



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

SENATE

THURSDAY 4TH APRIL, 2024

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 4th 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

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

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***Prayers
Minutes***

The Sitting of the Senate began at 9:05 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 of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President, and good morning to my colleagues and my friends on the "Other Side", staff of Parliament. Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Special Joint Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday the 6th of February, 2024, be taken as read.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Madam President: Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Let the record show that the Minutes be taken as read is the proper designation with that first vote. Now

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***Minutes
Announcements***

I return again to the Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Special Joint Sitting of the Senate, held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday the 6th of February, 2024, be confirmed.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

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 Senators, a pleasant good morning and welcome back to this Chamber following our last Sitting on the 6th of February. I trust everyone had an excellent and exciting celebration of our 50th Anniversary. We want to congratulate the Government and all organisers for the outstanding efforts made and the results achieved. We continue in the celebration for a year, so we look forward to what has happened in St. Patrick already. Well, we congratulate St. Patrick's, and we look forward to the rest of it happening in the other parishes over the course of the year. Again, happy birthday, Grenada.

I'd like to announce that Senator André Lewis has asked to be excused from this meeting since he's travelling abroad on Trade Union business.

I also would like to record my sadness at the spate of loss of life and loss of property that our Grenada has suffered in recent weeks, perhaps in recent days and to extend condolences to the families of the two motorcyclists and in particular, to the family of the young girl who was violated and the victim of what the police is now ruled a homicide in Carriacou, the 14 year old young lady.

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Announcements

At a future meeting, I'm giving notice that this matter is going to be taken up thoroughly. I will use the word "incest" here, and I will use the phrase "sexual violence" against young girls and women, and what seems to be an inability on the part of mothers in particular to believe and to take action to protect their young daughters. This, Honourable Members, has to stop. Our country cannot be known as a place for the insecurity of girls and the disempowerment of women in their own homes. I am calling on the whole society to address this.

On a much more pleasant note, I would like to extend deep, warm and exciting congratulations to our athletes who have done well, very well in the recently concluded 51st CARIFTA Games, and I would like to congratulate the Athletic Association, the Government of Grenada and all Grenadians for being such marvellous hosts to our CARICOM and Caribbean Athletic groups. Congratulations to Grenada, congratulations to CARIFTA.

At a future meeting, at a future Sitting, we will report on the many meetings that I've had since our last Sitting, perhaps the most significant is the celebration of Commonwealth Day and the 75th anniversary of the Commonwealth and the 72nd anniversary of the Meeting of Parliamentary Leaders and Presiding Offices that was held in London. And we've had quite a bit of exchanges and engagements with delegations, Parliamentary Delegations from around the world.

I want to thank the Speaker of the House, and I want to thank the Clerk of the Parliament, who formed part of the three-member delegation of Grenada as a member of the Parliament, for these meetings. And I must put on record our thanks also to the Grenada High Commission in the UK, High Commissioner Croney and her team, who didn't just do the, you know, immense logistics for the three of us but also partook in the commemorations where that was called for and generally supported us in a substantive way. Thank you, and here ends my notices for this morning.

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

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Rearrangement of Order Paper

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I stand here to humbly request an amendment to the Order Paper due to some unforeseen circumstances that would cause some of my colleagues here to attend to some very important matters, and I do not want to take the chance and have them leave before the very important issues of the Bills are discussed. So I want to request, Madam President, that we move item 15 to number seven, and thereafter we proceed accordingly. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas. I understand your request. Your proposal is to move item 15, which covers Bills, to become the new item 7, in light of the fact of some interruptions in your delegation? Being an Honourable House, we shall not ask what these interruptions are. **(Laughter)** We shall simply presume that they are of public importance. With that in mind, I asked the Honourable House if ... Senator Cox. Greetings Senator Cox. I don't know what Carriacou has done, but it has unleashed you to us. Welcome.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I do not have a problem with the recommendation in terms of amending the Standing Orders. However, I'll just ask the Member to ensure that whoever is planning to leave early, that we do have a quorum, otherwise the session would not be able to complete, and he still won't be able to achieve his objective today by having these Bills passed, so I just want to caution that as well. I am open to that. I understand from time to time that the Government would have matters of urgent requirement, and so we're not in any way adverse to amending the Standing Orders to take the Bills first. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Cox. Thank you. Leader of Government's Business, are you ceasing with the request to maintain a quorum for the meeting?

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***Rearrangement of Order Paper
Bills: Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2024***

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Yes, Madam President. We will surely. We'll make sure that that happens, but I must advise, Madam President, I think on "Our Side" the AG has a very important role to play in regards to the Bills, and she's maybe the live wire when it comes to Bills in the House, so we do not want to have... She's one of the Senators who will be leaving a little earlier, so we want to ensure that she's there to make sure that those Bills are passed in the most dignified manner. So I will ensure that we have a quorum, Senator Cox. Thank you very much, and I am happy to have your endorsement.

Madam President: Thanks to all, and let's proceed. Item 7. I suppose we ought to vote on the proposal.

Question put and agreed to.

Order Paper rearranged.

Madam President: Item 7 – Bills.

Leader of Government's Business, Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas. It's Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce for the first reading a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Road Traffic Act, Chapter 289A, to reduce the minimum age for the issuance of a driver's licence to an applicant from 25 years to 18 years with respect to the driving of goods vehicles, shortly entitled, Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Madam President: Senator David Andrew. Good morning, Senator.

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Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Good morning, Madam President. Good morning, all. Madam President, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Order of the Senate be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages at this Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, thank you. This Bill, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, seeks to address two areas. One, to reduce the age required for obtaining a licence for class vehicles D, that's light goods vehicles, so that persons who are now 18 can legally operate that class and description of vehicles.

You would remember that in the 2024 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure given in December, the Minister for Finance then alluded to the Government's policy intention and direction to stimulate employment among youth and the ability for young persons in the Construction and Farming areas to be able to operate these kinds of vehicles. We will appreciate that the current Road Traffic Act allows persons to operate this kind of vehicle only upon attaining the age of 25. In our mind, this represents a period where young people are experiencing the sharpest reflexes, and it's a significant period of their lives that we feel they have not been empowered enough to operate those kinds of vehicles.

We have young farmers who can't legally use one of those twin-cab vehicles, which fall under that category, and so I remember speaking to one young man, Madam President, in the area of Grand Bacolet, and he was eagerly awaiting such an amendment so that he could assist his father legally. I mean, he said to me I can't operate this van, I have done it, but with a class B licence, which is the regular private vehicle licence. And so it's important to empower our young people that this amendment takes place to lower the age at which persons can legally operate or catalyse to operate that class and

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description of vehicles. Small goods vehicles, we commonly know those as the licence for class D, which qualifies, which describes vehicles up to a tonnage of 7,000 kilograms.

Additionally, Madam President, this amendment seeks also to give the Minister to add a new section, section 37A is going to be added in this new amendment as well which seeks to give the Minister, the ability upon publication in the Gazette, authorisation to enable the Licencing Authority to allow for a licence given for a different class and description of vehicle, providing the holder of that licence has a significantly or a significant period or time period of experience operating that vehicle. And that must be published too in the Gazette and declared, to allow for that class of licence to be assigned to another class.

In other words, I want to bring us to section 37 of the existing Act because the existing Act in section 37 points to the need for an examination to be had by any licenced bearer and that no person can be upgraded in any form without a licence. So this new addition 37A would allow for, by publication in the Gazette and order by, the Minister to allow for such an upgrade to take place with the person having the commensurate years of experience operating the vehicle and paying the requisite fees and whatever other conditions as may be ordered and Gazetted by the Minister to have that licence by the due authority, upgraded.

So, Madam President, this provides an excellent opportunity to empower our young people, to empower and encourage farmers. In fact, I know the Senator on the other side for farmers would be quite elated to hear that because it allows for a lot more young persons to be enabled, to be empowered to get engaged in the construction sectors, in the business sectors, in the agriculture sectors and this we know will serve our economy well.

And so, Madam President, I commend this Bill to all of us. There is no specific time assigned to it, Madam President, because of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill, 2024. The intention is for this Bill to come into force upon its publication in the Gazette to facilitate the measures being implemented as soon as reasonably possible.

Having said this, I commend the Bill to you, Madam President, and Honourable

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Members of this House for your support and deliberation. Thank you very much.

Madam President: I thank Senator Andrew. Senator Douglas, is it? Senator Cox, thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to give support to this amendment, but also to just give some context, and I did hear the presenter of the Bill reference the farming community. If I could recall, maybe Senator St. Clair can help verify that. I think he did raise that recommendation sometime back in one of his presentations in this Honourable place, and so it is good to see that sometimes when a recommendation comes from "This Side" that the Government take it up and moves with it as well, so I think this is a very good first step, and it's a good idea.

However, there are some matters I just want to expound on a little bit as regards to this amendment. I know that initially, the whole concern, I think, via the insurance companies had to do with risk after just attaining a driver's licence at the age of 18, you know, in terms of the experience and the capability to handle a particular type of vehicle.. I think that is where the whole concern emanated from.

However, we recognise the challenge in terms of the restrictions, in terms of opportunities for persons based on the type of business. So I think that while there might be a cost associated with a person who now has to go and get a licence at a particular age. I think the insurance company may, in some cases, charge more because, of course, the risk does not remove itself in any way whatsoever. However, the opportunity is there for such individuals who may have to pay a little more, but you will give them an opportunity to actually utilise that vehicle to carry out their duties, so I think that is a good thing, even though they have to pay a little more; that is what we're trying to achieve.

The other thing. I think there is a discussion in terms of the age, in terms of the licence upgrade; the age range, in terms of how long the person is supposed to be driving. I think they are supposed to be driving for five years. I think that is what was mentioned,

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I think, at some point in time in the amendment. But I just wanted to ask the question.

Somebody having a licence for five years against somebody having a licence and driving for five years, because I know, there are a number persons who have a licence for 10 years and they haven't drove at all, so it's maybe something that maybe, I don't know how you're going to solve that mischief, but it's something that is called for contemplation by the Traffic Department. I don't know how you can interfere with the amendment to solve that mischief, but I just put it there for what it's worth.

I think also this measure will help Government in some way get an increase in terms of revenue collection in the licence upgrade because as you go higher you have to pay more, so I think this will help at the end of the day in that regard. So I just want to raise those couple matters just for us to contemplate on, but all in all, I support this amendment, and I think it's something that can help persons who are willing to, who are presently engaged in jobs or opportunities in jobs. Most jobs nowadays require a driver's licence, and as such, they want to know that you're able to drive more than one different type of vehicle so you can support that business initiative.

But I just want to raise something similar, but something different, like, for example, Madam President, in the pharmaceutical business, if somebody who successfully completes the pharmacy program at TAMCC before the age of 21, they cannot get a licence until they're 21, so that is maybe another mischief that the Government may have to look at. I mean, so if you finish at 20. You finish your pharmacy programme. You completely successfully pass your exam, you're not able to practice until you're 21, so that is something that we may have to look at because that is even. You still can't even find the justification for that as yet because you actually go through a training, you actually successfully complete it, you pass all criteria and all the requirements and why you have to meet a particular age now to actually start practicing, so that is something that I think that we may have to look at while we on a matter that is similar to in some context.

So with these few words, I give my support to this amendment. Thank you, Madam President.

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Madam President: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. Other contributions? Senator Gloria Thomas, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Madam President, colleagues, I stand here to offer my support for the amendment to the Road Traffic Bill. The purpose of this Bill is to support our citizens, especially our young people, in their efforts to be productive. Madam President, I firmly believe that this Bill is geared towards empowering and encouraging our young people in their entrepreneurship activities. With the law as it is, it can bring frustration and despondence in our society when young people who may be in the business of plumbing, electrical installation and farming need to get on with their business and are hindered because of the present law. We must have a group of young people who are supported in developing a business or strengthening their business. Madam President, we must commit to people's empowerment, especially our youth.

This gives many of our youth hope; some may argue that this is risky, but there would always be some measure of risk involved in all areas of life. You get up in the morning, you go to the bathroom, and it's a risk that you can slip and fall and break a bone.

Madam President, I am an optimist, so I believe we must focus on the greater good. With that being said, I again register my support for the amendment to the Road Traffic Act. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, risk taker. Thank you, Senator. Senator Rahaman, you have the flow, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you very much, Madam President. So I'd like to mention on the onset that I'm very pleased with this change. Sometimes very small changes can have a big impact on our economy, and I believe this is one of them. Quite frankly, I don't understand how it took so long to change this. It has been obvious for so many of us, and I've spoken about this more than once, as did my colleague next to me.

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A few things: one, it will provide new opportunities for businesses to hire drivers. It will provide young people coming out of school an opportunity to start their own business, go to the bank and get one of these used sales vans and go around the country and do their own business. It is really a tool that will help to empower our young people instead of them having, even our university students that have to be dropped, to classes at different times.

Many homes have a second car, so now they can take the vehicle and go to class to pursue their tertiary education. It has a lot of benefits. I'll leave the farming aspect to my friend to speak about, and generally we don't see... We've heard some talk about risk.

We know that in Barbados, I believe you can get your licence at a similar age. I know you can get your private licence at 16. In the United States, it's even less than 16 as well, in Canada. So other countries have already done this, so this risk is not new for insurance companies. That's the point.

Another change I was actually and we don't see, we do not see commercial vehicles involved in accidents every day that's not something that we regularly see so we don't expect to see you know irresponsible drivers and we expect that the police when they do their tests they will ensure that their testing is done properly so that when a young Grenadian gets their licence we know that the rest of us is going to be safe on the road.

And I would like to ask, though, how does that apply... now the amendment speaks to driving of goods vehicles, and on the back of any licence, you'll see that you have light goods and you have heavy goods, so I assume that it applies to both D and D1. D only? Okay. Does it say light goods? Okay. Just clarifying.

And then the other is that will this impact those who have... How will this impact those who have a licence to operate equipment? Does this impact this at all? I believe it doesn't, but I'd like them to speak to that because this is something that the private sector would also like, if I am correct, that the restriction is still at 25 for a trailer licence or heavy goods. We would like that to be brought down at least to perhaps 20 at some point because young men in particular are involved in that industry, in the construction industry, of operating machines and equipment and to wait to 25, till you are 25, to start

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to feed your family, to have a career, these are skill jobs and there is nothing that a 25 year old can't do that a 20 year old can't do. It is done in other countries, and I think this is a good step, and I think it needs to be looked into in other areas as well.

I thank you, and I commend the Government for this move, which they said they would do. We're very happy to see this change today. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Senator LaCrette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, colleagues, I want to briefly stand in solidarity with the proposed Bill as put forward by the Honourable Minister for Education and to categorise the Bill with two terminologies; empowerment and productivity, simply because, for me, it creates a degree of agility for that category of young person's so that the workforce can pivot more effectively. That is my contribution.

(Applause)

Madam President: I thank you, Senator LaCrette. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning to you, good morning to all the Members of this House, and of course, good morning to everyone on the outside following us. Thank you.

Madam President, of course, as the mover of the Motion would have indicated, this significant change and improvement, I would say, for the country was announced at the Budget Presentation back in December 2023. Of course, I also recalled and I checked through my notes I realised that sometime in May 2023, it was alluded by Senator Cox and of course Senator Rahaman that this concept and I call it a concept was presented in this Honourable House at which time you really tried but I think you can sit down and be happy today that at least notwithstanding us having a meeting, good sense has prevailed.

Good sense has prevailed, Madam President, because when we look at the

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Grenada Development Sustainable Plan 2020 to 2035, and I always speak about this. If we go and page 60 of that said document, Madam President, we would realise that this is a document that had extensive consultation in this country where series of recommendations and aspirations of the population was expressed and one of those had to do with the whole issue of youths and technology in that agriculture segment and of course then having that obligation to represent this interest group in this Parliament I would have bring forward that matter. But more so, Madam President, I think that the Prime Minister's declaration of his Vision 75, which he made it very clear at the time that it was grounded in the Sustainable Development Plan. I know the promises that were made in December would someday come to fruition. I think today is the day.

Today is the day, Madam President, when we all, as I go through the Hansard and the transcript, I had to laugh because I wonder when it was mentioned by the Leader of Government's Business then that you have to think outside the box, and I'm wondering if the box got bigger or if the idea came inside the box. But it is good anyway that we are all with the idea today, and so I want to commend the Government for catching up because back then the transcript would have said that in three, four, five, six months we expect you to come back because what we are speaking about here is not illusions and make up thing, it is real reality on the ground. So when I heard the mover of the Motion speak about a young man eagerly excited waiting to be able to do this driving to assist his grandfather or his father, I'm wondering if my transcript was reviewed and little pieces was taken and there is something called plagiarism, you need to quote section 1 page St. Clair May 26 (**laughter**) that is what I want and I know my learned friend is well adapted to this sort of practices.

Needless to say, this is a matter that we in the farming community is very excited about. We are happy that it happened at this time. I know, notwithstanding the time that would have passed, how many young men and women let us not lose sight about young women, I am only hearing about the young men, young men, young women also. And of course, as our dear sister Gloria Thomas on the "Other Side" speak about this empowerment and this unleashing of new opportunities, is a day where we have

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thousands of young persons who would be finding New Hope in this country. Of course, my bias and my representation has to do with Agriculture, has to do with that whole sector; fishing et cetera, and so I implore on all my fellow stakeholders to do be ready and take good opportunity of this. It means, therefore, that the financial institutions, including our good friends at the GDB and so on, may even start looking at offering special loans and so on to assist these persons in this regard. Because this could be the other issue, they have the licence, but there is no means. So I want us to look at that as a package so that it's not just equal to zero. And I also think that our young women need to... There are other young ladies in the construction, in the plumbing and so on, it gives them new hope in this business. Family businesses in whatever aspect.

But I want to say also, Madam President, it would have been good to also hear the... Because what sort of increase in Government revenue that we will see from this? I am not sure if that was projected when we met under the budget consideration but this we would expect to have some significant increase at the Government level, and the question is, how would this monies be used? Because there are concerns, and I think it was expressed here about issues of safety and so on, and so you may want to find that certain portion of these monies is allocated to public awareness, institutions and helping to have safer drivers on our road. In fact, if you want to stick to the 2035 Sustainable Plan, it speaks again about the whole issue about safety and safe driving because that is a concern. The insurance companies, of course, whilst they may be happy on one end to have increased business, insurance we know never like to pay out any money because that's how they make their profit. And so, as responsible agents of this country, we should not lose sight of that. It is not just about having a vehicle, but it is about having it, using it productively and use it safely.

I implore that we also... This would create also new opportunities for people, mechanics and all of those other areas, so I think that this injection. I wonder why we had to be sitting down and think about this thing so long. Again, as I said, it is because it was outside of the box. With this said, Madam President, I provide full support to something I supported before unwaveringly (**applause**) and I trust that it come as it said

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it will come and there is no little changes and we didn't sure here and there. I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. I see one more speaker. Honourable Quinc Britton, the youth of the West. You have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Morning, Madam President, I think you have to make some corrections. It have a younger person inside here **(laughter)** from the west. We all are youths from the West **(laughter)**, so I am not the only one. All right, my dear brother.

So I, too, Madam President, join with the sentiments expressed in the proposed amendment for the Road Traffic Act, 2024, and this I am pretty sure a lot of young persons, a lot of young drivers out there are very happy for those kind of moves.

We see our dear brother on the "Other Side" there beaming with pride as his recommendation has been considered. Sometimes it is frustrating as young drivers because I got my licence at the age of 19, and I wanted not just to get a B class, but upgrade, but I had to wait until I was 25 to go through the process, and I went through every class until I was able to upgrade to four classes in total. Be it motorcycle as well and the testing is normally a rigorous testing and I am happy that we saw the initiative to just upgrade persons who has a B class and have at least five years driving experience to a D class, that's for light goods vehicle and that's D class only, not D1 which is the heavier goods vehicle and those who have a C as well or a C1 that's where you carry over 17 passengers to 25 like the coasters and so on, they can be upgraded to a D class as well.

So that's just to bring some clarification, and we expect to generate some revenue from that obviously, any addition, any my dear friend, it will go towards fixing our nations road. Because many of us can complain about how our roads has been maintained and so on with the wear and tear, some of our roads was not designed to take all this amount of heavy vehicles that traverse our roads and so on. So our road network is good, but our road structure needs maintenance and improvements, so that's what the revenue

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would be used for, my dear friend.

I just joined with the sentiments expressed earlier to give support to the proposed amendment of the Road Traffic Act, 2024. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. I offer the floor to the other youth from the west, Senator Franklyn.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise this morning to also offer my support to the Bill. Initially, when it was recommended by the Honourable Senator St. Clair, I had no opposition to it, and I would not be hypocritical at this point because it is being brought by the Government to not support.

I offer my full support to the Bill, but might I add, Madam President, that in the same vein that the Government has supported and implemented the idea generated or developed by the Honourable Senator, I would also like to see the Government move towards adding some support to other initiatives brought forth by the Honourable Senator, such as the crop compensation. It is something that he has fought for, and of course, it would bring significant benefit not just to the more seasoned farmers but to young farmers. I do commend the Bill and offer my full support. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Honourable Senator Franklyn. Honourable Senator Adrian Thomas, Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to give my full support to the Bill, and I want to make a couple comments. Madam President, we must admit as a nation, transportation is a very important sector in the development of our society, and we have been able to pick up some of the problems that our society faces in regards to transportation, and this is not the only issue we would be dealing with in regards to transportation. We have a long list

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that we have to deal with in order to solve the transportation problems that we are facing in Grenada.

This, however, is one of the issues, and I remember quite clearly when the issue was raised in the context of Agriculture by my dear friend Senator Roderick St. Clair our response was it is not only the agricultural sector that was affected and I think it is very important and hence the reason why we ask for the extra time to deliberate on the issue. We took our time, we went through the process, and we have come to the conclusion that apart from the agricultural sector, there are a lot of other areas, as Senator Rahaman pointed out, some of the areas that would be affected. And therefore, when we said that we need to think a little bigger, that is what we were referring to, and today I think every sector that is being affected is knocking the table for this Bill we have brought to the House. So, Madam President, I really and truly rise to support this Bill.

I want to make a point in regards to the other stakeholders, Madam President, because the insurance companies. I'm quite sure that they are listening and will have to make the necessary adjustment at some point in time. We know they still hold tight to 2025, and I remember going to pay my premium, and the sales rep said to me, "Mr. Thomas, you will have to pay a little extra if you want your daughter to drive the vehicle". She was 18, 19 and every time I go to pay and I have to renew my licence, she would be 25 in a couple of months' time. Every time I have to pay my licene, I have to pay a little extra. I think the time has come for the insurance companies to follow likewise. I think the Government has set the pace, and we expect them to follow likewise.

The banks, the banks are very concerned about putting responsibility in the hands of young people, but I want to say to the Banks that our young people are much smarter than sometimes we think they are. And I also want to appeal to the financial institutions, credit unions, and the Banks to make the necessary adjustment and honour those people.

