



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FOURTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

SENATE

TUESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2026

***Sitting of the Senate
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 3rd February 2026***

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Attendance

PRESENT

Madam President
Senator the Honourable Dr. Dessima Williams
in the Chair

- | | |
|---|--|
| Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas | - Minister for Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture |
| Senator the Honourable David Evlyn Andrew | - Minister for Education |
| Senator the Honourable Quinc Britton | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture with Responsibility for Culture |
| Senator the Honourable Seville Francis | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Youth and Sports |
| Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph | - Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs |
| Senator the Honourable Gloria Ann Thomas | - Minister for Social & Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs (Social Security) |
| Senator the Honourable Norland Cox | - Opposition Member of the Senate (Deputy President) |
| Senator the Honourable Dr. Myanna Charles | - Opposition Member of the Senate |
| Senator the Honourable Dwight Hosford | - Opposition Member of the Senate |
| Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis | - Member of the Senate (Labour Rep.) |
| Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman | - Member of the Senate (Business Rep.) |
| Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair | - Member of the Senate (Farmers and Fishers Rep.) |

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Prayers

Announcements

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

Sergeant-at-Arms: Order. Order. All rise. Madam President.

(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 – Messages from the Governor-General.

Item 5 – Announcement by Madam President.

Madam President: Distinguished Members of the Senate, Honourable, good morning. Happy New Year, belatedly. A wonderful 2026 to everyone, families, constituencies, and representatives. On the eve of the eve of the eve of independence, we look forward to celebrating a Happy 52nd Anniversary.

You will notice at the table there are two women, and in the Chair there's a woman. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. Women's power. 51% of our population, 33%, just about, here in this Senate. So, we are delighted to welcome to the table, Acting Clerk, Melvina Gulston, and ably supported by Ms. Palmer. We are delighted to have them and encourage women's leadership in decision-making. I hope that all women and girls in Grenada are encouraged by this development.

I would also like to report that the Speaker and I travelled to the Republic of India for a meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth. I placed on record our delegation's gratitude and deep appreciation for the extraordinary hospitality and warmth that was shown to us by our host, the entire Indian governmental and state

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***Announcements
Minutes***

apparatus, and in particular, the Speaker of the House of the Lok Sabha, Mr. Om Birla, and we were met and received by the Prime Minister of India.

So it was for us, and the 50 or more delegations present, a moment of dialogue discourse on the role of parliaments in expanding democracy. India, being the largest democracy in the world, is a parliamentary democracy. It was really an opportunity to see the various constituents of regional and national democracy unfolding. Thank you to the Government and people of India. More later. This ends my announcements.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 6 – Confirmation of Minutes.

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

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President, and let me say a pleasant morning to my colleagues and the "Other Side", my colleagues here, Madam President, yourself, and your staff at Parliament House, my Rastafarian brothers in the gallery, pleasant morning. I wish you all a Happy New Year and all the best for 2026. Let me join with the President, wishing you all happy independence.

Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Wednesday the 10th of December, 2025, and Thursday the 11th of December, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. be taken as read.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on

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***Minutes
Papers and Reports***

Wednesday the 10th of December, 2025, and Thursday the 11th of December, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. be confirmed.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

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

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

Madam President: Senator Adrian Thomas.

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

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Honourable Members, the proposal is that the following Reports be laid.

1. State-owned Enterprises and Statutory Bodies Statement of Performance Report 2024;

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2. Grenada Authority for the Financial Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) Annual Report and Accounts 2024;
3. Grenada Authority for the Financial Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended 31st December, 2024;
4. Grenada Ports Authority Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December, 2024;

All these Papers are now laid on the table. Thank you. You have a question, Senator? You have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Good morning, Madam President. Good morning to the Acting Clerk and supporting Clerk, and, of course, all Members within this Chamber on both sides, and, of course, our visitors and listeners on the outside, of course, along with the Sergeant-at-Arms. I rise, Madam President, to make a few remarks, not much, on the Reports that were just tabled; that's the purpose of the rising. I thank you.

Two comments. One, I want to commend the different organisations for providing those reports, and the reports are as of 2024, which is really good. Recent. GARFIN, of course, we know, play a very important role in the regulation of the insurance sector, and we know our history with this matter, CLICO, BIACO, et cetera. Of course, their diligence on this matter will provide some level of assurance for us as local citizens. We utilise those services.

Whilst the insurance report claims that it is not taking responsibility or can be held responsible for your actions, based on the report, that sort of disclaimer, I must say, notwithstanding that the information that they provided, particularly the issues of solvency and the strength of some of the companies, would go a long way in people making decisions. And what we have seen from their report is that the insurance companies are very strong and in order, which means they are doing a good job of ensuring we are protected. So we want to commend them, and the fact that they are reporting so current, which is very current because we're just in 2026, and they must be commended.

Of course, the State-owned Enterprises Report, I think we'd have gotten that

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Papers and Reports

access during our budget discussion in December, so we have had that, of course, and it's good to see those reports, and of course, those noncompliant will act accordingly.

And more importantly, the last point I want to make is the report on the Port Authority. Maybe it's an oversight from senders, but having a financial report audited and signed by HLB, I think it is, the balance sheet, page five, of the document needs to be duly signed by two directors. I'm not too sure how it got past all the stages without being signed.

The directors would sign and say well we accept as true, the report that is provided by the auditors, and we stand by it. As it is now, I'm not too sure if this report should really be accepted as presented, because accepting it in itself is risky, because the owners have not even claimed it, and it's not in the approved form.

I'm not too sure how the auditors even sign off on that because they shouldn't sign off on that without the stakeholders, well, the shareholders, the owners, the directors, in this case, saying yes, we agree that what you have provided us, we're okay with it.

So I think this might be a document that may need to go back and come back in an approved form, because us accepting this... Well, there is really nothing to accept, really, because there's no ownership, and it could be an oversight in the format of the file that was sent. So, I think this is something that could be easily verified by a phone call to finance or the port to have that resolved. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator St. Clair, for your comments and observations, and I'm certain that GARFIN will appreciate your remarks.

Regarding your comment on the Port Authority's Report, to its legitimacy without this requisite signature on page five, I'm looking at the text that was signed on pages three and four above—scanning it quickly to assess whether or not it detects there and a signature that follows, if that will constitute acceptance below. The unsigned page says, “The financial statements were approved by the board”, and you correctly note... Approved by the board on such and such a date and signed on their behalf by the directors, and as you correctly indicate, it's not signed. Now, immediately above, however, the Certified Chartered Accountants have signed accepting the report.

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So I stand to be guided whether or not the acceptance of the chartered accountants and their signature, thereunder, constitutes an adequate subsidies, alternative for the director's signature. Are any lawyers in the audience of the Senate? Our Attorney General is here, if there are any comments on the legality or legitimacy of that. Senator Joseph. Your learned...

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I have no comments simply because I don't see anything wrong with the report that's presented. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank you, madam. Thank you. Senator André Lewis, good morning.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President, and good morning to everyone. I know I'm speaking after certainly the Attorney General, who ought to be the expert in this field, but my very limited exposure to matters like these is that the document would not properly be before us unless it is signed off by the directors.

The auditors are the ones who audited the document, and they are given the opinion. What will normally happen is that a draft will be sent to the board of directors, and they will then do their review, say yes, no, et cetera. The auditor will send the finalised document, and then the directors ought to sign off on the document before it is presented officially. Because what we are looking at is the financial document itself and not necessarily just the covering letter from the auditors.

My limited exposure to these, notwithstanding, what my friend the attorney general has indicated is that for it to properly before the Senate, it ought to be, it ought to be, unless I've been told otherwise, it ought to be properly signed off by the page where the signature is designed—clearly states as you're read in your exploration as to whether or not the auditors letter will suffice.

If we were just to read it again, because there are people who will take ownership of this, it would be the directors. It says here, "These financial statements were approved by the board on 'x' or 'y' date", and the provision for the directors. If

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the Senate has any queries about this information or document, it is a board that will have to go through the necessary channel, so they must take ownership, in my view, of this document. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Lewis. Any other comments? Senator Rahaman, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Good morning, Madam President.

Madam President: Good morning.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: And morning to my colleagues, to Grenadians home and abroad. As far as I'm aware, Madam President, financial documents that are presented must be signed off by the board of directors, and if they are not signed off by the board of directors, then the people who are supposed to represent them do not represent them, because their signatures are there. I'm sure this is a simple omission, but it's a significant omission simply in the fact that it was probably just an oversight, but important enough that it was flagged by one of our colleagues, rightly so.

With regard to comments on the reports, I draw your attention to the performance report of the statutory bodies, to say that if you look at the bottom of page seven, under Overall Assessment of Commercial Entities, you would see it says here that, "Commercial entities maintain strong liquidity during 2024. Profitability contracted sharply, and solvency ratios weakened, reflecting heightened financial pressures of associated post-disaster recovery measures following Hurricane Beryl. Reversing this trend will require disciplined cost-management and targeted operational improvements to restore margins and stabilise leverage". Among the major entities cited here are GRENLEC, GDB and NAWASA; two of those we all rely on.

So it just points out to us, you know, the impact of a hurricane on our statutory bodies and the fact that it puts additional downward pressure on these companies to perform, and as you see on page eight, the actual overall risk rating for the commercial entities. This is something that we will have to pay close attention to because, of

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Statements by Ministers***

course, these services we cannot do without. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for your observation on risk management or risk aversion that we should be, not only alerted to, but supportive of. Concerning the report from the Port Authority, it is well understood that auditors are technical experts who verify data, methodology, and so on. And it is well appreciated that directors carry a fiduciary and political responsibility. To err on the side of caution and remind all the directors, you must carefully exercise, in its completion, your responsibility, even as it comes to signing.

I rule that this report be returned and come back again to the Senate once it's completely presented. Thank you.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 9 – Statements by Ministers.

Madam President: Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Pleasant, good morning to all in this Honourable House. I take this opportunity to update this House and the wider community as to the work that we have completed over the last month or so, in the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs.

Madam President, I want to inform. The national five-year strategy and action plan to end gender-based violence from 2026 to 2030 has been completed and approved by Cabinet. This strategy represents a significant step forward in Grenada's response to gender-based violence. It establishes a coordinated evidence-based national framework focused on prevention, strengthening essential services, supporting survivors and ensuring accountability across all sectors. Importantly, it moves us from fragmented responses to a unified national approach.

Madam President, the value of this strategy lies in its ability to bring all ministries,

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departments, and agencies together under a single framework. It mandates alignment of sector plans, ensuring a whole-of-government response that improves coordination, strengthens data sharing, and enhances accountability. This approach also enables the Ministry of Finance to better mobilise and align resources from both the Government and development partners to address GBV in a strategic and sustainable way.

The strategy is firmly grounded in our national development priorities. It directly advances commitments under the National Sustainable Development Plan 2020 to 2035, particularly goal number one, which speaks to a resilient, inclusive, gender sensitive and peaceful society. It also supports Vision 75 and the Medium-term Action Plan, reinforcing our shared commitment to social protection and human rights.

Madam President, gender-based violence remains one of the most pressing human rights and public health challenges facing our nation. It carries a heavy social and economic cost estimated at EC\$171.7 million annually in lost productivity and services. These impacts are further intensified by emerging risks related to climate change, natural disasters and digital forms of violence. In this context, urgent action is not optional. It is necessary.

The primary beneficiaries of this strategy include women and girls, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, rural women, migrants, children and youth. By strengthening the prevention and response system, the strategy also enhances national resilience, particularly during times of crisis and climate-related shocks.

To support effective implementation, a multi-sectoral steering committee will be established. This committee will bring together ministries, statutory bodies, civil society organisations and development partners to work collaboratively towards shared objectives and measurable results. Madam President, this strategy reflects our collective responsibility to protect the most vulnerable, to uphold human dignity, and to build a safer and just society for all.

Madam President, I wish to further inform this House that the Ministry of Social Development has approved the Grenada Living Condition Index 2.0, known as GLCI 2.0, as the new national targeting tool for determining eligibility under the Support for

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Education Empowerment and Development Programme, SEED. This revised tool will replace the existing tool introduced in 2012 and will take effect from February 2026.

Madam President, the approval of the GLCI 2.0 is both necessary and timely. The current targeting tool is based on data that is over 17 years old and no longer reflects the realities of poverty and vulnerability in Grenada today. As a result, it produces a very high level of error.

Current analysis shows that 59% of households that should be receiving SEED support are excluded, while 51% of those currently receiving benefits should not be included. These inequalities undermine the fairness, effectiveness and credibility of the programme. GLCI 2.0 addresses these shortcomings by modernising how beneficiaries are identified. The tool is built on the 2018 Living Condition Survey and Household Budget Survey and applies a proxy mean test methodology supported by predictive modelling. This allows for more accurate, transparent and evidence-based assessment of household poverty and vulnerability.

Madam President, the revised tool significantly reduces both inclusion and exclusion errors and is fully aligned with Grenada's official monetary poverty measure. Importantly, it structurally prioritises those most at risk, including elderly-only households, persons with disabilities, individuals with chronic illnesses, female-headed households and households highly vulnerable to economic and climate-related shocks. It also strengthens gender sensitivity and responsiveness to crisis.

The ministry has already completed a pilot, finalised and updated the model. Implementation will proceed through a phased rollout, which includes a managed-exist strategy for households found to be no longer eligible, integration of administrative data, digital data collection, and strengthened verification processes for disability and chronic illnesses. These measures ensure that the transitions are fair, orderly and socially responsible.

So, Madam President, by ensuring that assistance reaches those who genuinely need it, GLCI 2.0 represents a major step forward in strengthening Grenada's Social Protection System. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Thomas, for the update. Those are two important policy frameworks and the tools. I note you said that you're updating it,

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but I also know that it's based on 2018 data, GLCI 2.0, so I trust that the next iteration will clearly be using current data, but updating it is clearly an improvement in the question of establishing eligibility. Thank you so much. Comments? Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. I find myself having to rise because I always commend Senator Thomas, the reports from her department and the support she gets. As I say, we discuss a lot of other things, but the social fabric is very important, and we must not lose sight of it. I really appreciate it every time we come here, and we get those reports. I look forward to them. I do.

And particularly to the issue of gender-based violence... I think it is a very important point, and we must not lose sight of the whole process. We, most of the time, know the reasons and the background surrounding a lot of these things, and the constant education and self-awareness...

Particularly to the women, to be able to stand up and be given the strength and encouragement to stand up, is very important. I speak a lot about that because I believe that, like yourself, the powerful women need to really surface, and whatever we can create that rising is very important. I am of that philosophy. So this gender-based violence thing is not just about fighting and beating up, but there are forms of the "violence and oppression" that happen, and we need to find ways of education and self-awareness of everybody, you know, in the businesses, in the churches, in the organisations, you know, creating opportunities for that to happen.

Women could do a lot of things that men could do. You know, even if they are doing 100 pounds or something, they may take it 10, 10 pounds apiece, and they'll get it done; whilst we may want to raise everything and then strain our backs or something like that as men because we want to show that we are strong.

But it's important. And I think that lack of appreciation rules out women in the mix because you don't think that way, and I think... And I'm calling on men in general especially in leadership positions who can do better, and that I wanted to share those comments and commend Sister Thomas and what she is doing and the ministry which she lead, that they continued to support her and that is a very important part of organisation and country, not just the economics, that social part is very important.

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Thank you.

Madam President: I think I speak for the nation in saying that it is wonderful to have a male as an advocate for inter-gender-based violence, and there are thousands across the country. So thanks for giving voice to that this morning, and I'm sure Senator Thomas heard you. Other remarks? Senator Rahaman, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. I wish to be brief, but to say that when Senator Thomas speaks about gender violence, we all know that it is a problem that is largely caused by men, and it is a societal problem because it is one that repeats, that we hear over and over again. And so it stems, in my opinion, from the male not understanding his role in society and, in some ways, lacking confidence. And so we need to pay special attention to our males.

I know many times we speak about women, leadership in women, and so on, because for so many decades women were marginalised; that's a fact. But we don't want to reverse the issue and to have men marginalised, so men have to find their way and their place in society.

If we look at the scriptures, we see that God Almighty chose many, many men as leaders. Today, a lot of men do not stand up and come forward as leaders. And so that is something that is a weakness in our society, and that is something that we need to address.

And I would like to say to our dear Senator Thomas, if there's anything that I can do to join you in the effort in speaking to some young men, I'd be happy to do so, and I wanted to say that publicly. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahman. Thank you very much, and to remind everyone that Men's Day comes up every year. Ministerial Statements? Hearing none, thank you for the Ministerial Statements. We move on.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 10 – Government Notices.
Item 11 – Unofficial Notices.

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

Item 12 – Question to Ministers.

Item 13 – Personal Explanations.

Item 14 – Motions.

Item 15 – Bills.

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

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Adrian Thomas.

Madam President: Adrian Thomas.

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Senator Adrian Thomas. Repeat it again, Madam President. Thomas.

Madam President: Adrian Thomas.

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce the first reading of a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Clerk (Ag.): A Bill seeks to amend the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Chapter 84A, shortly entitled, Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the

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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 Senator Adrian Thomas.

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

Question proposed.

Madam President: Honourable Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, in responding to contemporary realities in public health, social justice and human rights, this Bill that we are about to present this morning represents measured evidence-based reform of Grenada's drug control framework.

The Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Madam President, reflects a clear acknowledgement that overly reliant and punitive criminal sanctions, particularly for minor cannabis related offences, have not, and will not deliver the intended deterrent effect and instead produce lasting social and economic harm to many of our young people in our society.

Madam President, the reform that we are embarking on, the reason why we are here today, is well informed by rigorous regional research and policy guidance by CARICOM, a reputable organisation that we have knowledge of in the Caribbean, and we take a lot of guidance from CARICOM, Madam President.

In its 2018 year report, "Waiting to Exhale – Safeguarding our Future through Responsible Socio-legal Policy on Marijuana", many islands in the Caribbean have taken the lead from there. And, Madam President, the University of the West Indies, the university that we boast about and are proud of, has done extensive research, and

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this, Madam President, has helped shape a Caribbean-appropriate approach. One grounded in data, public health principles and constitutional respect.

Madam President, several CARICOM States have already moved in that direction, and we are moving today. Hence the reason why, Madam President, I feel so proud to be part and parcel of such a measure. From the time I was a kid, I've been hearing people talking about marijuana, and you would have thought this was the most deadly herb on the face of the earth; deadly drugs on the face of the earth.

Madam President, this Bill also builds on the incremental, and I must commend the past administration in Grenada, which began the conversation many, many years ago; it is coming to fruition. This amendment gives legislative effect to this Administration's cannabis decriminalisation policy, Madam President. We are moving from a policy, and we are legislated. This Bill, Madam President, decriminalise possession of small quantities of cannabis for adults.

Madam President, it introduces regulated access for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific and religious purposes, acknowledging long-standing cultural, faith-based, and health practices. Madam President, this Bill establishes protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young persons. We are not doing anything in isolation, Madam President.

We are taking every aspect into consideration. Wherever the potential lies to be dangerous, we are putting measures and structures in place that do not give the kind of harm that our society experienced many decades ago.

Madam President, it creates a fair and proportionate framework for minor offences, including fixed penalties and alternatives to prosecution. Madam President, we're going to fix the wrong that has been done for decades; this is the objective of this Bill.

But, Madam President, it will be remiss of me if I do not reference our culture and historical struggle, and I say culture and historical struggle to get where we are today. What we are doing here today, Madam President, is not only grounded in the law and policy, but also resonates deeply with Caribbean cultural expression, and I'm saying Caribbean, not just Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Madam President, our legendary reggae artist goes by the name of Peter Tosh. As a young man growing up, this was a popular song in Grenada. If I had a band here

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today, I would have sung. But Peter Tosh, Madam President, was among the most outspoken Caribbean voices advocating for the decriminalisation and legalisation of cannabis, framing the issue as one of human rights, freedom, cultural identity and justice; that was his approach. If we study the history of our colonial masters, one would understand where we are coming from. Through his music and public advocacy, Madam President, Peter Tosh challenged the criminalisation of cannabis as a colonial legacy and disproportionately punished black and marginalised communities in those days.

As you know, as a young man, going to secondary school whenever it wasn't holidays, vacation, sometimes went to the courthouse and listened to some cases, and when the drug cases came up, you always heard the judges cry, "Only the small fish they're getting. They want some big, big herring and tuna"; this is the kind of injustice our artist was speaking about.

Other reggae icons, including Bob Marley and members of the wider roots reggae fraternity, consistently highlighted cannabis as part of their spiritual practice, cultural expression and social consciousness, particularly with the Rastafarian faith. Something that each one of us inside here met in the Caribbean, grew up with and is fully aware of the Rastafarian faith, and the role that there have played in our culture's stability. Sometimes, when many of us go north, they still remain well rooted in our African ancestors, and we must respect them for that.

Madam President, within the calypso fraternity, Caribbean artists have similarly used satire and social commentary to question the unjust laws, moral double standards and colonial era prohibitions, including those surrounding cannabis. Madam President, we cannot speak about decriminalising cannabis without talking about Rastafarians and about our cultural heritage.

By acknowledging these artists and cultural contributions, Madam President, the Bill honours the role of Caribbean creatives as agents of social change whose advocacy helped lay the groundwork for informed, compassionate and evidence-based reform. Madam President, in this sense, the legislation stands not only as a legal instrument but as a cultural reconciliation, recognising voices that were once marginalised but are now validated by law, research, and regional consensus.

