Oh, you're begging the Cabinet to help fill," to help fill something that you destroyed. Madam President, this is very, very, very misleading and mischievous, and I had to point it out and I had to pull it out. So I think I must remind the Member that it is because of his actions that there is only one person in the Department of Social Services right now, so I rest my case on that.

I know that sometimes when I speak passionately on these matters, some people get a little bit uncomfortable, but I have to, I have a responsibility to, and I will continue to speak on those matters. It is not nice to do that and then come afterwards and pretend that the former administration didn't adequately staff the department; that is not right.

Madam President, the next thing that I wanted to raise, you know, Carriacou, we have a challenge from a Climate standpoint in terms of rainfall, and this dry season has been a very tough one for a lot of persons. In the past, I know that the former Parliamentary Rep there were initiatives whereby persons were given support by bringing water to some of the persons who do not have the financial capacity to purchase or the

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pay for the truck to transport, I think the water is a couple cents per gallon but it is about a hundred and something dollars for every trips so you got to pay a private person.

So, I'm just saying that I think there's a clear opportunity for the ministry to intervene where there are persons who do not have the capacity, financial and maybe otherwise, so that they can maybe review or look at that initiative. That programme that was there before, they can bring water to maybe use one of the Government trucks or the ministry truck to help bring some water, to help relieve people in this difficult time, as we have a shortage of rainfall for more than months now that we really haven't had any substantial rain to speak about, so I know the challenge. So I just raised that, I think there's a clear opportunity for the ministry to intervene there.

The next thing, Madam President, and my goodly Senator colleague, Senator for the Farmers for Agriculture, I think he will side with me on this one. The movement, the flourish movement, Madam President, I don't know what has happened, but that has been its no way to be found, and I think that I'm just raising it, I'm not laying blame to anyone whatsoever. But I think there is a clear opportunity for our voices as leaders in the Honourable House to get our flourish movement back up and running. I think that everybody understands the importance and the impact that flourish has in terms of transitioning persons, our younger persons, into the agriculture sector.

The Minister for Education is also here and most of us, if not all of us has a clear understanding the impact that the flourish movement have on the development of our young people, and I think it's something that I think that there's a clear opportunity for the Government to look into that and to re-initiate the flourish movement in some shape or form, so that we can see some more of that of that going forward.

The next thing, Madam President, is I think I did raise it in this Honourable House, and I'm raising it again because it is one that has merit and for the Minister for Education, the issue of support, specific support for students from Carriacou and Petite Martinique who are enrolled in TAMCC on the mainland. I think there is a clear opportunity to provide some additional financial support for those persons, while some efforts have been made in terms of removing the tuition fee.

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We are at a disadvantage, Madam President, and I think you have boarding, you have all sorts of additional expenses. The TAMCC branch in Carriacou does have its limitations, in terms of what it can offer, and so I think that there is this issue, not an issue, but there is a push towards free education. And so, I call on the Government through the Minister for Education to find some way, I don't think that is anything beyond the Government to find some additional resources, it is easy to find who are the persons who are enrolled from Carriacou and Petite Martinique and who are in TAMCC to find some way to provide some support for them in that regard. I think that will be a very good gesture, so I raised it for what it's worth.

The last thing, Madam President, I want to take this opportunity to invite persons who have not already booked their trip for Carriacou to come and enjoy our String Band and Maroon Music Festival this weekend, it has already started, the pot probably comes down from the fire already, and food will probably be shared around this time. What time is it? Yes, yes, yes, food is definitely shared already. So, I think that it's a great opportunity for persons who maybe visiting Grenada for the first time or persons from the mainland who never had an opportunity to come to Carriacou to experience that richness in our culture, and so we have Friday and Saturday, and we come with it on Sunday. So, we just want to extend that invitation to come over to Carriacou this weekend, and Petite Martinique is right there. You can have the opportunity to go to Petite Martinique as well, on any one of those days, if it's just to visit, just to relax, just to chill, just to engage with our residents.

So I don't think that the Leader for Government's Business has left already. I just mentioned the food came down, and I saw him walk out of the hall. But we have enough food for everybody, and I think there is a clear opportunity for people to have a wonderful time this weekend. So, thank you very much, Madam President, and I do extend a special invitation to you, maybe not this year, but if you can't make it. But we will find a way to get you up, Madam President. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Cox. Thank you. Senator St. Clair.

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**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you very much, Madam President. I raise to make a few comments on the Adjournment, and of course, not necessarily in order of priority, but it seems to be in a festive moment: May Day, Maroon Festival and St. Mark's Festival. So I want to share that it is not my festival, but there is an annual festival also in my community in Carriere, it's called the Saraka, they call it the "Bashalaka". It's basically is the Saraka approach, but you need to make sure you have your bashie or your calabash with you, so you'll get your food and so on in it. I've been to it a couple of times and it's a good time for fun and frolic, nice pots and soup and so on. So, we want to extend an invitation to the community of Carriere playing field on May 3, so book your spot.

On another note, Madam President, while of, course it, was mentioned in the other place, and I was happy to see so many Members fighting for farmers. I was so happy that every day I have a fighter, I feel good pertaining to the holy shower of that water situation in Mirabeau, SAAB area. It's a matter that I know I've been around many, many, many years, many years in the whole setup, and of course, while there are disputes.

We also have to recognise the goodwill if you want to speak of the NAWASA in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture in having that infrastructure, and also making it available. While it might have been some people who made a connection on the legal side. We know how society can happen in a lot of things. I was happy to realise that good order seems to be prevailing, and the matter has been resolved. I was contacted by a few farmers in the past, and now, and I trust that they can find some way, although I was not part of that discussion.