Madam President, the issue of people starting their own businesses, people employing themselves, creating employment, this is the rippling effect that this Bill will have on our society, and our young people would grab the opportunity to start their businesses at a very young age, rather than waiting until they are 25. I have seen young

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people have businesses, Madam President, and they have to hire a driver because they are not 25 yet to drive the truck or the T vehicle. I think this is an opportunity whereby they can now save money and plough it back into the business rather than hiring a driver. I am not against employing people, but I know many companies these days, they would be happy to hire a professional who can drive rather hiring the professional to do the work and have to get a driver to drive professional.

A lot of ministries in the Government service still have drivers, and I know a lot of the technicians can drive. While we can use the money to employ people, we can also use that money to employ people in other areas and create more professional employment. So, Madam President, there are a lot of advantages that this Bill will bring to our society, and it will create the kind of impact that is so badly needed in our society at this point in time. So I fully and wholeheartedly support this Bill. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Honourable Senator. Senator Andrew, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to express sincerest thanks to all of my colleagues on “Both Sides” of this Honourable House for your valued and valuable contributions to the debate on this Bill and to provide some summary remarks. I'm very happy that we've gotten to this point, this administration we are keen on augmenting what's good making it better, if there is a good suggestion, if there is a good idea that will benefit our citizenry, we are happy to embrace it but we have to admit, we have to acknowledge that Rome wasn't built in a day neither can Grenada be and things take time and in fact several of these things existed for years and I don't have the luxury of saying that we have been in office as Government for years. It has not yet even been that. We cannot appropriately pluralise it. It is almost there. It is almost two. Things take time, but we have demonstrated our commitment to advancing whatever is in the interest of our country, our youth and empowering our population, and this is evidence of it. So we continue to work in that vein, and I am sure the Honourable

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Senators, Honourable Franklyn, and St. Clair, we are listening. We are responsive to the voices of the people who have given us a mandate to fulfil the governance of this country, and we are going to do so in a very responsible manner, as we have demonstrated so far.

Just a few areas of clarification. I want to point out, I think a question was raised on the "Other Side" by the Business Senator, Honourable Rahaman, whether or not class E and F are affected by this; the answer is no. The current regulation allows for persons to acquire a licence for classes E and F at age 18; the current legislation and regulation allow for that, so there's no need for any adjustment there, and it's not contemplated, so just for clarification.

I want to make it clear again and I think my colleague right here senator Britton made that, the upgrade of which we speak to class is applicable to class D licence only and when we say that we mean persons who carry a class B which is a private vehicle C, passenger vehicle less than 17 or so passengers, C1 which is the bigger coaster type vehicles holding over 17 passengers, these categories of licence holders can upgrade with this legislation if passed to class D without having to take another test provided that they have the prerequisite experience as would be declared by the Minister in the order and that they meet other requirements that may be put forward. So B, C and C1 can be upgraded to D, that is, where the upgrade part of it is concerned.

I want to point out that the age adjustment will apply for anybody, so right now, if this legislation is passed, anybody who attains the age of 18 and can do the appropriate test can get a D or a D1 licence because of the age adjustment that's being recommended in this amendment, so that...I think you were asking that as well, but they would have to do the test, so that is separate and distinct from the upgrade element. They would have to do the test to get it. They can do it at age 18. If they pass the exam as prescribed by the local licensing authority at age 18, they can get a D or D1. But you have to drive to the satisfaction of the licensing authority to get it, and I want to make sure that that distinction is clear. So it is available to them if that decision should pass at age 18, but they would have to drive for it. We are talking about drivers who already have the

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experience carrying a B, C or C1 licence and having the experience and meeting the requirements as outlined in the Gazette through the Minister can be upgraded with the upgraded payment of fees to D. **(Laughter)** So I want to make that pretty clear.

The issue of risk, the insurance agents and agencies are experts, and that's their field, that's their business and risk mitigation, risk coverage, risk assessment. We don't get anywhere without risk, everything carries a certain amount of risk and the insurance companies are experts in covering or attempting to mitigate or cover those risks and so we anticipate that they would act accordingly but happily the empirical evidence does not suggest that there is extremely high risk with goods vehicles as opposed to passenger vehicles and so we could appreciate that it may not be necessarily result in as costly a risk coverage as may be the case for class C, C1 vehicles.

So, Madam President, again I want to echo my thanks to all of my colleagues for your valued and valuable contributions to this debate, and I commend it to you and to the nation. Thank you much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Madam President: Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolves itself into a Committee of the whole Senate to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew.

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Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

Madam President: I have to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed without amendment.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, I beg to move that the Chair's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, I beg to have the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

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Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act, No.39 of 2014, to extend the non-application of the principal Act to the procurement of goods, works or services up to the sum of EC\$100,000, shortly entitled Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Madam President: Honourable Leader of Government's Business, you have the floor, sir.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order Suspended.

Madam President: Honourable Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the second reading of the Bill be taken. Madam President, as was announced in our budget debate in December 2023, for the 2024 budget, the Government of Grenada has found it necessary to reform the existing policy to enhance long-term growth and competitiveness and introduce relief measures to reduce the impact of inflation on the population. In order to do that, Madam President, one of the structural reforms that was identified for implementation in 2024 includes an amendment to the procurement legislation by March 2024 to allow single sourcing of works, goods and consultancy services from EC\$15,000 to EC\$100,000. Madam President, according to the do Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (amendment) Bill, 2024 which seeks to give legal effect to this structural reform by amending the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act, 2014 Act No.39 of 2014 the principal Act to increase the maximum sum from the procurement

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of goods, works and services to which the principal Act would not apply from EC\$15,000 to EC\$100,000.

Madam President, this, we believe, is necessary. 2014 ten years ago, each one of us inside here was quite aware of the rate of inflation, the cost of goods. Sometimes I reflect on the construction business on what the cost of a house was 10 years ago. A house that may have cost EC\$250,000, people who are in the construction business now, a two-bedroom, three-bedroom house, if you can't mobilise half a million dollars, better you settle for something else based on the cost. And so in the Government business, when we talk about roads and bridges and retaining walls. I always used to smile and wonder why those guys started work on a 20-foot stretch of road and completed it when 7/8 of the road was not completed. It was brought to my attention that it is only EC\$15,000 the contract worth. So 20 feet of road couldn't go further because they have to go and sign another contract for another EC\$15,000, and you find yourself on the same project with six EC\$15,000 projects going up the road in order to satisfy the needs of the communities.

We believe, Madam President, in this day and age it is necessary to increase in order to cause things to happen to make things happen, to satisfy the needs of the people and let us not be frighten, Madam President, because this administration is an administration that is well noted and sometimes we come across as the Government of accountability and transparency and good governance. So I don't want people to be frightened to put that it is too risky to put money in the hands of our citizens to do the work. We believe and we have confidence in ourselves, in our Government, in our administration that we can manage this. And this piece of legislation that we are presenting here this morning, Madam President, all we are asking for is to increase the threshold, but there are relevant stop gaps; the conditions remain the same. What we need to do is to enforce them so that we can guarantee we get value for money. Let us not sit here and believe that it is too risky to move it from EC\$15,000 to EC\$100,000. We trust our people, we trust ourselves, and we believe that Grenadians have come to a stage in their lives where it is important to give value for money, and the state must be

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respected for that.

Madam President, in local parlance, someone may say that EC\$15,000 in this day and age, in local parlance, we say that is real “nana-tay”, really and truly. Because if you go to the hardware, one truckload you can carry more than EC\$15,000 in a reasonable-sized truck. I am not talking about those big SL trucks. You buy cement, you buy steel, and EC\$15,000 gets licked up, so we have to increase that, Madam President.

Madam President, this Bill contains two clauses. Clause 1 deals with the short title and clause 2 seeks to amend section 4 of the principal Act to increase the maximum sum for the procurement of goods, works and services to which the principal Act would not apply from EC\$15,000 to EC\$100,000. The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2024, does not contain, Madam President, a commencement clause as the intention is for this Bill to come into force upon its publication in the Gazette. So, Madam President, with much ado, I commend this Bill to you and to the House of the Senate for support and for deliberations. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Honourable Senator.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Cox, your light is on, sir. You have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to make some comments on this amendment, and I'll speak a little further on it. I think it is important to give some context as to why certain policies were taken then and why we end up where we are now.

Madam President, those measures in terms of the Public Procurement legislation all came on the backdrop of the financial situation that we found ourselves in, in 2013, when we took office, so those are some of the measures, including the Public Finance Management Act and a couple of other measures, so all fell into place... That was part of

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those measures in terms of how Government dispense money for various projects and initiatives.

Now, the whole idea of the EC\$15,000 where you don't have to go to the Procurement Board for approval, that was done so that if there is for some reason something urgent in a community, a constituency to be addressed that one can quickly access EC\$15,000 to treat with those matters, like say a block drain, something damage, you have heavy rains and you want to quickly respond. However, it is required that you get three proper quotes for submission to the Ministry, and a decision will be made thereafter on the most suitable person to treat that request. So that is the context in which this EC\$15,000 was recommended... that's how that policy emanated. Everything over that was to be directed to the Procurement Board for approval as is now.

Madam President, I think it's important to do that. Now, what would have happened over time? I think there were two things that caused us to be where we are now, and a Member rightly indicated the issue of inflation. The cost of goods and services has increased, and as such, EC\$15,000 has become a constraint. I think there was also a failure, maybe a little weakness in the policy in terms of defining how far you can use this EC\$15,000. So I think it kind of got away in trying to address certain measures, you find now that EC\$15,000 becoming more and more difficult to address it.

So, Madam President, I believe that yes, there is a need for an increase, but what we haven't heard is how we arrive at this EC\$100,000, and I think there is too much of a grey area. EC\$100,000 is not about trust; the issue is not about trust. In the business of construction, money is can be estimated, but trust is about competencies and practicality and whether or not it is in practicality to give somebody EC\$100,000 without proper oversight, ensuring that the estimates are correct and ensuring that the person has the capacity and the competencies to manage the project. I believe that is what I am speaking about. It is not whether we trust our persons or so, that is not the issue; otherwise, we probably wouldn't consider them to start with if we didn't trust them.

So, Madam President, my concern here is centred around once you're increasing these monies, it means that it is a further responsibility for the person whom you are

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entrusting to implement that project. And we all know that if somebody does not have the competencies to manage large sums of money, it can't be spent, and it is within that context my concern is centred around. How do we arrive at an appropriate figure to move from EC\$15,000 for this particular policy that we have in place in terms of addressing immediate things dealing with small contractors? I think that is where the issue is.

The question is, why can't it be 50? Why can't it be 75? So what I haven't heard from the "Other Side" is how they arrive at EC\$100,000? Did they just pull that figure out from the sky, or do we just say let's go with EC\$100,000? I would have loved to hear from the Member some more reasoning behind that to say that we have accessed 50 or 20 projects, or we are only confining it to a certain quantity of road or a certain quantity of drains, hence the reason why we are going with EC\$75,000 or why we are going with EC\$80,000. So I think for me that is where the challenge is.

Because when those monies go out and they are spent, very rarely do we find historically Government holding its own local contractors responsible, because sometimes they do not have the financial capacity to even meet some of the violations or even to repay some of the things. Because you have to remember, the people you are targeting for this policy are not the person who has a physical office or who has a secretary whom you can go to in terms of their record keeping.

From my understanding, that is not what this EC\$15,000 policy was for; those weren't the people that were targeted. I am not certain now, Madam President, if the Government would be targeting a different category of contractors now that you have increased it from EC\$15,000 to EC\$100,000, but that in itself is something that must be considered. Just saying that somebody can just bring an estimate for EC\$100,000 and you say go ahead and start to work, I think that is a little bit scary, if not for you, but for me. For someone who has overseen the Ministry of Infrastructure and understands and has an intricate knowledge of how construction works and how quickly things can go sideways, I think that there is a requirement for further oversight before giving someone EC\$100,000.

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I just think it is common sense. It is just plain common sense. There may be a requirement. I am in support and recognise that there is a need to increase it. There might be a requirement for a review of the details of the policy. There might also be a requirement for having another layer within the ministry, maybe a separate committee within the ministry, an internal ministry to review those quotes when they come in and to have people assigned. Because, you know, you would have your road officers who normally supervise those projects and not your senior engineers. The senior engineers don't really deal with projects costing EC\$15,000; you can't waste time on senior engineers going to look at projects costing EC\$15,000 when you have a project costing EC\$100 million or EC\$20 million; you need eyes on those projects. So your road officers who are the ones who would be doing that and so I am saying that there may be a requirement for Ministerial sub-committee inside to deal with that and even while you're rolling it out maybe it might be a requirement to have a period... a trial period maybe the first six months to see how it goes and then you cut it off from there and you do an assessment to see if it is working.

I am saying all this in the interest, Madam President, of securing the Government back in terms of the likelihood of this thing going crazy. Things can get away very quickly out of your hands if you do not manage it. There is also a possibility of adding different layers, and even may require further amendment so you can have... You move from... if you say 15, you bring it up to 100% so let's say 30,000 layer, and then you have a 50,000 layer. So those are some suggestions that I am offering in an attempt to minimise any possible loss in terms of money, and sometimes, in some cases, it is not as a result of the contractor entirely. And I give an example, Madam President.

We had a CDB project. I think it had to do with schools and we had a number of local contractors and I am certain that this Government also within their policy I believe and I heard the Prime Minister speak sometime about ensuring that local contractors benefit from whatever is invested in our country and we also was trying to achieve that, Madam President, and we found ourselves in a tricky place where you're trying to ensure that local persons get the opportunity and then the challenge comes that they don't have

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the capacity to do so.

One of the things we had to do, Madam President, was to have weekend classes in construction management after giving out contracts to some of the contractors. We had to bring in somebody to actually do training to get these contractors up to speed so that they could successfully complete some of those schools. One contractor, when he became overwhelmed, just basically walked off the project, and we had to call another contractor to take up the project, because of our relationship. It was a large company, a very large company locally, whom we called, and because of our relationship with them and because of the love that they have for Grenada and who they are, they decided to take it up without even doing the necessary details, just to ensure that we had the schools ready open for the school year.

So I am not saying this, Madam President, in a vacuum. I am saying this from my experience and in terms of our capacity and our contractors. I think when it sounds all nice and well. Yes, we can give you EC\$100,000, go and do this, and we can get 100 feet of road. If you believe that EC\$15,000 gave you 100 feet of road, which you think wasn't bad, imagine what EC\$100,000 could give you. And if the first hundred you figured was not properly done, and you are now giving EC\$100,000 to do five times more, it only means that we are having five times more bad work that is going to be all right.

So I am saying this in the context, Madam President, as somebody who's been serving this country, I think, and who understands and who worked in Government. You just need to have systems in place to safeguard how taxpayers' money is going to be spent. There is nothing in having those measures. I believe at the end of the day, once you get quality work, then you can stand here proud and say, "Look, we were able to get this done successfully".

So, as I said, my reservation, my support has a bit of a reservation towards this amendment. I believe that there might be a requirement for Government to review this before implementing or implement with great caution. So these are my contributions, Madam President, to this amendment. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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Madam President: I thank Senator Cox for his contribution. Seeing no other request for the floor... I call Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. This is a very serious, serious Bill, and I'm concerned, bearing in mind the proposition made and supported ably by the Leader of Government's Business, that we get to the Bills because we have to have serious contributions to make sure those things are passed. And I'm concerned that I haven't seen the level of response on his side, so I'm calling out to those who remain silent.

The procurement is a very serious issue, Madam President and of course, it's a matter that has been sort of baffling my mind to move from this EC\$15,000, where you don't have to go through this board or down committee. And if I may say quickly, I saw it in my first read, but somehow it slipped me, and maybe someone can correct me, I saw that this board, this Procurement Board, according to the Procurement Act, 2014, essentially you should be meeting on a monthly basis. I glimpsed that when I was reading the Bill. I may have missed that, but I tried to look for it again, and I didn't see it, maybe in my haste.

But if that is the case then it means that if it's something that cannot be kept and based on the different individuals that composed this board then it means therefore that we need to maybe change it and say well maybe meet every six months, maybe meet every four months or maybe you find a different composition of such committee to ensure that due process is done. Because notwithstanding this debate as to the increase in the threshold, which I'll talk about in a moment, it then worries me if that's the case then those that are over EC\$100,000, would we have the level of efficiency and meetings to discuss and review many other projects, many other procurement issues that supposed to take place that is delayed because of this default, if you want to call it that?

And so it's a call that maybe it's a process that needs to be relooked, maybe the composition needs to be relooked, and there are various persons who can make up such and of course, can be then ratified or reviewed by that board, so the work becomes less.

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I think our whole court system and other systems have shown that there are protocols and procedures as to how those things can be done. So that's the argument that can come from "That Side".

In terms of the argument in terms of inflation, you know, I smile because I say it's a pity that my Labour Senator, friend André Lewis, is not here today because he would have liked to hear that. If we're speaking of inflation, inflation is inflation. So it's not only the goods, but of course, Labour would also be looking for more money and not just some money, we're speaking from... **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** Well, I understand now the 4% issue because if EC\$15,000 gives you EC\$100,000 divided by 15... So it's 6%... **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** So... **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** No... Well, yes, you see that's where they are going. So be careful, be careful.

But the point is, Madam President, the issue of inflation cannot correlate in any way to this hundred thousand business. It baffles me because, simply, we are skewing the argument about construction and construction, but when you look at the Bill, and that's why we have to be careful, I looked at the original Act, and it speaks about services, it speaks about goods, and of course, it speaks about all these construction issues. So the same argument can be held, and that's why I spoke about service, so you have to hire a consultant to do some Environmental Studies. Similarly, are we saying we see some inflation there, too? Of course, I guess they will be happy because they can bid at higher rates, because they know that we can go up to EC\$90,000.

So this also opens up a wider frame for abuse, as Senator Cox was also alluding to. I agree that we can increase, but the question is, what is the premise? Where is the source of this? What are we trying to achieve? Okay. Are we trying to achieve, for example, if I give an analogy, Madam President, a simple analogy. The child is going to school, and the bus fare is EC\$5.00, but you know it's possible that if they miss the bus, the tax is EC\$40.00. So you make sure that this child has EC\$45.00 in their pocket so that in case they miss it, they could cover that.

And so the analogy here is, if we are saying we're operating at EC\$15,000 now, if there is an increase to EC\$75,000, what does that mean to us? It means, therefore, that

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we are exposing ourselves more. The difference with the child is that they may not always miss the bus. In this case, there is a high chance that they can miss the bus a lot based on the presentation by my dear Senator, saying that when you see a lot of roads that are unfinished, that is the risk.

So I want to humbly suggest that we review this. Because is it to fix blocks drain, is it to fix up to a mile of road? What is the benchmark? But I also agree that the issue of graduation, you can have different boundaries, is also an issue because we're speaking about procurement, but also note that this also could apply to disposal of access too, if my interpretation is right, I could be wrong. It means that you can have some... I'm wrong? Okay. Thank you, no problem. Right, so I wouldn't go there. No, I just wanted to be clear. I want to be clear.

But I want to say that while there is a need, not an EC\$100,000. I think we should look at it. There is nothing wrong with trying 50,000 and coming back. For example, in the last two years, have you had cases where you realised that you actually had projects to do that were really going to cost you close to EC\$100,000, and you could not get them done because you had to go to the Procurement Board, and that held up the process? **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** And so the question is, why is it they're not following the Act and meeting every month? That's a question. The Procurement Board should be meeting every month, and if they're not meeting every month, then make a change.

You see, so we have to be careful, Madam President, that sometimes there's something called "Root cause analysis". I learned that way back as a little boy. Some people call it the "Ishikawa diagram", or "Fishbone diagram"; they're all the same thing. And you ask yourselves the five whys. Sometimes you end up with six whys. And so the question is, we would like to hear what are those five whys that were asked, and what are the answers that were given, and have we explored deeply because it's easy to come here and just make these changes. We may hear next year things get so high it goes up to EC\$150,000.

So I just want us to be cautious and not be trigger-happy. We will speak about that later on when we come to the amnesty. I just want us to be cautious. Thank you.

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(Applause)

Madam President: I thank you, Senator St. Clair. The distinguished Attorney General of Grenada, Honourable Senator Claudette Doug... Thomas, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Joseph.

Madam President: Joseph, sorry.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to lend my support to the Bill now before this Honourable House. Madam President, as the Honourable Senator Norland Cox indicated, there was a context in which the sum was inserted in section four of the Bill, of the Act, not the Bill, of the Act, when it was passed in 2014. And that was in the context, yes, of the Structural Adjustment Programme under which we were at the time and also to satisfy certain, he didn't use the word "emergency", but urgent and in some instances, yes, emergencies needs on matters that needed to be quickly expedited without the time for going through the procedural steps required by the Procurement Act. Madam President, the same, in relation to the latter reason, the same applies today.

But added to that, Madam President, the Act was passed 10 years ago in 2014, 10 years, and since then several things have happened. First, we came to an end with the Structural Adjustment Programme since 2017, although many of the measures remained enforced up to when we took office, but the programme ended; it was a three-year programme, so it came to an end in 2017. Then you would have the natural occurrence of inflation over the 10-year period. So the inflation point is a very valid and relevant one. And then, Madam President, we all know what happened to the price of goods and services, particularly construction material, due to the onset of the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and we know, Madam President, that the cost of some items, in some instances, quadrupled. The cost went up

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to the extent that in 2022, when we took office, we had to implement some relief measures in our first budget; we all recall that on import duties. That's how impactful the rise in goods and services adversely affected business and economic activities in a country.

In addition, let me say, in addition to the increase in the cost of goods and services, we also, as a matter of fact, had an increase in the cost of labour. The construction sector was particularly itemised in the new minimum wage order that came into effect in January. And so these are real inflationary matters that we must take into account.

Added to that, there is the practical aspect of things. In many instances, there are small contractors who are engaged by Government to do certain urgent and remedial works throughout our country in all our different communities. And sometimes the matter is so urgent that the procedural steps attached to making the application or tendering the application through the procedure set out in the legislation is itself a hindrance. But that does not mean, Madam President, that there aren't set procedures eternally at the Ministry of Infrastructure through which these small contractors must go.

And I was indeed surprised, Madam President, to hear the former Minister for Infrastructure suggest that persons are just given a contract or they're just given the work to do without more. I would inform this Honourable House, if that is how things proceeded under his watch, I can assure this Honourable House that is not how things are proceeding under the watch of the current Minister for Infrastructure. **(Applause)**

Madam President, the small contractors, for example, three quotations are required for these smaller contracts. And yes, we don't think it is a waste of resources to engage an engineer from the Ministry to assess the work to be done. In fact, that is done, an engineer is engaged in these projects. And so, there is that level of scrutiny and assessment, in addition to which Quantity Surveying Reports are to be submitted. So there is a sufficient degree of scrutiny, as far as we are concerned, that takes place before a contract is awarded.