Madam President, the amendments affirm that Grenada's approach to reform

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is authentically Caribbean-rooted and above all, Madam President, this Bill, I believe, and I guess all of us do, positions Grenada as a modern, responsible, and regionally aligns states, balancing public safety with compassion, evidence, and respect for human dignity. Having said this, Madam President, this morning we present this Bill to this Honourable House.

Madam President, according to the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, it seeks to amend the principal Act, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Chapter 84A, in order to give effect to the policy objectives by—

1. Decriminalising the possession and use of cannabis in small quantities;
2. Permitting the use, handling and cultivation of cannabis for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, and religious purposes under regulated conditions;
3. Establishing protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young persons;
4. Providing for the regulation of such activities;
5. Creating new offences and controls relating to the misuse of cannabis; and
6. Providing for consequential amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act for the expungement of criminal records and discontinuance of pending proceedings in respect of minor cannabis-related offences.

Madam President, this Bill contains 17 clauses and one schedule. Clause 1, provides for the short title of the Act. Clause 2, Madam President, deals with definitions and it takes into consideration cannabis, child, young person, qualifying medical conditions and other definitions.

Madam President, clause 3, deals with the prohibition of importation of cannabis-based medicinal or therapeutic products, Madam President, and we will amend section 4 of the principal Act to address that.

Clause 4, provides for the amendment of section 5 of the principal Act to permit the lawful production, supply or offer to supply cannabis or cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, or scientific purposes.

Madam President, clause 5, amends section 6 of the principal Act to decriminalise the possession of cannabis. And there, Madam President, we are talking about small quantities for personal use by people who are 21; I repeat, by people

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age 21 or older, as specified in a new Eighth Schedule.

Clause 6, Madam President, provides for the insertion of a new section 6A in the principal Act, which establishes protective and rehabilitative procedures for children and young persons found in possession of small quantities of cannabis or cannabis resins. I would not go into details, Madam President, because the Bill is provided to us.

Madam President, under this new section, such cases are to be handled without arrest, charge, or criminal record. And I spoke about the harm that the old laws have created in our society. Children (under 18) years, Madam President, must be referred to the Child Protection Authority for assessment and, where appropriate, participation in counselling, education, or rehabilitation programme; and young person's, people who are 18 years to 20, were referred to as young persons, definition would speak to that, must be referred to a Minister-approved counselling or education programme.

Madam President, we are not allowing these young people to be left on their own, in situations where they sometimes find themselves unaware and uneducated. We have a responsibility to guide them, and the new legislation will do just that.

Clause 7, Madam President, amends section 7 of the principal Act to exempt from prohibition the handling of cannabis and cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, or religious purposes pursuant to a valid license or other lawful authorisation.

Clause 8, Madam President, provides for the amendment of section 9 of the principal Act. Here, in this clause, we are dealing with the whole question of equipment that may appear to direct you in the cannabis industry, and people who are in possession of pipes or any apparatus fit and intended for the preparation or use of cannabis, Madam President, shall not constitute an offence.

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

Clause 10, Madam President, provides for the amendment of section 11 of the principal Act to exempt the cultivation of four or fewer cannabis plants from criminal liability and to deem such plants as cultivated for medicinal, therapeutic, or horticultural

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purposes. It also clarifies that multiple households on one premises shall each be treated as separate for this purpose. Four plants per household or less, Madam President.

Clause 11, Madam President, brings in five new sections, sections 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D, and 13E into the principal Act. And so, Madam President, 13A creates broad exceptions for the use, cultivation, importation, exploitation, production, supply, and possession of cannabis or cannabis resin under a valid license, permit, or other authorisation for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, or religious purposes.

It also empowers the Minister to authorise adherents of the Rastafarian faith cultivate and use cannabis for religious purposes and to declare certain events as exempt events for religious observance. It's a cry that has been long, long, long, Madam President.

Section 13B prohibits the smoking or use of cannabis in or near public places, workplaces, or public conveyances. We cannot afford to provide second-hand smoke in this country, and if somebody doesn't have a desire to smoke, they should not be forced to.

Section 13C prohibits the smoking or the use of cannabis on or near our schools, on a near our schools, and the definition goes on to tell you what will be regarded as our schools, not only the structural building, but the other infrastructure that supports our schools, our children, Madam President.

Section 13D requires a development of legislations to establish a regulated cannabis industry a regulated cannabis industry for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific, and religious purposes. And sets out key regulatory features to govern licensing, compliance, monitoring, and enforcement.

Section 13E creates a fixed penalty for dealing with offences of public smoking under section 13B penalty of EC\$300, Madam President.

Madam President, clause 12 provides for the amendment of section 21 of the principal Act, and here this amendment, Madam President, is calling, is recommending, and is stating that subsection (5) should be deleted. Because subsection (5), which clarifies that the provisions of section 21 do not apply to the possession of cannabis or cannabis resin that is otherwise authorised under the Act.

Madam President, clause 13 provides for the insertion of a new section 53 in

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

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

Clause 15 provides for the amendment of the Fifth Schedule to insert therein the penalties for the newly created offences.

Madam President, clause 16 provides for the insertion of three new Schedules. Schedule Eighth sets out the decriminalised quantities of cannabis and cannabis resin. Schedule Nine provides a definition and special provisions concerning cannabis, and the Tenth Schedule prescribes the form of a fixed penalty notice issued under section 13E that I mentioned previously.

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

Madam President, this new section 19A specifies that convictions involving possession of up to 56 grams of cannabis or 15 grams of cannabis resin, the cultivation of four or fewer cannabis plants or the possession of related paraphernalia shall be deemed spent and expunged from the individual's criminal record.

Madam President, having said all of the above, I believe that this Honourable House, the listening public, our society, and the Caribbean will definitely be happy with the approach that this Administration has taken regarding cannabis, marijuana, and ganja.

I believe, Madam President, that life also evolves, and as time progresses onward, we may be back in this House discussing this Bill again, because there are so many new areas in this Bill when it gets on the ground, we will all be monitoring and observing how it works. And so, I invite my colleagues in this Honourable House to discuss this Bill objectively and ultimately to approve. Madam President, I commend this Bill to this Honourable House. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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Madam President: I thank the Honourable Senator Thomas, Leader of Government's Business, for his presentation, and the floor is open. The floor is requested by Senator Gloria Thomas, and I offer you the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to support the Bill that is before this House, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Madam President, it is an undisputed fact that the world is evolving, and so as a nation, we are also expected to step up and be responsive to the changing realities. I ask the question, will we continue to lock up our young people instead of investing in their development? I believe we need to look a little bit closer at how we deal with our young people and the whole question of marijuana use.

We do not want to create or generate a nation of criminals; a nation where we can assist our young people to be responsible and exercise restraint and good judgment, so we need to look more on the positive side of things.

Decriminalising marijuana means that people are no longer treated as criminals for possessing small amounts of the substance for personal use. Instead of facing arrest, jail time, or a permanent criminal record, individuals may face a fine or no penalty at all; this approach has several important social benefits for individuals, family and society as a whole.

One major social benefit is a reduction of harm caused by criminal records. When people are arrested or convicted for minor marijuana offences, it can affect their ability to find jobs, travel, access education, or fully participate in society. Decriminalisation helps prevent young people, in particular, from being labelled as criminals for one time or for low-level offences. This allows them to move forward with their lives and contribute positively to their community.

Madam President, decriminalisation also promotes fairness and social justice. Strict marijuana laws have often affected the poorer and marginalised communities more heavily, even when usage rates are similar across society. By removing criminal penalties for smaller amounts, the law is applied more evenly and reduces the risk of discrimination or uneven enforcement; this can help build trust between citizens and law enforcement.

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Madam President, another important benefit is the shift from punishment to public health. Decriminalisation allows governments to focus more on education, prevention, and treatment rather than arrest and incarceration. People who struggle with substance misuse are more likely to seek help when they are not afraid of being punished; this creates a more compassionate and supportive approach to health and well-being.

Families and communities also benefit when fewer people are sent through the criminal justice system for minor offences. Incarceration and court proceedings can place emotional and financial strain on families. By keeping people out of prison for minor marijuana possession, communities remain stable, and family bonds are less likely to be disrupted. We know quite well that when a family member goes to prison, often times that person is ostracised by family and by the community.

Madam President, it is essential to recognise that this legislation does not legalise unrestricted recreational use. Rather, it decriminalises possession and limited personal cultivation for adults aged 21 and over while maintaining robust protection for public health safety. Under the new law, individuals aged 21 and older may possess up to 56 grams of cannabis without facing criminal penalties, and registered households may grow up to four plants for private use.

Madam President, finally, decriminalisation can help reduce stigma around marijuana use. When society moves away from criminalising users, it becomes easier to have open and honest conversations about responsible behaviour, risk, and personal choices. These opponents support better decision-making and encourage respect for the law.

Madam President, decriminalising marijuana offers clear social benefits. It reduces unnecessary criminalisation, promotes fairness, supports public health, protects families, and encourages a more humane and balanced approach to drug policy. While regulation and education remain important, decriminalisation is a positive step towards a more just and inclusive society. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Gloria Thomas. I offer the floor to... Let me see which one of you it is. Senator the Honourable Norland Cox, you have the floor, Senator.

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Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I stand here today to contribute to the debate on the Drug Abuse and (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Madam President, at the onset, let me be clear that we, the Opposition, have been consistent in our policy, approach and attention, and of course, an intention regarding cannabis as to how it should be administered and what format it should take. And of course, we have always been 100% behind the decriminalisation of cannabis.

However, Madam President, the construct is one that must have significant integrity for it to function properly, for it to achieve the intended objectives, and of course, to minimise any negative impact as much as possible.

This Bill, Madam President, represents, I believe, maybe one of the most significant shifts in the country's drug policy. And of course, the decriminalisation of cannabis for small amounts has caused, not decriminalisation, but the criminalisation of cannabis in the past, of small amounts of cannabis has caused a lot of social harm, of course, particularly among our young people, and of course, those in marginalised communities who have really been impacted by this.

But while reform is necessary, Madam President, we must be careful, we must be balanced and just, and of course, it is our duty as legislators, Senators in this Honourable place, to ensure that good intentions are matched by good luck, so I think it's very important to highlight that.

I must, and I believe it's important to highlight some of the strengths of this approach. I think it's important to do so. And this approach removes ordinary citizens from the criminal justice system for small amounts of cannabis.

Secondly, Madam President, the approach to children. While it is clear that there is some indication as to how you approach young persons and children who may find themselves in contact with cannabis, I still think that there's room for improvement and strengthening that approach, Madam President, but it must be commended, that approach to look at them in terms of the counselling and also to ensure that no criminal record is assigned to persons in that regard. I think it must be noted.

The third amendment that I notice that falls in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, I think that with the expungement of past minor cannabis convictions, which is also noted and commended.

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Madam President, these are real and meaningful advances, and of course, I think it's important that we acknowledge them. However, Madam President, one of the major concerns and probably a major weakness of this legislation, or this Bill before us, is the concentration of ministerial authority for something that is novel to this country, is novel to our approaches, and it also contravenes other countries that would have done the same thing and their approach to addressing the oversight, the monitoring, and, of course, the implementation of this Bill. Madam President, this Bill begins with a significant over-reliance on the ministry of discretion. I think that is something that we need to flag, and we'll speak more about it, and we'll dive deeper into why I raised this.

Throughout this Bill, we see the ministers empowered to authorise cultivation for religious use, declare exempt events, designate approved public smoking areas, approve organisations for counselling, and amend the key Schedule by Order. All this rests in one office. And Madam President, I'm not saying this in the context of who is the minister currently, but this goes across the board, Madam President. It has nothing to do with the whole of the office, but more so with the integrity of the legislation before us.

Legislation must be designed not only for the best minister, but for any minister, Madam President. That is what we believe, and while there is a precedent that most of all our legislation that comes to this Honourable place office of the assigned minister is responsible. In this case, Madam President, this legislation is far too important for us to use the same approach. I think there is a clear opportunity, and there are clear practices where other approaches in terms of governance and implementation of this legislation could have been utilised.

Madam President, I believe that decisions, major decisions, major regulatory decisions should be guided by clear statutory criteria, supported by independent bodies, and subject to a robust parliamentary oversight, and Madam President, I'll explain as I go along.

This Bill, Madam President, leans heavily on trust and not enough on structure. Madam President, in 13D, this legislation speaks about developing the regulated cannabis industry, but only in the future. And I was fortunate, Madam President, to be in Canada on the said day that cannabis was legalised. What was evident was the

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level of preparation, the level of readiness for something like that. Meaning that the day that it was actually and down to the hour that it is going to be legalised, there were thousands of persons lined up on various streets from the clinics or the prescribed pharmacies. People were lined up going through blocks, thousands of people.

It goes to show that Madam President, in terms of readiness, that there were actual pharmacies, there were actual regulations, and actual structures were already there before the commencement of such legislation. And we see in our case, the difference that we are given legal authorities, something, and we don't have any structures to support it. And hence the reason why I am saying that leaving that discretion to the minister's office is very risky.

Madam President, in terms of access to that industry, I don't know whether we are late or how much we will be able to access the cannabis industry in a meaningful way. Meaning that we have seen, and maybe the business community can speak more to that in terms of the criteria, in terms of the different species that are approved or that are in circulation.

Can those species grow here? Do we have the requisite training to cultivate those? What are the things that we need to do? What do we need to know to access the market in a meaningful way for persons who desires of getting involved in this industry? Can we really access it? I think that is something that we need to know because I'm quite certain that there are a number of people who are interested in terms of getting involved and monetising this opportunity.

So, Madam President, there are no clear timers set out in this legislation, no transitional framework, no guarantee of access for farmers, nothing of the sort, no protection against market capture, whether or not we can prevent people from coming in or taking advantage, things like that. None of the sort was mentioned; I presume those might be forthcoming.

So we've been asked to decriminalise today while postponing economic clarity indefinitely. I think that is what is missing, Madam President. This creates some uncertainties, which I just indicated for prospective farmers, prospective investors, medical practitioners, and law enforcement personnel. Great uncertainty lies within this legislation.

Madam President, if we are serious about cannabis reform, then we must also

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be serious about economic inclusion, particularly for persons in our rural communities who might be attracted to cultivating cannabis. So this is what is really missing.

Madam President, this legislation also speaks to public smoking and enforcement risk. The Bill introduces a probation of smoking cannabis in public spaces enforced through a fixed penalty regime. In principle, Madam President, regularisation is reasonable, but in practice, the definition of a public place is near or extremely broad. And we'll dive so much more into, Madam President.

I think there is one section that speaks to public space buildings. I think it has to do with the vent, I think five meters, Madam President. I think the Bill speaks to that. Five meters, Madam President. Five meters is basically probably from Senator Lewis to Senator Britton, Madam President, from a public building. Five meters, Madam President, for a practical sense for us to understand. Yes. Madam President, five meters is about 16 feet, there about. Yes.

The question is whether you're smoking and the smoke travels, and we all know the issue of secondary smoke. So I think that's one of the areas that I believe needs to be reviewed. I am not certain how we arrived at that, and I think it has to do with being five meters away from a building, a public building vent, or five meters from the entrance. I think those that were contained in that particular section.

So I raise it, Madam President, as an issue. I don't think that it is practical. I think this measurement may have been applied in the sense that if you walk into a building and you're not allowed to smoke in the building, then you can probably step outside and light your cigarette and smoke. I think in this case it is not the same, Madam President.

Madam President, so there are a couple of things that I definitely want to recommend, and we have some more things that we'll speak about. So the issue of protecting children is non-negotiable, Madam President. Our kids are, of course, parents' pride and joy. And the whole issue of the implications on young persons, we are all aware.

I mean, I heard the Minister for Social Development spoke passionately about how parents feel when their child finds themselves in contrive with the law, and they're taken to prison, or they go to court. Madam President, as a parent, I don't know how a parent will deal with a child who has been impacted mentally by the use of this drug,

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as we have seen, and having to go to a mental home for care, so there are two sides to this. Madam President.

It is not just about the criminal side but also the mental side, and we have been having significant conversations about mental health in this country. And of course, the cost it has, not only for the state, but also for families. And those of us who are parents and who have seen parents who have to deal with kids with mental issues understand the pain, and as such, this must not be glossed over. Yes. While we recognise that decriminalising small quantities and removing persons who have infractions will be a benefit, but there are more important aspects of this law that we are trying to gloss over, which is the mental impact on our young people, Madam President. We have to take that into account; we must.

Madam President, this Bill permits medical cannabis use, but it leaves the most practical question unanswered. And we speak about how affordable it will be, and there are questions about that. Will local production be prioritised? Are doctors adequately trained? How will misuse be monitored? And it comes right back, Madam President, to the issue of having a single office to monitor this novel policy. Is that adequate? Will that be appropriate for the Office of the Minister for Health to be able to manage and monitor the implementation of this law?

I think, Madam President, that the “Government Side” needs to think about this, and the reason that I’m raising this, Madam President. I think it is important that our thoughts, our consideration, or something that we all need to agree on, needs to happen. Our thoughts need to be agitated in such a way that the decisions that we make must be one that allows for what we are trying to achieve, but also protect as it is supposed to, Madam President.

You know, this morning I was asking myself, looking at the name legislation, Drug (Control and Prevention), so I’m wondering maybe we should have an amendment to change the name of the Bill. You know, so that may also be a consideration going forward. Yes? That may be something we need to look at as well, Madam President. I just raised it for what it is worth.

But I want to go a bit deeper, Madam President, on the issue of ministerial oversight and why I believe that this amendment must be made, this amendment must be considered because it is the right thing to do. I don’t in any way question the

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drafters, but as the saying goes, “It is used as a trying fault of the manufacturers”.

And so it is our responsibility, it is my responsibility, while I’m in support of this, but I can’t support blindly, Madam President. I have to support because I, too, have two young boys, Madam President, who may choose to do that; I don’t know, I hope they follow me and don't do that. But you know how it is, Madam President. We have to be mindful of that, and we have a responsibility to the nation.

But Madam President, why is sole ministerial discretion inappropriate in this context. All right. This Bill introduces reform that directly affects criminal liability, public order, and the use of public spaces. It also affects the law enforcement practice and discretion, youth diversion prevention and social services, and the establishment of a quasi-related cannabis industry. In such circumstances, vesting sole discretion, Madam President, in one minister or a minister’s office creates four material risks—

1. Legal uncertainty, as citizens, enforcement officers cannot know the full scope of their rights and obligations at the time the law takes effect.
2. Inconsistent enforcement as administratively developed roles may be applied unevenly across parishes.

Madam President, I make this to say that while the law indicates that there is no recreational smoking, but the same legislation indicates, Madam President, that the minister's discretion could designate an area for smoking. So I don't understand what it is we are trying to achieve.

Are you telling me to smoke in a way... If I need to smoke in a particular area or at a particular event, then I have to go to a particular individual, in a particular office, to get permission to do so? We have to be clear, Madam President. I think this is where inconsistency lies, and this is where confusion can arise. It might be difficult for law enforcement officers to be able to use their discretion in terms of how they should dispense the authority under this law.

3. Governance fragility, Madam President, as policy direction becomes vulnerable to sudden change with the change of a minister.

Madam President, that's where the level of subjectivity comes in. Now, a minister might not have a problem with giving permission to a particular religion or to perform a religious act whatsoever the case may be, but another minister who comes may not feel the same way. You know. Where is the protection? And if we are

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speaking about for religious purposes, one minister may feel strongly against that, and so that is an issue that we have to manage, and I indicate that we need to protect this. If we are doing something, then we should put some structure to ensure that if this is what we want, it remains.

4. Reducing public confidence, particularly where discretion is broad and oversight is minimal.

And I'm saying this, Madam President, you know we have.... You will go to certain places, and I speak in the instance of just speaking in general. Some people don't like the scent of cigarette smoke or whatever smoke they just don't like it, and we have to also respect their rights as well. And so, within that context, we have to make it clear whether or not what the true definition of a public space is. Can I go to the beach? You know. I don't know, so these things have to be clear; it has to be clear to avoid confusion. Because you know how it is, the fine is EC\$300, a man might say, "That's okay, I'll just pay my EC\$300, and I'll just smoke my thing". You know, so that is something that we have to we have to pay attention to.

Madam President, international and comparative legislative practices. In jurisdictions that have implemented cannabis reform without institutional instability, three consistent features are present:

1. The primary policy decisions are fixing statutes rather than delegating to executive discretion.
2. Regulatory bodies operate independently with published criteria, transparent decision-making, and an appeal mechanism.

So we don't see any mechanism for appeals if a licence is revoked. Yes, if the minister decides we are not giving the Leader of Government's Business a licence to perform his ritual, there is no scope for redress, Madam President.

3. Parliament retains oversight often through an upper chamber or legislative approval regulations.

And so, Madam President, in those countries that successfully done this, there is parliamentary oversight, and so that is something that I believe that we can consider going forward. I just want to reiterate, Madam President, I'm making all this because I believe that we could do this better. We could strengthen this legislation in the interest of what we're all trying to achieve. That is my objective; I have nothing else.

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Example of such, Madam President, Canada, which I mentioned, where ministerial powers are tightly bonded and regulations are subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Countries like Malta and several European Union States where independent authorities report directly to Parliament. In Jamaica, where licensing and regulation are administered by a statutory authority rather than a minister.

So there are clear examples that we can follow, adapt from to ensure that we get this right. Notably, Madam President, in this system, regulatory authorities are commonly appointed through legislative or bipartisan process, so that is something that we can consider. Yes.