The fact that maintenance seems to be a big issue, I don't think farmers, especially in those areas that depend on that water and have done well for them to pay, if is a small fee of an EC\$50 or EC\$100 that goes towards a pool to help maintain a burst pipe or something like that. I don't think farmers would have a problem with that, but there needs to be organisation and structure into how that is or how that is done. I mean, there is another approach also.

You could also create two lines, so the farm, Mirabeau, makes sure that they have

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water, and then you have another line that services the farmer. Because there is a lot of ways that could be done, I think, I trust that NAWASA would use the engineering ability and try solve it in that way because we should not get there you know sometimes, Madam President, I don't know and it's not Government per say it's individuals sometime in the way we try to resolve matters, you know, you write a letter and you get a letter so you must, we're going to cut you off, we're going to.

I don't think the Government is in that mode because this is something that has always been a contention, even before this current Government, per se. But, of course, the question is, I'm not too sure if previous governments would have written a letter, you know, sometimes the dialogue helps, it's the same thing we saw with the folks on the Port Highway, I think a letter and then discussion. So consultation comes back to the fore, and I'm happy that the farmers were able to rest a little bit, and I trust that they would, quote, unquote, behave themselves and cooperate as much as possible for the common good.

And of course, we are in the heat of the dry season, so we have to ensure that sufficient practices, are followed, and I think that should be the learning out of that exercise, in terms of the mulching and various agriculture practices that could help us not only the Mirabeau area but in many other farming areas of the country. Two other things, Madam President, as I close. The MNIB I think, we were told that things by the first quarter, we should get a report, that report should submitted and it will be good to know, where that report is? Was it really submitted? And what is the next step? Because we have seen the impact of the lack of MNIB on our whole agricultural production and stimulation, and the lack of markets definitely affects production. Agriculture is a market-driven industry; otherwise, you would have a situation, as my dear friend Senator Thomas mentioned, of a market failure where farmers produce and cannot sell, or there is a market and they cannot supply. So this is a matter that we need to be careful with.

And then the third part, I want to say, is that from The Grenada Cooperative Nutmeg Association, I just want to make a note as a significant organisation in this country is having its General Meeting, area meetings coming up from the 7th to the 16th, and the

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announcements are in various places throughout the country. And of course, the farmers are encouraged to come out and participate, and we know sometimes there are disenchanting. They need their bonus. They need different things. They need better prices. But as Farmers Organisations, as I have learned, you have to be in it, your voices have to be present to articulate, to express, to be there because that's where the discussion takes place, you cannot sit down and wonder in the market and want to change the Laws in the Parliament, you have to be in it.

And so, come out and then you would find that over time, a lot of people are being misled by information, third-hand information, fourth-hand information, because someone tells them something that is not even true. And I am just saying that, not in a defence of the association, but it happens in a lot of things, and so we lack participation because of those things.

And so we trust that we could get more involvement, and we could get more organisations having their meetings coming out and in, whatever way they support. We know the cooperative department. I know Mr. Grimes and his team. They're very supportive in going out and assisting different organisations to put themselves together, and of course, they should not be in any way the third by that sort of support. So I wanted to share these thoughts with the House, and of course, the listening public, until we meet again. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Before we take the vote on adjournment, I want to thank all of you for your kind invitations. Senator Lewis, I say with pride that I have been and expect that I will always be a militant for justice, whether it's for women's rights, small island states, children, you know. I join my ancestors here and worldwide who fight for justice, for rights, in different forms, in different roles that I played. But be assured that May Day is the day that I recognise, International Workers' Day, and it's tied very much with the Women's Movement because International Women's Day, working-class women, is what has given rise now to March 8.

Senator Cox, I will ask you to mark your calendar for me next year for Carriacou,

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so I can come and dance the dance of my ancestors. I don't know if you know, but my father's mother came from Carriacou. I claim it.

Senator St. Clair, thank you for your invitation. I think it's more possible that I'll go up there with my bashalaka because it's nearby, and I still eat from a calabash. See you there.

Thank you all, and I encourage all of us to attend these cultural moments because it grounds us, it takes us backwards, forwards and in the present all at once. Thank you.

I wanted to... I wish you good luck with the festival, the String Band and Maroon Festival, and of course, to wish workers a happy May Day as well. Wanted to remind us that in the other place, we have passed the Gun Amnesty Legislation, and we are all concerned about violence. The amnesty is intended to reduce it, so I just want to remind us to be advocates for the Gun Amnesty. It's part of our national legislation now. However, we may feel it starts on the 1st of May and it ends on the 30th of July, 90 days. Let's see if we can make a dent in bringing down crime by bringing in illegal weapons and ammunition.

And lastly, to remind us that the small island states are having their Fourth International Conference in May, we might meet before or we might not. It's going to be late May, in Antigua, and a whole range of issues, including Renewable Energy, Climate Change Resilience, building against climate change, Youth Gender Equality and a large number of items, will be discussed by islands from all over the world that will gather in Antigua. Grenada once held the leadership position with the SIDS, and I'm sure we'll be in attendance to take up some of the ongoing issues, whether it's in tourism or agriculture for SIDS. So to bring that to our attention and to encourage us to contribute, whether to the NGOs, to the Government position or to the business sector, all will be present.

Thank you for today. I thought we made some really remarkable progress in discussions, in a very close look at what is now or soon to be the legislation. I want to thank and commend the Government side for proposing it, and all the other parties for their contributions and in the end, the passage of that important piece of legislation. We should all be updated. Is there a request from the floor, Senator?

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**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Sitting of the Senate adjourned *sine die* at 1:15 p.m.**

**PREPARED BY**

**HANSARD REPORTERS**

Ms. Shanta Joseph

Ms. Akeda David

Ms. Leasha Francis

Ms. Jasmine Redhead

Ms. Jelissa Alleyne

**EDITORS**

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Clerk)

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