And, Madam President, what we inherited was in a situation where already, already, the situation was such that the threshold set by the legislation was too low for most of the projects. So what we inherited is a scenario as described by the Leader of

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Government's Business where consecutive EC\$15,000 contracts were awarded to the same contractor to finish a project and that, Madam President, was a flagrant violation of the law because many of them came in above the EC\$15,000, by law, needed to go through the procurement process but to avoid process the contract was broken up. And we are not going to preside over operations that bridge and fragrantly breach the provisions of the law. Right?

So it's either you slow down the process, you slow down the economic activities, you let them clog the Procurement Board with all the applications for these small contracts, or you make the adjustment. And we opted to do the proper thing because we were not going to continue to be in breach of the Procurement Act.

In relation to the Procurement Board... The Procurement Board, as far as we are concerned, is duly constituted and indeed very busy, indeed very busy. The board does meet and in addition to that, almost every week the board treats with, assesses and approves requests for no objections as they are prescribed in the legislation, constantly, the board does that constantly. Because there are certain methods set out in the legislation from around section 34 onwards that speak to how work can be tendered by Government, direct negotiation method, and sole-sourcing, there are different methods through which Government may contract goods and services, contract for goods and services and those are all employed by the various ministries, departments and statutory bodies and scrutinise by the board.

In fact, the Procurement Board is actually very meticulous. In fact, some ministries are sometimes too meticulous. The Procurement Board is very inquisitive. They probe. As Attorney General, I sit on the board, so I speak from first-hand experience. This Procurement Board isn't making jokes. When you come to the current Procurement Board, you have to come crossing all your t's and dotting all your i's. And as I said the board is very busy, right, assessing applications constantly as they come in.

So, making this adjustment to the Act will also help to unclog some of the bottlenecks that we are seeing, in addition to the practical reasons why these adjustments are necessary. And I know that my colleague on the "Other Side" is fully aware that this

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is an adjustment that is long overdue, long overdue. If it weren't overdue, there would not be a need for breaking up contracts into consecutive EC\$15,000 contracts to execute some of the works.

So we want the work to continue in Grenada. We want our people to be continuously employed. We appreciate very clearly that construction is a main component, a main sector of our economy and therefore whatever we can do as Government to help along that sector and to enhance productivity in that sector, we will take those steps. So with that said, Madam President, I fully endorse the Bill before this Honourable House. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Attorney General, Senator Claudette Joseph. The Business Senator, Senator Rahaman, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you very much, Madam President. Having heard both sides, I support this Bill for the following reasons.

Senator Cox mentioned that it was basically a relief measure that was put into place by the prior Government and necessarily so. And so that EC\$15,000 was used for a quick fix, short, small projects that needed attention right away, such as perhaps a landslide and so on, unblocking drains in the rainy season and so on. A very, very, very, very useful relief measure, but listening to "Both Sides" it is clear that, as all have pointed out, that it needs to be increased. And the question is, to what?

We know that inflation during the COVID-19 period in terms of construction of some materials, steel, lumber, increased at least threefold, which is true. We know that that was caused in particular by freight, by a tripling of the freight. Freight rates did go back almost to normal, maybe about 10%, 15% more than it was prior to COVID-19 it did go back down to that level, but again, we are seeing freight rates rise because many ships coming from the Far East cannot pass through the Suez Canal currently and have to make their way around the whole of Africa. And because the going around Africa is a longer distance, freight rates are going back up.

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In addition, the sea, the water around the bottom of Africa, Southern Africa, is quite rough, so the amount of payload that a vessel can take around that is less, therefore, further compounding the price of freight, and this is happening now as I speak.

Of course, these wars, Ukraine and what is happening in Gaza are manmade, and many of our problems in the world today are manmade. And they can be solved, but we don't have the capacity to solve them in Grenada, unfortunately, and so we have to deal with the effects of these things. So when we look at the cost of construction materials, we look at the cost of labour that has also increased, and we have a new schedule that we've all agreed to and passed.

And then we look at... We always talk about Government is slow. They are so slow to implement. They are so slow to complete. They are so slow to get things done. This is one of the reasons, because for small amounts, small issues, they have to go back through the procedure and proceed. Yes. They have to go through the procedure, and yes, I hope that, as our Attorney General mentioned, Senator Joseph, that he will go through due process and have those three quotes per project.

And I believe that if those things are done, time is money, and if Government can be more efficient, they will save money. So with those things mentioned, I support it and I support it fully. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Rahaman. Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. I am happy to hear some of the responses and suggestions. We welcome all. And before I wrap up, Madam President, I just want to make one point and to give Grenadians the level of assurance that they need.

Madam President, on reviewing some of these projects EC\$15,000 projects for the last maybe five, six years, what we have found, Madam President, and I think Senator Cox raised that very important point on the issue of competency, the issue of

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responsibility, the issue of financial capacity. Madam President, what we have found out is that a lot of these people with due respect who had these contracts in their hands, number one, they were not known, especially in the construction field. They were not known contractors. Some of them were introduced to the sector for the very first time, and so they had to subcontract to really get the work done.

I believe we could create opportunities for these people in other areas, rather than exposing them to areas in which they're not competent. This Administration will ensure... You don't have to put up a block to have a construction company, fine, but you must be registered and have the capacity, the human resource capacity to execute the job satisfactorily. Madam President, this is what we will ensure. If you are a fisherman, the state has a responsibility to create the opportunity for you to develop your profession in that particular area. I had the opportunity, Madam President, to talk to a lot of people in the construction industry who had to go and fix projects that were not properly done.

We will ensure, and the AG spoke at length of the tightness of the present board that we have and how they will scrutinise and make sure that the EC\$100,000 is being put in the hands of people who can do the job. I don't want anybody to misquote me because I'm quite aware of people who have companies, formed construction companies, and they employ people and agencies. I have no problem working with people of that nature. But when you're going to ask somebody to get involved in a EC\$100,000 job and they have no clue what this job is about, we cannot run a State like that. And therefore, Madam President, I want to assure the Grenadian public in regards to any doubt that they have that the t's will be crossed i's dotted in terms of going forward.

So, Madam President, I commend this Bill to you and the House, and I seek your approval. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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Clerk: A Bill for an Act short entitled, Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Madam President: Honourable Members... Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to discuss the Bill Clause by Clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

Madam President: The Honourable Senate is resumed. Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole and passed without amendment. Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: I beg to report that the Bill was considered in Committee and is adopted... And was adopted. Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

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Bills: Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2024**

Clerk: A Bill for an Act short entitled, Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Madam President: Bill is passed. Honourable Senator Claudette Joseph, Attorney General, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to introduce for the first reading, a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Clerk: A Bill which intends to lessen the potential for the commission of violent crimes and firearms-related incidents by reducing the number of firearms and ammunition circulating illegally in the state, shortly entitled, Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to move that the Relevant Standing Order of the Senate be suspended to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages of this Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Honourable Claudette Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to move for the second reading of the Bill.

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Question proposed.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, Government recognises that in recent times there has been a noticeable increase in incidents of criminal offences involving firearms, either the possession of firearms or use of firearms and in this respect, Madam President, Grenada is not alone. While Grenada is a little better off than several of our neighbours, we are not alone.

All around us, Madam President, in Trinidad and Tobago, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in St. Lucia, in Jamaica, all our Caribbean neighbours have seen a significant rise in offences involving firearms. And in some instances, it feels, Madam President, as though it's already out of control in some of these other jurisdictions. For example, Madam President in 2022, Jamaica, Trinidad, St Vincent and the Grenadines... Well, let me call them in order: Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and St. Lucia, in that order, were among the top countries of Latin America and the region in terms of murder rates. Jamaica, for example, had 53 murders for every 100,000 persons in the population. St. Vincent and Trinidad had 40. St. Lucia had 37. Many of these offences, Madam President, were gun-related, and we like the boast that Grenada is one of the safest Caribbean islands, and it is, and Madam President, we are intent on keeping it that way.

So, as Sir Eric said during the 70s, when we had all the turmoil in Grenada, he is reported to have said, "When your neighbour's house is on fire, wet yours". We have to be proactive, Madam President, in treating with this matter that is actually quite frankly becoming a scourge on the Caribbean region, and we see here in Grenada, based on the police reports that we do have an upsurge in the incidents of offences relating to firearms or involving firearms.

So, Madam President, we have taken the proactive step to make amendments to the Firearms Act to allow for the institution of a firearms amnesty that will give persons who are in possession of illegal arms and ammunition to surrender these devices or these instruments of harm and pain and suffering to the authorities.

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Madam President, in this regard, we propose that this Honourable House insert a new section in the Firearms Act, section 51A, because the current Firearms Act does not make specific provisions for the Minister, the Line Minister, who is the Minister for Home Affairs, to declare an amnesty. So this new section is going to be, once passed in this Honourable House, inserted in the legislation so that not only for this amnesty but in future should there be a need for an amnesty, there will not be a requirement for the legislation to be further amended. So the Act will empower the Minister to declare an amnesty in Grenada or any part of Grenada by an order which would be subject to affirmative resolution.

And during the amnesty period, a person who is in unlawful possession of a firearm or ammunition may surrender them to their specified locations, most likely, police stations and to specified persons with no consequence, no adverse consequence flowing from such surrender, so that there will be no proceedings taken up against the person who surrenders his or her illegal firearm.

Now what we propose, Madam President, is that during the amnesty period, a person who has the firearm may surrender it as I said following the set procedure and the procedure will be set out in the order that I mentioned which would be in the form of an SR&O and there will be certain conditions, we propose, including that, no one will be prosecuted for being in possession of the firearm or for delivering the firearm and ammunition. So that if they are in possession of it for the purpose of depositing it with the relevant police station or other designated area, they will not be charged with being in possession of the firearm, that's during the amnesty period.

Persons would be allowed to surrender the firearms and ammunition anonymously and would not be required to disclose any information relating to them. So you would not have to give any information about yourself, it's an anonymous depositing of the firearm, and you will not be required to give any information in relation to the firearm. And in that regard, persons who are in possession of illegal firearms may enlist, for example, the assistance of their loyal or their illegal counsel in surrendering the firearm. So we want to do it under the Cloak of Anonymity.

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After the amnesty, we propose that the amnesty will be for a 90-day period, and after the amnesty, persons found, and these are important persons, found with illegal firearms and ammunition will face mandatory prison sentences with no bail options, because we have to keep our country safe for all of us. So you have the amnesty, and after that, if you are found with an illegal firearm or with illegal ammunition, there will be mandatory prison sentences imposed, and it will be a situation of no bail. So you will not be in a position where a lawyer can go and beg for you. You will not be in a position where your lawyer can go before a magistrate or a judge and beg for you. You will not be in a position where your lawyer can plead to mitigate your sentence. You will go to jail. Put it this way. You will be going to jail if you get caught with a firearm or ammunition after the amnesty expires, and you're not getting bail while you're awaiting trial.

So, Madam President, we know we have certain hot spots in the country and only a few days ago, I was actually speaking with one of the guys on one of the blocks in Town, and he said to me, "CJ, nobody will be handing in their thing, you know". I said, "All right". He said, "Men paid a lot of money for their stuff, up to EC\$3,000 and what not and they not handing in their thing", I said, "Well, I know you have a lot of influence, I know you have a lot of influence, so tell your partners and them who you know have, hand it in and if you have one you better hand it in because you can't come by CJ, you can't go by Pedro if you get caught after the amnesty you're going to jail". So we need that message, Madam President, to resonate with persons in our community who have access to or who are in possession of illegal firearms and ammunition, because we are not going to become like our neighbours. We have to keep our country safe.

So, Madam President, another feature of the amnesty will be that designated police stations, I indicated that, perhaps one per district throughout the State of Grenada, will be identified, named and publicised as places for the deposit and surrendering of firearms and ammunition. The Senior Officer in charge of the police station or any other police officer given the responsibility in the absence of the Senior Officer will be the person designated to receive the surrendered firearms or ammunition.

A database of firearms and ammunition collected will be kept, including the types,

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the serial numbers and the ballistic analysis, and the police will investigate all surrendered firearms recorded as stolen property because there might have been reports in the past, right, or suspected of being involved in a crime.

So I want to explain clearly. You deliver the firearm or the ammunition anonymously, you deliver, and you may even enlist the help of your legal counsel, as I said, so you deliver anonymously, but once the firearm is received, it will be examined, and the serial numbers and ballistic analysis will be recorded. And if in the process of that analysis, the arm is reported as stolen or being involved in the commission of a crime, that too will be recorded.

So disposal and destruction. After the firearms are disposed of, they will be destroyed following existing legal procedures for the destruction of firearms, which we already have on the books. And we are offering no fiscal incentives. If you buy something illegally, you might have paid up to EC\$3,000 for it, but we're not going to pay you back EC\$3,000 to get it. But if you get caught with it after the amnesty, you're in a lot of trouble. So there will be no fiscal incentives for the surrender.

And a specially deposit bin will be installed at secure and key locations for the surrender of the firearms and ammunition, which will carry clear procedures for opening and retrieving firearms and ammunition that have been surrendered.

So, Madam President, these are the main features of the amendment, the proposed insertion of a new 51A in the Firearms Act, and we are so serious about this matter, Madam President, that the Bill does not contain a commencement clause. Because our intention is that once it is passed in this Honourable House and assented to by the Governor General, it will come into force, and the amnesty will be declared and run for a period of 90 days.

So I urge all the guys who have been using these rifles as toys in recent times, firing off, taking advantage of when fireworks are going off be it New Year's or Independence and firing off and doing a call and response thing, one side over here and the next side over there and it's a big joke, literally, terrorising neighbourhood, literally. The last time this happened, people were horrified, people felt terrorised, they felt scared,

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right, and this is happening in residential areas with a lot of children, a lot of elderly people, people who are shut-in, and it's horrible. And I mean I've spoken to some of the guys and they express remorse for, you know, this kind of behaviour, not admitting, but showing... no, no, no they not admitting, they not admitting... but I mean it's a group of them, they know each other, they know who they are. They not admitting, but everyone who you speak to, they say, you know, this is terrible they, so sorry this happened and whatnot, but some may even be suspected to be to be part of it.

So what we are saying... You understand... **(Laughter)** Nobody is admitting... But everybody's expressing sorrow and horror at this indiscriminate firing off of wrongs. So we have to be more responsible as citizens and as Government, we are taking this matter very seriously because we are not going to allow our country to become lawless to this extent. So the urge from Government is for persons who are in possession of these firearms and ammunition to take advantage of the amnesty offered and surrender them knowing, that there are now negative or adverse consequences that will flow once you deliver the firearm or the ammunition during the amnesty period in the designated places. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: I thanked the distinguished Attorney General, and the debate continues. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Norland Cox, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, this amendment that is before this Honourable House, as indicated by the move of the Bill, is a measure to respond to the increase in crimes related to firearms. Madam President, I heard that there was some there were mention of follow-up actions in terms of after the amnesty but I haven't seen anything in this Bill that speaks to that in particular and for me I am somewhat disappointed that if you're doing an amnesty I think the measures that you're going to implement, right thereafter, should form part of this Bill. That is my suggestion. **(Applause)** I think that would have acted as a stronger motivator

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and that will bear success on the amnesty initiative.

Because if I pay EC\$3,000 for an illegal firearm and ammunition, and you give me 90 days, I think that is sufficient time for maybe me to pass it onto somebody else to collect back my EC\$3,000 or more. And if I have several, it might also be an opportunity for me to engage in selling. That is just one view, one side of it that I'm looking at. I understand the suggestion in the context of why the Government may not want to offer compensation for collecting these firearms, but I still think that, probably, was also a viable option, not necessarily EC\$3,000, but some form of compensation to motivate them.

As the word indicates and implies, amnesty, obviously, people know that they're not going to suffer any issues once they bring their firearms. The question is whether or not that is sufficient for somebody to bring in their firearm. I do not know if that is sufficient, and maybe that's a question that the Government may have to ask themselves, whether or not just having an amnesty is sufficient to address what you're trying to achieve.

And this is more a response, Madam President, in my assessment and a more symptomatic response than a causative one. **(Applause)** And so, I don't know how effective that this measure can be or will be, I am not... I can't say that it will be a failure, I can't say. But what is proposed in terms of motivating persons to come forward, I feel it's somewhat weak and may not bear the success, unless there are other measures that I don't know about or that is not mentioned here, or that wasn't presented by the mover of the Bill, that the Government intends to put together with this amnesty to achieve the goal of the amnesty.

So I do not want to say too much in that regard. However, I think the whole issue of why people possess guns is more a complicated one because there are... I believe that some people believe that they need one, because I... A few days ago I woke up and I just, my mind is thinking that, well since he have increase around, illegal, I might need one myself, Madam President. You know to protect myself. So... **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Well, I am... I'm getting to that.

I am not going to go the illegal route, but I'm understanding from remarks from the Minister for National Security indicated that in his opinion he don't think that we don't need

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any guns at all, whether legal or not legal. I could be wrong, but based on his, that is how he felt. And I'm saying this in the context that there is, it's a rigorous process, a difficult process for a legal one to be obtained, and that also may be a constraint or a deterrent why persons are going the illegal route.

So there is a combination of factors, all right, and I'm saying that we have to look at this to see whether or not, whatever approaches, whatever measures that we are taking, could be a sound success. And I know that there are comparison that were drawn with different countries, but I think that is beyond looking at, at who we are as a people, because just saying that Jamaica have this amount, St. Lucia this amount, a Jamaican is not a Grenadian, a St. Lucian is a Carriacouian, so it is much more than just saying that crime is taking a particular place, but it has to do with the people, it has to do what is taking place in the society, it has... It's a number of factors. So while it's important to look at what is taking place around you, but it's also important to understand why this happening, where it is happening to as well, and to ensure that those things don't happen where we are.

But getting back to the crux of the matter. I'm not certain. I did hear the mover of the Bill speak to a gun that might be linked to a crime. And maybe the mover can give some more clarity about that. We do have some active homicide cases that are related to guns, and if one such gun should be submitted through this amnesty, the question is, how is that going to impact an active case? I couldn't remember. I couldn't clearly pick up what was said, if the Member did speak on that particular matter.

And so, just giving a scenario, if that gun will also be a key evidence item, an evidence item in terms of determining the outcome of the case. I think, I think there needs to be some, I just would like to get some clarity on how you treat with a particular. And the question is, the family who is going to be aggrieved by the person who, the likely person who would have caused that crime, how are they going to feel that somebody may get off, for committing a crime. So I think it's a little dicey, and so I couldn't get clearly if much explanation was given on that in particular, especially for an active homicide or so. I think that is something that is not spelt out clearly in this amendment. How are you

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going to treat a firearm that is actively involved in a homicide that has been investigated?

And if no, no, no charges or so are going to be laid to that firearm, no question is going to be raised about that firearm. It means that somebody is going to get off scot free. Yes, for our crime. I stand corrected in my whole analysis of what is being presented through this amnesty. So I raised that for further deliberation and response from the mover of this amendment. But I know that references were made to the popping of guns and things in a celebratory type way, at different times of the year. I just want to add that it's sometimes we lay blame on illegal firearm activity, and in some cases, legal firearm owners do it, but using illegal ammunition. Because you know you have to record with the police your firearm, and also the amount of ammunition that you have. So it's a little bit of tricky stuff, so I know that there's more work to be done, in terms of how we're going to pull the ammunition and the guns off the street.

I recall, Madam President, in another place which is directly affecting Carriacouans, that the Member for Carriacou in the "Other Place" did make mention about sporadic checks, random checks that have been made by the port and customs and the police, when Carriacouans traverse from Carriacou via the ferry to the mainland. And some complaint was laid, and I think there was an ease in the measure in terms of how the checks were being done. It was random checks. In retrospect, thinking about what is happening, and knowing that how porous our borders are, by the removal, or the relaxing of that measure, possibly could have and possibly is allowing for the movement of illegal firearms and other stuff as well.

While I do know that residents of Carriacou sometimes do feel aggrieved, that they just come to Grenada to get ordinary stuff and they're being stopped and asked to check and thing, it creates some bit of uncomfortableness for them, knowing that they're Grenadian, and likewise when persons coming from Grenada, that doesn't happen if you're coming to Carriacou. And it's not because it's a... It's because they don't understand the context and the information that the police have in terms of how things happen, because of the Grenadine Islands. So the likelihood of things moving from Grenada to Carriacou is minimal than the other way around, hence the reason why the

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police take that approach.

So I know it was raised, I know that the measures were, were, were relaxed. I cannot say that is a contributory factor, but that is a clear possibility for a clear opportunity for illegal activities to escalate, for a person to feel comfortable in some way or the other. So I say this, to say that it's a broader context, it's a broader discussion surrounding or managing, controlling, reducing and deterring the movement and the... well even right on our ports, large numbers of guns and fire... That's to tell you now, brave persons are. So if you're doing it where you have a structure, where you have checks, where you have measures, to check those things, people taking the chance to pass it on our ports, could you imagine if you have an area that is not being checked? So I say this to say that is something that may have to be looked at going forward. I don't know how they would do it, but I know that people feel aggrieved that they're being randomly checked and asked questions when we traverse between Carriacou and mainland Grenada.

So I just wanted to point that out, that sometimes you know attempt to live more comfortable, sometimes we create more uncomfortable situations for us and for everybody else. So that is something that we have to pay attention to, at times when we call in for relaxation measures. If we don't have an understanding of the full context in which certain things are being done.

So, Madam President, I just want to summarise by saying I think this first measure is a little bit weak in terms of a policy approach, not anything to do with the drafters or anything like that. They're only drafting what they've been told to draft. But the policy approach, knowing what we know, given the presentation from the mover of the Motion and the amount of crime that we have, even closer to St. Vincent, our neighbours, I think that I was expecting it to be a little bit more robust.

So you have amnesty and the measures are there, and automatically the measures kick in once the amnesty sunsets. So, but this don't, this doesn't speak to it. I heard the Member mention it that that is what is going to happen. I don't know if it's just going to be happening by way of regulations. I don't know if there is a need for it to come to the House. I don't know. So, I'm just raising it to say that, I believe if you're not going

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to compensate persons for bringing in their firearm, I think just asking them to come and say nothing is going to happen to them, I don't think that is sufficient enough to get a viable response. Somebody who has had a firearm for the last 10, 15, 20 years is comfortable, quietly. I don't know why you believe that they might believe that they'll get caught next year or next month, if they've been doing it successfully for quite some time.

So, it's just that I think that we just need to find a way to get people to come forward and do it. I don't think that this open measure is sufficient in my mind. I don't think so. I thought, I think that link in it which strong measures, one time I believe would have been much more effective in achieving this amnesty. So that is my contribution to this. **(Applause)** And so I wait for the response in terms of how we treat active homicide, for cases that are ongoing and some of which I know for a fact are ongoing currently. So I wait. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox. Thank you. And as I await the next contributor, I think there is the possibility of gun-free societies, you know. At least, if I recall correctly, I think, for example, even the British Government, the police never carried guns until very recently. And I can think of several small, small countries, some in Europe, where the state isn't armed, and that's been a signal to some of the citizenry outside of traditional hunting. But that's a conversation for later. Senator Rahaman, you've requested the floor, and it's given to you, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thanks. Thank you once again, Madam President. So a few things come to mind. We like the intention to surrender your firearms without charge. However, there is not enough motivation, as the respected Senator Cox was just mentioning. I agree with him on that point. There needs to be a sufficient deterrent to ensure that people do not take advantage of the amnesty. Because, in fact, as it was pointed out by our AG, people have spent thousands of dollars on their illegal firearms.