So, Madam President, the role of the Senate is clear, as we have always demonstrated, as we have seen this morning, by Senator St. Clair. Our eyes, our attention to detail, our scrutiny have always stood tall, and we have a clear opportunity with this Bill to do so. And as I said, I know that we were all in agreement with the approach, the policy approach, but how we structure and how we do it is most important. But I want to raise a couple of critical things, Madam President, that we should also consider going forward.

Madam President, the whole issue of using cannabis while driving or operating heavy machinery. I think that is something that cannot be left to you in ambience; we must give consideration to this. And while I say that there are going to be implications for insurance claims, insurance companies', insurance coverages for persons who are given permission, well, now that you are allowed 56 grams, or just about two ounces, at your own leisure, and four trees per household, yes, that gives some consideration for insurance companies now, if you're going for a driver's licence or going for insurance for a vehicle. One day, there might be a new clause in your insurance agreement speaking to that. So that is something that will come into play. I don't know how we'll have to look to see what is there in other countries, how that is treated, but I know the insurance companies don't like to lose anything, so they probably redrafted those contracts already.

But, Madam President, also the labour representatives here and the business communities here, employers now may start to do random testing. Yes. So those are things that we have to be mindful of; testing may be a requirement going forward for certain employment to meet certain employment. Because, as I said, using

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cannabis can slow your reaction time, and depending on how it impacts you, because it impacts everybody differently, and we are aware of that, like everything else.

Madam President, one of the other things is the implications for businesses that emerged through this industry, this prospective industry, as to how we treat monies generated from either medicinal purposes, money that is generated from the sale of medicines from cannabis. If somebody were to do that after this law is commissioned, can those persons use those monies? Can those people go to the bank and say, "Look, declare source of funds EC\$10,000 that is for the sale of cannabis"? Are those monies going to be able to enter the system? We have not heard anything about this, so the Banking Act may have to be amended going forward to address this.

So there are a number of things, Madam President, you see I'm pointing them out, and I'm raising them because these are real issues, these are real concerns that persons who are looking to get into this sector will have to contend with. Yes. And the general public, to some extent, Madam President. So these are some critical issues I just wanted to flag, Madam President. I wanted to raise those because I think it's very important to do so.

So, Madam President, my recommendation. All right. My recommendation in terms of having statutory oversight as against a minister or ministerial office does not mean that I oppose, Madam President. I just want to make it clear for the record sake. You know I am in support of this policy approach, but it's important that we get it right. I want to recommend that there is a clear opportunity for us to have parliamentary oversight in this. By embedding parliamentary oversight, establishing bipartisan authority appointed by the legislature, and reducing ministerial control, Madam President, I think that is key.

The Senate, this Senate, by making those recommendations, would not in any way be obstructing progress. So if Members on the "Government Side" feel that pushing for these recommendations might go against what they want to achieve, I am saying that that is not a move against progress. This is clearing a pathway, a structured pathway for progress to perforate, Madam President.

So I just want to close, Madam President, by saying that we have an excellent opportunity, and I do hope the "Government Side", in some ways, is agitated by my contribution. And in some way, would have taken note to see how we can strengthen

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this legislation going forward, Madam President.

So with these few words, as I said, I do support this Bill, but I believe that there is a clear opportunity for us to make those changes. Whether those changes can be made now is up to the “Government Side” to decide. And whether those changes can be made soon, that also rests with them. But the fact remains that if those changes, those recommendations, those amendments, are not made, I believe we are going to have significant difficulties in the implementation of this. I believe so because there are significant gaps, there are significant omissions, and so this consideration for this Honourable House through you to the Leader of Government’s Business and his team to seek redress on those issues that were flagged. And I guess as much as my colleagues on this side would have other things, as well.

So Madam President, I just made this, these are my contribution and I just want to thank this Honourable House for giving me the opportunity to do so. Thank you.

(Applause)

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox, for your remarks, and through me, as you said, the presenter of the Bill would have heard you, and the review that you gave and the recommendations made. I thank you. Senator Seville Francis has requested the floor and will now present on one of the two mics. There you are, thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis: Thank you, Madam President. Allow me to say a special good morning and happy New Year to all Members present for today's debate. And it is my wish for 2026 that we are all successful and that our dreams and aspirations are achieved.

Madam President, before I proceed, allow me to recognise in the gallery this CEO of the Cannabis Secretariat, Ms. Nandy Noel, welcome, and our Honourable Lenox Andrew, Acting Prime Minister and as I heard in the “Other Place”, the Minister for Marijuana (**laughter**), Madam President, but the driving force and ministry and minister behind this reform of this Bill.

Madam President, I also take this opportunity to say welcome and good morning to Bongo Star I, Hail de I, St. Patrick in the House, and my beautiful cousin,

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as we call her, 'Rasta Judy', who is here supporting in this Honourable House, and Mr. Junior Joseph, aka 'Basket Man', you are most welcome in this Honourable House, today. Madam President, I rise in support of the Drug Abuse... And anyone else, sorry, in the gallery today.

Madam President, I rise in support of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and I do so deliberately, Madam President, through the lens I carry every single day in this Honourable House, the lens of the youth. Madam President, permit me to approach this debate not from a place of alumnus but, Madam President, from a place of education, because education is where good policy must always begin.

And Madam President, I have a note that is written on my desktop, so everything that I do on a daily basis, I see it. And it says, "Policy must feel human, or else it will fail", and I'm guided by that mantra, being a parliamentary secretary, Madam President. And so allow me to speak as if I am sitting with a young person right here in Grenada who asks a very honest question, "Senator, what does this Bill really do, and does it mean marijuana is no free-for-all?"

Madam President, this Bill does not say that cannabis is harmless. Madam President, it is not saying that smoking is safe, and it is not creating a smoke anywhere immoral society, Madam President. **(Applause)** What this Bill is doing is simply removing criminal penalties for small, clearly defined quantities of cannabis for adults, 21 years and older, and replacing automatic criminalisation with a regulated health informed and proportionate response to minor possession.

Specifically, Madam President, the Bill establishes a decriminalised quantity of 56 grams of cannabis and 56 grams of cannabis resin. These figures were not chosen at random, Madam President; they are intended to create clarity, consistency, and fairness in enforcement, and, Madam President, clarity is essential because this Bill also draws a very clear line. It distinguishes decriminalised possession from trafficking. The Bill sets a trafficable quantity of 71 grams above the decriminalised threshold.

So let me say this plainly, Madam President, especially for our young people, this Bill doesn't protect traffickers. It protects people from disproportionate punishment for small possessions. Because, you see, Madam President, something that I think is

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sometimes severely omitted is that there is a significant difference between the criminalisation and legalisation; they're not the same. But I've noticed from the emergence of this Bill into the public domain that it is being used as one of the same. So, Madam President, I think this morning's definition matters in this debate for clarity.

Decriminalisation means that certain conduct remains restricted, but minor breaches, particularly small possession, do not automatically result in arrest, prosecution and a lifelong criminal record. **(Applause)** Legalisation, on the other hand, is something entirely different. Legalisation involves a comprehensive framework where you would have licensed production, regulatory sale, taxation, inspection, compliance and enforcement.

The Bill does not legalise recreational cannabis. In fact, it is expected that separate legislation will be required to regulate cannabis for medicinal, therapeutic, scientific and religious purposes. But, Madam President, I think the emphasis is most times places on the recreational smoking aspect of things. So if a young person is listening today, the message is simple and honest; this is not a hall pass, this is a shift away from lifelong criminalisation for minor amounts.

Madam President, let us demystify the quantity. 56 grams is approximately 2 ounces or just under one-eighth of a pound, because if we're saying 56 grams, not everyone might understand grams vs pounds vs ounces. This is not an abstract number, Madam President. It is a carefully defined threshold meant to prevent excessive, and I'm stressing on the excessive enforcement, enforcement while maintaining that public order. Madam President, I must emphasise that the Bill is not a get-out-of-jail-free card, meaning any old thing goes. There are regulations that must be followed.

Well, Madam President, I want it to be made abundantly clear that the consequences still exist. Here, I'm not speaking just about consequences in the judicial system, Madam President. The consequences associated with the use of cannabis do not disappear with this Bill. Madam President, the consequences they become more targeted. Smoking or using cannabis in public places or within five meters of entrances, exits, windows or ventilation systems of public buildings, workplaces, or public conveyances remains an offence and carries a fixed penalty of EC\$300.00; so the penalty remains.

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Madam President, smoking or using cannabis on school premises or within 100 yards of the school during school hours is strictly prohibited and attracts serious penalties. So, Madam President, I know in this Honourable House here, we have studied this Bill, and we understand this, but I did profess my presentation by indicating that I'm speaking directly to the young people who are asking the questions. Madam President, so when people suggest that consequences vanish with this Bill, this is simply not true; what vanishes is automatic criminalisation, not accountability.

Madam President, one of the most progressive aspects of this Bill is how it treats children and young people, something that I'm very much proud of the Secretariat and those involved in drafting this.

Madam President, a child under 18 been found with small quantities is referred to the Child Protection Authority for assessment, counselling and support rather than the justice system. A young person between 18 and 20, because we did indicate that it's for persons 21 and over... So, a young person between 18 and 20 is referred to a Minister-approved counselling or education programme.

Madam President, I don't think that where it says "A Minister-approved counselling or education programme", it is essentially saying, for example, Minister Lennox Andrews or Minister Delma Thomas, who is responsible for Mental Health, and so on, makes or refers that child or that young person, rather directly, to a programme.

I think we have... I think, Madam President, sometimes I wonder why we do this. We know better, and I don't understand why we try to mislead the public, Madam President. I believe that this Honourable House is a place of education. It's just like in the Bible, Madam President, when it says "man", it is not referring to the males only, Madam President, and so we know sometimes terminology is inclusive.

So when it says here, "A Minister-approved counselling or is referred to a Minister-approved counselling", it is not saying that the minister is hand-picking this. The minister is obviously responsible for ensuring that the policy is there, the programmes are there and all of that. **(Applause)** There is a team of people there, Madam President. I expected better from us.

Every time I come to this Honourable House, and I feel like we use the opportunity to mislead the public internationally, it hurts me, Madam President, because

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our young people are listening, and we ought to be better. I always say it, and I boast. The Upper House is the best House, and I think we should utilise it for what it is intended for, Madam President. I proceed.

Madam President, let us be very clear. What this is saying, in terms of youth protection and intervention, is that no arrest, no charge, no criminal record. Madam President, this is not leniency. What we're saying is, this is early intervention; that is the difference between saving a life trajectory and destroying one. Madam President, I come from a place where I see this, and I have a lived experience of this.

You see, Madam President, freedom comes with responsibility, and I now must make a crucial point. Every individual must be cognisant of their personal responsibility to protect their health, mental well-being, and future. Madam President, why do I make this point?

Alcohol is there; growing up, everyone indulged in alcohol. Cigarettes are there, Madam President, not everyone indulges in that; there are some people who take absolute charge and responsibility for their health. So, we're saying that it is the same thing here, Madam President.

If you consume too much fatty foods, the consequence is obesity. If you consume too much salt, you'll have hypertension. If you consume too much sugar, then you'll end up with diabetes, and so we're saying here that yes, we know that the consequences exist, but it is also an individual responsibility to know what they ought to do and what not to do, Madam President.

Madam President, one of the challenges in this national conversation is that we focus almost exclusively on smoking **(applause)** when the cannabis plant has recognised medicinal value in many parts of the world. **(Applause)** Madam President, you see, medicinal cannabis has been used successfully to treat many things:

- Chronic pain - particularly for patients who do not respond well to opioids;
- Epilepsy and seizure disorders - especially treatment-resistant epilepsy;
- Cancer-related nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy; **(applause)**
- Multiple sclerosis to reduce multiple spas... spasticity; Madam President, sorry. I am getting a bit emotional.
- Glaucoma - by lowering intraocular pressure;
- Appetite loss and wasting syndromes - particularly in patients with HIV and

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AIDS, Madam President.

So, you see, Madam President, these benefits are accessed through regulated forms: oils, capsules, topical treatments and not just reckless smoking. I am asking myself why it is that we're focusing only on the recreational smoking aspects, Madam President.

What we're saying is that a person who, take for example, is suffering with chronic pain, Madam President, now has access to four plants, an adult, cultivated in their flower pots, in their homes, in their backyard, Madam President, and that can be used to help with their ailments, Madam President.

So we're saying that there are other aspects that can be utilised and let us not just focus on the smoking aspect of things. Madam President, so yes, cannabis has benefits, but benefits do not erase responsibility. The Bill does not encourage reckless behaviour; it creates a space for regulating medicinal use, research and responsible policy.

Madam President, our society will not collapse because we are decriminalising cannabis, Madam President, as some people are putting out into the atmosphere. The fair narrative suggests that decriminalisation leads to societal collapse, but the Caribbean has already tested this theory.

We don't even have to get as far as Canada, Madam President. Jamaica decriminalised possession up to two ounces in 2015. Jamaica did not collapse. Trinidad and Tobago decriminalised cannabis in 2019. The society did not collapse. Barbados adopted a proportionate non-criminal approach. Barbados did not collapse. Antigua and Barbuda reformed its cannabis laws. Antigua and Barbuda did not collapse. What collapsed was the idea that harsh criminalisation was the only tool available. **(Applause)** Madam President, and I can stand here and say we will not allow our Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique to collapse because we are decriminalising marijuana, Madam President.

Madam President, I must speak from where I come from, because when I stand here, I represent my community, I represent where I am from, the community that is responsible for who I am today, the lived experiences. Madam President, I'm from Mount Rich in St. Patrick, a place where people ask, "Can anything good come from this community?" Madam President, a rural community long associated with these

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practices. I have seen first-hand how the lives of young men from communities like mine have been upended, not because they were violent criminals, but because of small quantities of marijuana.

Let's be honest, Madam President, there are people in more affluent parts of this country who may possess cannabis and their doors are not being kicked in, and they're not being dragged, hauled and thrown into the back of a police van, Madam President. In rural communities, young men have often borne the full weight of enforcement. Madam President, the law must not operate like a spotlight that shines on some communities and not on others.

Madam President, I recall walking through Mount Rich with the members of the Royal Grenada Police Force, just a few months ago, in an attempt to bridge the gap, reduce fear and rebuild trust; one that has been broken between the Royal Grenada Police Force and the community, Madam President. The breakdown we confronted between youth, law enforcement, and the community was significantly linked to marijuana law enforcement.

Madam President, today, this Bill speaks volumes. For many of these young men, this feels like a guardian angel moment, not because the law says anything goes, but because the law finally says, we will not destroy your future over a small mistake; **(applause)** this is like an olive branch extended further to continue bridging that gap, Madam President. Madam President, the young men in my community can now say I can go and get a proper job, not because I choose to engage in recreational smoking, Madam President.

Madam President, you know, this is how I think of this. When you look at the big, you know, corporate men and women, in some instances, across the world, on their break time, you would see them outside lighting a cigarette, smoking, decompressing.

Madam President, so we're saying here, also, that you should not be restricted from holding jobs or positions simply because you choose to engage in recreational smoking, Madam President. Madam President, I have never seen a person engaged in recreational smoking of marijuana and go home and beat his wife to death, Madam President, but I've seen, and I have heard, and I'm sure Sister Gloria has witnessed the same thing in her ministry, where people consumed alcohol and went home

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abusing their families, Madam President. We have alcohol—lap and cut—everywhere, and it's free for all, and we're even seeing it in some school activities, Madam President.

I know Brother David has something that he has been working continuously on to ensure that our children are protected at all costs, Madam President. So I am asking, “What is it with the double standard?” The ones that create or do more harm in our society, Madam President, are available for all. I'm sure if we go to the Records Office in the Traffic Department, we will see how many accidents happen because of drinking and driving, Madam President, the consumption of alcohol, but it is available, and it is legal, Madam President. So I'm saying we can't continue with the double jeopardy, Madam President.

Madam President, this Bill also confronts the burden of our records. It allows for expungement of minor cannabis related offences and the discontinuance of pending proceedings, which is the power of second chances. A criminal record is not just a punishment; it becomes a permanent barrier, Madam President, and reducing the burden means fewer young people needing rescue later because we choose intervention over incarceration.

Madam President, at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, we have programmes like the MPower Programme. Madam President, we're constantly creating remedial programmes because of the incarceration of our young people, Madam President. Prior to this, I've worked with an organisation that dealt specifically with young people, giving them second chances.

On the intake form, one of the questions that I always had to ask, which was painful and woeful to ask, was, “Have you ever been in conflict with the law?” The answer was most times, “Yes”. Then I had to ask, “What was the reason?” Sometimes it was just for a spliff, Madam President. Because of that, they have a record, and then when they go to employers to get jobs, they're skilled young people, they're talented young people, and then they have those restrictions.

And so, we're saying that in an attempt to have fewer remedial programmes, early intervention, and over-incarceration is one of the ways that this Bill is helping to do just that, Madam President.

And in closing, I must say that this is not a celebration of cannabis; this is not

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what I'm saying at all, Madam President. It is a recalibration of justice. **(Applause)** Madam President, it says that we can protect public health without permanently branding people as criminals. It says we can protect schools without destroying futures. It says we can address youth behaviour with counselling and not cuffs, Madam President, and it says we believe in second chances.

And, Madam President, on behalf of the young men of my community and every young person in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique who felt like the system has placed them in a box, I stand today resolute for those reasons that I gave above, Madam President, in full support of this Bill. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Seville Francis, for your presentation and look forward to the recalibration of justice for young people through this Bill. I offer this road to the next petitioner for it. Dr Myanna Charles, you have to follow the Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Dr. Myanna Charles: Thank you, Madam President, and before I begin my brief contribution, I would like to greet everyone, including my colleagues present in this Honourable House today.

Madam President, I rise in support of the direction of the Bill and, in principle, decriminalisation. We can all agree, and as was stated before by many persons, criminal punishment for small possession has caused needless harm; that is true, but with reform, Madam President, we cannot only settle on the what, we must confront the how, such as the processes, the safe guard, and the safe guards are very important, and the capacity of our systems to carry this change responsibly.

We must focus on the how because, Madam President, decriminalisation, and this is very important, without proper guardrails, does not remove risk; it simply transfers it. It takes it out of a court, yes, but it can potentially move it into our houses, into our communities, into our already overburdened healthcare system, so we need to also look at those gatherings; this is crucial.

You know, and I would want to start with one of the first important areas, protecting our young people, which must therefore be of paramount importance. Yes,

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there is a wealth of research out there, and yes, cannabis has therapeutic potential in the right setting, but we must acknowledge that cannabis is not the first-line drug for the treatment of any of those conditions mentioned, and it is not the most effective, so we also have to acknowledge that in the broad spectrum of things.

But, Madam President, it is a fact that cannabis, like alcohol and other drugs, is not harmless. I heard this point stated before; it is not harmless, and like other drugs, it has the potential to be abused. It's just the reality of things.

I will go further to say that the public health evidence shows that cannabis use can interfere with brain development, and our children, our young adults, who are aged 21 and beyond. In fact, our brains don't stop developing at 21. It is a reality. The evidence shows that they are particularly vulnerable, and the main psychoactive ingredients in cannabis have been linked to long-term cognitive problems such as difficulties with memory, learning, and attention, which don't just affect education but can also affect social function.

So, when we look at the Bill, we have to seriously consider those things, especially the public health impacts and brain development, and how this can affect our young people, not only up to age 21, but beyond that point.

And let us not forget the mental health risk. Madam President, for people who are vulnerable, because of genetics, for instance or existing conditions, cannabis use can increase the chances of severe mental health outcomes. We can take a trip to mental health facilities on the island, and the physicians there and the nurses there will tell you that a lot of people there are there because of marijuana use, which increases the risk of psychosis diagnosis of schizophrenia, which is a reality. **(Applause)** It is a reality.

One thing I also want to highlight... You know, a lot of the time we refer to drugs as startle drugs. Right? Now, when somebody consumes alcohol, marijuana, name it, what does that do? It causes you to lose inhibition, and it affects your impulse control. I take one drug, I want to take another drug. So we cannot separate these things; we have to look at them holistically. **(Applause)** Today, we are not only here about cannabis, but we also have to look at the scope of other drugs, because I can simply lose my inhibition and want to consume others or even more.

And, you know, I'll make that point as well. When we look at social media, we

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have people who scroll through social media. We call it a doom scroll. You're on your phone, and you just scroll, scrolling, scrolling. It affects reward mechanisms in the brain, the same reward mechanisms that drugs can affect, causing addiction. So we have to also consider those things when we are looking at the Bill. We have to look at it holistically.

And, you know this, this is why I am concerned, and the safeguards that are expected to be clearly outlined in this Bill are, for the most part, at least in my humble opinion, insufficient. We must be cautious, because if we get this wrong, the consequences of this will land on our families, especially our children.

In fact, as it stands today, some schools, and I know that for a fact, are battling the challenges of addiction, and are battling with that, and in some instances, whether we want to acknowledge it or not, it is being purchased by our nation's children. Now that we are moving in this direction, it will become even more readily accessible, and this problem can now become even more widespread and difficult to control.

So, while I support the direction of the Bill and decriminalisation in principle, I just want to raise those concerns here because these are important considerations that we have to take into account, because there can be long-term implications of those things.