We know that no arms are manufactured in Grenada, yet they are readily available.

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We also know that it is primarily coming from the north. So if that is the case, because we know that countries in the north, for example, North America, there is a law that gives them a right to bear arms, so it is very easy for citizens to walk in and to purchase a firearm in those countries, because it is their right. So how are these arms and ammunition getting here so freely? It comes in, one of the ways is through our ports. I don't suppose that companies would take the risk of bringing in firearms, so therefore I suppose that it is individuals who are taking the risk to send them to individuals.

So if we know where it is primarily coming from, the direction, and we have an idea as to who would be motivated to do that, an individual rather than a corporate entity, then we know what to search, where to focus our search. And we know the ports of New York and Miami are major ports, for example, from which we receive goods every week. And we also know the type of shipments that personal goods tend to come in. Very rarely do personal shipments come in container loads. They come in barrels, deep containers, and smaller shipments. So the Government has a responsibility to seek out and purchase the type of equipment that will aid customs in scanning (**applause**), so that it can make the job of the officers more effective.

Those who are caught importing firearms, in addition to the amnesty, you should have seen... I would have liked to see something mentioned about those who are caught importing firearms. (**Applause**) Those who import more than one or are caught with more than one face an additional charge and intention to sell or distribute arms and ammunition, which should come with an additional charge, prison time, and a fine. And when we talk about fines and additional charges, we shouldn't only speak about prison time. The act speaks about 10 years and 12 months, and, in terms of different things, different scenarios, the Firearms Act.

But it should speak to this specific instance. We would like to see the seizing of property, so if you are found with a firearm in your vehicle, we may seize the vehicle. The firearm cost EC\$3,000, the vehicle cost EC\$30,000. Because when you commit a crime, you have to transport the firearm to commit the crime. People are not walking to commit crimes; they're using their vehicles to go here and to go there. So they're transporting it,

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either I bought by boat or by car. And so, if you are caught with an illegal firearm in your car or your boat, you lose the car or you lose the boat. Serious consequences that make people think twice, in order to go along with this amnesty.

I'm suggesting that the Government take additional measures, look at additional measures. The amnesty is good, very good, but it needs to be, have more, it needs to have teeth. So, these are my humble suggestions that they can strengthen the deterrent, so that people who commit crimes or people who just want to have a firearm, as Senator just mentioned, that perhaps he needs to get one too, because of his protection as a law-abiding citizen. I mean, you can't help but think like that if it becomes too common. So this needs to be, some serious consequences need to be considered, and I believe it should have been added, but it's not too late for the Government to decide. In addition to the mandatory prison sentence and the no bail, which are good things that the AG has mentioned, there are some additional things that should be done. I thank you.

(Applause)

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to give support to this Bill, the Firearms Amendment Bill, 2024, as presented by the Honourable senator. And I think this Bill underscores the responsiveness of the Minister for National Security, and by extension, the Government, to increasing incidences of what I will call lawlessness. And in fact, being responsible for legislation, it would be careless on our part not to have legislation adjusted to be able to respond to things like those.

So, apart from just supporting this Bill, I want to encourage all our citizens who currently hold and possess illegal firearms to take advantage of this amnesty. You've listened well to the AG, and what's like it happened thereafter, and we've heard some excellent additional suggestions coming from the business Senator, Senator Honourable Rahaman. But the good thing about it is that it proposes a three-month period for the amnesty. So lots of adjustments can be facilitated within those three months, to see the

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final product come together. And there's a reason why you are in this House. **(Applause)**

Yes, I'm confident that their appropriate adjustments will be made within that time frame, to see an effective product resulting at the end that will genuinely address the issue. And hence, I'm calling on our citizenry who may be so implicated, to take advantage. Further, I want to call on our wider citizens, because it's been my observation that we almost make it a sport, or we consider it quite lightly, to oppose law enforcement. We've seen in recent months the public, John Public, pulling people away from our law enforcement officers, who are legally and lawfully trying to enforce the same laws that we are trying to put in place.

I condemn this. This Honourable House condemns this. **(Applause)** And as a nation, as a people we need to condemn this too, because we could put as many good laws into place, we could put the strictest regulations, we can put as many incentives as possible and get good legislation there, but if as a people we prefer to behave lawlessly and to disregard law enforcement none, of this will bear the fruit in helping to preserve the peace loving nature of this, our blessed country. So I implore us.

Quickly, I heard a couple of questions asked in relation to incentivising the person who is going to surrender their illegal firearm. And in my own deliberation at one point, I thought of it, and I felt it could have been nice. But upon deeper reflection, I think it will be pretty dangerous to pay people to abide by the law, because the law is clear. If you begin to pay them, think of, I mean, and Senator Cox said it nicely, think of how porous our borders are. And so, when we decide to pay and incentivise them to surrender their illegal arm, they're going to purchase them illegally elsewhere and come and milk the Government. And I think that's a dangerous recipe. So upon deeper reflection, I think we proceeded appropriately not to give any financial incentive, but instead to encourage them dearly to surrender them before the consequences become too severe. Right?

On the other matter, I think this Firearm Amendment Bill seeks to, and when it speaks of the propose section that says, no one will be prosecuted for being in possession of or delivering a firearm and ammunition for disposal, during the amnesty period, now this speaks to the, this doesn't treat with the criminal code, it doesn't treat with any of the

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other laws that would have somebody implicated for some criminal offence. This speaks to the firearm, and the offence here is being in possession of it. So if, for the purposes of this, being in possession will not be prosecutable for the purposes of the amnesty. However, causing grievous harm, using a weapon, I presume, and probably AG will speak to that more clearly, will still be prosecutable under the other laws, because those have not been amended. But for the possession part, if you, it's been amended there.

And that doesn't guarantee, in fact, from my understanding, the ammunition is being surrendered anonymously, so even if that gun is found to be associated with a crime, there is no association of the gun with the person. So the police will still have to do their due diligence and be able to prove whatever they need to prove.

So I want to re-register my support, and I ask all of the citizenry to consider the cost of ignoring this amnesty. I don't think it's cool to be looking over your shoulder every, every day. In pursuit of what? So I encourage all of the persons so implicated in this amnesty and this amendment to consider the cost and make the correct judgment to take advantage of this amnesty. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew. Thank you. Other contributors? Senator Douglas, you've requested, and you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Katisha Douglas: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to contribute today as we engage in this crucial conversation on the use of illegal firearms, a topic that deeply resonates with the people of this country and our brothers and sisters internationally. This is deep, and it's troubling. Madam President, this topic carries profound implications for our society's safety and well-being.

Gun violence is a scourge that threatens our most fundamental right, the right to life, so it cannot be taken lightly. Madam President, in the Prime Minister's presentation on March 26, he indicated that for the first three months of 2024, the police confiscated about 10 to 11 illegal firearms. That number might sound small, but for our country, it is

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significant. Madam President, I must say the step by the Government to institute the firearm amnesty is a positive one, and I support it. I think it's necessary. I wished it had happened sooner. But, and, I also showed that the people of our country appreciate the step, because people are scared. You know it's not easy to be in your community, and you're hearing pow, pow, pow, pow, pow. It's very unsafe and troubling, so I'm sure that our people also embrace that.

But, Madam President, I would like to take the opportunity to encourage the illegal firearm holders to take advantage of this period. And the hope of it is to remove and stop the illegal gun circulation. Fewer firearms simply means fewer opportunities for gun accidents and violent crimes. Madam President, I would like the nation to know that this amnesty represents a critical step in breaking the cycle of illegal firearms and enhancing public safety in our country, which is important. You know, visitors out there and they're looking. You know, tourism is very big for us, and we want to ensure that when people come into our country, they feel safe. It's important. It underscores the urgency of addressing gun violence, so people need to understand what the amnesty is about and take advantage of it.

Madam President, I would like to say that, to the individuals who possess illegal firearms or ammunition, those without licenses or authorisations who might be listening today, and I pray and I hope that they're listening, the amnesty is a humanitarian action, it shows that we leaders of this country prioritise lives and safety over punishment. So we're giving you the opportunity to surrender, you know, without any penalties. Madam President, through you, I would like to encourage all illegal firearm owners to take full advantage of the amnesty period and help contribute to a safer society. Grenada belongs to us. It's not just a few of us. It belongs to all of us.

Madam President, again through you, I would like to also recommend to the Government that they should consider some type of incentive. And I heard my dear Senator colleague over there, David Andrew, that providing an incentive may just open the can of worms, you know, bigger, and we don't want that. But the fact is, when people receive an incentive, it motivates them, it encourages them to come forward. And that's

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what we want. We want people to come forward. We want people to participate because, really and truly, we don't want the amnesty to fail. Madam President, as leaders of this nation, we have to work together to ensure that we accomplish the common goal for this amnesty.

Madam President, I'm sure the individuals with the illegal firearms and ammunition are asking, "What's in this for me"? You know, a couple of weeks ago, someone was sharing with me that they were out with a gentleman, and he said to them, "You know, someone offered me a gun. A brand new gun. It's wrapped, and all". They said to me, "Give me EC\$3,000. Just like that". So the individual asked the person, "What did you do? Did you buy the gun"? He said, "No, I didn't purchase the gun, but I'm telling you, we have a lot of guns in Grenada, and new guns too". So that alone is frightening.

So you're saying, okay, I pay EC\$3,000 for my gun, you're asking me to bring it forth, what's in it for me? I need something. I don't want to give you my gun for free. I paid for it. So we would like for them to strongly consider, you know, putting some level of incentive, and I believe it's going to make the programme, you know, successful.

Madam President, in conclusion, in addition to the incentive, I must suggest that we look at just taking a comprehensive approach, and other solutions beyond the amnesty. And I believe it can be combined with extensive security and border control because the guns are coming in, and why are we not picking them up? It's our responsibility to ensure that we block it. So maybe we need to look at our security system, the border control.

Education. We need to educate people. We need to go to the schools. I mean, the other day I was looking at the news, and it's sad. It's very sad that the number of, you know, knives and other weapons that were confiscated in the schools. How is it possible for our children to be going to schools with weapons? What is the purpose of it? It means that they have some level of intention, and why are they getting away? So we really need to educate our people; go to the schools. We need to emphasise to our citizens the dangers of illegal firearms.

Community Engagement. Our ability to foster trust between citizens and law

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enforcement. I heard my brother say that, you know, we cannot look at law enforcement as our enemy, because they're not. They have a fundamental responsibility to serve and to protect, but if we as citizens are creating this friction that they're our enemies, then as our brother Senator David rightly said, it makes no sense, but in all these things in place.

So, these are the things that I really suggest that we look at, and I want to talk about counselling. The fact is, in our communities, there are a lot of broken families, broken homes, and what are we doing to help these people, to help our young people? Madam President, as I end, let me say, in our pursuit of safety, let us remember that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. We cannot forget that. As leaders, we must respect individual rights by prioritising public safety, and this debate, this conversation, transcends political lines. It's about guarding lives and promoting a safe and secure environment for all our citizens and visitors. Madam President, we must take a common ground, guided by compassion and collective commitment to a safer and violence-free society. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I wish to thank Senator Douglas for her intervention, and the floor is offered to Senator Neilon Franklyn. You have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to share briefly on the proposed amendment to the Firearms Act, to implement or rather institute, the amnesty. Madam President, the Honourable representative, well, the Member who represents the Business Community, pointed out that guns are not manufactured in Grenada, and that is a fact. While I understand the need for the amnesty, and I applaud the Government for attempting to implement a measure to deal with the current gun situation in the country, because this is not who we are as a people, this is not what we are accustomed to as a people.

We are known as Grenada for being peaceful. We are not known for gun violence. It is in this context that I indicate to the House, and of course, the illegal firearms are not legally imported into Grenada; they are smuggled into Grenada. And the Honourable

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Senator Cox indicated that in essence, the move to implement the amnesty doesn't address the true cause, rather. And in my view, in assessing cause and effect, the cause of the gun situation that we have is in direct relation to the fact that, as the Honourable Senator David Andrew indicated, our borders are porous. We have not taken any significant steps to address this issue.

So you might very well have a situation where the amnesty is implemented, an illegal gun owner surrenders his firearm, and on his or her way back home, they acquire a new one. The intention of the amnesty, and again, this is not an attack on the Government, the intention of the amnesty is good, but there are more issues that need to be considered in addressing access to firearms, access to illegal firearms, rather in Grenada.

The Honourable Member, the Honourable David Andrew, indicated and stressed possession. And while he was deliberating, a question came to mind, and the Honourable Attorney General may be able to correct me if I'm wrong. In a court of law, in order to prove possession, there must be control and knowledge. If, while the amnesty is implemented, the police or customs enforces a search warrant on a vehicle or someone's premises and an illegal firearm is identified there, how would it be treated? I think it's an interesting question to ask. And of course, I anticipate that the Attorney General will provide some clarification and answer as it relates to that.

But, Madam President, I have had the pleasure of working alongside the police officers while I worked at customs as a Customs Officer. And I've been on operations at sea, where customs, drug squad, and the coast guard have attempted to intercept vessels suspected of smuggling goods and illicit items. One of the issues that ties into compensation is that I heard a lot of indications that compensation should be considered for the illegal firearm, as an encouragement, rather than for illegal firearm owners to surrender their firearms.

I am looking at compensation in the context of the officers who are tasked with the enforcement responsibility. I never knew, until I worked alongside police officers, specifically those who go out on operations in an attempt to secure the borders, to secure

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our country, that they were not paid overtime. This could be considered at this point in time, because we see that there is a need for bolstering of our border security agencies, specifically customs and the coast guard. The Coast Guard is specific and is responsible for search and rescue, while the primary responsibility of border security lies with customs. Customs, of course, are compensated in terms of overtime, but police officers, those are the drug squad unit, those are the coast guard. They are required to go above and beyond. And I am speaking, again, not making a political point, but from experience, working alongside these officers.

There is a need for greater assessment of cargo at St. George's Port and Maurice Bishop International Airport. Officers of the customs are required to physically examine a lot of cargo. Again, I've had the experience of doing that. It can be tedious, it can be exhausting. I know, if I'm not correct, it wasn't last year, the year before, port authorities procured a scanner which is housed at shed one at St. George's Port. I'm not aware that the scanner is functioning as effectively as it should. The Government can consider looking into that issue, where the scanner is positioned, and what type of cargo is assessed or scanned using these scanners.

In countries larger than ours, I think it was you, Madam President, earlier on, who made reference to gun-free societies. In a lot of these countries, where policies are taken to not necessarily arm the police with firearms or reduce the access to firearms or by its citizens, there are strong and stringent border security measures in place to prevent the illegal entry of these illicit arms, and also stringent penalty measures in place if you are caught with these arms. In conversations over the past few days and weeks with citizens of this country, some have indicated that they have noticed that access to a licence to obtain a legal firearm is rather difficult. I've never attempted to apply for a firearms licence.

Like my colleague indicated, given the current situation, some of us may feel a bit unsafe and may consider obtaining an illegal firearm. And in this context, I make the point to say that the Government can consider looking into the process for law-abiding citizens who want to obtain a legal firearm through a licence issued by the police. Government can assess the process and policy that exists. This is not me saying, lift whatever stopgap

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measures that are in place. But of course, through consultation with the business community, with the police, who is the competent authority for issuing these licences that can be considered.

Madam President, and again, I'm just referencing my past experience working as a Border Control Agent at the Customs. There is a need and there is an opportunity at this point in time for the Government to bolster the agency, bolster the customs, bolster immigration, bolster the coast guard unit. There are a number of interceptor vessels that are at the disposal of the agencies, but you would understand in conversation with officers there that some are not well trained to operate. I know that recently the customs have been training the officers who will be manning the marine unit of the customs. And that training is commendable, and it is a step towards dealing with the issues in terms of border security.

So while the amnesty is an attempt to deal with the illegal firearms already within the state, there is also a need, in conjunction with that, to deal with the border control and border security issues. And again, Madam President, I believe that if these measures are dealt with effectively, the amnesty would be very successful. There isn't that set date as yet for the implementation or the institution of the amnesty, so it gives Government an opportunity to consider all of the recommendations that were made, especially on "This Side" of the House. And of course, I am willing to support any legal measures that are in the interest of all of us as Grenadians.

And to end, by echoing the sentiments of my colleague here, Senator Douglas, I encourage illegal gun owners to comply with the amnesty whenever it is instituted. What we see happening with a number of the older folks in society has indicated this is not us, this is not what we know. When you go on blocks and you speak to some of the older young men, older young men (**laughter**) the more seasoned young men on those blocks, they would say what they see happening now, it's not what they stand for. So I encourage them also to encourage their friends, to encourage everyone who may have an illegal firm, to surrender it.

One individual said to me one time, "Senator, I find it's time for you to get your

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thing. You are always outside with us and them kind of thing..." But again, it came from him being concerned with what is happening in the country. If there is a need for, and I shouldn't say if there is a need, I know that everyone on "This Side" of the House is willing to work along with Government to share their expertise, share advice and to give guidance wherever it is necessary, because this is not a political issue, this is an issue in the interest of all of us, all Grenadians, each and every one of us. From the oldest to the very youngest. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Franklyn. Senator Britton.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Thank you again, Madam President. And I, I know it's about that time when we're all looking for lunch. So I would not be very long. I just rise, Madam President, to give my support to the Firearms Amendment Bill, or Firearms Amendment Act of 2024. It is very, very important that we take the necessary steps to help curb the situation of what's happening in our country. And with some of the sentiments expressed, I am happy to know that we, the Members on "This Side" as well as the Members on the "Other Side", are on the same page in giving support for the Act, the Amendment Act.

And I, too, would just like to join in encouraging all of our citizens to be our brother's keeper. And those who you know who have an illegal firearm out there, encourage them to turn in their illegal firearm. And the incentive for that is freedom. That's the incentive. It's freedom, because if you are caught after the amnesty, well, you know, you're in deep, deep water. And when you look at the Act, the Act has a lot of, there is, I think there is, the need for educating the general public, because it has a lot of, of consequences there in the entire, in the entire Act. And we need to educate the general public as to the carrying of a firearm, or an illegal firearm, and discharging all those things.

We need to educate people on that, because many people, you know, have it in their possession just in case something happens. But, we... How did we get to this stage? We don't manufacture guns here. It comes in through our borders, through all the ways

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and means, and people find all kinds of sneaky ways to get it in. And that's why we are happy to say that we have a new x-ray machine at our ports to ensure that, you know, those ... We maintain as much as possible, we boost our security at the port to ensure that those illegal firearms and so on, don't get in.

And one of the reasons why you, my dear Senator, said that obtaining a legal firearm licence is a very vigorous process. That's simply because in Grenada, unless you're a law enforcement officer, you don't need firearms. So law enforcement is the person who's supposed to have those things. Of course, people might have it for the protection of their property and so on, and merely to scare off individuals, right? But I think it all boiled back to a serious breakdown in the society, of our moral values and so on, and on the understanding of the importance of respecting one another.

In St. Mark, I can tell you, we're having a serious challenge with youth delinquency. And we are trying to curb that as much as possible, hence the reason why we will be engaging, and that's just to side-track a bit. But it's all a part of getting the young people to understand the importance of life and valuing life and so on. So we will be engaging a behaviour modification programme for the young men in particular, in that constituency, targeting at least 50 of them, so that we can help curb the problem.

I've always engaged with them, and sometimes you hear them using, you know, idle threats and say, I'm shooting you, and I keep telling them, "Listen, this is not the way in which, you know, to go because using those threats and you send a red flag, making the police aware that you are in possession of some illegal firearm as the case may be, and the consequences of that would not be nice for you". So I encourage all of our citizens who are in possession of or those who know those that are in possession of, please take advantage of that opportunity with the amnesty.

And as I said before, the incentive for that is freedom. Nothing in the world is better than freedom. Okay? Thank you.

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

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Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. Of course, I rise to speak on this issue of the Firearms Amendment Bill, 2024, focusing on the whole issue of gun amnesty to reduce the incidents of violent crime associated with guns. I sat here and I was thinking and tried to understand, like how, I try to understand how I could understand this amnesty. Basically, after I listened to all the different presentations, my simple analogy is, Madam President, it is like walking in the sun with an umbrella over my head, knowing that I would get a little bit of shade, but the sun will never go away. Because this is what I hear, I'm hearing.

And I come to this premise because, at the end of the day, notwithstanding the debate as to how we end up here, how the guns end up here? The fact of the matter is that the guns are here. And so, how do we deal with this situation? My good brother, Senator Neilon Franklyn, spoke about the issues at sea, and it was very good that they have this sort of capacity within this House to tell us first-hand matters pertaining to that outside there, compensation, danger, resources and so on. I think this is, we should be very happy to have that sort of capacity on the ground, live.

And what it says to us, that he asked an important question that I had noted here, during this period of this amnesty, what does the police and law enforcement do with anyone caught? Will they be actively searching? Will they actively engage? Will it then be an amnesty situation? Or it might be contending that amnesty has to be I making the move, and if I didn't make the move of offer to bring in, then it means that really and truly I'm an offender, so I just put this, and that's a similar question I have in my mind. But the fact of the matter is, Madam President, the police force is in the middle of this, is in the middle. How equipped are they in doing the work that they're supposed to be doing, or we expect them to do? And so when I look at the main Bill, the Firearms Act, and you look at Part IV of the Bill and you speak about 39, 40, 43 and 42, which basically speaks about the power of the police for search and stop and search and looking and searching for guns and ammunition, I wonder how we reach here still? And that is why I said, even if the umbrella is over my head in the sun, the sun is still there. And so the police have to be actively supported with the necessary resources to be able to address this matter.

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And whilst the Bill speaks of, this is one of the measures, and of course we expect it to be one of the measures, the question is sometimes there is something called, and of course I know you yourself know these types of things, use those words called 'multi-pronged approach'. I don't like to use this big fancy word, but you have many actions happening from different angles, addressing different issues. And so we trust that with this process here that the police is adequately being prepared to address these issues at the end of 90 days. Because when 90 days come, if they're in the same state that they are now and may even get worse, you know, as time goes, if things going bad at time goes it get worse. Then that sun will still continue to be shining because nobody is there to remove the sun and don't think the gun owners doesn't know these type of things and I think we shy away from this statement because some of them have a lot of inside contact and information as to how things go.

And so within the police force itself, we need to ensure that they have a lot of confidentiality and those other things in addressing that. Because even though we partner, Senator Neilon has something, we coming and make a raid, you know, such and such and such. So the call here, and I will deal with the amnesty specifically in a second, but in the context, is that we need to ensure that there are enough resources for the police. You know, Madam President, I didn't want to go there, but I want to go there for one second.

A few weeks ago, I was going up to Grenville around 12:00 on a mission, not a gun mission, but a mission and my glass, and it's important that my main glass had a mechanical issue, so I had to open my door to. So I saw this Police Officer come out and stop me right around, by the, that water place in Grand Bras, you're familiar with that place in Grand Bras. And police came out, it had a road block and he turned his back and go and immediately afterwards the traffic warden came up to me, so I mean, I couldn't talk through the glass so I open my door. And I was halfway through opening my door, "So, why you not wearing your seat belt properly"? I said, "Well, I don't understand how you reach there". I said "I am not wearing my seat belt properly"? I mean, I might open my door, my hand on my steering wheel, where did I get this chance to even interfere

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with my seat belt? And of course they then came and they apologise and say, "You know, sorry, sorry, sorry".

But the point I'm making is, I didn't have a gun, but let's suppose I had a gun,, and they say license, insurance, go ahead. You see, I said this to say, Madam President, is that we have to be careful what we perpetuate and the message that we send. Because the same issues we have in Predial Larceny are the same lack of focus and energy that is just spreading to different areas, so what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Meaning that we must have one consecutive approach that the police must be given the support and so that energy that they...

I met with the Commissioner of Police and his team, and they said, Senator, we need resources. See what you could say to help us to do what we need to do and so the issue of the guns and so on liming around is because the police feeling inadequate. And so in the 90 days that we waiting for this amnesty situation, I would like us to have a commitment from the Government that the police is adequately resourced (**applause**) to deal with these guns that will not come in at the end of the day. Because otherwise increasing the penalty to life imprisonment and all of those things, this is a zero-sum game because the police will not able to find these people.

And so the confidence and the safety that we want for all of our citizens, including ourselves here, have to be guaranteed by the resources for the police. They have to be able to investigate, they have to be able to go and search, they have to be able to go and find, they have to be up in the night in the rain to find it where it is. Because most of these gun persons, the guns is not in their homes, it's not under their bed, because if it was there and as from what I'm hearing inside this House, we even know where some of these people are, we know where they're living, we would have find these guns already. Nobody keeps a gun. They know it's illegal in the way where people could find it. So this would be a very serious hunting process to find these guns.

And so the question about incentives to bring in these guns, I had some discussions too. And the point was, well, when a man thing is a EC\$3,000 or a EC\$4,000... I was shocked myself. I personally, Madam President, we don't have the

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amount of money in this Budget that we just passed in December, to compensate for this amount of guns that's outside. **(Laughter)** I mean, I'm sure we will have to come for an early supplemental, we don't have enough money, so we shouldn't take the gamble because we don't know, if we have an idea. So Senator Rahaman's points, I think, it was some good points. Your property, your this, your that, but again, sometimes the gun owners they're renting vehicles, so what happened to the person who is renting? You know, that interferes with business in the country.

So I believed that, yes the amnesty, it's a measure but I don't see it as a real measure. I think the Government could have come with something stronger, come with the "Am" instead of the "Amnesty", come with something stronger. Because it wasn't difficult, I'm sure, I mean, we have very learned persons within the Government system to put some of those strengthening of the Laws right there. Because then we have to come back here, and the perpetrators they're watching us now, you know. We have to come back here, and I know not next month, maybe three months from now, four months from now, to come with these measures, and so they now will be watching and say 'but I wonder if what that say they will really do?' If these measures, we should have those measures sitting here right now. Of course, though, the question is, are these persons with the guns, are they really evil? Are they really bad? Do they have bad intentions? What they have them for?

My research has shown that some of these persons have their guns to protect what I called their assets, whatever assets they have. Some of them have their guns for flash, for flash. Just to say that I have a gun, and then there are those who have guns for criminal activities. And so the police are well aware, notwithstanding their issues, and we know where some of the hotspots are. The question is, what have we done with that? And we can't just pick up people just so and put them in jail and without bail. You have to prove that they have some connection with these guns, and do we have the prison space and capacity to handle all of this? You see sometimes, Madam President, when we taking an action, we always have to look at all of these things in one plan and we are supporting, I think we all are supporting and agreeing but we want to ensure that this

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measure don't put us in a failure down the road and that we have all the resources that is needed to work with that.

At the same time as I come to closure, I believe that Senator Quinc has made a very important point, and I always applaud him as a young man. The way he operates and his caring position, in terms of engagement on the ground in those hotspot communities with misguided persons mentoring and all of those things, the Conference of Churches. Where are they right now in this conversation? The NGO and all of these different persons, ourselves, you know, how do we engage in those comments. Where is the town hall meetings to have a discussion? And these things, and I think this had to be that conversation during the next 90 days, to kind of augment the next steps forward. Of course, as I close, Madam President, as we all agree, the guns are not manufactured here.

In fact, I heard with my ears, I think the Mayor of New York or something like that recently speaking about it, he said that 'the guns comes from us.' So we also have to make an appeal, and we cannot take our death as a sheep in this part of this World and speak to these folks. When we go to the United Nations and those big international conferences, we need to make it clear, we need to have resolutions that we pass as a unit within CARICOM and so on, and say, "Keep our region safe", and we have resolutions in those cases. So these are some of my charge, Madam President, that I want to present on this matter, thank you **(applause)**.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair, thank you very much. Senator Adrian Thomas, Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. I'm laughing, Madam President, because time and time again, I come to this House and I see and I hear a lot of my colleagues advocating for a 60-meter dash because they want to speed up everything now, and a lot of us can't make the 60-meter dash. So sometimes we have to take it easy, Madam President and get our work done properly.

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Madam President, the Firearms Amendment Bill, 2024 is one of the first measures, that starting point that this Government and this Administration will be putting in place. It is in 90 days; 90 days would not be the end of Grenada. We have to live. The gun violence in Grenada, did it start a year ago or two years ago? Over a period of time, it has built up. We have been working closely with the police force. We have been working closely with other stakeholders to make sure that this gun culture does not become a stigma, an entity in our country.

Madam President, the examples are clear unto us in the Caribbean, in the United States, we have seen what the gun culture has done to those societies. Sometimes we are tempted to fight violence with violence. So because they are gun violence in the Country, some people may recommend, well, I want a firearm to protect myself. But imagine every peaceful citizen having the liberty to apply for a licence, and even to an extent, to purchase a firearm.

You know, when I was younger maybe about 10 years ago **(laughter)**, I had the thoughts of mobilising a legal firearm and you know, I said to myself when you apply for a firearm and a man interfere with you, because you have the firearm you tempted to say 'well hit me nah, hit me nah', if you don't have the firearm you might walk away and come back the next day and say, "Bro what was this about".

But the fact that you have the firearm, it could put you in a different mind-set and therefore, Madam President, we got to be cautious in terms of even licensed firearms, we got to be so cautious. The amount of thought we are putting into the amnesty, we have to think seriously about how easy it is for people to obtain firearms legally in Grenada, because over a period of time, you may have it for your business, but you never know. I've heard that people who have legal firearms, legal firearms, lost it. People broke open their houses, their cars, and they go for nothing more than the firearms because you'll go to your garden as a farmer and you fire two shots and everybody knows that you have a gun. They not coming for fruits anymore, they coming for the gun, and that legal firearm could become a problem in our society, so we got to be very careful with that, Madam President.

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Our society, statistics will show that the tourism industry contributes more than 40% to the GDP of our country. Very important. Gun violence is one of the areas that we have to guard against. A lot of people are running from countries, even in the Caribbean, where gun violence has become a burning issue, and they're looking for some way, somewhere, where they can reside peacefully and in comfort. Grenada is noted for that. We do not want to lose that. We must protect that. Therefore, it is important, it is important that for our own livelihood, our own survival, we must ensure that this gun violence and this gun culture do not get out of hand to hamper our survival in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: I thank the distinguished Leader of Government's Business in the Senate. Honourable Members, I pass the floor to the Honourable Claudette Joseph, Attorney General.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the House for their support, their general support for the Bill that's before the House. Would just, Madam President, take a few moments to give some clarification to some of the matters raised by the Members of this Honourable House.

Madam President, forgive me if I wasn't clear enough in the commencement of the debate on the Bill, when I indicated that the amendment to the Firearms Act now, to introduce a new section 51A, is the first of three steps that will occur in this process. So first, the Bill before this Honourable House merely inserts a new Section that will give the Minister the power to declare the amnesty. Then there will be the order that sets out the procedure that persons wanting to surrender illegal firearms and ammunition must follow in taking advantage of the amnesty.

Then there will be a further amendment of the Bill to make provision for enhanced consequences and stiffer penalties for persons in possession, found in possession of illegal firearms and ammunition. So that is the process that will be adopted, and in the

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final stage, yes, there will be a window there for further amendments to the Bill, to, for example, perhaps to increase the penalties under Section 4 of the existing Act. Because you see, the existing act already provides for some of the matters raised by some of my learned colleagues, so that it is already an offence under the Act. For example, to import, export, sell, transit weapons, all of that, and there are penalties in section 4.

There are penalties set out already in the legislation. There's already in the legislation a provision for travellers to declare firearms and ammunition and penalties therein for when that doesn't happen. The presentation I made indicated that when the firearms are surrendered under the amnesty, ballistic analysis will take place to determine whether the firearm was used in the commission of an offence and of course, if the firearm so surrendered is found to have been used in the commission of an offence, that firearm will then form evidence and will be used to assist the police in investigating and solving the crime. Remember, the firearms once surrendered will not be tied to any particular individual because they will be surrendered on the conditions of anonymity but the firearms themselves will be analysed, serial number taken etc. to determine whether they were stolen or otherwise used in the commission of a crime and if that is found to be the case, then the weapon will be used to assist the police in solving and ultimately prosecuting the crime.

So, surrendering the firearm would not absolve someone who might have used the firearm because it may not be the same person. It may not be the person surrendering the firearm who might have committed an offence with it. In fact, the person surrendering it may not even be aware that the same firearm was used in the commission of an offence. So there really isn't a risk for the person who is surrendering because one, he's anonymous, and two, he or she may not even be aware that this firearm was used in the commission of an offence.

And the other thing, I think a question asked by two of the Senators, I think, whether the other provisions of the law in relation to offences connected with firearms would be suspended, once the amnesty is in place? And the answer is no. So, you're only absorbed if you are caught with the firearm while in the process of going to surrender it,

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so you're going to surrender it, you wouldn't be charged with an offence. But if you're caught with an illegal firearm that you are not surrendering or that you have shown that you had no intention of surrendering, the offence will still have been committed.

So the point is you may be on route, for example, to the station to deliver the firearm and stop by the police, in that instance, if you can show that I was in the process of going to surrender the firearm then the amnesty will avail you but if you if in the regular course of the operations, the police discover illegal firearms, you know, in persons possession, then the regular criminal law will kick in, possession of illegal firearms and ammunition. So that doesn't change the fact that the general law would not be suspended during the amnesty; it is just that persons who take advantage of the amnesty will not be prosecuted for any criminal offence.

So once again, Madam President, I commend the Bill to this Honourable House, thank colleagues on both sides for the support of the Bill and urge all our citizens, particularly those who are in possession of firearms and ammunition, for which you do not possess a licence under the current law, to take advantage of the amnesty once it is declared. Because subsequent to the amnesty, the Law will be... By the time the amnesty expires, let me be clear, by the time the amnesty expires, the Firearms Act will have been further amended to impose strict or mandatory prison sentences, as we say. No bail for the commission offences and an increase in the penalties that currently exist under the Legislation. Thank you, Madam President (**applause**).

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph. Thank you for summarising, and now Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill Clause by

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Clause. Yes, sorry, Madam President, I was supposed to stand when I said that, my apologies.

Madam President: I was slow, so you're the young, fast.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

Madam President: I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and was passed without amendment.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam Chair, I beg to move that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg for a third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I stand to...

Madam President:... keeping your heads too close, separate.

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Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: We're so good looking, Madam President?

Madam President: Pardon? **(Laughter)** Proceed Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I rise because my tummy seems to be making a little noise. So I want to suggest that we have a short break, maybe a half-hour break for lunch, and then we can come back quickly and proceed.

Senate adjourned at 1:13 p.m.

Senate resumed at 1:55 p.m.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 8 – Ministerial Statements.

Madam President: ... so we can clarify. We just had the first reading of the last Bill. We had it already, didn't we? Yes, that's what I said. We had the first reading of the last Bill just before lunch. Isn't it? And now, we completed three Bills.

(The Clerk and Madam President converse in private)

Madam President: Item 8, Ministerial Statements. Thank you, Deputy Clerk, and I offer the floor to the Honourable Attorney General. You have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to give this Ministerial Statement so that this Honourable House might be updated on some developments recently taking place at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs.

Madam President, the Consumer Protection Act, No. 2 of 2018, has been enforced

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since 2019. It was commenced in 2019. Madam President, the purpose of that bit of legislation is to promote and protect consumer interest and rights in relation to the supply of goods and services and to ensure protection of life, health and safety of consumers.

Madam President, since the Act came into force, it was not operationalised, in that it provides for the establishment of a Consumer Affairs Office, and that was not done. Madam President, what the information gathered on my assumption in the office of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, the information shows that although there was a willingness by the relevant public officers and there were valiant attempt on their part to set up the Consumer Affairs Office as required by law, they didn't get the requisite support that they needed from the administration to properly set up the office. So they were not able to do so, and as a result, the legislation remained in place but not really functioning. I am happy to say to this Honourable House that on March 15, to coincide with World Consumer Day, my Ministry launched the office of Consumer Affairs, and that office is located in the NIS building on Melville Street, upstairs, SP's International. It's the new NIS complex, so it is located upstairs SP's International and directly beside Power 95 FM.

For the first time, Madam President, in Grenada, we not only have a stand-alone Consumer Affairs Office but we have in place a Director of Consumer Affairs in the person of Ms. Merlyn Horsford-Williams. The office is being staffed. We are not fully staffed yet, but we are operational.

The functions of the office include the technical functions of receiving, investigating and resolving consumer complaints. Then there is the educational aspect of the office which involves engaging the public in public education in relation to rights as consumers and of course they would be required from time to time to report to this Honourable House publication of information, reports, newsletters, posters et cetera that will raise public awareness on the question of consumer affairs and of course appearance on public forums that will help educate the public and engage in community outreach.

The other function has to do with research and market surveillance, Madam President. Under the legislation, the Consumer Affairs Office is to engage in research on emerging trends in consumer behaviour, including negative impacts on the environment,

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so there is that element as well. Conducting activities and initiatives that support the office's mandate to educate the public, assessing the quality of select goods and services that may impact the health and safety of consumers. And collecting data on prices of selected items to inform the understanding of pricing and supply issues.

These are some of the matters with which the office would be concerned. Of course, it will assist and support policy formations. It provides support for the Government as key policy makers.

Madam President, since the office was launched on the 15th ... The office was physically launched, and at the same time, the Consumer Affairs website was launched, which allows consumers in Grenada to engage with the office virtually by lodging complaints online and having their matters treated virtually, especially where the matters can be resolved without a face-to-face meeting. So, since the launch, both the online platform and the office itself have been quite busy receiving complaints from the general public, and I would take this opportunity to encourage the public to utilise the services of the Consumer Affairs Office.

Interestingly, we've had more online complaints than in person, so the public is fully embracing the digital format of lodging complaints.

In total, we have about 11 to 15 complaints so far in the two weeks we have been in operation, and that includes online and walk-ins. In fact one person contacted me on social media, sent me a message via Facebook saying that she went into the Consumer Affairs office and was very impressed with the service she got, she was pleased with how they assisted her and they actually helped her to resolve her issue and she said she happily posed for a picture that would help them to promote the services that the consumer affairs office offers.

In setting up the office, Madam President, we had great support from the OECS Commission and also the CARICOM Competition Commission, and of course, both of them participated in the launch of the office on the 15th. There is a pledge by both offices to continue to support the efforts of the consumer affairs office.

Madam President, we introduced a novel concept at the Consumer Affairs Office.

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We actually also established a satellite labour office. I am sorry, Senator Lewis is not here to hear this, but we have set up at the consumer affairs office, given that it is right in the heart of town and next to the bus terminal, very accessible. We thought it would be good to have a labour office right there. So a labour officer is permanently stationed at a satellite office at the office of consumer affairs, avoiding persons having to journey to the Ministerial Complex to interact with the Ministry of Labour.

Interestingly, the satellite office for the Ministry of Labour has actually been busier than the consumer affairs function. So, in relation to labour complaints so far received at the office on Melville Street in the two weeks since we opened, we actually have 37 so far. They range from employers who are not complying with the Minimum Wage Order that came into effect in January, but the employees are on top of things; they are very knowledgeable, so when the Minimum Wage Order is not being complied with, they are very quick to report the same to the Ministry of Labour. So we are wrapping up our inspectorate at the Ministry of Labour, so we have more people on the ground who may visit workplaces in relation to which we received complaints of non-compliance with the minimum wages order.

We also had persons coming in, in relation to hours of work, holiday entitlement, assistance with tabulating overtime pay, calculating termination packages, and so on. So the little labour office there has been quite busy. So I thought, Madam President, I would update this Honourable House on this new development in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs.

And just to say, by and large, the implementation of the new minimum wage has been going well so far, with a few complaints that we are able to manage at the Ministry of Labour. Thank you, Madam President, and Members of this Honourable House.

Madam President: Thank you very much, Attorney General, and Minister for A, B, C and D, Consumer Affairs. This is very good news. Thank you. Leader of Government's Business.

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Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President, and I hope that everyone enjoyed their lunch. Madam President, I rise to inform this House of a very important conference that will be taking place in Grenada. Grenada is due to host the Caribbean Tourism Organisation Sustainable Tourism Conference on April 22 to 24, this month actually. We are very proud to be the host of this conference. Madam President, the conference really and truly is all about disseminating information throughout the tourism environment and creating some regional awareness in regards to the CTO's strategy for sustainable tourism.

I think this is a very crucial word in our vocabulary these days. This conference brings together Ministers, Directors of Tourism, both local, regional and international, as well as experts in various disciplines, including climate change, disaster management, culture, environmental management and entrepreneurship development in the tourist industry. The conference would be done under the theme, keeping the right balance, "The 5P's of a Legacy of Caribbean Tourism Sustainability: People, Planet, Prosperity, Purpose and Partnership". We would also...

A very important aspect of the conference would be community tours, the people wouldn't be only sitting in Radisson, where the conference would be held, but within the three days, they would be going out in our communities and seeing what is going on regarding tourism in the rural areas. So I think that would be a plus for Grenada. The cameras would be focused on Grenada, and I have no doubt that it is something good to feature, especially on our 50th Anniversary of Independence, and therefore I ask Members of this House to really and truly show your face at some point in the conference. There are some public aspects to it, and it would be nice to be present. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business in the Senate, the Right Honourable Minister for Tourism. Senator Gloria Thomas, Minister for Social Development and Gender Affairs.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President, afternoon all. I

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rise to share this statement, which is just a snapshot of some of the activities of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs. Madam President, the Ministry continues to assist in the development and improvement of the lives of all Grenadians, especially the impoverished and disadvantaged.

Housing

The ministry has commenced the formal handing over and distribution of the low-income houses located in Corinth, St. David. This activity commenced over a week ago. The ministry will continue with the distribution of the low-income houses at Dumfries in Carriacou, which will be held next Friday. Later on, the ministry will continue with the other sites accordingly.

Madam President, I would like to inform the nation that the delay in the handing over of the houses was unavoidable. This was to ensure the necessary retrofitting of the houses with the necessary amenities, such as kitchen cupboards, closets and other retrofitting works, to make sure that the lives of the residents would be more comfortable. I would like to thank the applicants for their patience and understanding in this regard.

Retreat

Madam President, on Thursday, February 15, 2024, my ministry hosted its strategic planning retreat to plan for the year ahead, recognising that professionalism can aid in the achievement of strategic goals and create long-term success in any organisation. A developmental session was held during the retreat on the topic of professionalism in the workplace. Noting the nature of the work that is done within the ministry, emphasis was made on ethics and confidentiality.

International Women's Day

Madam President, the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs, in collaboration with international, regional and local communities, acknowledged the advancement of women and observed International Women's Day on March 8, 2024. The local theme for this year's commemoration of Women's Day was "Count Her In: Inspire, Inclusion". The theme was aligned with the priority theme of the UN68 commission on the status of women and examined pathways to greater economic

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inclusion for women and girls everywhere.

Accordingly, the ministry hosted a symposium under the theme, “River Stone Talk” on Friday, 8th March at the Crown Ballroom, Radisson Grand Beach Resort from 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., giving four of our Grenadian women the opportunity to share their experiences as women and their climb to success. Additionally, 50 Grenadian women from all walks of life were honoured for their stellar contributions and achievements towards the development of our nation. Awardees were selected based on their contribution to community development, entrepreneurship and advocacy for inclusion, and to celebrate the achievements of women of Grenada as we continue to journey towards a more equitable and inclusive society.

International Social Workers Day

Madam President, the International Social Workers Day was observed globally on March 19, 2024. The ministry hosted a week of activities to commemorate this year's celebration under the theme “Buen Vivir: Shared Future for Transformative Change”. This emphasises the need for social workers to adopt innovative, community-led approaches that are grounded in indigenous wisdom and harmonious coexistence with nature. The activities included church service, appreciation day, international social workers conference and community walkabout in the parish of St. John.

Child Development

Madam President, during the first quarter of this year, I led a team from the ministry, along with the officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure, including engineers, to visit child development centres throughout the island. This was to assess the physical structure of the building housing these centres and human resource needs, among other assessments. In addition, a team visited the Christine David Child Development Centre in Hillsborough, Carriacou. On March 5, 2024, the Ministry conducted the second cohort of First Aid training for child care providers, which included Private Sector workers as well. The venture was facilitated by the Grenada Red Cross, and over 25 people participated.

SEED

Madam President, under the SEED Programme, beneficiaries who fall under the

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following targeted groups received an increase in cash transfer of EC\$200 per month as follows: the mentally ill, people living with disabilities, and adults above the age of 65. Madam President, the Ministry completed a disability assessment along with the Grenada National Council for the Disabled, the Caribbean Development Bank and a community service organisation. The ministry is seeking permission to obtain a disability specialist to create a desk for the disabled, which would address the following: building capacities regarding dementia and Alzheimer's.

The establishment of Disability Unit with support from the University of Michigan, School of Public Health. Public Health actions support team to design the structure of the unit, "By us, for us, living nothing without us". So that is the slogan under which we function when dealing with people with disability. "By us, for us, nothing without us.

Madam President, the ministry completed the following policies: the ageing policy, the 2024 legislative agenda, the social protection policy in the initial phase, the standardised infectious control plans for our geriatrics home and the transitional and transitional housing allocation and policy developed.

Juvenile Justice

Madam President, the Grenada Juvenile Justice Policy review has commenced, along with the Juvenile Justice Act of 2012. The Ministry welcome the appointment of the Director of Juvenile Justice. Currently, the ministry is endeavouring to adequately staff the unit and is preparing for its re-launch.