Now, decriminalising cannabis, therefore, and with the points stated earlier, requires robust public health protection and system frameworks to reduce and, even more importantly, prevent youth exposure and youth use. **(Applause)** And we know it's the name of the Bill, right, so prevention has to be an integral part. Right?

And let us be practical. You know, this is an important point, and people raised with me, parents, in fact. Cannabis is no longer a rolled joint you go out on the road and smoke a spliff. Remember, these things also come in edibles and oil. Madam President, you may be surprised to know that it comes in the form of candies, it can be placed in cakes, it can be placed in gummy bears, cookies, and products that are all attractive to a child, and they look ordinary to a child. If taken accidentally, and in some cases even experimentally, it can have serious consequences.

So we need to seriously step back for a moment, I believe, so in my humble opinion, and ask ourselves, are we ready for this, and do we have the proper systems in place to handle this at this time? We have to ask ourselves those questions.

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Another point I want to raise today, Madam President. You know, in all that I'm saying, my dear friend, the Leader of Government's Business, I support the intention to divert people away from the criminal justice system and towards help. I think this is important. This, as put forward in the Bill, depends heavily on what? We heard it a few times, counselling, it depends on mental health support, yet we all know that these services are already strained.

Furthermore, counselling alone is not a full addiction response. **(Applause)** You know, where are the addiction services that diversion will require an actual practise when this thing is being implemented? Services like drug testing, people alluded to it earlier, detox support, a detailed rehabilitation plan, not just saying rehabilitation for saying rehabilitation, but having a detailed plan, relaxation prevention, and ensuring structured follow-up. In other words, Madam President, and simply put, we need the infrastructure and the manpower to make this thing work. We need both. **(Applause)**

And it is no secret that we already face serious staffing challenges in our healthcare system. This is a fact, especially in the area of mental health. So, before we build a diversion pathway that depends on mental health support, primarily, we must seriously look at the capacity of our system to provide these services. We have to look at those things.

How many trained the professionals do we have today? How many additional case managers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, you name it, will be required? Do we have a rehabilitation programme currently in place, to deal with things of this sort and to deal with addiction because it can become a serious problem? So, we are always have to look at it from all sides.

Madam President, it is also important to note that the international examples that are often described as successful, did not treat decriminalisation as a standalone policy; they built it on a health-led system with proper education, clear referral pathways and treatment where dependency is suspected; and this was supported with trained professionals, adequate funding and independent oversight.

We must insist on a similar approach if this thing is going to work. Again, we need safeguards that are practical, we need safeguards that are measurable, and independently supervised, and this was eloquently expressed by my colleague and

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brother, Senator Cox, and this is something we need to seriously consider.

Again, I would close by saying I support decriminalisation in principle, but decriminalisation without adequate rehabilitation services, without accessible addiction services, without real mental health capacity, and without clear safeguards, especially for our young people, risks creating new problems **(applause)**, even with the best of intentions. So I hope my friends on the “Other Side” and this Administration will treat these safeguards not as optional, but as the foundation of responsible reform.

Madam President, these concerns, as I mentioned earlier, are raised in good faith with a single aim that reform must reduce harm, not rearrange it or shift it. **(Applause)** We do not only need... And that would be my last line, you know, as it relates to that, and this is very important. We do not only need the concept of a plan, as I see in this Bill, but we also need an actual plan to deal with this thing. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Senator Charles, thank you very much. May I pause to note that, if everyone requires to make an intervention, there are seven speakers left, just about, so it may be advisable to take the next two speakers and then break for lunch? Just a thought. I wait to... We proceed with Senator Quinc Britton. Senator Britton, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Thank you, Madam President, pleasant morning to you, and I wish you a Happy New Year, you, as well as, all Members of the Parliament, my colleagues on the “Other Side”, the staff, police officers, people who are locked on and listening or watching; best wishes for 2026 to all of you and your families. And, of course, all these greetings are coming from the best parish in the west. My colleague who went before me can allude to that. **(Laughter)** So, warm greetings from Sunset City in St. Mark.

Madam President, I, too, would like to join this morning in giving support to the amendment of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, as presented by the Leader of Government’s Business, Madam President. As my colleague, Senator Francis, eloquently explained, Madam President, the many uses, the medical properties, and all the benefits that we have for, permit me to use the term “the herb”

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and not just marijuana or cannabis, because over the many years, Madam President, we heard this, and I think it was an injustice that was done to a plant, a simple plant, and I often refer to it as “the herb”. We tend to stress a lot on smoking, as well as the abuse of it.

Permit me also, Madam President, to recognise the people who worked tirelessly to get us to this stage: the members of the Rastafarian Community and the Chairperson of the Cannabis Committee, our Acting Prime Minister, who was just here, the Minister for Agriculture, you know, advocating and ensuring that we have everything in place, in terms of the consultations, so that we can be at this stage here to make the amendments and pass this Bill.

We recognise that Grenada is on a deliberate process to reform or to modernise its approach to drug control policy, recognising the limitations of a predominantly punitive and criminal justice-centred framework in addressing contemporary public health, social equity and human rights considerations.

Over several decades, the enforcement of criminal sanctions for minor cannabis-related offences has contributed to social dislocation and barriers to employment, travel and disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The Minister, my colleague, from the Ministry of Social and Community Development, explained that so too did the Representative for the Youth, who gave her experience on how this impacted young men in particular and how they have been treated. I know of instances where some young men, in particular, got the opportunity to travel to the United States, permanently, and when they went to Barbados, they failed their drug test because they probably, you know, were recreational users of marijuana. I really hope that the United States could relook those things, so people who failed are offered a second chance.

Most recently, the... And I don't often give praises to the President of the Great United States, but I welcome the initiative whereby he signed an Executive Order declassifying marijuana or the herb, from a Schedule 1 to a Schedule 3, meaning, it's not as dangerous as other drugs like LSD and cocaine. They classified it as a drug that is less harmful, given the medicinal properties, as my good Senator so eloquently explained, and what it can be used for.

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Madam President, I support this wholeheartedly. In fact, I've been waiting for this for a while, so that I can exercise my rights and cultivate my own herb. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. I don't need much; only four trees. It's acceptable for me. Madam President, from time to time, I use the herb for my tea. And, I mean, when I use it, I feel so energetic, and so on. Unfortunately, I don't have any inside here because you have to make sure that it's properly regulated, and the law is passed. **(Laughter)** So when the law is passed, **(applause)**, Madam President, we have to come... **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** Right? **(Laughter)**

Madam President: I am not participating...

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: No. I am drinking water. I am not drinking water. **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** **(Laughter)** Yes. I am drinking water.

So, Madam President, I think, you know, we have a moral responsibility to educate persons as to what the amendment seeks to do, and it's not about... We say 56 grams, and 56 grams is just about two ounces, which is really not a lot—15 grams of cannabis resin. Right? So, it's not much. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

"You're asking how many spliffs?" It all depends on how you want to wrap the spliff, but when you say spliff, you're speaking about smoking here; I'm not advocating for that. Smoking is dangerous towards health, Madam President.

Madam President: That's not part of the Bill.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Pardon me?

Madam President: This particular line of intervention is not part of the Bill. Stay away from it and continue, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Thank you, Madam President, but I was just explaining, with 56 grams, if you want to quantify and ask, you know, what amount of cigarettes you can get out of it... I was saying that I'm not advocating for the smoking, I advocate for the other uses, medicinal and therapeutic uses, and so on.

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Even, Madam President, maybe you might suffer from some chronic illness or even insomnia, it helps. You know, it's a natural thing. You drink some tea and you can relax yourself.

I've heard about, you know... Like with everything else, you have to do things in moderation, and I heard the doctor quite...

Madam President: You're a doctor now?

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Pardon me?

Madam President: You're doctoring me now?

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: I heard the... Yes, the doctor... When I say, "The doctor", I'm referring to, if you permit me to refer to the medical doctor, that's Senator Dr. Myanna Charles, who spoke about some of the findings and the abuses. Well, she was referring to the abuse of the herb that caused, you know, people to be mentally deranged, and whatnot. But, again, as I said, everything you do, you do in moderation.

Some people in the gallery, Bongo Star, could attest that. For all the years that, you know, he probably engaged in sacramental use, he never ended up in a mental institution. As a fact, for years I've been drinking herb tea, and I never end up in a mental institute, it never causes my memory to be delayed or anything. Whatever you do, you exercise a bit of responsibility. We have a moral responsibility to educate people as to what this Bill seeks to do, Madam President.

So with all that said, Madam President, I wish to invite my colleagues on the "Other Side" to please let us support, let us educate the general public, and I would like to offer a formal apology to the Rastafarian Community for the many years of, you know, being mistreated. **(Applause)**

Sometime back, I understand, during the Revolution, they were locked up and were really mistreated just for this. Colonial... This thing was handed to us by our colonial masters, saying that this plant is not good and whatnot, and now the world is seeing the many benefits, the different things that can be derived from the cannabis

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plant. You're making clothing. You're getting building materials; all those things, Madam President.

So, like I said, we have a moral responsibility to educate people about what this Bill seeks to do, and I'm not advocating so much for the smoking of it, but whatever you do, you do it being responsible and hopefully when the Bill passes, Madam President, I can sip my tea, and I hope, you know, we can all... **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank the gentleman from St. Mark, Senator Quinc Britton. I was listening to everyone all morning, and I knew, I knew, that at some point, we would get full disclosure. **(Laughter)** I knew it was on its way. Thank you, and I meant when you were recommending, in case I have an ailment, I can drink it. I was being facetious to ask if you were doctoring me.

May I proceed with our last speaker for the morning, if that's acceptable to all, by first welcoming the Acting Prime Minister, and may I join with others and say the Minister for the proposed "Weed Management"? Minister Lennox Andrews, welcome to our deliberations. Acting Prime Minister, thank you. I offer the floor to Senator Horsford. Senator Dwight Horsford, you have the floor. Thank you, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Dwight Horsford: Thank you, Madam President. Allow me first to greet and wish everyone in this Honourable House, your good self, Madam President, my colleagues opposite and the very hard-working staff of the Parliament, my best wishes for 2026.

Madam President, I rise to add my voice to those of my colleagues on "This Side" in our contribution to the debate on this amendment, Bill, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act.

Madam President, a constant refrain that you'd certainly hear from "This Side" of the House is that we do not oppose the decriminalisation of cannabis. I think the policy objectives, although it is not a novel one, we see neighbouring territories and countries moving in that direction, and there is a reason for that, Madam President.

Decriminalisation and legalisation are very distinct concepts; they're quite different. I was happy to hear Senator Francis emphasised that, because this Bill does

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not achieve any legalisation of anything. In fact, as I will shortly discuss, the decriminalisation that it proposes is very limited, but decriminalisation is a form of drug abuse control, Madam President.

Cannabis sativa, ganja, marijuana, however you wish to call it, has been around for a very long time. Indeed, in the 1830s, Dr. William O'shaughnessy, an Irish doctor working in India, discovered beneficial uses medically from his observation of the intoxication of Indians and their use of it, beneficial uses in relation to easing seizures, vomiting, pain and that sort of thing.

Now, there is good and bad in everything. We must begin there. All medical substances and ingredients that we use chemically now, whether in the form of portions, tablets, pills, are extracted from nature's gifts, offerings, plants and herbs. Let's begin there; these are extractions through a process that removes ingredients and substances that are targeted to relieve certain ailments.

Now, before cannabis was put into a controlled drug category, it was widely used in some societies, and I wish to say a few things, you know, on this because I was part of the preparation of legislation in a lot of Caribbean countries in relation to this matter, so I know exactly what I'm saying here.

But take, for example, the coca plant, the leaf if you chew it, and if you boil it as tea, then it is beneficial in terms of suppression of hunger, fatigue pain, that sort of thing, but the concentrated substance that is produced from it, is a psychoactive drug everybody knows as "cocaine"; good and bad in everything.

Madam President, the march for decriminalisation, certainly in terms of marijuana, ganja, cannabis, makes a lot of sense, and we must focus on really what the objective is in decriminalisation, certainly where serious efforts have been made to do so. It is not focused on medical use, because already there is a regulated medical use of extracts from cannabis.

It is in relation to smoking and addiction drug abuse because I began by saying, Madam President, is a form of control, and it certainly makes a lot of sense because the statistics over the years have shown that the problem of abuse, overuse has been in a certain demographic, certainly young people who have been engaged in deviant behaviour.

And so, understanding the social context and that we all need second chances,

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I support the move to expunge criminal records of people who have been criminalised, charged and penalised for small uses, small amounts of cannabis. A very good idea.

You know, criminal records, Madam President, they don't disappear. One simple incident, and the record of that stays with you until you're dead, no matter what the real circumstances surrounding how it came to be. I think that is a very good idea.

So, decriminalisation, there's nothing wrong with that, and expungement, absolutely nothing wrong with that. Not a new idea, other places have been doing that, but let's deal with practical reality now, that was just the concept. Let's deal with the practical reality.

What does this Bill achieve? This Bill achieves limited normalisation of what is already happening. Recreational use of ganja is not limited to young people and people smoking on the block. Its use pervades many social strata and social contexts and different age levels; that is the politics here.

The politics here is it is thought that this is some sort of political bonanza it is not, because the decriminalisation, the use, the freedom that was expected and people were made to expect, is not introduced in this Bill, and the qualifications and different nuances and exceptions and all of those things only create more confusion for you than clarity, as I will demonstrate.

As my distinguished colleague, Dr. Charles, said, and before her, my Brother Cox, this thing is a serious thing. Madam President, when you are embarking on the decriminalisation of cannabis, first as a policy and then as a law, you have to appreciate that you cannot be all things to all people; this is an issue with only two columns: either doing it or not doing it. There is no middle ground, you know. There is no middle ground.

For instance, you are saying, "You're free to smoke in your house and your yard", that is happening already, so you're not giving any freedom to anybody. Already, law enforcement does not expend resources running behind small uses; fellas on the block with two, three spliff; they don't do that, so you're not liberating anything there. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

And now, you have created the anomaly that okay, I am free to smoke because that is what it's all about, to smoke on my premises, home and in the yard. You can't smoke at a bus stop. You can't smoke a joint while walking along the road, because

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you say it's harmful. Well, my brother, who spoke before me, I am not sure if he helped the policy agenda that they are promoting, because you say it is harmful.

But a man could smoke a Three-five, a Du Maurier, a Marlboro right there on the bus stop, and that is legal. It is legal, but you're telling me you're doing such great things for me that I can smoke, but only smoke in your house, because smoking in a public place is an EC\$300 fine. Please, it's a joke political joke. If you are doing it, you're doing it. You can't be all things to all people. **(Applause) (Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

Now, I heard that this Bill invests in young people. In what way and by what stretch of their imagination? This Bill doesn't invest anything in anybody. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** It does not create any opportunity for young people to do anything. As my learned sister and distributed sister said, "You need to have a certain social apparatus to give support, whether it's addiction".

You see, the difficulty in this approach is that my friends opposite begin by recognising that this is a narcotic **(applause)**, and even though they promised as a political matter, you legalise, you'll realise that you can't do it. Decriminalisation is a narrow field in which you can permit recreational, sacramental, and spiritual use, without creating a market economy in what is a narcotic. You have realised that you can't do it.

There are three major international treaty conventions, Madam President, you should be familiar with them. I think it's the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotics, and the 1971 Convention on Narcotics and Psychotropic Drugs, followed in the 80s by the Convention on, I think, the Prevention of Trafficking Narcotics, Illicit, and Psychotropic Drugs. All countries, with the exception of a few United Nations countries, which I think some describe as rogue countries, do not and have not signed that, and they're committed to that. So, we must begin by recognising the classification as a narcotic.

But my friends opposite have to be careful and tread carefully because, as their own Senator Francis pointed out, the double standards and the hypocrisy are very plain. What recreational users were expecting in the proposed decriminalisation, they're not getting it. **(Applause)** What they were expecting was more liberty in what they're already doing. When carnival time, and they go on the party boats, you don't think they're smoking that? **(Laughter)** So, Madam President, let's get serious about

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this thing now. Let's get serious about this thing.

Now, I see my friends are congratulating themselves, saying that this Bill achieved something for the Rastafarian Community that has never been done before. Well, let me tell you where I stand on that, Madam President, consistent with what I just said; it's either you're doing something, or you're not doing it.

Sacramental use of Cannabis in Rastafarian rituals has existed for a very long time; this is not new, but before congratulating yourself, be very careful about the signals that you are sending. If you had to be serious, first and foremost, I want to see the official recognition of Rastafarianism as a faith. **(Applause)** Start there, number one.

Don't tell me inside this Bill that you will have a minister who would make the decision to make a declaration as to what? "Depends on the political permission of a Minister, as to occasion and events for permitting the use". Really? You cannot be all things to all people; it's either you're doing it or you're not doing it. They don't need any ministerial permission for any kind of event; that's mamagism, it's a joke. **(Applause)** Nonsense.

In fact, it's an insult to think that people are losing their minds for you to come and tell me that a minister has to declare events as a religious event and so on, so as to permit the thing. If you recognise the religion, and you recognise its importance ritualistically and sacramentally, permit it and done. **(Applause)** But we know, Madam President, that we are in a certain year, spent a lot of time flying and gathering, and the time ran out; so we had to start ticking boxes now, and as my good friend Senator Charles said, "It's not even a full tick; it's a half tick." Don't play games.

We saw that from a mile away. Stevie Wonder saw that from his balcony. Joke. As if you liberalised anything, you haven't done anything. You're still tight, you're still telling them what they can't do, stay home and do it. Please.

My friend is laughing, that's my partner, opposite. He started off with Peter Tosh, you forgot; well, I like reggae too, you know, and right now the one that's constantly playing in my car is that, "We have to find a solution for this pollution," but I know the one you're talking about, the song is "Legalise it," but you're not legalising it here. You're telling us all the reasons why you're not doing it, and all the reasons why this decriminalisation effort is a tight and strict one. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

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Yes. Yes, tight and strict.

So, Madam President, I join my colleagues in our position on that, but I have a certain position also, which is a little bit more elastic, because I see that this decriminalisation effort is good. The objectives, as I said, are expungement. Free up the thing with young people, they can't follow the stigma all their lives of maybe one or two infractions with these things, and certainly, decriminalisation, conceptually, you have to recognise certain social and other conditions. But this Bill does not offer any freedom.

Most people who are paying attention to this amendment, and what you are saying about this amendment; they are interested in the smoking part. So, don't play, we are not talking about smoking, they're interested in that. That is what they're interested in. That is what they're looking to listen for, and you know that, very well know that, but you have not delivered the freedom. You have not even delivered the decriminalisation, the scope that one would have expected **(applause)** by this Bill.

A few more things, Madam President. Madam President, politicians are creatures of expediency; we know this. But there are some issues in our society that are not for expediency. Because the position of leadership that we hold for the time being, especially in certain issues, bears upon us a great responsibility for the implications for the future, and the signals that you are sending.

I thought that it would have been made clear in this legislative approach what your signal is because I don't mix signals out of this, all over the place; that's why I said you cannot be all things to all people. What you would have, or certainly if I had participated in something like this as I did elsewhere, you want to make clear debunks of decriminalisation in terms of recreational use. It is not practical to tell people only in their house and in their yard; that's not practical. You know you're not going to monitor that, and you can't afford it; it doesn't even make sense.

You have to understand the expectations outside there, and you have to understand what is already happening in terms of the use. You have to be clear on the objective in relation to religious recognition and use. You must be careful as to how it rolls out in relation to substance abuse and rehabilitation because you're sending signals; this is for adults and responsible people, and for responsible use, that's an adult thing, and so I don't want to repeat the admonitions of my sister, Dr.

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Charles, but they are quite valid, and they will do well to keep these in mind.

Madam President, my position, as I said, is a little bit more elastic; that is why I took the position from the beginning; you're doing it or you're not doing it because when we look at the situation now, the use of ganja as a narcotic, is hardly the interest of the system, particularly, to the justice system. It's high drugs that we're interested in; the cocaine and the things and them there, not ganja. It's harmless in terms of how it is happening now; people smoke some joints or some spliffs, it's harmless, as the sister opposite pointed out. They know, and we know all too well, the disastrous effects of the abuse of alcohol; many of the cases in the system, and my learned distinguished friend, the Attorney General, will very well know that.

A lot of the cases in the system, whether it's murder or grievous harm, operate in a context where the violence is inspired by alcohol consumption and its abuse. Motor vehicle fatalities, alcohol abuse; you're not seeing any of the statistics saying somebody ran off the road and killed people because they smoked two joints. You don't hear they chopped up somebody by the shop because they smoke the joint; the most that can happen is that they smoke the joint and they get mellow, not violent.

So, I understand that, that's why I told you my position is that it's quite correct in the system, even already, we don't need to be wasting resources running behind those things, but the important aspect of decriminalisation must be, not so much the recreational use, because we know what is happening already; medicinal and religious, and if you're doing it as a serious thing, it's not a halfway thing, and you have to recognise properly the religious faith that you say you want to target.

So, Madam President, I am for decriminalisation, naturally, clearly, but we know clearly this is not legalisation, it's very far from that, and it is not generous at all, decriminalisation of the use of cannabis. Madam President, I am certainly in favour of expunging the record, especially when young people made a wrong turn in life before, given their social attitude towards its use, and have had a record against them.

Similarly, the objective in the Bill regarding discontinuing criminal proceedings where small uses of cannabis are concerned, I fully support that, because that there is otherwise time wasting and a waste of resources manpower, and other times the court system, justice system to be chasing, and the objective value of these interventions by that method, they're really not perceptible; you're not really seeing the

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real returns on that.

But I felt it was necessary to put this thing in perspective to make it clear that it doesn't have any political bonanza here. In fact, people are more interested in another issue about deportees, and there's another place about this issue here. So, Madam President, with those few words, these are my offerings, my contribution on this, and I wish to say that we will continue with our consistent approach to this particular issue. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Horsford. Thank you very much. It's past noon hour, and our lunch is here. Forty-five to 60 minutes maximum, and we will then reconvene. We have five full speakers, and one or two other items on the Order Paper; let us aim to complete today. The Senate is adjourned for lunch.

Senate adjourned for lunch at 12:28 p.m.

Senate resumed at 1:36 p.m.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you very much, Madam President. A good afternoon to you, and good afternoon to all my colleagues in this Honourable House on "This Side," the "Government Side", and even on the "Other Side". I acknowledge each of you. To everyone following this broadcast at home, abroad, wherever you might be, it's good to have you. It's good that you are in a position where you could be following and listening. I wish each of you, although we're in February already, all the best for 2026, health and strength, well-being, peace of mind, and success for you and your families.

Madam President, I rise in support of the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, as presented by the Leader of Government's Business; but even before I do, and share the reasons for my support to the Bill, I just want to make a few comments about some of the assertions made by Members on the "Other Side".

Madam President, quite a lot of references were made to the discretion of the minister in relation to the Bill, but examination of most of our laws will not provide a serious inconsistency.

For instance, references made to the Minister for Education having to do this,

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or having to do that, having to provide particular things; but it doesn't mean that the sole responsibility, or the sole discretion, is his. It means, as was alluded to by my Colleague that he has the responsibility to make sure it happens within his Ministerial line, and so, I just wanted to make sure that was understood. Then, Madam President, quite a few of the speakers referenced that we don't have all of the elements in place; do we have enough trained counsellors? Do we have all of the facilities in place?

And I can acknowledge that we probably don't have all of them in place, but if we were going to wait for all of the elements to be in place, at what cost? We must ask, and while we wait for all of the elements to line up, for us to wait four to five years, probably to send some additional persons to study, or to build a facility, we still have young people being criminalised for small infractions. We still have them with criminal records that prevent them from social escalation; we still have all of these issues, and we must practically and pragmatically confront those issues.

Quite a bit of suggestion were made too about us not having the complete plan, but sometimes I get confused, Madam President, here, because my understanding is that in this Honourable House, we make the Laws, we discuss the Legislation, and the actual fleshing out of the plan is not necessarily, by my understanding, the Business of this House to that extent.

I mean, we're interested in it, of course, because we want to set legal framework that we feel confident can be fleshed out; but to ask for all the details, here, my understanding is not that this is the purpose of this House, and so we must let the technical things be for the technical people, but we set the legislative framework within which those things will be developed and fleshed out; that's my understanding. Then, Madam President, my learned colleague on the "Other Side" asked, "What does this Bill achieve if it doesn't make free commercial smoking randomly available? Because that's what the people are interested in". Well, it achieves that no longer will younger people be criminalised for small quantities. It achieves the benefit of having their files and criminal records cleared, expunged, so that they no longer have those records.

Even if they don't get an opportunity to smoke wildly in public, they get these benefits; isn't that a lot? It is. And you see, we talked about achieving it, doing it, and being practical, but my goodly brother, brother Horsford on the "Other Side", Honourable Member, he is representing a team that had the opportunity to fix this,

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change this, do it several years ago. They didn't do it for one body or for anybody. We are heading in that direction, and we know it's the correct Direction. Madam President, I turned to my substantive presentation; this decriminalisation Bill, Madam President, comes at a critical time, and I want to set a little bit of the context for this decriminalisation Bill.

It comes at a time when several countries in our world have, in some measure, decriminalised or legalised small quantities of Cannabis for medical, therapeutic, or recreational use all over. Internationally, we can think of countries like Germany, Belgium, and Canada. Originally, we can think about Jamaica, Barbados, St. Kitts, Dominica, the Cayman Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Grenada is actually playing catch-up. So, if we think we're doing something that's not almost within normal practice in several of our Caribbean neighbours, we have to think again. Grenada is heading in the right direction, but I want to point out, too, Madam President, we are having this decriminalisation discussion at a time when we recognise that there are several critical benefits of Cannabis, and we need to stop demonising Cannabis. **(Applause)**

Several years ago. Madam President, we were at Teachers Training College, at what used to then be the Grenada National College, it wasn't even TAMCC at the time, and as part of our teachers training project, we did some presentations on the utility of the cannabis plant, and from that point as an educator, I recognised that we were woefully unfair in the way we've treated with cannabis, in the way we demonise it; and by the way I've never used it, never had the zeal to, don't want to **(laughter)**, never had the appeal; but I'm saying, from an objective point of view, I recognised that there are so many values, and we can talk about the value in medicine.

Several studies have indicated that there are particular products that work which are cannabis-based, that work in several elements, several conditions, and I'm sure our Honourable doctor on the "Other Side" can confirm say; but not only that, there are several environmental and industrial type uses and benefits of the cannabis. Fabric, we're talking about fabric, we're talking clothing, we're talking about paper, and all of these products can be made from elements of the hemp, which is a strain, a variety of the cannabis.

Then we've talked about food, Madam President, it is well reputed that the

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hemp seeds are super foods packed with protein, fibre, and essential fatty acids; and we can talk about the skin care, hair care, and the cosmetic industry, where several of the oils are good for skin, for hair, right? All of these things are benefits within the cannabis industry.

I still want to stay with the context because, Madam President, we are discussing this Bill in a context where, for decades, members of our Rastafarian Community, many of them present here today, were debarred from the opportunity, were marginalised, were debarred from the opportunity to legally use their herb as part of their sacrament. They probably did it, having to look over their shoulders, having to worry if some change in thinking in leadership would allow them to storm us again.

Madam President, we are discussing this Bill in the context where many medical practitioners who are aware of some of the benefits do not have the legal cover to be able to order and prescribe cannabis based medical products, even though the science is clear about the benefits that some of these things can bring; that's sad.

We are also discussing this Bill, Madam President, in the context that several of our citizens remain criminalised for simple cannabis related offences. If these are not good reasons to begin to look, and to change how we have treated with cannabis, I'm not sure we've found any; but Grenada, Madam President, through rigorous consultation, has embarked on a deliberate process of reform to modernise its approach to drug control policy, recognising the limitations of the predominantly punitive criminal justice-centred framework in addressing contemporary public health, social equality, and human rights considerations.

We recognise that the enforcement of criminal sanctions for minor cannabis-related offences has led to social, and my brother used the term earlier, social dislocation, and barriers to employment and travel, with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginal communities. **(Applause)**

Now, you see, we have allowed our legal framework to push one set of people, squeeze one set of people, and almost create a certain kind of people because from the time they're young, and they make one of these offences, you'll tell them; well, you can't get employed there, you can't go there, and you can't get a visa. You're constricted in a certain space, and the reality is that all of these things that happened in the marginalised communities have had no demonstrable effect.

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In other words, they have not benefited; all of the punitive sanctions have not created any major difference. They have not served as any kind of significant deterrent.

In fact, studies done in conjunction with the Inter-American Drug Research Institute, I think in 2013, among several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to drug use, pointed out that for Grenada, the drug of choice then, since 2013, was marijuana among students. Now, it might be something different, it might be changing, but I'm saying it was since then. I'm pointing to the fact that all this time there was no legalisation, there was no... Well, let me correct that, there was no decriminalisation, but those things existed.

There are several other causative factors that we must examine practically. It has not worked since then, but many international organisations have moved to alternative approaches that emphasise public health, Madam President, education, regulation, and prevention, rather than criminalisation, and Grenada is heading in that direction. It is for all...

So, this Bill, Madam President, let me just quickly say what it's not; it's not a free-for-all, and I think my colleague was making that quite clear because sometimes people get excited and they feel well that means I can go and smoke my thing anywhere, I can smoke anytime, and I can do what I want; it's not that, because only small quantities for possession and use are decriminalised, two ounces.

I don't know if you remember, Brother Quinc and some of the others might be a little too young to remember when they used to send you in the shop to buy an ounce of cheese, or two ounces of this, and you come back with a little piece, and you're wondering if it can share for everybody? Well, anyhow... **(Inaudible comment by Member)** It shared. For two ounces, for specific purposes, for medical, therapeutic, scientific, and religious use. So, it's not free-for-all, all over the place; it's guided, and it's regulated. There's also an age limit that is facilitated from the age of 21, and sooner or later, I'll talk about why that's important.

But in a nutshell, Madam President, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeks to amend the principal Act to give effect to these policy objectives by—

1. Decriminalising the possession and use of cannabis in small quantities;

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2. Permitting the use, handling and cultivation of cannabis for medical, therapeutic, scientific, and religious purposes under regulated conditions;
3. Establishing protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young persons; and that is key, because that's been an element that was not included in any previous legislation, so this is critical.
4. Providing for the regulation of such activities; creating new offences and controls relating to the misuse of cannabis;
5. Providing for consequential amendments to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act for the expungement of criminal records, and discontinuance of pending proceedings in respect of minor cannabis-related offences.

So, it attempts to do all of that, Madam President. I want to run through a couple of the Bills.

Clause 3 in the Bill seeks to ensure that sick persons can actually benefit officially from cannabis-based medical products because, prior to that section. If it hadn't been amended, a doctor would not have been able to prescribe officially something that was cannabis-based as a medicine. Now, they are allowed to do so with the amendment in clause 3, right?

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

Madam President, I refer to clause 4 of the Bill; persons can legally supply such products. So, it says, "Clause 4 provides for the amendment of section 5 of the principal Act to permit the lawful production, supply, or offer to supply cannabis or cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, or scientific purposes pursuant to a valid licence or other lawful authorisations". Right?

Madam President, clause 5 talks about the age that persons 21 years and older can have access, use and possess small quantities without penalty, and this is important, Madam President. We understand the dangers on a brain that's not fully developed is made to face the risk of, and as such, we understand that in your teen years, years from 20 to 30, quite a lot is taking place in terms of your... that's 13 to 20, quite a lot is taking place in terms of your brain development, and we don't recommend

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that anybody under that age engage in inconsistent use of cannabis. So, I'm saying this again, as the Minister for Education, to students and the young people out there, we need to recognise why we are trying to break the criminalisation record of several of our young people.

This is not saying that you need to get involved in smoking; your brains are developing, there's a lot happening, and the active ingredient, THC, as it's called, Tetrahydrocannabinol. It can obviously affect the brain development in your earlier years, and that is why, after all the careful review, from a psychological point of view, from a neurological point of view, 21, and Dr. Myanna was correct.

The brain never stops developing because it's always going to continue to develop and rewire based on what becomes the focus of life, particularly. Even until somebody is 80-something, the brain keeps rewiring and refocusing, but we are clear that at 21, or a little bit after, a lot of the major functioning, a lot of the major growth in the brain plateaus. Yes?

Some of it will continue until probably 30 plus, a little, and then other changes will happen down the road, so it never really stops, but the science is kind of clear that a lot of the significant developmental processes at 21 kind of plateau, and that's why it's a reasonably safe age to propose that; 21.

Madam President, this Bill mandates the protection of children because we're talking to 21, but we have two sets of people, and let's not be confused. Between 18, upon becoming an adult, and 21, we have one set of persons who can get involved in the use that is illicit of cannabis, but you also have persons under that age who would be duly considered as minors who can also inappropriately use it too. How do we cater to these people?

That's why the legislation makes it clear that counselling, in reference to the Child Protection Authorities for those who are minors, because that's almost natural in the current setup. So, we're using a framework that already exists, and in the case of those 18 to 21, it means that somehow they have not understood all of the things they need to understand. Their cognition is probably not right, they're probably misinformed, and so they need some intervention, and that's where the counselling will be directed; but that's a provision that's there in Clause 6 of this Act.

Madam President, we know well in clause 10 we talked about the four trees

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that can be cultivated per person, and clause 11 speaks about the introduction of a number of new sections where 13A gives exemption to adherence of the Rastafarian faith in the practice of their sacrament, and this we are happy about because we always want to treat our brothers and sisters of that belief we due human dignity and respect.

Section 13B, which is part of clause 11, prohibits the smoking or use of cannabis in or near public places. I want to make sure this goes out loudly and clearly; in a near public places, workplaces, or public conveyances, except where such public places are approved for smoking or use of cannabis by the Order of the Minister. Right? We can't just go smoke everywhere because we don't want to endanger...

In fact, the smoking of cannabis irks me; not cannabis, but tobacco that people just smoke freely all over the place. I'm bothered by it as, you know, I face the perils of secondary smoke. I don't smoke, nor tobacco, nor cannabis, nor any of them **(laughter)**, right? So, to preserve public health and safety, we have to respect the right of others, not those I choose not to, who might not want to, and that's why this is in place.

So, while we are making sure that somebody wouldn't come and break your yard or break your fence because you have two spliff, you want to make sure that if the brother decides I don't want to, it must not be puffed on me while I'm in the bus, standing on the bus stop, or while I'm trying to watch a football game right next to me; it mustn't be that, and so that's why this is there.

Section 13C prohibits the smoking or use of cannabis on or near school premises. This is very important for me, on or near school premises, which must not happen. As much as we are trying to decriminalise its use in small quantities, as small as the quantity is, if you find yourself smoking on school premises, or near school premises, within 100 yards, I think, that will constitute an offence, and I will share the schedule a little bit later that will obtain.

Section 13D requires the development of legislation to establish a regulated cannabis industry for medical, therapeutic, scientific, and religious purposes, and to set out key regulatory features to govern the licensing, compliance monitoring, and enforcement.

Now, you, Madam President, this is the beginning of a journey. We understand

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that to have a viable cannabis industry takes a while. How do you set up these shops? How do you set up the farms? Who sells what? Who has the licence to do what? Now, this is saying we know this has to be done, but you have a legal obligation to ensure that it happens.

So, I hear the scepticism, I hear much of the talk on the “Other Side”, but the reality is when this is legislated, it puts an obligation to ensure, on the part of the minister, to ensure that this happens, and that the regulations are indeed put in place to regulate the industry properly, which is the next step, right?

Section 13E creates a fixed penalty for dealing with the offences of public smoking under section 13B. So, if you smoke in public, you will have a fixed penalty. Instead of being subject to a criminal charge. It won't go on your record; just as you would have a ticket in a traffic offence that you got, and you pay your fee, you will get a smoking in public fee of EC\$300. Hopefully, if you don't refuse to pay, there will be no further action; that's what that is, right?

So, Clause 15, Madam President, provides for the amendment to the Fifth Schedule to insert therein the penalties for the newly created offences under 13B, and I want to share the penalties to make sure we are quite clear what the penalties are.

So, for smoking, using cannabis, or cannabis resin in or within the radius of five metres of the entrance, exit, window, or ventilation, intake of a public place, workplace, or public conveyance, there's an A; the issuance of a fixed penalty notice, EC\$300, and if there's a summary offence, a fine of EC\$5,000, but I move to the next one, section 13C(1); smoking or using cannabis or cannabis resin in or near school premises.

Listen to this. People of Grenada, this is serious. We don't want you smoking in or around schools because, A, a summary offence is a fine of EC\$250,000, or imprisonment for seven years, or both, as might be interpreted by the legal practitioners. I'm not sure if both mean exactly that, but to their discretion; and on indictment, it's a fine of EC\$500,000, or imprisonment for 20 years, or both.

Madam President, colleagues, I am quite convinced that there are too many positives surrounding the potential that cannabis has, the economic value that it can bring, the health benefits that we can enjoy; whether it's the cosmetic... The nutritional value that it can bring, and in the fact that for decades, if not centuries, a section of

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our communities, the Rastafarian brethren, have been using the herb sacredly, and you know, one of the things I'll say, Madam President?

Interestingly, the Rastafarian brothers and sisters, despite their prolonged use of the herb over time. I don't know them to be a difficult section of the population. **(Applause)** I don't know them to be a troublesome... Yes. Brothers, I don't know the Rastafarian brethren to be a troublesome section of the population. **(Inaudible comments by Senators)** So, start to use it? I'm not a troublesome one either without using it **(Laughter)**, right?

But, I don't know them to be troublesome; they contribute. They are among our best farmers; you know. They're not rowdy and disruptive like you see in some other sects. **(Inaudible comments by Senators)** Yes, I mean I try not to compare all the other drugs, you know, but that's the case, and so with all of this said, Madam President, benefits to how it facilitates the sacramental practice of a group within our communities, our brothers and sisters who have worked, a group that have worked, that have contributed, and continues to contribute, as a father and as an educator, I have no difficulties in supporting this Bill as amended, and presented by the Leader of Government's Business. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew. Thank you very kindly. Senator André Lewis, you have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam President. Before I get into the main aspect of my presentation, it is really good to see and hear all the accolades that are given to our Rastafarian brethren and sisters, you know. The trials and tribulations that they went through for many years, right? I know this Bill... in other words, the Bill is bringing out a number of contributions, especially in this period. It is really important to recognise the injustices that were done to, in particular, the Rastafarian movement.

I mean, a number of people went through this, but the fact that it is now recognised by everyone who has spoken, the importance of cannabis or marijuana, as a sacramental, or as part of their religious procedure, speaks volumes; but, I do not want us to just speak about the Rastas just in the context of Marijuana, right? Because

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it's far much more than that.

They have been responsible for a large part of our black consciousness, and a large part of keeping us grounded in our mother land (**applause**), and that is why, you know, as we speak, I hear many of our legal practitioners today, some in this House, some in the other House, some outside of the House, some in the communities speaking, praising, and recognising the injustice that was done, and what this Bill is seeking to do in terms of decriminalising.

By the way, Madam President, I am taking it from my learned colleagues on the "Other Side" that there is indeed a distinction between or a difference between decriminalisation and legalisation, right? Although I've heard it in the "Other Place" from people who will know better that there is no difference, yes? But I'm taking from a long colleague here, that just as we all know, there is indeed a difference that the law practitioners, who made all their money by defending or not defending the ordinary man and woman, just as Senator Francis and Britton, in particular, said.

My colleague, Senator Andrew, spoke about the marginalisation of a segment of our society, who are the ones who are always caught with one spliff, having to run from the police, and let me just say, the police were following the laws, the police were only following the laws, yes? The police are the enforcement arm of the state, yes? So, this is not an attack on the police, but this is a recognition that the police were doing that, which the legislators called for.

As we recognise the trials and tribulations that that segment of our society went through, I think we also need to recognise the role played by a number of legal practitioners, whose society even condemned, and even in the political field were condemned many times by saying that all that you're doing is recognising or presenting people that use marijuana et cetera, and certainly we must recognise, in my view, people like Peter David as a lawyer, Arley Gill, and these are those that stood out, Anselm Clouden, because I'm saying, there's a number of legal practitioners, who saw it as a disdain to offer services to the poor and marginalised communities, that could not... even easily claimed as Ruggles Ferguson.

These are colleagues who spent most of their time representing the downtrodden, representing those who didn't have the connections in society that, even if they were picked up, the matter didn't proceed much further in court. In that context

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also, for the Rastafarian brethren, who were beaten many times, caught with a spliff, whose houses of worship were broken into and kicked down because they were using the very same thing that we are speaking about now, saying that we're decriminalising it.

In this case, I will argue legalising the use of cannabis, marijuana, for religious purposes within a particular confine. They also, in my view, at the appropriate time, and I'm making this call, need to get some form of compensation, just as we speak about reparations for Slavery, be it in the form of some land. This discussion ought to be had and should be had, and as much respect to you Rastafarians, and the others there.

Now, brethren that I have personally interacted with over the years, and I know what it is to grow up in the community where if a man or woman is walking with a spliff in their pocket, every time they hear a vehicle, they have to be wondering if they'll be grabbed by the police. Just before I came here this morning, I called one of my brethren from La Digue; I said, "Ras, how do you feel?" He said, "Brethren, I've been following it. It's not far enough, but it's a good feeling, it's a good vibe." **(Applause)** Yes?

We need to recognise this, and therefore, I'm making a call for compensation because as we expunged the files which are important, right? Because it is not just some of the Rastas; it is about that criminal record that prevented a number of youths who went through the right of passage, and had that criminal record that impacted their ability to get a good job and to travel; this is a positive.

So, one must recognise that the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, is progressive and largely commendable; we must recommend this. However, there are some aspects of the Bill, as I said, there are positives... As a matter of fact, if one were to review the CARICOM Regional Commission on Marijuana, 2018, a lot of this is built on this, yes? Colleagues?

So, the evidence is outside there, and I will encourage a lot of examination of this to be done. I'm not going to spend much time on that aspect, but to also identify before I go into the broader aspect, that there will be concerns for labour. The fact that we recognise that there is the potential and possibility, especially in the immediate period, and increase in usage; the aspect of drug testing, the aspect of work place

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policies, and all of these things will come into play, but I also recognised that as we spoke about the medicinal benefits, and the commercialisation benefits etc., the main trust of today's amendment is not there.

These are aspirational, and in this context, Senator Andrew, as the Minister for Education, we are expecting the State to make the necessary budgetary allocations to ensure that the possible fallout and challenges that you yourself have recognised as a professional, highlighted by Dr. Myanna Charles, and some of it highlighted by Senator Horsford, that we put the necessary resources in place.