National Parenting Programme

Madam President, the Ministry is working towards the expansion of resources to ramp up community-based parenting education training to enhance parenting skills and family life practices.

Achievement from January to March, 2024

We had International Women's Day activities where we had a motorcade, symposium, and we did some ongoing mobilisation in the community of Rose Hill. We worked with the men there. International Family Day celebration was conducted, community cycles in St. Mark, Bonair Government School. We had around 25

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participants. We also had a community cycle in Grenville. We had that at St. Mary's R.C School, LaFilette, and we are awaiting the Ministry of Health for the commencement of the plan that they need to put in place, so we can work along with them.

Fire at Chantimelle St. Patrick

Madam President, finally, my heart goes out to the five sets of families who lost their entire homes and livelihoods in the raging fire which occurred on Tuesday, 26th March at Chantimelle St. Patrick. The ministry immediately came to the aid of the residence who were affected by the fire and provided assistance to them; temporary housing at the Villa Housing Project in St. Patrick, grocery, clothing, household items, linen, mattress, psychosocial support, counselling and a one off payment is being made for the victims as the Ministry awaits the police report on the cause of the fire.

Domestic Violence

Madam President, the ministry extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of little Esther from Carriacou, who lost her life under allegedly strategic circumstances. My ministry continues to provide the relevant support to all those who are affected by this death. On that note, I would continue to strongly condemn all forms of violence against our women and girls in this nation.

I would like to call on the nation to report all acts of violence against our women and girls, as we are indeed a community that is supposed to be caring and to be looking out for each other. I strongly urge all of us to be our brother's keeper and report acts of violence when we recognise they are happening. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Madam Senator. Thank you, Minister. That is a request from, and I got it this time, Senator David Andrew. You're in the spotlight and on your feet. You have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I just rise to bring a few statements and updates on matters pertaining to education. But first, I want to join my voice in offering sincerest condolences to the surviving relatives of

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the late Esther Patterson a 14 year old, a student from the Hillsborough Secondary School who was laid to rest yesterday.

It is always tragic when we lose young people, and in particular students, who by our normal thinking have most of their lives ahead of them, and to have them lost in these kinds of circumstances. Our prayers, our thoughts go out to the families, friends, well-wishers and the entire community in Carriacou and Petite Martinique who have been affected by her passing.

Our ministry has been... we are happy we have been able to support. Some of our counsellors from the mainland were assigned up there the Monday after the incident occurred to assist with offering psychosocial support along with Sister Gloria's ministry. I am happy that we from Education were able to partner and offer that support as well.

Our ministry condemns strongly every act of incest, every act of abuse, every act of violence, every act of intrusion against our women and girls and in fact against anyone. Indeed, as a Ministry of Education, we will continue to promote respect for self and for others through our guidance and counselling programme presided over through the student support services unit of the Ministry of Education.

My heart goes out to the families of the fire victims at Chantimelle. As Members of the Cabinet, we were able to show solidarity, we visited, we supported even financially, apart from what the Minister did in terms of our presence, so we joined the Member of the Cabinet responsible for that area to show support. It is really heart-wrenching because no amount of support will actually take away from all the discomfort, the difficulty you would have in adjusting to something new and knowing you have lost all that you have worked hard for. So our prayers go out.

And I can't, while I am on that note, remember the families of the two bikers who tragically passed over the Easter weekend while we were happily enjoying the Carifta Games. May God grant all of the families associated with the above-mentioned incidents and events grace and strength to cope and to manage in this time.

I move quickly, Madam President, to... I can't allow today to pass without putting on record our profoundest appreciation for Grenada's Carifta team as they performed in

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the 51st edition of the Carifta Games. I think it is a good place to knock **(applause)** the table, I think they made us extremely proud. I looked at the heart and the spirit inside some of these athletes as they competed just to see the Grenadian flag on the podium. All of us there. You listen to the crowds. You listen to the feedback all over.

We are tremendously proud of our athletes. Many of them are still students and we will continue from an education point of view to keep pushing them, to keep providing all of the support we can both academically and sporting wise and to see them see the potential and the possibilities that exist in sports as a career, not as something you do if you can't make it or not as something you do because you don't want to but to see the genuine possibilities that exist there.

So we want to commend them and pledge our continued support, and I know the Minister for Youth and Sports isn't here, but he probably would have had some things to say about that. But in my capacity as Minister for Education, I take the opportunity to commend them.

Now, Madam President, in relation to education, only yesterday, I am happy to announce that some of you may have seen that we have had the sod turning, ground-breaking ceremony for the commencement of the construction of the Grenada Christian Academy in the village of Pearls, St. Andrew. **(Applause)** This is something that I am happy about because the construction of a state-of-the-art school in that community carries tremendous potential for transforming the lives and fortunes of the villagers there.

After we issued the contract and signed the contract last year at the end of the year, I think it was in November, just before the budget, we are now able to see the actual commencement of work as evidenced by the ground-breaking ceremony yesterday.

I want to say a few things here because inside of that project, we ensured that while this project was worked on prior to us getting into office by the former administration, and we gave some level of credit to them for advancing that project. I want to say that we have augmented the project. We have improved the project to the extent that when we got in, we realised that from one of the Bills that was near completion when we came into office in 2022, that was in Carriacou. We found that some of the completed projects,

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like Bishop's College, were not fit for purpose, and whether it was a failure in the design, or a failure in supervision, or whether something fell apart at some point.

We took the decision to have the designs reviewed, and in fact, in Carriacou, there was no water cistern, and that was one of the shocking elements because anybody who knows Carriacou would appreciate the need, and I am sure Senator Cox would appreciate the need for an institution, as a school, to have a water cistern, that wasn't the case. So we commissioned a review of the designs to ensure that any 21st century construction that we are having in schools will be reflective of being constructed in this period. So they have to be climate smart. They have to be adaptable for energy harvesting, solar panel fitting up for water harvesting. There has to be fitted with smart classrooms, the white boards and all of these things because we are living in an era of artificial intelligence and technologies, and so this facility, this over EC\$27.4 million facility that's going to be constructed in the area of Pearls.

The Grenada Christian Academy meets all of those standards, and we are happy that we were able to upgrade the designs. It may have contributed to some degree of delay, but it is better to have a delay than to have a proper project than to have speed, and we are not sure how satisfied we will be at the end of it.

While I am at this, I also want to put on record and give credit to the visionary behind the school. I mean, sometimes as politicians, we can pretend to take the credit because it started with us, or it was augmented by us, or something of the sort. But the gentleman behind this school, the Grenada Christian Academy, was a missionary, Charles Carpenter, who came and, in his desire to do something for the community, moved to the Dunfermline area and the school was first located in Dunfermline in an area known as "The Nook", then it outgrew that area. Then he sort to move his ministry. Then it was a ministry for persons who didn't make it in the school system at the time, and he moved it into Pearls, and certainly he had to collaborate with Government, but he moved it into Pearls, and his vision was let's do something, let's do a school for them. In fact, he had it in "The Nook", and it was moved there.

He has since passed, but today I want to put on record our profound appreciation

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for his insight, his vision and his love for Grenada that caused him to come and invest his time, his energy, his resources that today, years down the road, even after he is gone. We can see the construction, and we can see ourselves get to the point where we have broken ground to construct a facility that was born from his idea. Credit to him and thanks.

Even while we talk about the Grenada Christian Academy, I just want to update that there are several other schools that are at various stages and nearing that ground breaking moment as well the St. Andrew's Anglican School which at the moment is currently decently housed at the Resource Centre in Telescope with air conditioned class rooms and the entire school being accommodated because we've rebuilt the wooden structures from Progress Park, we've taken them from there and they are all accommodated there comfortably so.

I have made couple visits to ensure that they are functioning well but we are reliably informed and I want to share with this House that the tendering is completed and there has been a provisional selection of a contractor waiting on the no objection from CDB, once that comes together with other little supervision logistical things somewhere before the end of this year, we will see a start of construction on that school as well.

Similar can be said for the St. David's Catholic Secondary. We have negotiated the land. The acquisitions have been completed. The payments have been arranged. The designs have been finalised, and the tendering, I believe, has started as well. So, we anticipate that it will start before the end of the year. So we are very optimistic that a lot is going to happen, and those are the Grenada Education and Enhancement Project that CDB has funded. We do have a couple of local schools that we are going to fund locally, and we speak of the Florida Government, and we speak about the St. Giles Government. We are working assiduously to have those two move on as well. Florida is a lot more advanced because we are still in the process of getting the final infrastructural designs, not just the artistic impressions for St. Giles, done, but I am very optimistic about the way we have been approaching and going. A lot is going to happen in those regards.

Within the last couple of months, Madam President, we have seen the launch of further tech clubs. Technology is an inescapable part of our educational journey these

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days. Everything you get online is a medium to get everything else done, and on the 14th of February, we had the launch of a technology club.

Now you would remember I have said in the House before, since we got into office, we've started instructing students in selecting secondary schools in coding technologies, so that eventually people can become employable and can use these technologies to work from home. In addition to that, because that continues, we have also launched new technology clubs in collaboration with Mr. Rage Ramdass, and to restore a sense of I can foundation. It is a regional foundation. It doesn't cost us. They pay their own way to come, and all they want in return is participants who come through the programme to plant a tree. And so that has started, and we look forward to seeing a lot of good things happen from that. It is going to focus on virtual reality, simulation technology, drone technology, photography, all of these things are being focused on in that. I personally had an exciting time flying the drone for the first time when I visited and was a part of that launch. I look forward to students becoming excited about the possibilities in the area of technology, and there is a lot more I can say about education, but, Madam President, I will stop at this point and give way to others who may want to share. Thank you very much.

Madam President: I thank the Honourable Senator, Minister for Education. Any other Ministerial Statements? None. Thank you very much, all Ministers who presented.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 9 – 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.

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Madam President, I rise to present the following Papers and Reports from Select Committees.

1. Grenada Investment Development Corporation Annual Report 2022;
2. The Financial Intelligence Unit Grenada Annual Report 2022;
3. GARFIN (Grenada Authority for the Regulation of Financial Institutions) – Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended 31st December, 2022; and
4. Grenada Bureau of Standards – 2022 Annual Report.

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business. Are there any observations, questions, comments, or recommendations regarding the Reports? Because this is the Parliament and we are not a rubber stamp, we're an analytic body, and whatever comes to us deserves and must therefore get our full attention. Sorry to be so detailed about this, but I see the need for some discussion. So with that being said, let me offer the floor to Senator Rahaman. You requested the floor, sir. Proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you very much, Madam President. I believe we can comment on all the Reports. So let me start with the first, which is GIDC. I thought it was a very good report. I am happy to see that under page 27, under key performance indicators, GIDC, in conjunction with SAEP, gave 250 grants to people who completed their entrepreneurial training, and I thought that was very good. The grants were small business, ranging from EC\$2,688 to EC\$6,720, but 250 grants are significant.

My concern is about follow-up when these grants are given, and of the 250 people assisted, how have they fared? How has the Government spent that money? What is their situation currently? So, a follow-through plan, I would like to suggest a follow-through plan on the smaller and medium-sized businesses, needs to be part and parcel of any roll-out programmes to assist the small and vulnerable businesses.

I did note that under accomplishments, the next page, page 28, I noted that entrepreneurial and business development services were provided to 328, but the document said potential and existing entrepreneurs. So potential means that they do not

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exist yet, and existing means that they do exist, but the 250 that they did help did exist. So we don't know if the 250 is in there or not because it is bundled together when it should be separate. One is potential, and one is existing. So if you fund the existing, we want to know, the additional training that you provided was it for the 250 to help them succeed in business or not? So I think that there is some improvement that they could perhaps suggest that they can make in their next report.

I also like to see the fact that they provided training, and I have attended some of their trainings, one in particular was on custom entries, so for small businesses, it is really beneficial. The training is really, really helpful because it is done by a senior customs officer themselves, they perform that training. So I would like to commend them on that training and to encourage them to continue and broaden the training. Private Sector organisations like GIDC, GCIC they do training as well, and it is a good thing. But I would like to see some training being done for artisan skills. We have our masons. We have our carpenters, but there are certain skills that are required now, for example, that we are remodelling our fort, which we don't necessarily have here.

When we look at our existing building that needs maintenance, we may not have all the expertise here to maintain some of the buildings that are being built today, for example. When we look at the Silversands Hotel Project, we know that the first project we had artisans brought in from Egypt and recently I had the opportunity to meet with the new Egyptian Ambassador to Grenada, who is based in Venezuela. He came here and I believe he is leaving today to go back to present his credentials and I spoke to him about that and I said to him that we as perhaps the Government now that he has presented his credentials and you have that diplomatic relationship with them, perhaps now that we know the Silversands Project was done that Egyptians did come to help with the design and artisan more detailed work, we would like our people to benefit from that high level of work. So perhaps the Government can liaise with him and invite some of those people across to train our people, and GIDC can be involved in that so we can train Grenadians not only in customs entry; the regular run of the mill training that we do, but we can get into more detail and areas that are nesh, such as high-end carpentry and artisan work.

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So that's just on GIDC.

I'd like to move on to the Grenada Bureau of Standards. I noticed that they have 22 employees as of 2022. They have six lab techs and eight lab staff in total, but when I compare that with the inspectors. They only have five inspectors. The inspectors of the Grenada Bureau of Standards, I served on the Board at one point in time many years ago, and I believe that having served on the Board and seeing the staff complement, I believe that they should have... I hope by now they have more than five inspectors because when goods come into the country, they are responsible for checking all of the goods that enter the country in terms of automotive equipment, in terms of the quality of products that are brought in, let's say the labelling and all of these different things from electrical appliances and so on. So they have to inspect, and you don't have many inspectors, and so that's something that I would like to see they look into: the Bureau of Standards hiring more inspectors.

I note that with regard to the... They did some training in terms of their standards on the code of hygiene, part 1 of 2011, on page 11 of their report. Training was provided in terms of the code of hygiene, and I would like to suggest that the training on hygiene and so on needs to be translated into our food production. We know that we have many small businesses that provide food, many of them on the side of the road, vendors and so forth. We need to make sure that we have standards. We need to make sure that they are registered. We need to make sure that they have hygiene training. So if the Bureau of Standards has standards for a code of hygiene, we need to make sure that our small businesses follow those rules, know what those rules are, are trained in them, and so that we can make sure that our people don't get sick, and how we speak about how you handle food and that type of business.

The other thing I would like to point out with regard to the Bureau of Standards is that I noticed that for 2021 and 2022, they had a surplus of EC\$164,000 and EC\$165,000, respectively. I also noticed that year to year they receive about EC\$900,000 in subvention, I don't know if that is the word to use, but subvention in Government. So what I am saying is if they are receiving... statutory bodies, I look at them as children,

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children of the Government. We don't mind our children forever. At some point in time, children grow up and they handle their own affairs, so entities that are capable and are showing signs of being able to handle their own affairs, gradually, Government needs to look at their finances and pull back resources and place them in other areas if they are capable. If you notice that in 2021, you look at the financials and in 2021 you have EC\$164,000 surplus, in 2022 you have EC\$165,000, then you know maybe you could have a 10-year period where each year you give them EC\$50,000 less and so on, so they become more independent so Government can take that money now and put it into other areas.

Finally, I move on to my notes on FIU. I note that the FIU Report, of course, for obvious reasons, is not very, very detailed. They have a lot when they are doing their investigations and so on, not everything can be revealed, but I noticed that lately we in Grenada have had several hacks. I heard it happened to Ariza. I know there have been hacks, there have been people who have been requested to send their PIN on WhatsApp and so on. So I don't know if it is general within the region or if it is Grenada recently.

But recently we have heard a lot of these things happening, so this is something that FIU staff... In 2022, they needed to have the relevant training to be able to investigate and inform the Grenadian public and businesses so that they are not ripped off. So only two days ago I was told that one poultry farmer got a call saying that actually a call saying that over Whatsapp saying that there is some meeting that he needs to attend to and this meeting is going to be held and they are asking him to click on the link and so out but he found that the accent was not a Grenadian accent, it was an African accent and he took a screenshot and he put it on the chat and that person called him back after he put it on the chat and threatened the individual that did that. So what I am saying is that people are trying different ways, and they are ahead of us out there, so we want that... I have seen in the document that FIU staff received a lot of training.

We want to make sure that the training is relevant to our part of the world and what challenges we are faced with now, and we want to see more categorisation of drug financing. So you see, when they speak about... When you have categorised, you have

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categories under page 23. You see that there were 45 arrests for various charges as follows: you have fraud, you have stealing, you have money laundering, but money laundering is broad, so I would like to see in the future more about drug financing and what they are doing in that area.

I read there were three case studies that they gave in their report, two were on drugs, which was good, but in terms of the details of the categories of arrests and what is being done with regard to that in terms of drug financing and now well FIU wouldn't be responsible for the weapons unless there's finance involved in that link with regard to that.

But drug financing is a huge aspect that affects our region because we know that drugs make their way to the north many times through Caribbean countries. And we also know that a lot of drugs are, you know, the people that want it, getting it right, I don't know how they're getting it, but they get it, and the people need to pay for it. So there must be a trail. My point is that there must be a trail.

So, whereas in other countries there are issues like terrorism and all these things, and we have these laws, some of the things that affect, my point is that some of the things that affect other countries are not the main issues for us here. The main issues for us here that our people are facing are what we need to focus on and what I would like to see more of in their reports that focus on those things.

There are some more, but I'll leave it for others. Generally, the reports are good, especially since I was particularly impressed with GIDC's Report. I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. I want to encourage you to follow up with the heads of some of these statutory bodies to go deeper into some of your observations and recommendations. Thank you for the discussion. Any other comments?

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 10 – Petitions.

Item 11 – Government Notices.

Item 12 – Unofficial Notices.

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Item 13 – Questions.

Madam President: Honourable Senator Neilon Francis... Franklyn. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I would like to table... Re-table this question... One of the unanswered questions from the previous session was about the Leader of Government's Business, as the Minister for Health no longer sits in this House.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. You might have the duty to at least name the question.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Question number three. From... **(Inaudible comments by Senators)**

Madam President: Or read the... Read the shortest version of it.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: I will read the question.

Madam President: ... shortest version of it.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Okay. "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, Wellness, and Religious Affairs inform this Honourable House:

- a) How many containers landed in Grenada with medicine and medical supplies procured by the Government?

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- 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?
- 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. Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, while I recognise that the question was submitted and maybe was unanswered in December 2023, I must and I think it's... the House must recognise that the first Order Paper that was sent out this question was not recorded, and therefore, the Order Paper was reviewed only yesterday, and it was only yesterday it was sent out. So the answer may have been prepared already, but we don't have it here with us. So I beg and I kindly request that we defer this answer to the next Sitting, or I will make it available to the Members of the House as soon as possible.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you, Madam President. As this is a question segment, I would not engage in a back and forth, so I will save my comments on the issue, on the matter, rather for the Adjournment. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for your cooperation, both of you Senators. Thank you. Senator Roderick St. Clair.

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Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. The following questions were submitted in December 2023. Well, of course, I know it takes time to get through the process.

The first question in my name is one related to CITES, which we speak a lot about with the divers and lambie, and that's the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora requirements, such that Grenada can export conch (lambie).

And so the question is, "Can the Leader of Government's Business provide the Senate with a status update on Grenada's level of compliance to CITES requirements and our readiness to export conch/lambie such that our divers can have improved income?" So that's question number one.

Madam President: Thank you. Request for an update on question one regarding CITES readiness and preparedness. Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. It seems as though all the questions I go to the ministries follow me. **(Laughter)** Madam President, I am the Leader of Government's Business in that capacity now, right? Madam President, I would have recalled that we did give an update not in the last Sitting, but the last time the question came, we informed this House that a lot of the groundwork has been completed and we have submitted all the relevant information to the relevant authorities, international organisations. We don't have any information that will express their satisfaction with what we have submitted, and we await that information. Once this information is made available, we will be happy to let the entire country know where we stand in regards to the exportation of conch/lambie.

Madam President: Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes. If I may add, not trying to help answer

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the question for the Senator, because this was in December, the question came in, and some activities took place after, and I guess you'd be officially updated and then update us accordingly. That's what I would say. Right? So... Because it would be not fair at the same time to have seen some progress after regarding, particularly with the legislation and so on, but that came subsequently, and I didn't want to force all the questions in his process. **(Inaudible comments by a Senator) (Laughter)** No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, never. I am not saying not yet, never. Okay.

Question number two, Madam President. And this one relates to the Crop Compensation Schedule of 1995, and of course, I think this is almost a road march inside here. And the question is the issue of Crop Compensation such that farmers can have improved compensation whenever they suffer crop loss from praedial larceny and property damage from man or animals.

And the question is, can the... Again, just an update, "Can the Leader of Government's Business inform the Senate on the following, as it pertains to the Crop Compensation Schedule of 1995 and the question has part a: Has the Minister for Agriculture issued an order to have the Crop Compensation Schedule of 1995 reviewed? And that is because the law says that you have to issue an order. And the second part says, if yes, when was that order issued? And part c says if yes to a, that is whether the order was issued, can you basically provide an update as to where we are and how soon we might be able to come to the end of the road to see the finish line?" So it's pretty much a question of giving us a status update on this. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you. Leader of Government's Business, the Crop Compensation question follows you, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, the answer to this question is no. And therefore, if the first section is no, then I think the other two sections are irrelevant.

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Madam President: Thank you. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Right. The third question... All right, so there are two, three more... The third question says, it relates to the poultry and livestock farmers and the whole issue of feed prices. We know that is a big issue and we know that the Government has been involved in various initiatives. So we are again looking. "Can the Leader of Government's Business inform the Senate of Government's policy action(s) taken to date that would result in the lowering of the cost of feed for poultry and livestock farmers?" Is there anything happening pertaining to that?

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. And I pass the floor to the Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much again, Madam President. Let me inform this House that the policy on poultry production has been reviewed and has been completed. There are a number of recommendations that came out of this review, and the Ministry of Agriculture is presently in the process of meeting with various stakeholders in terms of discussing the reviewed policy and some of the recommendations that will be taken to the Government to really and truly execute.

On the issue of lowering the cost of feed, I want the House to recognise that Government is not in the business of producing feed, per se, but within the recommendations, there are issues that are down on paper for negotiation with the producing companies regarding feed and maybe some of the importers. As far as the Government is concerned, within our realms, the whole question of the concession is the one which we can, in terms of duties and so on, where we can... Most of these are within the recommendations. So once we are able to sit at the table with the producers, then we can, we would not be able to say, give any definite word in regards to by how much we're able to negotiate and have a reduction in the cost of feed and ultimately the cost of production.

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So as we sit here, as I said the Ministry of Agriculture they are going around the country and meeting with various stakeholders and I hope that in the near not too far from now we'll be able to complete the process and make sure that we have something in our hands that is of substance, well done and ready to be executed, nourished, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. I have never heard a more sophisticated nothing happening reply yet. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: We... Madam President, we are working on...

Madam President: Nothing happening yet on the cost of feed.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: It's a process. It's a process. Work in progress.