Now, I know it will be a challenge because we have limited resources, and that is why Senator, through you, Madam President, it was not just a concern of what do you do first; it's a question that says here we are, but we need to speak about what needs to be done, and what needs to be done as a priority. I will just focus on now that decriminalisation, rehabilitation, over-punishment, and record expungement are long overdue.

We see here, for instance, that when we look at their appearances, not appears in our view, some internal inconsistencies and drafting issues because good policy must still be matched by careful drafting, constitutional restraint, and clarity in enforcement. It is on those grounds that I raise several concerns which I believe the House should seriously consider.

Under decimalised possession, we see that for cannabis it is 56 grams, and for cannabis resin it is 15 grams. We also see that trafficable quantities of cannabis are 71 grams, and cannabis resin is 30 grams. Between these figures, there is what one will call a grey zone. What do I mean by that grey zone? Because the Bill creates an illegal no man's land where citizens may be neither clearly protected, nor clearly criminalised, which is precisely the kind of ambiguity that leads to arbitrary enforcement. **(Applause)** Why do we say this?

Because there is no guidance in the Bill as to whether possession in that range is criminal, whether it attracts arrests, or whether it is left entirely to police discretion. So, a suggestion, Madam President, because at the end of the day, law enforcement, the ones who have to enforce that which we passed, because in a large sense, that's the easier part; that's the easier part. I know the brain... We have enough bright people to put words together, and to say that which we want to see theoretically, or

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academically, but their practical application.

So, I'm making the following suggestions, Madam President, in this case, through you, Madam President; I ended up looking at the Attorney General, but let me just look at the Leader of Government's Business as the one who presented the Bill, you know? **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** So, look over there? **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Okay, good. Right.

To insert an intermediate category; example, possession above decriminalised quantity, but below trafficable quantity, with clear consequences, because we would have agreed that between the amounts that were said, you have 56 grams and you have 15 grams respectively, and then you have 71 grams, and then you have 30 grams. So for what one will call... Where you can... If you are caught with 56 grams... You're allowed to have 56 grams, yes, and that is decriminalised possession.

Trafficable quantities are from 71 grams. However, there is a gap between 56 and 71. What happens there? Is it discretion? What happens there, and who do you leave that discretion to? Won't it be best as drafters of the Bill to ensure that there is a clear cut-off point, or, as is being suggested, to have an intermediary definition with clear consequences?

Let us go now to inconsistent age treatment across certain parts. Madam President, through you, I guess I took the liberty based on how Senator Adrian, I wouldn't say the surname was called, so I thought... **(Laughter)** Thanks very much, Madam President. These are serious matters. I haven't heard any voice condemn decriminalisation. Every voice here has spoken that which we all knew, or most of us knew, that Rastas were treated unfairly, but this is not just about Rasta.

As a matter of fact, Madam President, I can safely say that a large section of the Rastafarian Community does not smoke. They know the importance of the herb. As a matter of fact, on a per capita basis, if we were to take the Rastafari Movement or those who identify themselves as Rasta, we wouldn't get into the discussion of whether you have to be dread to be Rasta. These are different discussions, but they have always been speaking of the importance.

As a matter of fact, one of the earlier things that one heard growing up was about the importance of cannabis for glaucoma and how those things were hidden from us. And I heard that Senator Britton, through you, found the opportunity to

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recognise the president in the north for making that move to get cannabis removed from certain of the schedules. But my brother, believe me when I say that we are now playing catch-up because what has driven those things is pure commercialisation.

So let's be clear. We have been playing catch up and CARICOM, as our leaders, now feel comfortable because they have been given the okay by the bigger powers, North America, after they have controlled the market and they have done what they have to do so we now start looking so whereas we recognise that but bear in mind that our discussion here today is focused on righting some wrong and giving certain recognition and these will not be unsure. The same thought processes that drove the president that you have identified in the US and elsewhere for doing what they have done.

So let's come back now to the age. We see here that a "child" and a "young person" are defined differently depending on the part of the Act. A child is under 18 for Part II, under 14 for Part V. A young person is 18 to 20 in one Part, 14 to 17 in another. While these may be technically defensible because one can say an age is an age, whether you are 17, 14, or 18, it can be extremely confusing, especially for police officers and social workers.

Magistrate is therefore tasked with applying diversionary and rehabilitative measures—clarity in criminal justice, Madam President. Justice. Legislation is not a luxury; it is a necessity. So we are making this appeal for the drafters to have a relook. When a police officer sees someone, and he has to remember which Part II, Part V, 18 or 14, 18-20, 14 to 17, it creates an operational headache. It must create operational headaches for the people and the institutions tasked with that responsibility.

One other problem created is what one would call a split definition. It's technically deliberate, but operationally confusing, especially where enforcement diversion and penalties intersect, as in section 6A. The Leader of Government's Business and the Attorney General can look at section 6A, 13B and 13C because it speaks in two voices on who is a child and who is a young person. As I said, drafting, because you are putting pen to paper or ink to paper, this must be confusing for the social workers.

Let me, through you, Madam President, look at what we call religious use

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exemptions and a review of that for the Rastafarian Community. I know that colleagues will do that, but I want to stress this point. It is important that you continue to seek legal advice as you practice what you have now been given in terms of decriminalisation, because one of the potential outcomes of this passage is that, as more rights are given, you can use your herb. There may be a temptation by law enforcement to be stricter on that which they used to turn a blind eye to before. So in the interim, you can find yourself being more heavily scrutinised and therefore seek legal advice, as we know that you will do.

So let's look at the Rastafarian use, which is exempted in private worship spaces once registered. Exempt declares by the Minister and possession and smoking in such events under ministerial conditions. Now, I will focus on the powers of the minister in a while. Let me say here through you, Madam President, we do not see this as the other Bills we have debated, where there is ministerial responsibility, and we know, yes, the minister will put certain committees in place, et cetera.

The fact that we are spending so much time on this, the fact that the Minister for Education have recognised and everyone else has recognised the potential difficulties that can arise, it speaks therefore that we must not approach this as what we call the everyday because this is societal change, everyday legislative powers that we place in the hand of a minister to put together a committee in place and therefore that is where we need parliamentary oversight and broader than just limiting it to what one would call a line Ministry or a line Minister. So let's look at that.

Section 13A: The Bill does not clearly reconcile with the section 13A exemptions, the 13B public smoking prohibitions, or the 13C school zone prohibition. So let's take, for example, and we have all big-up... My colleagues on the "Other Side" big-up the Rastafari Movement, and I accept that. Recognising that you have said in the past, everybody or most people used to scorn you.

The Bill says that "If one is found using cannabis within 100 yards of a school is a criminal offence". However, what happens, my brethren, when the Rastafari Tabernacle is within that perimeter? 100 yards is about 300 feet. Think about it. So whether it is within a rural or urban community, and one day when the Rastafari faith is recognised legally...

As Senator Horsford has said, they are not recognised and my brethren Star I

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have just confirmed to me earlier on that despite all the applications that they have made, all the processes that they have gone through, they have not been allowed, and have not been given the necessary legislative authority to function as a church to carry out the different functions that other ministers are allowed to confirm.

But we can fine within a school compound and I do not necessary want to name any denomination, but you may find within 300 feet of a school there might be a Christian church. So what happens when that tabernacle or that religious activity takes place in terms of their faith? Are we saying that we are still discriminating against them?

My brother Senator Salim, permit me to use you as an example because I know you would be proud. Yes? I want to use that as an example with your permission. So Senator Rahaman, once a particular time in the day arrives, wherever he is, whatever he is doing, he will go to do his worship. Yes? That is part of his faith.

The Rasta brethren and sistren are only allowed to use the herb that you have recognised as part of their religious activity, only within the confines of their tabernacle, or do they have to get permission from the minister? So every time or designated area, check the Bill. I am saying, if we are recognising and we do not want to discriminate, these are areas that must be addressed in my view. I am not saying where I stand; this is a discussion of the debate. We are interrogating the Bill before us.

So it clearly creates exemption on one hand and offences with the other, that's what it does. And probably it is matters like these that may encourage other onlookers to question whether or not we were ready to come up with this Bill or whether or not we are half-ticking or quarter-ticking a box.

We accept, and I accept that expunging criminal records is a major achievement, and it could not have been done sooner. But remember, when you throw a pebble in the pond, you do not control the ripples, and that is why one has to give broader thought processes to these matters.

So in a sense, I am asking. If the Rastafari faith buys a piece of property that is within 100 yards of a school, what are they expected to do? Would they be allowed to use cannabis? Because it clearly states that it is an offence to use without stating the exemptions.

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So if, for instance, you may wish to consider saying something or making it absolutely clear as to whether or not they are allowed, once they are within their tabernacle, regardless of how near or far, because one would assume, and more so, what happens. Star I, I look forward to the day when you have your own school. So it is not just drafters and legislators, we have to think down the road because what happens to the day when a school is erected to that of a Rastafari faith background, what can happen here?

I wish to go to what one will call the powers of the minister or ministerial overreach and delegations concern. In our view and our research with our legal colleagues... Because on matters like these, Madam President, you just have to encourage our Rastafarian brethren to continue to seek legal advice. We in labour do the same thing on matters like these.

Just to piggyback on the point made by my other colleagues, this is not about a person or a position, but it is about a function. If we look at section 13A, Madam President, the broad powers of section 13A say, "The Minister may determine who qualifies as a Rastafarian adherent". It will also raise the question of what discretion was used. In other words, whether or not everyone that have locs is a Rasta or whether or not someone who does not have locs is not a Rasta.

And we turn to Morgan Heritage as a group that comes out of a Rastafari family. Morgan said, "You don't ha fi dread to be Rasta" and I am saying this because between the Rastafari faith, just as how within the Christian faith, you have different denominations and this is not for us to go into. It is not my purpose here, but to indicate that people worship or carry themselves along that faith in different forms. You don't ha fi dread to be Rasta, you know, but they have contributed a lot to our health in terms of the...

A number of the things that we do today, some of the meats you are refraining from eating today, had you listened to them many years ago, we would have been a much healthier society today, you know. Designate lands for religious cultivation, declare, exempt events, specify quantities and conditions for possessions and use and regulate places of worship. These are not merely, Madam President, administrative functions and that is what I keep saying, that is a number of the other places we have spoken about, what we call powers of the minister. We have raised

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our concerns, but every situation must be treated on its own merit.

So let's just delve a bit further into what we are addressing here, that is, within the domain of that minister or ministerial portfolio. These are quasi-judicial, so they deal with law, theological, and rights-affecting determinations, and that is why it is important to broaden, to want to have parliamentary oversight, so that we, as legislators, can feel comfortable with the composition of that oversight body.

There are, Madam President, through you, no statutory criteria, not seeing any statutory criteria, no appeal mechanism and limited parliamentary oversight. We want to see more oversight, as I have indicated, but this is not just... These are dealing with theological issues, so one would be able to say, "Look, we recommend this oversight because we will not do it, but the composition is made up of 'x', 'y', and 'z'." Are you following me, Madam President? Yes?

In a secular constitutional democracy, no single minister should be the arbiter of religious legitimacy, and I take the point as Senator Andrew quite clearly stated that this is not about a minister making a decision. The minister may delegate that to a committee, but still... But remember, the line minister has that ultimate responsibility, and we are saying that that ought not to be the case. So broad are the issues.

Madam President, I would repeat, or I can ask my colleagues, seeing that the Leader of Government's Business directed me to focus on the Attorney General, who is now absent, I will ask him to take a note as to what has been referred to as through our legal personnel, as Henry VIII-type powers over schedules.

Madam President, section 53 allows the Minister, by Order, to amend multiple schedules, including those dealing with decriminalised quantities, the definition of public places, and fixed penalties procedures. These are the powers that 53 allows the minister; these are co-elements of criminal liability, not minor administrative details, by permitting amendment by Ministerial order, even with affirmative resolution.

We are arguing, Parliament is delegating its law making responsibility in a way that should concern all of us. I wish to repeat this, and I am calling on my colleagues on the "Other Side", Madam President, through you, let us not look at this as though we are coming after a minister; this is not the case.

We have said openly and frankly that this is an important amendment that we are doing, and we take your point, and this is... In a number of instances, a lot of us

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have been saying that for years. Stop running down and picking up a brethren for one spliff. As a matter of fact, it is wasting resources. **(Applause)** Wasting resources.

So through you, Madam President, my dear Senator Francis and from our rural village of Mt. Rich or Mt. Reuil and Hermitage, Rose Hill and Tivoli or La Poterie or La Digue or Mamma Cannes, where our brethren know what it was to face the onslaught of the law and remember the police is doing their job, let me make that point.

We understand that, and what we are seeking to do here is to ensure that legislatively we help you on the “Other Side” as the people and the Cabinet responsible for accepting the drafters' document, because Cabinet can say no...

By the way, Madam President, through you we are policy makers, by the way, Madam President, you know many times especially from on the “Other Side” almost everyone stands up and proudly say that this is the best House to be in, you know, in the Upper House, but yet still in the next few months most of them might be trying to go in the next place, you know. **(Laughter)** Why try to move away from the best place? I said most, yes? Madam President, it is something I keep hearing because that is where normally decisions... Yes. Yes. Yes.

So, for instance, in terms of regulations, just as how the amendment to the Pension Act spoke of statutory bodies where you have collective agreement with pensions and you would not have the new pension there, because it is in the “Other Place” and it don't have to come here, you take Grenada Solid Waste Authority and you pack it there, violating the collective agreement of the workers, so it might be good to be down there where we can address issues.

As I said, I want to repeat the following: the above issues, the decriminalising of the quantities, the definition of public places, fixed penalties procedures, these are co-elements of criminal liability, not minor administrative details. Hear the important point again, by permitting amendments by Ministerial Order even with affirmative resolution, Parliament is delegating its law-making responsibility in a way that should concern all of us.

Let's also now go to... We are suggesting that, as it relates to the religious legitimacy and what we see as putting our responsibility in a minister or a portfolio that is beyond them. We are suggesting the following: that we move the criteria into primary legislation, the criteria to determine the aspect of religious... determining who

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is a Rasta, for instance, right, because we are dealing with the religious aspect. We are suggesting, especially taking into account that we are in a constitutionally secular state, which we move this criterion into primary legislation, or require an independent advisory or licensing body, or provide a statutory right of appeal for consideration. Because the fact that someone can say yes or a portfolio can say yes, it also means that you can say no, and therefore, there should be some right of appeal at a minimum. There will be more comfort if it is moved into a primary legislation or an independent advisory or licensing body.

So, just as you have PURC that deals with regulatory aspects for the public utilities, my colleagues were able to... When certain pronouncements were made about water rates to jump up quickly and say no, these decisions are made by us, but it is made by PURC, the regulatory authority. Remember, it is not a minister and you know why that has moved out? Because it was also felt that ministers got a lot of slack, even if they still have policy influence for increasing rates. So you can stand off now as a politician and say it's not me, it's the body that is in place. We are calling for that independence and objectivity to be placed and not be limited to a ministerial portfolio. Under the... You see that the minister...

Let's go now to approve public places for smoking. You see here the minister may amend... that's the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Schedule order subject to affirmative resolution. One of the problems with this is that these schedules, when one closely examines them, include decriminalised quantities, definitions of public places, fixed penalty procedures, and rights affecting exemptions. Once again, this is substantive criminal law content, not mere administrative details, Madam President. We are delegating too much power to the minister to withdraw the boundaries of criminal liability by order; that's our legal advice. And that has identified as the Henry VII clause in Albert's name in terms of legal understanding and powers; supreme powers.

Madam President, because the minister may declare or designate a public place where cannabis smoking is permitted, but the Bill sets out no criteria. One of the flaws or gaps that we find in the Bill is that the question of criteria on a number of these matters is missing. No consultation requirement and no equality safeguards, these open the door to arbitrary or uneven decision-making where one community or

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sector may benefit while another is excluded with no explanation and no remedy.

So take, for instance, the point raised by our colleagues on the “Other Side” in their deliberations as to how certain communities were treated, where probably almost every weekend, probably 5 o’clock on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning, homes in these rural communities were smashed into. Why allow that possibility in the hands of a minister? And this is not personal. You may be okay with the current minister, the current minister may know that he or she may not want that to happen, but probably six months from now or three months from now, based on how the season is looking outside, the bell may be rung.

I see there is a mad rush to do a number of things that were not done in the past, and I think we understand that this is happening. I mean, none of us know what will happen. The same people may go back, but it might be a different minister or a new set of people might come in with a different outlook. What if the minister who would have influential powers is against Rasta, because there is no doubt that there is still in the eyes of a number of people, and in some other faith-based organisations that look down on the Rastafari Movement.

What if that minister... I am not saying my Senator Andrew here would do that, and he will understand because we grew up around the same community, we understand that. We understand the challenges that came; there are some religious practitioners who are opposed to drums, more so cannabis, and if you have the authority to give permission to designate places of worship, you could say no.

As a matter of fact, someone pointed out to me in the Independence celebration, it was clear, I mean, there are certain religions that are against Jab Jab and against our culture, it was openly said. Are you following me? I am saying especially these days where more and more religious practitioners are getting involved in frontline politics, not because it is acceptable most of these days that some of your faith-based work has to be done in a practical way. I am saying, let us put safeguards in place that, regardless of who comes. We have a broader body. We have Parliamentary oversight to minimise the possibility of continued discrimination against that group, which we ourselves are saying that we want to remedy.

Under the fixed penalty regime, procedural confusion. Madam President, let me just identify the following. I was just going through my notes, this here under the

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Schedule procedural confusion... sorry. I am just getting it for you. It says that “under the fixed penalty provision, a police officer is required to: charge the person; and simultaneously offer an administrative penalty as an alternative...”

Page 15 (3), I was told by my colleague page 15(3) and we are saying that this blurs the line between criminal prosecution and administrative disposal. Since the citizen is left unsure whether they are charged or not, the confusion that the criminal law should never tolerate. On the one hand, you can have criminal prosecution and administrative disposal, and therefore, it blurs that line. So our request is for clarity; this needs to be sorted out and ironed out.

So I can be more precise by saying it is 13E (2) that was the section. So I'll continue along that line. Forfeiture applies even where there is no offence committed. Madam President, I am dealing with section 6A, so thanks for pointing that out to me. I guess that is where you got lost. I hope I got us back on the same page.

So under section 6A, cannabis is seized and forfeited from children and young person's even though no offence exist, that's 6A. Just to point out that the problem we see here, it raises property rights and proportionality concerns. What do we mean by this?

Even where a child, Madam President, commits no offence the Bill mandates seizure and forfeiture of cannabis. While rehabilitation is widely prioritised, punitive confiscation without Judicial oversight raises proportionality and property rights concerns. If conduct is not criminal, punishment should not be disguised as administration. **(Applause)**

What we are doing here is to open up the possibility and probability that when these things happen to raise these issues, and I know that is not the intention of the “Other Side”. I have accepted, and we all have accepted, because the foundation on which we speak has to do with two or three parts: the aspect of the expunging of records, the aspect of giving the Rastafarian community more liberty for the use of marijuana. Remember, I am not saying smoking, smoking is broader than just the Rastafari community, but we have to ensure that we are opening up the door for infringing on other rights.

Under section 6A, Madam President, I said this already. I want to note that the Bill rightly rejects criminalisation, but quietly retains punitive confiscation without

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judicial oversight, and that's the danger. Let me repeat this again. Our advice is that the Bill rightly rejects criminalisation but quietly retains punitive confiscation without judicial oversight. **(Applause)**

Under section 6A, cannabis is seized and forfeited from children and young, yes. Because the problem it raises is property rights and proportionality concerns, that's the guidance that we have received. What is the possibility of the following?

I want to address religious freedom and equality risk because we are looking to pass a Bill. The Bill gives specific recognition to Rastafarian religious use, which is historically understandable. However, Madam President, the absence of a religious use framework means that protection is extended to one faith alone based entirely on Ministerial discretion. **(Applause)** What does that do?

That structure may expose the Act to constitutional challenges and equality and freedom of conscience grounds. As I say, when we throw a pebble in a pond, we accept everything. So we must be aware of what the possibilities are, must be aware of the possibilities. Madam President, a general observation, what is referred to as deferred regulation, a hollow cold. After I make this presentation, there are some labour issues I wish to address under the Bill, but I am just dealing clearly with what I call the legalistic aspect that has been advanced to us.

We look at section 13D, section 13D states, "The Minister shall hence show legislation is developed to regulate the cannabis industry". Let me repeat that again. Section 13D states that "The Minister shall ensure legislation is developed to regulate the cannabis industry". This is aspirational language, not enforceable law.

Parliament has been asked to pass a Bill whose regulatory heart is postponed to an unspecified future statute with no timelines and no guarantees; that's what we are being asked to do. And this again, I don't like to keep repeating it, but I'll do it because I refrain we on "That Side" have constantly been saying, this is not an opposition to the Bill, this is not taking a swipe at the "Other Side", but this is our deep dive into this matter.

Madam President, before I come to my closing, there are some things that I wish to raise specifically from labour's concerns in the workplace. Madam President, I wish to place the following on record, also, that some of our recommendations from the Labour Sector have to do with the workplace policy framework. The Government

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should develop model workplace policies addressing.

When we say the Government, in other words, the state will take that lead, but remember we also have a tripartite body that deals with labour matters and one would expect at some stage and I am looking at the Leader of Government's Business because the Attorney General is not there, and I know he will pass those information because certain things can occur at the workplace.