Madam President: Something is happening on the review, I complementation, and I hope the Bureau of Standards **(laughter)** and others are informed with you. But on the cost of feed, we want some action. Thank you, Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. Very good observation, yes, yes, I guess that you looked at CARIFTA very much so, you've been watching, making sure they stay in line **(laughter)** and stay in their lane. Okay, but I understand.

The fourth and final question speaks of, "Can the Leader of Government's Business inform the Senate of the official designated locations for holding impounding animals?" And this has been sort of a concern within the sector and even to myself, where the schedule exists, what is that official point, so we're trying to get some clarification. Thank you.

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Madam President: Thank you, Senator, for your question. Leader of Government's Business, Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Again, the issue of impounding animals and the question of holding sites, history has shown that there aren't any official sites in Grenada for holding animals. Once you impound an animal the onus is on the farmer or the person prosecuting or intent to, to take care of the animal, keep it within his or her holding and make sure that the animal is being properly fed, well taken care of because you do not want the animal to die in your own hands so that is how it has been operating.

But, I know this is a question that needs a written response, so I want to say here that, but before I go there, and you rightly asked the questions because, I think it's in Carriacou, the site might be Limlair, but in Grenada, there isn't any holding site per se, official holding site per se. But I want to ask the House to bear with us. We have requested a written response from the Ministry of Agriculture, and whatever I say here, whenever the written response comes, it will supersede what I'm saying here. So, but, I'm just giving some information up front in regards to the historical data. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Question for my own edification: What happens to impounded animals? Can they be given back to the owner if they bear the responsibility for the loss? Can they be given away if nobody shows up? Can they be slaughtered for Christmas? What happens to an impounded animal? I think Senator Cox has a policy in Carriacou that he wants to share. You go first, Senator Cox.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Madam President, I kind of want to help my colleague today a little bit on this particular matter. There is an Act for impounding animals. In the case of Carriacou, there are Impounding Officers who are hired and form recollections based on legislation animals that are impounded on Government property,

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the public spaces, they're taken to the station, I think there is a, I think a seven-day or 14-day window which person would come and identify and retrieve the animal and they will pay the impounding fees and also I think there is a charge for every day that the animal is kept. So that summarises it. You pay, you collect your animal, and you go. So, that's how it operates. If you don't come, which nobody comes and claims, or if you can't afford to pay, then you can agree for it to be sold by an auction, thereafter. So that happens, and whatever expenses are paid to the State for which the animal incurred, I think the difference goes to the owner. But if nobody comes, then the animal becomes the property of the State, and then they auction it off to other farmers who may be able to better take care of it. So that is how it is done.

So I'm working with my colleague today to **(laughter)** to provide some information to the Nation and the Honourable House. Yes so... That is where we are.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much. We have some empty chairs across here. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Don't worry, I have some more teaching for him just now, I have to respond to him on a particular matter. I must do that before I leave today.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Very good, very good. This brings us, I think, to the end of Questions. Thank you.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 15 – Motions.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian: Madam President, thank you very much. Again, I stand to present this Motion regarding the Stamp Act.

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**RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 6 OF THE STAMP ACT,
CAP. 309.**

WHEREAS it is provided by Section 6 of the Stamp Act, Chapter 309 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) that the Minister may from time to time, by Order, amend the Schedule by increasing or decreasing the amount of, or by annulling, any of the duties therein mentioned, or impose duties on any instruments not mentioned in the Schedule, or alter the Schedule in such other manner as he or she may deem advisable: Provided that before any such Order shall come into operation it shall have been approved by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, by resolution;

AND WHEREAS the Minister proposes to amend the Schedule to the Act to revise the formula for calculating the stamp duty payable on Leases and Agreements for Lease so that where the annual rent is fixed, the stamp duty payable shall be 1.25% of the total rent reserved for the entire term of the Lease or Agreement for a Lease and where the annual rent fluctuates, the stamp duty payable shall be 1.25% of the total average annual rent reserved for the entire term of the Lease or Agreement for a Lease;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that the Stamp (Amendment of Schedule) Order, 2024, which seeks to amend the Schedule to the Act, be approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to section 6 of the Act, the Stamp (Amendment of Schedule) Order, 2024, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution, is hereby approved by the Senate.

Madam President: I thank the Honourable Senator for the Motion.

Question proposed.

Madam President: This is the Motion before you, Honourable Senators. The debate on said Resolution is open. Seeing no request... Yes, there is one. **(Inaudible comments by Senators)** Leader of Government's Business in the Senate.

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Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, the present legislation that we have seems to be very cumbersome, laborious, and tedious. Madam President, a lot of uncertainties regarding the calculation of the duties have turned off a lot of businessmen, particularly based on the discussion we have had with many of those businessmen.

And we believe that... The present... What we are seeking here is to ease the difficulties of people... The business community has to pay duties, and also the people with leases and agreements whereby the rent fluctuates, in particular. But before it fluctuates in terms of the fixed rent, what you have is many of the leases and many of the agreements will go for one year, two years, or five years and duties tend to be calculated on the first year, and if the first year for is, an ease of calculation, is EC\$1,000 that EC\$1,000 might be the principal figure that people tend to use even though two years, three years after the lease or the agreement the fees increase.

We are advising, Madam President, that rather than going through, if we look at the Schedule in the old Act, we will see that, where the subject matter thereof is a value of EC\$50 and not exceeding EC\$100, EC\$1. Then we have exceeding EC\$100 and not exceeding EC\$200, EC\$1.50, and it goes on and on, Madam President, until we go up to EC\$700, EC\$1000 and other figures, Madam President.

We believe that if we could round it off, it would be very, very easy. A lot of the time, people do their own calculations, and when they reach the Ministry of Finance, the people in the Ministry of Finance do their calculation also which really and truly does not synchronise, and it seems to be at loggerheads. What we are advocating, Madam President, is that we use one figure and in cases where we have the rent fluctuating based on circumstances, we will take the average, take 1.25% of the average and ease the burden.

Madam President, we believe that the business community will welcome such. We believe that the landlords who are involved in those things will welcome such, and I now present this Resolution to you, Madam President, and my colleagues on the "Other Side" seeking their support.

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

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I just rise to briefly comment on the Resolution currently before the House.

Of course, I expected a more detailed explanation as to why this Resolution is necessary. I understand the need to establish some sort of uniformity when it comes to the calculation of the stamp duties. However, the justification of what was there before was too cumbersome. It was too tedious, so we had to create a new formula in order to calculate the stamp duties. I don't think that is sufficient, and I'll explain why.

We do not know how the formula was derived. From my assessment of the previous schedule, or the schedule that exists in the current legislation, and the proposed Resolution for the new formula, I see at the top of the schedule a dollar value symbol and the cents symbol and for the proposed amendment to the schedule, there is a percentage sign.

Of course, I would ask, once again, how the Government arrived at 1.25%. And then, in considering tax calculation or the applicability of various taxes, dollar value tax would be considered a specific tax, so in the case of petrol tax, for example, it is EC\$3.50 whether or not the value of a gallon of fuel goes to EC\$50 or EC\$100, the tax payable is EC\$3.50. When you know move from a specific tax or specific duty to a percentage, you are looking at ad valorem, so it now becomes an ad valorem tax or an ad valorem duty, and you are asking taxpayers to pay a percentage of the value. In this case, if the value goes up or the value changes at all, the tax payable to the competent agency or the competent authority, I think in this case, it will be the Accountant General's Office that would impact the amount of money to be paid by the taxpayer.

Again, I think these are genuine concerns because we have not heard any detailed explanation as to how the 1.25% was derived. And I will use an example, let's say a lease is in the value... Is... A lease, sorry, has a value of EC\$1.45 million. I am just using a

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random figure, and that's the annual amount. The annual value and the new schedule is implemented and that taxpayer is asked to pay 1.25% of that which will be EC\$1.45 million by 0.0125 that is EC\$18,125, around that. Now, you could correct my math if I'm wrong, but if that value now changes to... let's say... EC\$1.55 million dollars, and the same 1.25% has to apply, of course, it will go to the tune of just over EC\$19,000, EC\$19,300 and something dollars. That's a big change in my view.

So, my question is, from that explanation, has the Government assessed whether or not the change in the calculation or the introduction of this new formula would adversely affect taxpayers or the duty payers, the stamp duty payers, and how do they intend to deal with this? And again, I would like some clarity as to how the formula was derived. I wouldn't want to think that the Government just randomly came up with a figure out of the sky. We have competent staff in the Ministry of Finance. I know a lot of them, especially in the Accountant General's office, in the Inland Revenue Division, competent tax administrators and tax collectors. So I would like the Government, to at least explain how this new formula was derived. There is no opposition to uniformity, but at least some clarity as to how this 1.25% was derived. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Franklyn. Leader of Government's Business... And before you reply, Senator St. Clair, go ahead, Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: ... Because once he speaks, the debate closes on the matter. Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, in the previous one, we had an umbrella overhead in the sun, and this one, I haven't figured it out yet. **(Laughter)** Maybe this one is a glasses with a bifocal lens and some other magnification at the end.

I stand, Madam President, to make my contribution to this Resolution regarding the proposed amendment to section 6 of the Stamp Act, CAP 309. Essentially, this is asking us, this Resolution is asking us to agree to move from what is termed a very complex series of calculations to determine the stamp duties that a leaser, that is someone who wants to rent from somebody, whether they want to rent land or they want

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to rent a boat or they want to rent something, they want to lease something, they want to lease some lands to farm, etcetera. The person who is leasing will have to pay that cost.

And this Motion is asking us to sort of eliminate or remove this complex, which is referred to as a complex series of calculations, to determine this and to go to a very simplified version. And I heard the question as to how did we get there. And for those of us who went through little mathematics, sometimes there is a longboard with all sorts of pluses and minuses, open brackets, and closed brackets before we get the answer. This here... presents a schedule...

Generally, I want to make some preliminary statements, Madam President. The issue about this complexity that the business community... Talking about complexity... With this Schedule... No, can't be the business community. Senator Rahaman is laughing because he knows his office has capable persons to do these calculations. But, that's not really the real issue.

Generally, Madam President, when leases are prepared, you go to lawyers, you go to a law office. Inside there they are trained, and fully competent in how to handle these things. They have been handling these things since before this Act was present. So when I heard "the business community" I was kind of worried that the business community wouldn't get tricked in this process. I heard the word since I got here, and I heard it about twice afterwards and I have to use it because it is very fitting here. Because the law offices know how to calculate these things, they've been doing that for years. And if every time they keep going to the Inland Revenue with this thing and they're doing it wrong and they coming back and they... I don't see them doing that over and over...

Many leases are prepared every day. If you go into the registry, you will read hundreds of leases are prepared. So I don't buy that narrative about how this thing is complex and the business community complaining. If you tell me the law community complaining, I could say, well, maybe yes, because they are the ones preparing the leases.

The business community is involved in much more complex calculations than this. Senator Rahaman just said he came from a training dealing with customs brokerage.

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That is a complex, very complicated... I don't even want to watch those forms about CT, SIE... what... all kinds of calculations, and I don't hear the business community complaining, saying they want simplified custom entries. Instead, what the Government has done and not just local Government, many Governments in the world, they computerised these things, they computerised these things in the days of technology, and they punch in, punch in, and the information is right there. In fact, if you want to take a loan from a bank or a credit union these days, you just go to their website, and they have a calculator to tell you what the interest will be.

Our Government is a very smart Government. In fact, I think even for this period as we're speaking about doing your taxes online. So it therefore means that there is some capacity to have relevant technologies to do a complex series of calculations, much more than about eight lines of calculations, even an Excel spreadsheet can work out. So I don't buy this story about complexity that's basically a zero-rated matter. And for the business community to say that it is complex, it's not for them to say it is complex because they are not the ones calculating. They go to the lawyers, the lawyers calculate, and they say this is what it is. If you don't know how they ended up with the figure, you'll ask, how did you end up with the figure? And law firms want the business, they will go and explain whether to the farmers or whoever is leasing. So I don't buy that.

But, it is always good to try to find simpler ways to do things, and nobody is saying no. But, the question is have we tried some computerised approach and say that it is difficult? You see, because sometimes I wonder, Madam President, to what extent we really try options or we just reach on the first tread and we say, well, let's see where that goes, not realising there might be another answer on the side tread or just the next tread up front. And then we may lose a lot of opportunities. But, again, it depends on what is your goal.

So, for example, when I speak about the business community may not understand what has happened to them or what will happen to them shortly... **(Laughter)** Senator Rahaman is worried. I am not a big mathematician, so I cannot speak like Senator Franklyn, one point something million. I am staying within the thousands. **(Laughter)** I

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am counting in the thousands, Madam President. So, let us look at the practicality and the impact because when we bring these discussions always we have to remember, what is the impact on the people of this nation? Are we putting a burden, are we creating complexity, are we creating a safer environment, are we making business... So always look at that.

And if you do a matrix and see how this duty approach and I'll say it, because the proposal to us is not to increase the duties, you know, like how you will increase the road tax in a while, it's not that, it's to find a more or less cumbersome approach. So if at the end of the day, you are putting in less effort, I should expect at the end of the day that I might even get discounts because the inputs and the efforts are less. And if you want to service the country, I don't think... it's like what Senator Rahaman saying, I don't think the Government is into making profits but it's to provide goods at least to recover its cost. So I don't expect that at the end of the day, it will result in an increase.

Now, if you want to increase it, then let's speak about that. So let's see what the net effect of this, Madam President, is. My little research shows that... Let us suppose you have a rent of EC\$1,000 per month, this will work out to something like EC\$12,000 per year. Okay? Based on this complex formula that is being proposed, that is being suggested that we have when you speak to the lawyers and those different firms across the country who do these calculations they will tell you that if you are the person who does the leasing, the leaser, you will have to pay somewhere around EC\$143 in stamp tax, stamp duties for this EC\$1000 monthly. So, again, to appease persons, it will not be EC\$1,000,000 you have to pay like Senator Cox... Norland... Maybe those big, big enterprises.

Now, Madam President, here is the catch. Generally, someone doesn't really lease for one year. Generally, when you speak about leases like two, three or four years. So what is the current practice, based on my extensive research, stand corrected, is that if the first year is EC\$1,000, the second, third and fourth, yes, generally you will have a little increase. But let us suppose it remains EC\$1,000, it's your good buddy, "you give them a bly", as we would say. So then it means that whether it's year one, year two or

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year three, it would work out on this EC\$1,000 a month EC\$12,000 for one year. The practice is, the practice.... And I think that is where maybe could be the bone of contention. And that is what I'm saying, if every time we continue to have that issue with the Inland Revenue, then that matter needs to be resolved with our law firms, which are doing those things.

The calculations... And I think that was also... Not I think... That was clearly articulated by the Leader of Government's Business proponent of the Bill, of this Motion, that the calculation takes place for one year. So it's going to only work this maths in the current formula based on the first year's rent which will be EC\$12,000 which will give you just about EC\$143, as I was informed. I stand corrected, but that is what I got when I roleplayed a tenant. Now, with this 1.25% proposal, what does it mean? Let us suppose that I had rented the same EC\$1,000 three times, it's my partner so for three years, EC\$1000, it will still work out to EC\$12,000 at 1.25%. I think that will work out to about EC\$150. So immediately, we already started moving EC\$7, that doesn't look bad, simple.

But if I hear the presentation from my good friend, Senator Thomas, he says, you know this thing has to calculate as an average over the years. So if it's EC\$1,000, EC\$1,000, EC\$1,000 then it will still be more, EC\$7 more than the EC\$143. However, we know business is not like that. So let us suppose that the first year was EC\$1,000, and the second year was EC\$1,500, and the third year was EC\$2,000, when you work out the math based on the memory of my learning from since being taught, I would have it be about EC\$54,000 as a global. And when you do the average and divide that by the average to get the average, you would end up with our EC\$18,000. Now, I don't even have to go to the complex formula that is presented because we already know, based on the premise, that the new approach is always higher... Sorry...

Madam President: Point of Order.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Sorry... Okay.

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Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I really do not want to disturb the Senator, but, I really want to follow the calculation so that I can respond accordingly when my time reaches. I'm getting something figures there and I'm not sure... I cannot go through it in my own head, so I'm trying to use the calculator, but the calculator seems to be contrary to what you are saying. So I don't know if we could... **(Inaudible comments by Senator Roderick St. Clair)**

No, no, no, no, but I want to follow in... So just for clarification, because when I calculate a EC\$1,000... 1.25% of EC\$1,000, that's what, EC\$12.50?

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No, you have to work it out of the EC\$12,000.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: It doesn't matter. I mean 1% will always remain 1%. If you say EC\$1,000 at the end of one year, at the end of a year that will be EC\$12,000 it will still be 1.25%.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: The first one that is the complicated one, as I said, I stand at EC\$143. Now, this is the real important part, Madam President. So, for just reversing, we say if, in the new year, you get EC\$1,000 for year one, EC\$1,500 in year two and EC\$2,000 in year three, that will give you a global of around EC\$54,000 that three-year rent, which is the value of the three-year rent. But the proposal is for us to take an average. So when you do the average, you would end up EC\$18,000. I was taught, I was taught by the people who are doing it, who they say it's complex. And then, Madam President, when I put the 1.25% on the EC\$18,000, the answer is EC\$225. So the point is...

Madam President: Here... We have to take another interruption around the EC\$18,000. So if you total EC\$54,000 for three years and you want the average for the 36 months, my understanding is that you divide... 54 divided by 36... The other way around? **(Inaudible comments by Senators)** By three? Three? So we get our 18.

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Three years so it's yearly I thought was monthly. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No problem, no problem. Thank you. So when you take this EC\$18,000 and you multiply it by the 1.25% you end up with EC\$225 and this is what you will have to pay because it takes care of the average of the three-year, or the lease period. And so if we use the old way what is going to happen in this case you will only pay EC\$143 because normally the practice is to be only paying one year.

And so I just hope that the business community, which saying that it is complex, understands the implication of this. I don't have a problem with that because I believe that... I was shocked to know that it's only one year that is being treated. So I think this is a very good point. But if the Government side understands that this is what we have to do because we have to pay for what the situation is, I don't think people have a problem with that. So I do hope that the business community, which sees it as a complex matter, understands that with simplicity we can all see the figures better. So I have no problem with that. But our stakeholders must be aware of the impact of that and it also means that the revenues of the Government will be more secured, would be more secure and can be used in worthwhile ventures of this country.

So I wanted that... This is basically my main consideration I wanted to share. I have no problem in objecting, the no objection, but I want us to be clear that we are seeing this thing with real bifocals, and I'm very clear that we will be increasing. So it means that as of the next few months, persons who have leases to prepare this is a massive impact.

Would there be an amnesty period? Would there be a period for the next six months because persons who would have budgeted, the annual budget, what are the implications for that? And these are things where the issues are on everybody's side. I think this is the bigger picture. So would there be a period of, say, six months for rolling this out so that persons could arrange themselves? Or if persons from tomorrow will be hurrying, all the lawyers in this country, all the law firms, to rush in their leases to finish them in time, such that they don't get caught with this. I think this to me is a significant increase and for EC\$1,000 lease, but there are leases... People have leases for

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EC\$40,000 a month. That's a lot. So, could you imagine the amount of impact this has on them? So this is the perspective I wanted to share, and that the business community realise what they have done.

The farming community, we also are concerned with that because farmers already sometimes complaining with the size of the leases that they have so I basically wanting to have this clarified, and we have enough mathematicians here to help with the maths.

(Applause)

Madam President: Well, we want to thank one of these fine mathematicians. Honourable St. Clair, thank you very much. And now to Leader of Government's Business, sir. No, the representative of business in the Senate, Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: So what I have done here... Thank you very much, Madam President. What I did was to try to equate the old table, which the Leader of Government's Business mentioned that was cumbersome and to compare that with the new proposed legislation at 1.25%. So if we were to simply take, for ease of calculation, an EC\$1,000... EC\$1,000 for every EC\$1,000, the charge would be EC\$11 on the chart. Yes? Right. So that's .011, that's .011. So there's no... Yes. .011, which means 1.10%. Right? So no lease for the year is EC\$1,000, so if we're going to take a lease, for example, for the year of EC\$24,000 which is EC\$2,000 a month that might be a more realistic figure of rent that people are paying and you use that same, that same, the rate remains the same it's 0.011 which is 1.10%.

So effectively, what this new regulation or proposal regulation is doing is increasing it from 1.10% to 1.25%. I have not done further calculations other than what is presented here, so I don't, I wouldn't be able to speak to how that will impact leases with a bigger... A percentage is a percentage, so definitely the percentage has been increased.

Because of the summary or the old chart, nobody pays those figures anymore. So I see a need to change it. It's just that when we do the math the change comes with an increase. **(Laughter)** So, it is what it is. I mean, it's not... It's... I don't know if it is

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burdensome. I understand inflation and all these things. I know Government has to do their calculations, and I'm sure the people in the Ministry of Finance know what they are doing, and they know how much is a reasonable increase. So I can't say further than that other than to point out what the math shows me. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Senator Cox.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Yes, Madam President. Just a short comment on this Motion. And my colleague and I had extensive discussions on this whole impact, the likely impact this would have for persons who are renting properties and so on.

Now, Madam President, I will just say this from my standpoint. I understand the requirement for the change. I understand the justification given, but from this Motion, what I deduce is a pattern of the Government looking and implementing, in a quiet way, measures to increase revenue. **(Applause)** That is what I'm picking up. We can start with the EC\$50 for, for licence for vehicles, I'll talk about heavy vehicles on the road. We have had heavy vehicles on the road for a good 10 years or more now. Yes, we have. We had that **(laughter)**, so we see that, then we see the upgrade of the licence, which we all recommend. That in itself would be a revenue generating initiative at the same time, and now we see this.

And I say this because I know my colleague the Leader of Government's Business. Anyhow, this measure has some savings he would have been standing on the table, Madam President, **(applause)** thumping his chest and saying how we're fighting for the people, we're fighting for the business and... So from the time I see he come, you know, he come very quiet, **(laughter)** I realized something is not right. Yes. **(Laughter)** **(Applause)** So, Madam President, we understand, we understand, and we just want to highlight and to let him know that we know what he's trying to do. So I rest my case.

Madam President: What a session! **(Laughter)** Thank you, Senator Cox. Senator David Andrew.

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Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Yes. Madam President, thank you. Thank you. I rise to offer my support to the Resolution. Notwithstanding all of the discussions, I have absolute confidence in our professionals and practitioners, within the Minister for Finance, to ensure that whatever adjustments were made were carefully reflected upon and won't be onerous on our people, and even the preliminary discussions so far don't necessarily point to it being outrageous or anything that will not be manageable.

Given that, by and large, leases for the most part, particularly for lands and those things are often not as huge, and I don't see this as becoming too onerous, and I trust the professionals within the Ministry of Finance.

But additionally, I think this will help to make stamp duties...given that there was some that were fixed and some that fluctuates within year, the predictability, doing this allows for greater predictability in the process, greater consistency in the process and I think that augers well for... even it may have implications for the, Grenada's ease of doing business index. You're getting things like that; these processes are standardised, making it easier and less cumbersome to facilitate processes like that, which are routine processes that businesses would always have to endure. So I offer my full support to the Resolution. Thank you much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew. Leader of Government's Business. Finally, sir, here you are.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: **(Laughter)** Madam President, I was really prepared to end the debate after that commercial break, given to us by **(laughter)** by my good friend Senator Norland Cox. **(Laughter)** But, Madam President, on a serious note, there are many landlords in Grenada, and we all know them. The few who are capable of going to the law, to the legal firm, Madam President, I know of them. I have managed GCNA properties for years. I have communicated with law firms, and there are a lot of businesses taking place in Grenada where... and big business. You'll be surprised to know. I had to call up a few of the big businesses in the vicinity, and they said I don't go

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to any lawyers to make any agreements. Myself and the tenant sit, we sit side by side and we sign our document, and then they register it.

So ... and the Senator is quite aware of that too, because I've brought those things to his attention over the years. Mr. Senator? **(Inaudible comment by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)** So to come and list, so to come in this House, Madam President, and split hairs over these simple matters, I think maybe really and truly we're talking about what? A few dollars, if it increases? But our intention, Madam President, is not to create any avenue whereby we will create any extra burden on the business community. We have, we have, we have consulted with the officials in the Ministry of Finance of, as Senator David Andrew just pointed out, we are the politicians, we have technicians in the ministry that have been working there for years. And when we come to Parliament, Madam President, is not that we sit down in our own homes, or in our own beds and discuss matters of other that nature.

As a matter of fact, on a regular basis, technicians visit the Cabinet, because we want to make sure that when we take policies and laws and legislations, that we are properly advised. And the data from the Ministry of Finance clearly shows, that what we are proposing here, Madam President, really and truly is equitable and would not create any burden on the people who will be affected. Really and truly. And if that is the case, as it is being said in the House here today, on the "Other Side", I expect to see, Madam President, mass demonstrations in the streets of Grenada. It's ... Especially the business community. I expect them to be calling on the Government and, and say, "Well, we cannot afford that". Time will tell. Let's wait and see.

So, Madam President, we are not here to play with words. We are here to carry on the people's business, and we believe that this Resolution will be a breath of fresh air to many people who have had the burden of sorting out themselves and making sure that they comply with the business of our country with the business that they are carrying on in our country.

Madam President, it hurts me, and I'm on a... Even when people go to the port to clear goods, and they have to go from one point to the next, bam, bam, bam, bam, those

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are the matters we have to address, also. Not only stamp duties. We have to address all those things. But again, we are not on a 60-meter dash. **(Laughter)** We're going to take our time, and make sure that we get it right. We are not, we are not going on a 5000k either. We are not going so far. But a little 200, 400 metres will surely take us there and make sure that we do the right thing.

So, Madam President, I am happy that people deep down in their heart, I think they support this I now sit by and ask for the approval.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Leader of Government's Business in the Senate.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

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

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business. Private Business. Sorry. Public Business over there.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Sorry.

Madam President: Is there a request for the floor? Senators.

(Inaudible comment by a Senator)

Madam President: Senator St. Clair, your...

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Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No, no, clarifying the Road Traffic, but I think we don't have to touch that. I think that was the... Yes, yes. Okay. Yes, yes. No problem.

Madam President: Before you move for adjournment, I just wanted to make a quick remark.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Madam President, on the Adjournment, I want to say something.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: We have to move the Adjournment Motion.

(Inaudible comment by Madam President)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. I now move that, move the motion that this House be adjourned sine die.

Madam President: Senator Cox, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Yes, Madam President. I just wanted to bring some clarification to a matter that was raised in Senator Andrew's Ministerial Statement regarding Bishop's College, Carriacou. I think it's important not to let that remark just go. I think I want to put it on record, in terms of correcting him. It has to do with Bishop's College. And so, he did make some reference that the school was constructed without consideration for a water tank, and given Carriacou's climate conditions, he sees that as being irresponsible, or something to that sort. I can't remember exactly, but I want to clarify this for him to know and seeing that he is currently working with CDB, and maybe there might be some World Bank Projects that he can work on, for him to understand how those institutions work. And sometimes you don't speak too quickly, because sometimes

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your turn may come. So I wanted to bring some clarification.

So, Madam President, I suspect there was a long, a long drawn-out negotiation on Bishop's College, a number of, numerous assessments, even before I became the Minister for Infrastructure. And they finally agreed that they're going to build a new wing for Bishop's College and renovate the existing primary school, which had a water tank below the building. And so, it was agreed with the contractor, with the bank, with the Government of Grenada that the infrastructure of the tank and the existing school was satisfactory and suitable for renovation, and not demolition. And so, the project commenced, and the new wing commenced, and when they attempted to do the renovation works on the existing building, it was deemed and found to be unsuitable when work started.

Now, what does that mean? It means now that the entire wing that was housing a number of classes upstairs and downstairs had to be demolished, including the water tank. So the project initially had all that; there was no need to include a water tank, because the water tank was assessed to be okay and suitable, and that building. And so, when work started, physical work actually started; everything had to come down. And hence the reason why the tank was no longer there. And there was a long discussion in terms of the additional funds and where the additional funds are going to come from.

And so, what happened, the monies that they had available in addition, including contingencies and whatsoever, would have only built the build over the wing, not inclusive of the tank. And a decision was taken that, because we have portable water, in terms of Hillsborough, from our desalination plant, that can suffice, and thereafter, a water tank for emergency purposes and other things was going to be constructed. So I wanted to bring some clarification to this Honourable House, and to the nation, so that it doesn't seem as if some irresponsible decision was made, in terms of just excluding a water tank for that project. So that is what actually transpired.

So I'm saying this to say that the Minister for Education may find himself in a situation like that, you never know going forward. So sometimes it's important to find out the true reason. I heard about it, but I didn't have an opportunity to speak about it in the

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House. And so, I'm glad that he raised, so that we can be better, so that we all can better understand what actually transpired and why, why there was no water tank in that project, because of what transpired before. The funds for the school were tight, and then what happened, I believe, because whatever was approved, it took some time for the project to materialise, and then the cost of goods and services, I think, the whole issue of COVID and everything, everything went up exponentially. So that is what really transpired there. So I just wanted to put that on the record.

And I just want to close on one more thing, Madam President. Is that, just to remind the Leader of Government's Business, you know, we have a responsibility here, as Members in this Honourable House, and while the Member may have access to technocrats who can give him the explanation, if he failed to give those explanations when he come here, we have a responsibility to extract it, in whatever way that we can, so that the nation can understand **(applause)** what is taking place with their business. So I just want to say that. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox. Thank you. Senator Franklyn. Your light is on, and you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise on the adjournment to make a few comments. As it relates to that question that I posed, that was posed, rather to the immediate former Minister for Health, and we are yet to get an answer for that question. Madam President, as of December last year, when we last sat to debate the Budget, that question was pending a response for 104 days. At the time the question was initially posed, you asked that a response be given within 30 days.

As of today, Madam President, it is now 210 days since this question could be answered. And I say this, Madam President, this question specifically was not asked to make the Minister for Health or the Government look bad. There were a number of concerns echoed by citizens of this country that the hospital was short on medication,

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short on medical supplies and so on. So it's only fitting as a responsible opposition to give the Government an opportunity to explain what was happening, whether or not it was true and clear the air.

As a result of there now being 210 days elapsing between the time the question was asked and now, it only leads me to believe that what was said by citizens is true. For the past few weeks, Madam President, I have had the experience of having both my parents, one after the other, admitted to the general hospital. I dare say, Madam President, the situation is bad. I assessed the budget for 2023, EC\$114 million was budgeted for the Ministry of Health. Almost EC\$27 million was unspent in the Ministry of Health. This is not an attack on the Government, because for some reason, when we stand to speak, it comes across as an attack, and I don't want it to come across as an attack.

When I interact with health professionals in the general hospital, they ask, they indicate, I see they are trying, Madam President, but they do not have the proper resources to do so. Through interaction with other health care professionals, specifically in some of the homes, they indicate to me that they don't have the proper cleaning material, they don't have medication to effectively do their jobs and take care of the elderly. This is concerning, and it pains me, because these questions weren't asked yesterday; they weren't asked last month. It was asked last year, in the context of what we were hearing on the ground.

Madam President, while I'm on this note, I would like to make a plea to as many of us, as Grenadians, to donate blood to the hospital, the blood bank. There was a request that came from one of the professionals, and I am simply doing the bidding of our citizens. I have donated, I would ask our colleagues, my colleagues, rather, in this House to donate if you can, and to other Grenadians to do so. A number of our citizens are at risk, and we need to support the general hospital as best as we can. Some of the healthcare professionals are saying that, or are complaining about compensation, about security of tenure and all of these, and I urge the Government, Madam President, like the Leader of Government's Business said, it's not a 60-metre dash.

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We clearly understood that, but promises were made, and I urge the Government to seriously consider addressing this issue. None of us would want any of our family members to end up at the general hospital, God forbid, die, because of a lack of medication, a lack of resources, so that the health care professionals can do what they need to do. This is a genuine plea, an earnest plea. And, Madam President, just to somewhat add to what the Honourable Senator Cox was discussing, about the trend he noticed, in terms of Government implementing policies to generate revenues here and there.

And to add, or to add context rather, the Leader of Government's Business said just a while ago, we have to take our time and make sure we do it right. As it relates to the EC\$50 that, EC\$50 increase on the inspection fee, based on my own assessment, and listening to the Minister for Finance, in the "Other Place", there will be a credit, rather a tax credit that will be given to persons, people who have paid the increase before the actual implementation of the amended legislation. Last year, for the excise tax increase, the Government delayed the implementation of the increase. They moved it from February 1st to March 1st. That, Madam President, I could refer to as taking your time to do it right. But the Government took their time to do it right, in respect of commodities, but at this particular time, in respect of its citizens, you didn't take your time. They didn't take their time. **(Laughter)** There was a... I guess there was less than 60 metres. There must be some level of understanding when it comes to social implications on our citizens, Madam President. **(Applause)** We were not appointed to this House to look after ourselves or machines. We were appointed to do the business of the people of this country. And I say this for what it's worth, Madam President. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Franklyn. Thank you very much. Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. Just a few, just closing. Our Attorney General spoke about a new office of Consumer Affairs, and she

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said that they're already receiving calls and so on. It's a good thing; however, we all know that we can buy an electrical appliance that is fault-free, that is good and have an electrical surge or a power outage, and that appliance would get damaged. Many of us have experienced those types of things with appliances that are on when the power goes out, and when it comes back, there's a surge, and it damages a board and so on.

So along with, if I were to buy for example a, an air condition or a refrigerator and it is on, operating, electricity goes, it comes back and there's a surge, I don't have the proper surge protector and so on in my home, and it blows a board or something like that and the unit stops working, I'm at work, didn't know that it happened, I come home and see that it's not working, I just bought this fridge from so and so business, two months ago, and all of a sudden, this thing is not working. I called them and I said, "Well, this thing is not good, you are selling defective products to the public". I call Consumer Affairs and report it.

We need to have qualified people in that office, because you're going to have people that are calling, yes, they have a legitimate problem, but they are the consumer, and they don't know why this has happened. They just know it's not working, and they're calling to complain. So I suggest that in this new office, that you have a list of professionals, electricians, other people, that if you want a professional opinion from this office, you could make a phone call to these private sector people, independent and tell them, could you go check customer A. There's a complaint here, we want to find out what the truth is with regard to this particular appliance.

If that is not done, then I'm afraid that you're going to have complaints that you're going to end up in court. It's not going to be able to be solved. It's going to be no independent, it's going to take longer to resolve. Same would apply, for example, with a tyre or a battery. Any electrical product. Right? Anything that's used in service that is being used on a daily basis. Right? Sometimes it's damaged by the habit of the consumer, who didn't know. Sometimes you have your vehicle and you leave a light on in the vehicle, and when you come back in the morning, the battery can't start. Right? Or so there are different areas that they need to make sure that within the private sector,

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they don't have to let the private sector... They have to identify businesses and business people who are professionals in those, with those products and use them as references to independently check without them knowing who the customer is. You know, they can go and they can do a performance test on the product.

And also, with regard to doctors, I forgot to mention that in speaking to the Egyptian Ambassador, I asked him, "What are some strengths of your economy, in ways that we can benefit from"? And one I spoke of, which was artisans, and the other is doctors. They also have a medical school, and they train their doctors in English. And when we look at economies, you know, a doctor from the United States may not come back to work in Grenada, unless there's a lucrative opportunity.

But when we look at the economies, we are currently benefitting from Cuban doctors, there's no reason why we can't look at other areas where we can have people, you know helping our health sectors, to have the qualified personnel that we're not able to attract, when we still have certain positions that are not filled, right, to my knowledge there's no paediatric specialist in Grenada. I could be wrong, but I was told there are only two in the Caribbean.

One is in Barbados, and I forgot where the other one is. So, we talk... so if there are these types of opportunities, I'm just giving the idea, a lot of ideas came from "This Side" today. It's the last one that perhaps they can. I'll be happy to share the contact information. I'm sure they already have it; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have it. They can reach out and see how we can benefit from certain expertise that other nations may have. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Thank you much. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. As I am given the opportunity to make a few comments in this portion of this Sitting. A few points, I want to say a little bit on fishing and up in the St. Mark area, Senator Britton and I had a bilateral

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this morning, as usual, on two matters. One matter, related to that, you might have seen it in the news with the fisher folks in the Duquesne area and of course, recognising, of course, the issues of private property and court judgment, et cetera.

We both agree and in discussions with him that the beach is the beach and there are portions that are connected to crown lands, and I know that he can use his good office, especially with his new promotion, and see how we can create some home for the fisher folks there who have been longstanding, so at least there is some accommodation. Of course, it may not be a 60 metre dash, because I don't think we want to go back and support just sheds, but maybe do some nice little concrete structure. But I trust that some sort of commitment, engagement can continue to take place and create some hope, such that they may then, they may just abandon the area, they may abandon fishing, and then we wonder why things happen. They may, end up maybe going in Waltham, maybe where there's a little bit more accommodation.

And I say a little bit, because my understanding, in Waltham, there is the number of boats are increasing, and of course, following up on a petition I had years ago regarding finding some improved accommodation, jetty and so on for the fisher folks in the area. And I know Senator Britton, of course, shared that same concern, and I trust that some resolve can happen to create the confidence for these fisher folks. Plus, the issue of ice is a big issue, because their fish come in sometimes two in the night, 12 in the night, and ice is very limited in that area. So, we need to find some way, especially with fish being a major export and a good protein source. So, I wanted to share this, this concern and I know it's in good hands once Quinc is on the ground. But we need to note that.

The issue of food security, sometime I think in October, November last year, I would have brought a Motion again to discuss the matter of having a national multi-sectoral committee to look at food security, Madam President. And of course, at the time, I think the Government was saying, well, how do you strengthen food and nutrition? I was amazed and extremely happy to be part of a session yesterday organised by the ministry in collaboration with the well-renowned World Bank Food Security Project. And understanding from the declarations there and other documents, that it's literally almost

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mandated that such a committee has to be in place, to support the whole framework for the project implementation and continuance, such that, in the next two years, five years, six years, we build some capacity to look at early warning, monitoring, responses and not come back and say well, we're in trouble again based on all the shocks that continue to happen almost on a yearly basis. So this, I was pleased to learn of yesterday, that again, it has been about six or seven months since we see something happening.

The praedial larceny, you know, that's a bit of an issue, I keep speaking about that, but this matter, I know the police need to be resourced. And I'm making a clarion call, because we have seen recently the police has had some new recruits, but these new recruits is going to go straight into being some sort of CID or FIU or some sort of thing, but none going towards praedial larceny. And so, we'll continue, if you don't be careful, just as we come and speak about the gun amnesty and all of those things here today, we may find some new issues emerging around praedial larceny that we, I don't think we want to confront.

In fact, over the weekend, I had some calls from a farmer inside the Mt. St. John area in St. Andrew, and he had his melon, and he discovered it was being stolen. He did the correct thing, we said for him to get cameras, so he put in cameras, Madam President. Cameras saw the men, he sent it to the police and as of, up to Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, thereabout nada. Even if those photos are very clearly identifying who those people are et cetera. I personally contacted the commander, and he said okay. And I trust that he would follow up, but we haven't heard anything up to now. In fact, what was scary for me is that this farmer went back in the night to stake out his farm, and when he looked at the timeline on the photos, from the camera that this person was in his farm, he was actually in his farm too. So I warned him and I said, "Please don't go to your farm alone", and you know he doesn't have a firearm, neither one illegal, so I'm very worried for our farmers and their safety.

And of course, Madam President, the last point I want to make, and I wouldn't elaborate too much because our dear sister, the Attorney General, Minister for Labour, is not here. Because it's a burning matter that has emerged pertaining to the minimum

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wage particularly to the agriculture workers, in terms of the contention of, you know we say we want to have more productivity on the farm, we need the, the workers to stay for the whole eight hours, not we but the Government says look, there's no hourly rate, eight hours, work out your maths. You know, they always leave us in the rain to work out our things for ourselves. Everyone else had a schedule; work it out.

And so, there are cases where farmers was saying their workers were, when 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, they do their normal, what would have been their normal work at the 45, EC\$50, now at 60, they are going the same time. Well farmers say, "Well how you, we need the, the Government says it's eight hours". And so, when you do the maths, and I sit down again with my good friend, Labour Senator, and you do the maths. If you want to speak about an increase, the minimum wage was supposed to end up with an increase for the workers, when you do the maths, at EC\$60 divided by eight, compared to 40 or EC\$50 divided by about four or five hours, you could see where the minimum wage is. The minimum wage, well it's the lesser wage right now.

Not that, our farmers don't need more output, but we know at the same time, some of this work is intense work to continue on the farm. So, what we were proposing, if we put the hourly rate, and we increase the hourly rate, then the worker can be more incentivised to be more productive. And he may say, I don't mind working that extra 3 o'clock, because he knows he's getting more per hour. Right now, the worker is getting less per hour, so the farmers are suffering. Who's speaking about wanting to import labour and all of those things? Do we need to get there? I think this is a conversation and a review that the technical team and the Government need to look at, and I just want to flag it for some concern.

So these are my immediate remarks, and I thank you for your indulgence on this matter. Thank you so much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Thank you very kindly. I want to begin by saying to Senator Neilon Franklyn, I'm very sorry your parents are ill. The only silver lining, perhaps, is that you will have to become a better caregiver. **(Laughter)**

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Something as a young man coming up, you could clearly benefit from doing, **(laughter)** in your... But I, I want to wish them, you know, a good and well-treated stay in the hospital, and a strong and resilient recovery, and your strength and guidance to care for them.

And I want to wish all of us good health. In the spate of killings and deaths and other mishaps, the disaster with the families in Gouyave. We really do feel the need to bring all the best in us as a community, as a family, as a country, as a nation or as a people. And I wish everybody good health, which is our main wealth. So eat well, exercise, rest well, read all your Senate documents **(laughter)** to exercise the brain **(laughter)**, and we pray for the best for everyone.

I want to close out my remarks by saying that today... First of all, a comment or two to the executive, and those of you who are Ministers of Government and gave reports and so on, my own observation is that there is really a show of interest in what you reported, for the well-being of the people, and just my own independent comments.

It's good to see and I encourage you to keep doing that, and to come here month after month and report progress. That's critical, that's important for us to go forward as a country. A certain level, if I may say so, maybe of democratic expansion, when we think about democracy, we think of it as voting and going and attending meetings, but it's also about improvement.

So, for example, urging the public to take advantage of the arms, the illegal arms amnesty, I think that's really good. And just have the amnesty itself, it's an excellent measure to my mind, and as being said by Senators here this morning, earlier this morning, it's part of a basket of responses. So, not only by itself, but clearly it's a good initiative, and we do hope and congratulate the Government and hope that it will yield fruit. However it's unfolded, it may be successful.

We also heard about the inclusion and the campaign in the interests of the disabled from Senator Thomas, you know, the disabled, it's not just doing things for them, but building up their capacity, to define their needs and to help implement what they identify as their needs. I think that's empowering. That's very democratic, that's what stood out for me.

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The Consumer Affairs Report, the starting of the office. I remember in the 80s in Jamaica, they used to talk about the Consumer Rights and Consumer Affairs Office, and I always felt jealous. And from the 80s to 2024, we have one in Grenada. I'm encouraged by that, and I'd like to encourage the Consumer Affairs Minister to work with the Bureau of Standards. I think that there's a natural synergy there, as said even by Senator Rahaman, that the Bureau of Standards, the Consumer Rights Affairs, I think that they can support each other with, you know, analysis and technical reviews and staffing and so on.

And several other... someone said too... You know, regarding violence, we are our neighbour's keeper, and I think those sorts of sentiments are very valuable and very encouraging. The construction of the school in Pearls, that's really touches me as a person from the rural area. In fact, I border on Pearls if you will, and it's important for rural communities to have a high-grade, sustainable, innovative technology-savvy institution for their learning. I want to ask, I want to recommend that our parents in education really focus on removing violence and gender-based violence in the home.

I don't know what your syllabus looks like, but parents in education has really to take on board this pervasive and persistent violence that comes from inside the home. Parents, step-parents and so on, then the international family day, and those kinds of opportunities we have to stamp out gender-based violence, we have to stamp out violence against children and against young girls, sexual violence in particular. So we have to make sure that we, when we get our parents, whether it's in the PTA or in the parents in education in communities, that that's on the agenda.

Let me congratulate all Senators today for the meeting. I thought that there was a real sense of rigour, yet collegiality. There was common ground around a number of topics that came up, and while there was a sort of good sense of give and take and chat, there was also good rigour, and that's important. The Senate must be a place where the strongest and the best recommendations, discussion, debate, information, argumentation, and proposals come forward. So do that, and that was done. I thought today in a good spirit, and I'm glad and encouraged by the appeals from Senators to the

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public to take advantage of the amnesty. That's good citizenry, citizenry work. And let's all go out and encourage the country around that.

Do our homework, Leader of Government's Business, he's got work to do. Please let him know that we want answers to the questions that are outstanding. It's not acceptable to have questions unanswered for 200 days, unless there is some extraordinary circumstance. Not even the changing of a Minister, I would think, is an extraordinary situation that allows for such a long elapse. So we look forward to all our homework, whether it's on the societies, on the food security, or on the animal pound or so on.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think we have done a long day. I hope that the quality of our work deserves, you know, to be reflected in the amount of time we spent, and I simply want to thank you again. I forgot this morning to congratulate intercol for the brilliance of our secondary school students, and even the primary school games. I think that the nation is pitching forward for a healthy society, active youth, and all-rounded education, an educational programme. So thank you very much for today, good luck and all the deficits we have, we will reflect on them, think on them and correct them at our next sitting. Thank you kindly.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting Senate adjourned sine die at 4:41 p.m.

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