Clear definitions of impairment versus the presence of cannabis in a metabolite. If you have now decriminalised, or what happens when it is allowed to be used, you can use 56 grams. I can see some concerns arising at the workplace, the question of testing. Yes? Because there are certain functions already that prohibit at the workplace any form of having within your system any of those substances, and my understanding, it is not just because it is illegal, it is a criminal offence, but the impact it can have, just as alcohol and other substances.

Procedures for reasonable suspicion testing in safety-sensitive positions. The Labour Movement have that responsibility, meaning that organised labour, but a vast majority of workplaces are not unionised, and therefore they can be the subject of discrimination and abuse. Therefore, that is why nationally, we need to have some clear guidelines. We are not there yet, but when we reach that stage of medical marijuana use, one will, I guess, once it is acceptable, just as if you appear at the workplace and you are under some legal medication, action can't be taken against you or not to be taken against you.

So if, for instance, your decision-making was impaired and it is found out that you were on some sort of medication that might have caused drowsiness, et cetera, disciplinary action ought not to be taken against you. So one would expect, I think, it will be a natural flow that once we go to the medicinal use of marijuana, these would not be an issue.

We need to have a lot of education, yes, medicinal, I didn't say recreational, medicinal. We have to have a number of trainings, the state, some of the concerns they said the resources for psychiatric unit, sources for our medical practitioners, the training for counsellors and it is not in mere words, but we must demonstrate in a practical way the assignment of these resources. And, Madam President, through you, I can see our Minister for Social Services et cetera, having a lot on her plate. I

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mean, it is her right now, but it can be anybody else, and therefore, take these as our observations in good faith.

Madam President, labour has always played a leading role in advocating for rights and benefits. We wish to see that when I guess we will come back here at some stage, hopefully, the commercialisation aspect, because that's not the focus now. We would wish to see, as an upfront, the equitable distribution of benefits, local ownership and participation, worker safety and dignity, protection of vulnerable populations, investment in public health and rehabilitation.

With these words, Madam President, let me just... Madam President, I'll just go back to say that Parliament is being asked to pass a Bill whose regulatory heart is postponed to an unspecified future statute with no timelines and no guarantees.

Madam President, in closing, the Bill is right in direction, but uneven in execution. It modernises our approach to cannabis but concentrates excessive power in the minister, leaves dangerous grey areas in criminal liability and risks inconsistent and arbitrary enforcement.

I urge this House, through you, Madam President, not to reject reform, but to refine it by tightening safeguards, clarifying thresholds and restoring Parliament's proper role in defining the criminal law. Thank you very much, Madam President, for your indulgence. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator. **(Applause)** And just to pick up on that last point you made on the unevenness that is anticipated in execution. I think you are correct. I don't think that any bit of legislation can anticipate every potential scenario, but I wonder if you have in your consideration that the notion, I think it was said by the side here, of minister is a collective; it's a consultative. So that ought to help with the unevenness. I'm not defending. I'm just wondering out loud as we analyse this. If there is such a potential for, as I say, the minister as a collective or not, and also in the initial stages of new legislation, I believe it's customary to draw on the courts to help give more certainty and even out the unevenness, because, as I said, so much cannot be anticipated. So just those two points struck me as you were making this very valuable analysis of where you think the Bill ought to be. Thank you. At the podium is Honourable Salim Rahaman, our next speaker. Thank you. Proceed.

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Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to say a few words on this matter. I begin in the name of God Almighty, the Noah of the apparent, which is the now and the unseen, which is the future.

This particular Bill... We will see the effects of this Bill in the future, as we do with other laws that are passed in this Honourable House. This Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, proposed, could otherwise be known simply as the decriminalisation of marijuana Bill, to call it what it is.

I've been told legally, in order to give those who need to use the cannabis products for medicinal purposes the ability to do so, there needs to be decriminalisation, and in order to provide for the Rastafarians to be able to practice an aspect of their faith, there needs to be decriminalisation.

While we have tolerance for the beliefs of others as others have for us, it is difficult for me, Madam President, to be expected to have empathy for the use of a substance outside of those two reasons that I just mentioned: religious purposes, the allowance for that, and medicinal purposes, which are proven, the allowance for that. Outside of that, it is difficult for me to have empathy for the use of a substance which is proven to damage the developing brain.

We come into this House, we speak about the youth, we speak about protecting the youth, we speak about math, and we spend millions of dollars on education. Especially when you have a family member, as I do, who has been negatively affected by this drug forever after his father died, who went through a period of difficulty, a young boy, 18 years old, who was forever damaged by it, it does not, and it is not equal to all minds. **(Applause)** And I don't know that passing a Bill for recreational use will get to that.

So, Madam President, when it comes to the well-being of our people, economic issues, moral issues, et cetera, I try to be as direct as possible, and I do this because I see life and our responsibility in this House as a trust given to us by the people and the sectors that we represent. A trust that is given to me and to us by the maker of the people, God Almighty, which I don't take lightly.

Madam President, the fact that the Government has taken a while to come forth with this Bill is, in my mind, due to the significant risks that the abuse of marijuana presents; it is real, Madam President. We should not sugarcoat this, as abuse can

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have serious implications. Just a few examples of this, I will mention.

1. For young adults, the risk of dependency is higher. Let me repeat that. For young adults, the risk of dependency is higher; one in six may develop the propensity to become dependent. As I said, one mind lost to any drug is a reflection of the society that made it available to him or her; and
2. Lasting cognitive issues, which means cognitive problems that do not go away, such as memory loss, loss of ability to pay attention, psychosis and schizophrenia.

There is a reason why this Government saw the ability to have a Minister for Mental Health, which I recall is the first time in our history, subject to correction. It means that mental health is real, and this is not something that reduces it or reduces the risk of it.

Madam President, smoking is the most common and efficient means of ingesting cannabis. Who said that? The Minister for Health in the "Other Place". Smoking is the common and efficient means of ingesting cannabis; that's true, yes, that is true in Grenada as well. It is definitely the most common by which it is used in Grenada. You just have to talk to people and move around to see.

It is responsible for intoxicating effects such as impaired motor coordination, euphoria, anxiety, a sensation of slowed time, and impaired judgment.

So I want to say, I don't want to speak to the positives, because they are positives, and the positives we are happy for them; if somebody can get relief from medical issues, if somebody is not oppressed because of their religious beliefs, and they can use it in accordance with their religious beliefs, we are happy for that.

We have to face, let's not sugarcoat it, that we are trying to protect. It is our duty to protect our children, our nation's children and the future of our children. To be honest, I'm not convinced that this Bill has enough safeguards for them. I'm not convinced that this Bill has enough safeguards for them.

Madam President, do you know that there are videos on social media, which I would be happy to share, well, privately, of a driver of heavy equipment smoking while driving because people feel an emboldened sense now that it is decriminalised? For many, decriminalisation and legalisation are the same thing. For many, the perception is that everybody is freed up now, so nobody can tell me anything. I could smoke it

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wherever I want. I could do; that's the perception.

I went to Grand Beach on Sunday, case-in-point, and I saw at least four instances where people were smoking openly in the presence of others. At least four. One of them was smoking, and the parents were smoking in the vehicle with two young children under the age of 10. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Well, the old people say, "Put it in your pipe and smoke it". **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

What I am saying is that already there's an emboldened attitude towards a prohibited substance. So whilst we want to cater, we don't want to oppress any religious sector in Grenada; time for that is over. Right? God Almighty gave us freedom of choice. We don't want to make it more difficult for people who have a legitimate medical need; there are proven advances and benefits. I don't think that this Bill, John, the public, understands sufficiently that this is still a prohibited substance, and it is not a free-for-all.

I think that Government will have a hard task before it to rein that in. I see some good measures in the Bill in that the distance from the public buildings, schools and heavy fines for smoking in and around a school. It's very good, but I can tell you that in society now, even before all of this, people smoke anywhere they want.

So, what about an equipment operator who smokes weed while operating heavy machinery at work? I got a call from a business owner this morning telling me that his operator smoked weed while driving.

What is the impact, danger, or constant productivity? In accordance with the law, we expect that there will be policies of drug testing, especially for those who operate heavy machinery, tools in the construction industry, and so on. People naturally want to protect their investments and want to protect against injury and accidents.

What about restrictions and glorifying those ills, such as smoking in public, and posting it on social media; shouldn't this Bill have spoken to that? Some other controls, because we know we are social beings, and we learn from what we see. We learned from what we see our elders doing, especially those we love and respect. So if daddy does do it, I could do it too, or when I get big, I would do it. Right? And if we see that it is glorified on social media by people older than us, then we will look up to that; this Bill does not address that, or at least I have not seen it. I'm open to correction if it

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does.

So the question comes to mind, Madam President. How can Government facilitate a promise which they made on the campaign trail, which in some aspects is doing a good thing, as I mentioned before, while at the same time properly protecting the minds of our youth from such a drug that is medically proven to inflict damage on the developing brain, when we are okay at passing laws, but I don't think that we're very good at enforcing them?

I give you an example. My colleague spoke about 56 grams and 71 grams. Do you know the difference between 56 grams and 71 grams, 0.5, two ounces and 2.5 ounces? How is a police officer going to make head or tail of that? What instruments or tools is the police officer going to have? He won't bother, and when you don't bother the people, they become freer because when the police pass and the police don't do anything about it, the people become emboldened, the problem becomes worse; that's the nature of the human being, that's why we have police. If everybody did everything right and everybody had a good conscience, we wouldn't need police. Everybody will be doing the right thing. Nobody speeding. Nobody is breaking any laws or doing anything wrong.

So it makes it difficult for law enforcement to really police this issue, and I'd like to hear how they intend to differentiate between two ounces and two and a half ounces. When is the police going to do that? Does he confiscate it and then bring it back to get weighed, and then the man says, "Well, the police added some to it", right? You have a whole issue coming up there; it creates a lot of other issues, right, a lot of potential problems.

Now, we do know what alcohol is capable of. We do know the problems of alcohol. There are some serious problems associated with the wide availability and wide consumption of alcohol and abuse of alcohol, but we do not yet know what those would be for our youth.

So, as I mentioned, this Bill does recognise and permit the use of marijuana for religious activities among Rastafarians and makes legal provision for that. It recognises the use of cannabis for medical purposes and the business or revenue from proven medicines derived from cannabis, which is a good thing. It does mean that the Government will make some revenue, perhaps from taxation, from these

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business ventures in the future, and another good thing is that this Bill gives second chances to those who may have criminal records to have it expunged.

What I am disappointed with is the provision for four trees in your backyard. I mean, that is just a mistake that Trinidad made in my mind. Why? When the people... I made the point several months ago in this very Honourable House. When the people who smoke in it don't have a problem getting it, why do you need to make provisions for four trees in a backyard? If I'm a landlord and I'm renting a property, you planted nothing in my backyard.

Then the question is access. Parents are out of the home for eight hours of the day, but who is home when the parents are not there? The children are home. Who is monitoring what is going to grow in the backyard? Who could monitor that? Why even specify that when the Government itself does not have the resources to police it, nor are we going to go into anybody's backyard to see what they have? What is the benefit of mentioning this recreational use?

As a matter of fact, the people who make money from selling the weed might not make that money now because everybody could grow their own thing, right? No need to go to the supermarket if you have all the produce at home. So I still don't understand that allowance, and I am disappointed by it.

Madam President, I would like to mention the parable for us to consider, and then a lot has been said, so I will close it will not be long. The parable of those who respect the limits of God Almighty, the responsibility to others is upon us by God Almighty, and those who violate them, is that of a people who board a ship after casting lots, after voting who you want to represent you.

Some of them reside in its upper deck, and some of them reside in its lower deck of the ship. When those in the lower deck want water, they decide that they will bypass those on the upper deck; they wouldn't bother with them, and they will say that, you know, if we make a little hole in the bottom of the ship, you could get some water, but we won't bother those above. If those in the upper deck allow them to do what they want, the entire boat will sink, and they'll all be destroyed together; this is the importance. If they refrain and those above restrain them that they will all be saved together.

So the analogy of the ship is also society, and the analogy of those on the upper

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level of the ship is us, and I think, and I would like to see that after this Bill is passed, because they have the majority, some additional thought be given, and some additional measures be given to protect youth under this Bill. I would like to see as many of the colleagues mentioned on "This Side" a wider across section when it comes to review and approvals, as was mentioned by colleagues before, so that we can give allowances where we need to give allowances, but we can remove any risks to damaging our children and our children's future.

I hope I have been clear that morality is learned. Habits, whether good or bad, are learned, and we are socialised according to our habits, and what is allowed by leadership today will shape the type of society we have tomorrow. So we have to be very, very, very careful. I have no doubt that Government is trying to do a good thing, and indeed, in many instances, here they are, but in my opinion, this Bill is not ready for public consumption. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Always advocate for children. Senator Roderick St. Clair, you have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President, and I rise at this moment to contribute towards the Bill before us, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

I was sitting the whole morning, and it was very good listening to the discussions, and I was wondering whether we are dealing with a Marijuana Bill or whether we were dealing with a Drug Abuse Bill. I am still confused because I heard so much about marijuana. I think someone said earlier that we made a special Bill just to deal with that alone because the scope has been so much expanded from listening to all the presentations. Sometimes, you know, we have to accept that things can be done better.

I want to make a comment also, Madam President. My good friend, Senator Lewis, I was so proud to listen to him today. It's a long time. When I don't like how he presented, I usually say to him, "Bro, I didn't think you did well". But today, you did well. I want to give you full kudos for that. The way you took it and presented the legal challenges, which have been the major issue that has brought us to this cannabis

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issue.

The issue of this cannabis component, when you listened all the stories, has been a legal issue, from the Rastas who end up in Hopeville and many others for a spliff and a joint occupying a lot of court time and magistrate time for one spliff and two spliffs; that has the greatest occupancy of this. It wasn't about Rasta wanting weed for religious prophecies; it was about everybody wanting to feel irie and say it was against the law based on what the regulations were.

And so I see this to say that 30 years ago, 40 years ago, neither of us, maybe 50 years, would have thought that we'd be sitting here today discussing how to create an environment to "make what normally happens" happen in such a manner that it doesn't tie up too much court time. Essentially, that's my understanding.

So it's okay to... Once you have less than 56 grams, you can have it in your pocket, you could have it in your house, you could plant some trees, and your mind could be rested. Police has less work to do because you're within the scope.

So I said this to say that this is the picture in front of us. After having studied this 20-something-page document, I was able to create that one page of about seven key points that I want to address in this presentation.

Madam President, the first one I want to address is the whole issue of decriminalisation because that seems to be the biggest issue, and the big beneficiaries of this, essentially are those persons who would have been in some way convicted, would have some charge and would have been found guilty of marijuana, the small quantities for which they would have been, they say use a big word, expunge. Basically, that will be struck off their record, and they'll just have a clean beginning.

So I kept reading yesterday, reading last night, and I'm trying to figure out what the small quantities we're talking about are, and the document has not said that. So, for me, if my name was involved in some marijuana business as being charged, was it for one pound, two pounds, five ounces, or ten ounces? I'm really not sure whether or not I will have this struck. So I'm still waiting. The law doesn't say. It doesn't specify. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** It says how much? **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** 56 grams? Okay. Okay. So if you were found 56 grams or less, you're okay? But I say this to say, you see, it is how the thing is written, Madam President. It's very ambiguous. Okay, so that is fine.

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Now, the other part of it has to do with what happens moving forward. So we could have the 56 grams; that's okay. Decriminalisation. Expunction. In that same context, I queried, and it could be a matter of procedure that if I do want my record to be clean now, I have to apply to this board. I think it is that the Established Drug Control Board, or something like that, I would have to apply to get my record clean.

And I'm saying the records should be very clear in the court and in the police records, and to me, if I wonder about a police record, then I could get that very clear, and that should be automatic. Once this law is passed, it should be automatic—the declaration. I shouldn't apply now. So, if I never applied, then that still remains my record, and I think the onus shouldn't really be on me, especially since you have said look we have made an error, we're going to pardon you essentially. I should not have to apply.

You see... An error is something, sometimes you don't recognise when it happens, so that's why the Rastas are saying they want repatriation, because reparation, because what does happen to them before was an injustice and the question is if it wasn't an injustice, was it an error, and that is the premise of the error. Okay. So, that is the premise I'm operating with. So let's go a little bit deeper, Madam President.

The issue of the children, the child and young persons and, of course, I share Senator Lewis's comment with this 14 to 18 years, under 21, it can get very convoluted, but essentially, what he is saying is that there are different measures for different age groups. So, I read in one of the schedules, and I think it's important to understand. If I just get the schedule... All right.

Treatment of children and young persons found in possession of cannabis. "Where a child is found in possession of cannabis or cannabis resin in a quantity that does not exceed the amount specified in the Eighth Schedule"... And the Eighth Schedule speaks of the same 56 grams of cannabis, 15 grams and so on.

So, I understand Senator Lewis's concern about the threshold. So, it means big me, big me, allowed 56 grams or it is 75 grams? 56 grams. If we are saying for children... **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. To me, for children, for children 14 to 20 to 18 and 18 to 21, the amount of grams, to me, should be reduced to almost five grams, such that we make it almost impossible for them to have anything, and this

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would address the concerns about the impact on our whole mental health, our development of the brain, and the same issues that Senator Charles raised.

(Inaudible comment by a Senator)

So I believe that the threshold should be cut down by 75%. Because, yes, the children may have it, they may have it, they may. They have to understand that. So then, let's reduce it down to, if it is, five grams, for example.

Madam President: Excuse me, Senator.

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

Madam President: Please pause.

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

Madam President: Senator Andrew is on his feet.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam President. On a Point of Order, point of correction, the Honourable Member is making assertions that are inaccurate. In fact, he is suggesting that children between 14 and 18 can have access. But by the legislation presented, that is not the intent. It was not intended; it was not stated.

In fact, the 56 grams were made only permissible for persons 21 and over, and so your assertion suggesting that it should be reduced for children almost to five is insinuating to somebody in the public space that children are allowed to have it, and I want to make it abundantly clear this Bill as presented does not contemplate that doesn't say it and should not be interpreted at such. Thank you very much, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I stand corrected, Madam President. Yes. So, in the same light, though, this 18 to 21 we should reduce it down to maybe five grams or 10 grams, such that we can reduce the risk of it among young persons. I

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think that is something that needs to be looked at.

Madam President: May I, Senator St. Clair? Let us clarify. I believe that the Bill calls for access to 56 grams or above, only if you have reached the age of 21.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, we agree. We agree.

Madam President: Only that age? Only that age?

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, we agree.

Madam President: Okay. So, there is no 14 to 18 years?

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No. Yes, we agree on that. Yes, we agreed. So, I believe that this should be reduced so that it can protect the young ones. The same young ones that we speak about, needing to be rehabilitated in centres, not having enough resources to help our health care system. So if we know that this potential issue is there, what you do is try to reduce the risk, and, of course, whilst you cannot control human behaviour, you can set the threshold such that it will be able to reduce the risk because we have control over that. I think it is responsible for us knowing the risky involve to have such high levels.

In fact, Madam President, what is dangerous is that you can have this 56 grams at 10 o'clock in the morning and walking down the road, nobody can touch you, or you can have it at 3 o'clock, that's another 56 grams, and then you can have it several hours in the day. And so it occurred to me, not just on a daily routine, it occurred to me, how do we even treat repeat offenders? I thought that we needed to have something in there also, not only for the young ones, but also for everybody. There should be something to deal with repeat offenders, because this is a very serious issue.

That's the same points Senator Lewis was raising earlier. If this were not so dangerous, notwithstanding that we're saying we know so many good things about it and so many good, useful aspects of it, we also know that there are some downsides.

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If we know it has so many downsides, why did we take so long to get this here after 40, 50, 60 years? Why?

And of course speaking about downsides, Madam President, I want go there one time. A lot of us spoke about smoke and smoke and smoke and smoke, these are plant herbs, plant herbs, and there are several different chemicals inside of these herbs. Smoking or burning will release some. There are essential oils; if you burn or heat them up, you'll lose them, but they are important ingredients. If you put it in tea, as my good friend Senator Quinc Britton spoke about, he drinks it as a tea, you would extract.

So, I'm saying to us that there are several chemicals. Some are water-soluble, some are alcohol-soluble, and some are differently soluble, so you'll have to extract the components. And so we have to be careful as to the modality that we use and refer to because different chemicals with different components, with different characteristics, will have different impacts on our body.

So the question is, when we're speaking about smoke, smoke, smoke, what really is coming up in this smoke? Forget the fumes; that's a different issue. What chemical is coming out of these fumes? And I'm saying this to say, Madam President, we have to be mindful about the targeting.

For example, I cannot smoke by the school; there is a distance. I cannot smoke by the entrance based on how many feet, but if I have my tea, can I sit down on the bus and drink my marijuana tea? Can I eat the fudge there? Who knows, I am eating marijuana fudge because I'm not smoking? Can I sit down in a public space? Can I go to the school with it?

So I'm saying this, and it comes back to the same point Senator Lewis raised, the regulations and having a special commission which deals with all of these things... Because we're speaking about 56 grams, but if the same child has some sweets in their pocket, is it illegal, because sweets have maybe coconut? Maybe a kind of coconut called "Chip-chip" with some sugar, with some this, and with some marijuana. How are we treating with that?

Or their parents give them some tea to go to school, so they have a little chubby bottle, 500 ml, and it's well concentrated because they extract it from maybe a quarter pound of weed, and this child drinks that as a juice. The regulation doesn't talk about

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that; they could do it, but I can smoke.

So what would they do? Children are children; they will use it differently. So, the question is, and Rahaman raised it, there are a lot of deficiencies in the implementation of what we're trying to do. I understand Rastafari, Star I, your component is easy to deal with, so leave the children out of this thing because we introduced that part, you know, that wasn't fully... We introduced the children... How will we regulate them? Well, the children are young people, young, and 18 to 21; introduce them to satisfy the Rasta. We deal with the Rasta man. We deal with them and leave the children, and let it fall in its full space. All of these things raised are problems.

I've been speaking to some police people, policemen. They say, "Bro, a serious issue is education". But if all of these things we speak about are not in the education package, then how would people be educated? And then, the fact that those things that I just raised, the drink, the sweets and all of those things, they're not there, they will say, "O' man. Senator making up things; things that doesn't even exist", and when they hold the child, you end up with a problem, and it is the same issues that we've been having from Hopeville, two months ago. Same issues.

We all agree that there are opportunities in this herb; opportunities. The Rastas would tell you there are arts and crafts that could be done. Nobody has to consume that; that doesn't interfere with our health and wellness, and this doesn't even make any mention about use in arts and crafts, where there is an opportunity for value-added, growing in the industries, which is safer and healthier. So there's another opportunity.

So, when the Bill speaks about the industry, because that's the other pillar. It speaks about the industry. If I get that section... It's essentially in the new section, section 13, which is where a lot of the new areas are. It speaks about... 13A. "Nothing in sections four, five, six, seven, nine, 11 or 13 shall apply to the use, cultivation, importation, exportation, transit, production, supply, et cetera". If you go to two, which is where I want to be.

13A (2), "The Minister may, by Order published in the *Gazette*, authorise any person who has attained the age of 21 years and who he or she is satisfied is an adherent of the Rastafarian faith or any group of such... cultivate, on lands designated

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in the Order and in accordance with such regulations as may be prescribed for that purpose, cannabis"... Et cetera, et cetera.

So inside of here, this section coming down, there are opportunities to look for adding value, which the Rasta talk a lot about, where they can do the same agro-processing, do arts and crafts, and all of those things, with all the stock, and all of the roots, and all of those things from the product.

When we speak about industry, Madam President... Industry speaks about opening up and looking at all different components, whether it's drinks, whether it's t-shirts, whether it's you know open up, creating jobs and employment, and this to me is also a lost opportunity in this Bill, especially in a time when we need to be making money. I heard someone say earlier today, we have lost... We're coming so late with this that we've lost a lot of opportunities medicinally and all of those things.

And then some other thoughts come to my mind when it comes to the industry, Madam President. It relates to the issue of varieties, and it comes back to the regulations again, because what is it that we want? It is my understanding that, whilst yes, we have the local weed and we have different types, and so on, if you want to go into the oils and all of those high-value products, we need to import a lot of these varieties into this country, and they need to be properly regulated. Who would have these varieties, et cetera, right? So that is a major issue and opportunity that we need to look at.

I share, of course, the views that Senator Lewis advanced in terms of the focus on just the Rastas and using the herb for worship and religious purposes, because other religions, other... And, in fact, I shouldn't use "religion" because I understand today that the Rastafarian community is not even recognised as a religion. So I could say some other group that can literally fall into that same bracket of how they operate, and you cannot really deny that group of followers and being afforded similar opportunities. So, the issue of equality and justice is very important in that mix. So that is an issue.

Whilst I don't think there might be a national cry today of it, but down the road, 10 years from now, five years from now, in the absence of the regulatory commission, and you have Minister A, and Minister B using their own discretion, that could also be a challenge.

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On the issue of smoking in public places... I... Well, I spoke to that already, in terms of smoking versus eating and drinking, he's eating and drinking, but there's a great deficiency because the focus is very one-sided. Unless we are to interpret that the only use of this marijuana will be for smoking and there will be no other use, there will be no drinking, no cookies and candies being made, it will be only smoking. So, if you found using it otherwise than that is an offence.

And, in fact, it should not even be silent because what was very instrumental and instructive in this Bill in cases where the negative was considered, it was very clear by saying, "This does not apply to this, this, this..." And so, I raised this because it's very slanted to smoking.

Now... And my good friend Senator Andrew, Minister for Education, you will need to help me with this one. When I go to the Fifth Schedule with that table on page 17, it continues over to page 18. 13C (1); that table at the bottom. 13C (1) it speaks about smoking or using cannabis, or cannabis resin on or near school premises, and it gives, on summary conviction, you'd have EC\$250,000 or seven years in prison, or both and on indictment, EC\$500,000 or 20 years in prison or both.

My query when I was reading this was one... It speaks about school premises and all of those things, but it didn't speak about a school event. So, meaning, let's suppose the event happened not necessarily in the school, but some other place, maybe a concert, maybe a fair, maybe a sports, and if I say sports, you say public space, so strike that, because based on the broadness... So, it could be in a non-public space with a school event, how do we treat with that? I thought that including the word speaking of some school event, or an event that involves the school, needs to be included to have that extra protection inside of there. So that was one of the observations I wanted to share in that regard.

I also want to inquire, and I think Senator Lewis raised it earlier, I'm not even speaking about the workplace component yet, but we do know that the issue of sports and drug testing is a big issue. But... And how we plan to treat with those... I think this is again, education, testing and monitoring, counselling, all of those issues... Because it is... All of us now have access and are equally exposed and at risk. Whilst we may speak of the good things, we also have to look at the impact.

And I am saying this to say, the Rastafari, if you speak to a lot of them, very few

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and I stand corrected, smoke the herb, they use it, they may have it in a chalice to use as an incense as a... So, the average citizen might be pulling and smoking, so the impact is different to the impact that may happen in the...

I've been tabernacle in Sauteurs. I've been there with Star I and the group. I didn't see them smoking and puffing; they were there, they had their little scented thing, they had some sweets that they gave me when they finished, but there was no puffing and things going on. So I say this to say that they are very conscious of the way that they use their thing, whereas the other person may not be thinking about it in that way and expose themselves to a greater risk. So I want to raise that in that space.

The issue with the workforce... So I dealt with decriminalisation. I dealt with the industry, religion and Rasta. I dealt with that. The young people, I dealt with that. The workforce, Madam President, and I share the concern because even within my space, this has been questioned. How do we look at that? How do we treat with that, especially people using equipment, and all of that? The impairment... I think Senator Horsford raised the issue about the insurance, and so on. What is the implication of that? And so, that is a whole new regime that we have to deal with in line with all these productivity issues that we are already speaking about.

And I go there... In that... You know, on a Friday evening, maybe a Thursday evening, maybe a Monday evening, folks come from work, they go there, have a little drink, and I think someone mentioned it, I think it was Senator Charles, drinking, smoking, regular cigarette, maybe or weed with a drink... Escalation, and then they have work the next day or work the next week, you know... How do they recover? So, this is a matter that we have to address again through public education, counselling, and what is the system...

And so the question arises, and I think Senator Cox raised it earlier when he was in Canada, when this programme was just released. How ready are we today to have all these backstops in place with the passage of this Bill? And so the question asked of us is, do we have a lead time? Do we have a window? Do we have a six-month gap before this can be rolled out, such that systems can be put in place? Or, if you do have systems in place, we would like to hear and say, "Okay, we have this, this, this, this in place for rolling out".

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Because, whilst yes, the Administration and the Government, in its purest form, has to implement and do what you have to do, we must have enough confidence that what we're supporting and agreeing with will have the results that we're looking for.

And I said this to say, Madam President, to tie back a little bit with Senator Francis's presentation earlier, and she raised the issue of men drinking, domestic violence and those things, and I am collecting and packing all in one, and so on... It's... And that was the alcohol part. Of course, different substances have different impacts on different people, and at the same time, people do things differently for different purposes and in different circumstances. So it also means that as a nation, we have a bigger challenge on our hands in that space.

However, what we have to be mindful of is that we do not lose sight of the trade, the bigger picture of the drug trade. The people smoking a spliff here and there is different to that of trading thousands of pounds that the police would have, and capture this one that is in transshipment; that's a different discussion, this may not change that necessarily.

So I am saying this to say that we should not sit and say, "Okay. Well, decriminalise it, and it will be more accessible. So, less people would want. There wouldn't be this big demand, and so this whole transshipment point in Grenada, et cetera, would not be a big issue". We should not drop our guard on that. We need to still maintain a level of vigilance that we are not being used as a nation for transshipment; that is the point, right? A lot of what would have been transhipped is not really used here. I mean, we don't have enough people to really use it. Right? I don't want us to lose sight of that. We still have to ensure that the monitoring of that outside business still takes place.

It may sound frivolous, Madam President, but I'm a practical man. I am a very practical man. So, in a household... In fact, I shouldn't because Senator Rahaman explained it. Two elderly people were smoking in the car, and the children were there. He saw it in the car. Could you imagine what's going on in the home, and how do we police that? How do we police this 56-gram puffing in the house with little children, with the 21-year-old and the two-year-old? Will education stop them?

So how do we really address that, notwithstanding that we may say, "Well, it is happening already"? I think Senator Horsford said, "It's happening already". Well, it

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may not really be happening the way he brings it about. How do we stop that? Education again, because education can control the behaviour, because they can still go and plant, have access to their house and keep smoking; so education of the children is also important.

Children have to be able to influence their mommy and daddy by saying, “No, no, you cannot smoke this around us. If you want to smoke it, go down in the land, go down in the yard or somewhere to do that, so that this doesn't affect us”. They already said second-hand smoke is worse than first-hand smoke, which is the person smoking. These are the practical issues that I'm seeing when it comes to implementation, or will we go house to house and see who is smoking?

These are real issues that our police officers are going to have challenges with, or their neighbour would report and say that we have to call social services because this neighbour is smoking and they have all the children in the house, et cetera, et cetera; this is the society. We are not making up anything; this is the society. We know that.

You have the parents there, the father might be drinking a little rum sometime and the child is sitting there. The child is not drinking the rum, but now we are talking about smoking, so these smoke fumes and impacts other people in the household; this is a concern that I have.

And, of course, of course, as I get closer to closing... Senator Horsford raised an important point earlier that struck me. He spoke about some treaties, but what struck me was the word “narco”, narcotics, which marijuana, cannabis, belongs to. He spoke about the market economy, and that struck me because whilst we try to achieve the religious usage and managing the other usage, this is what I would call an undercurrent that can emerge in the whole space of, not legalisation, I don't want to use that word because not there, but decriminalisation.

So now, somebody can move with x amount of spliff easily and push it, x amount of spliff and push it, because that is the minimum amount. I just have to make sure I have, many times, a day as I move this stuff. So, this is something that needs to be monitored, whether through FIU and the drug squad. Those little areas are those that will create challenges as people look to...

Because I don't see this Bill set up in a manner to create a whole market and

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economy. It is a matter that a person could be able to, in their own confine, have the only relaxation, but if it is going to transform into that, which we know things change, we have to be very careful about how we address that.

And, of course, whilst we speak about trafficking quantities, you could do trafficking quantities in manage amount throughout the day in different ways. Law enforcement will tell you that, to me, is something that we have to be very mindful about.

I trust that the Rastafari will be able to get some land where they can plant their herb in a controlled and proper manner, so that they don't have to individually plant all over the place. This is something I trust is specified in the Bill, and I trust that they do get that so that they can manage their business, and that will make a big difference in the way that a lot of these things are controlled and managed. So I wanted to also share that part.

Our farmers, specifically, you know, I know they would want to put a few trees on their lands for the different purposes, and whatever they would advise is that they bear in mind all the health implications, the social implications of the actions in this regard. I thank you. Here are my comments. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Thank you very much for your thoughtful analysis. The last speaker of the day, we offer the microphone to Senator Claudette Joseph, who will make her presentation and conclude the debate. Well, the debate will be concluded by the presenter, but I meant to say that she will be the last speaker.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President. Madam President. Sorry. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Take it off? Yes, sorry. Sorry, Madam President. I'm a little under the weather these days. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes, but everybody is six feet apart.

Thank you, Madam President. I rise to give my full support to the Bill now debated before this Honourable House and ably presented earlier by the Leader of Government's Business.

Madam President, if you would permit me, in keeping with Order 33, row 7, to

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occasionally refer to some notes that I have made, and also, as I open my contribution to this debate, to read a little bit from the report of the Commission on Cannabis established or commissioned by CARICOM that rendered the report in 2018. That commission, Madam President, was headed by a learned and distinguished regional scholar and jurist, Professor Dr. Rose-Marie Antoine, from, well, she's from Trinidad, Grenada, and St. Lucia; so a real Caribbean woman.

And Madam President, at page 63 of that report, under the rubric 'Conclusions and Recommendations', the commission said at paragraph 12.2.3. I'm quoting, "Marijuana is a plant substance with historical, cultural and religious significance to the Commonwealth Caribbean, which existed benignly as a beneficial plant without condemnation or legal intervention for centuries. Legislative history illustrates that cannabis or marijuana acquired an illegal status and classification as a 'dangerous drug' with 'no value,' without scientific or moral rationales to support the radical change in the law, both internationally and domestically.

Further, there is considerable evidence to suggest that this transformation was due to cynical motives to quash competition with the merging alcohol industry, itself emerging from prohibition and even racial policy. This resulted in the draconian legal regime existing today, which by virtue of its now illegal classification, acquired a demonised social status". This is after extensive research by this high-level commission.

They went on to say, Madam President, "The commission acknowledges that there are documented health risks associated with cannabis. However, modern scientific data demonstrates that there is conclusive evidence that cannabis has considerable value as a medicinal substance, and as liberalisation in laws occurs, scientific studies are approving more medicinal uses for the plant.

At the same time, "Medical science has disproved..." Addressing some of Dr. Charles's submissions this morning, and to a less extent, Senator Rahaman. It says, "At the same time, medical science has disproved some of the most important myths or propaganda about the supposed negative psychological impact of cannabis, including causative links to psychosis and its status as a gateway drug. It has also proved that cannabis is no more harmful than alcohol or other substances that are no longer prohibited, in many respects less so, in many respects less dangerous, than

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substances such as alcohol that are no longer prohibited”.

Madam President, and I would just like to read one last portion. Let me find it, Madam President. Madam President, I am having a little trouble finding it, but basically, that portion that I'm looking for, and can't find now, in that section, the commission encouraged that we begin to treat the issue of cannabis, as was recognised as far back in 2002, at the CARICOM Heads meetings in July of 2002. The heads way back then, so that's 23 years ago, no 24 years ago, they acknowledged and accepted that drug addiction should not be treated as a criminal matter, but rather as a public health risk.

So, Madam President, it is against that background, and almost directly coming out of that CARICOM report, that virtually all of the CARICOM member states have implemented legislation to decriminalise cannabis. And some, such as St. Vincent, Jamaica, and Barbados, have set up a Medical Cannabis Industry, and in some instances, that industry is thriving.

So, for us in Grenada, we are basically in this move here to decriminalise cannabis and to set the stage for the establishment of a Medical Cannabis Industry; we are bringing up the rear. And while it is always good to be pioneers, and in many other respects, Grenada is a leading and pioneering CARICOM State, I think in this regard, we have the rare and special opportunity to look at what, not just the first world has done in relation to decriminalisation and legalisation, but to what our own CARICOM brothers and sisters have done, and the areas in which they have succeeded, at the areas in which they have not done so well. And so we have the opportunity to come up, Madam President, I submit, with the best package when it comes to decriminalisation and legalisation for medicinal, therapeutic, and scientific purposes.

Madam President, the principal legislation that we are amending today, the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, Chapter 84A of the revised laws of Grenada, is grounded in the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the protocol thereto of 1971. And, Madam President, we are party to that convention, as are most nations of the world.

And as such, apart from the responsibility and obligation we have towards our people for the promulgation of laws that will be to their benefit and protection, we also

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have an obligation under that treaty, and under the 1988 treaty against trafficking in illegal and narcotic substances that Senator Horsford mentioned before, those are the three international conventions: the 601 Convention, 71 protocol to that convention, and the 1988 Convention, Grenada is party to all of them.

And under those conventions, we have international obligations, and we have legal obligations. Under all of those conventions, cannabis is a controlled substance. Even our legislation in some respects mirrors the language in the treaty. So, cannabis is not just a controlled substance; it is still a Schedule 1 controlled substance. Meaning it is ranked with the most dangerous of all controlled substances, along with cocaine and heroin, and so on.

Countries have been moving towards and advocating for removing cannabis from Schedule 1 to Schedule 3; the schedules that contain substances that are not treated as dangerous as the Schedule 1 substances. One of the countries that I've been holding out on keeping cannabis in Schedule 1 is the United States. So while in some states, individually, cannabis has been somewhat decriminalised and legalised at the federal level in the US, it is not so.

About two months ago, the President of the United States, President Trump, announced his intention to execute an Executive Order that will reschedule cannabis from Schedule 1 to Schedule 3, because he said he is convinced based on several presentations that were made to him by experts that there are tremendous medical and therapeutic benefits to be derived from the use of cannabis and its by-products.

So we believe that once the United States has rescheduled the drug that will trigger movement for the convention itself to be amended to reschedule the drug, because it would mean most of the leading countries, so to speak, of the world are along that path. Because we know the Netherlands went out way out, Canada, Germany, and Thailand, most of the larger countries. So cannabis is on the path to being rescheduled.

But until that happens, Madam President, as a party to the convention, we are obligated to do so whenever we amend the law to do so within the confines of the treaty, or else we could be liable to be sanctioned as provided for in the legislation. And sanctions can range from a simple write-up, you get a negative write-up, and you get some pressure in certain of the UN bodies, to financial sanctions. And as little as

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we are, having all the examples of the world, we really wouldn't have much of an excuse if we find ourselves in a position where we have to be sanctioned. So we have to be very careful as we balance competing interests.

Madam President, I will not go through all of the legislation section by section because I think my colleagues on both sides of the House have adequately, but especially, on "This Side" have adequately addressed the key sections in the legislation, and of course, we have the committee stage where we can have some further discussions. But Madam President, I will deal with some; I would here try to answer by way of rebuttal some of the submissions made by certain of my colleagues in this Honourable House, Madam President.

There is a concern raised by Senator Charles related to the fear of abuse with the relaxation of our laws now. The law will be relaxed in that, presently, possession in any quantity in any amount of cannabis or cannabis resin is an offence, and if you possess up to... Is it 15 grams? In the case of... In the case of... Yes. If you possess up to 15 grams, in the case of cannabis resin, you commit an offence of possession, actually.

So, zero to 15 grams is the offence of possession. Above 15 grams, you're dealing with the offence of trafficking, so that's the law. So, anything over 15 grams right now, whether it's cannabis, cannabis resin, you are being charged with trafficking, and zero to 15, possession.

We propose to amend the law so that in the case of cannabis, zero to 56 grams, and to answer a question, Senator Lewis, zero to 56 grams will attract no penalty, which will be decriminalised. In the case of cannabis resin, zero to 15 grams will attract a law penalty; it will be decriminalised for all persons.

56 to 70 grams, it will therefore mean, now, that 56 to 70 grams, in the case of cannabis, will attract the charge for possession. And 15 to 29 grams will attract a charge for possession, in the case of cannabis resin. Anything about 56 grams of cannabis, sorry, 71 grams and above for cannabis trafficking. Yes. 30 grams and above a cannabis resin, trafficking.

Now, as legislation is currently constructed, it does not specify a quantity for possession; it deals with trafficking. And anything below the trafficable quantity is possession, which is exactly what we have done. Right? We have kept in line with

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the design of the legislation as it is now. Yes. So there's no ambiguity there at all, none whatsoever.

Madam President, in relation to the treatment of children and young persons, I hear a lot of talk from Senators opposite, the concern for children and young persons, and so on. Actually, what we've done is that we have adjusted the ages as it relates to this piece of legislation.

So under the current legislation, a child is someone zero to 14 years, under the current legislation now. A child is someone between zero and 14 years. A young person is someone between 15 and 18, and after that, they are adults; that's the current status.

For the purposes of this amendment, we have made children, persons under 18, so we have increased it by four years. So, we have actually made things better in terms of the concerns that you have been raising. Children and persons zero to 18 under this amendment and young persons 19 and 20. So, we have actually improved things in terms of protection for our children and young people by raising the age. Right?

Madam President, the... You know, all the concerns raised about, you know, the notion that children will have more access and all of that. I don't know if my friends opposite are aware that we have multiple studies in Grenada that show that our young people first encounter with dangerous substances, alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco, all of them dangerous, as young as 14 years. Young. 14 years. Right now. Right now before we pass this legislation. And we suspect that with the measures that we put in place, it will improve, and we'll be better able to track our young people who abuse these substances.

And I heard all the calls about why not tobacco? Why not alcohol? Good question, but we are here today dealing with an amendment to the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act. Under that law, excuse me..... Under that law, alcohol is not considered a controlled substance because alcohol is not an illegal drug in Grenada. Tobacco is not considered a controlled substance; tobacco is not an illegal substance in Grenada.

So, after consultation and hearing what people are saying, we may well have to come back here to deal with other substances, but not under this particular legislation

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that we are dealing with today. So we are dealing with the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, and cannabis falls under that legislation, alcohol does not, and tobacco does not.

And so I heard the Opposition Senators, the Senators representing the party that the Opposition represents, the "Other Place", I wonder if they spoke to each other. I wonder if they spoke to each other because we had broad and general support for the legislation in the "Other Place", and some lamentation that they kind of wished they had done it. Well, they didn't make an attempt in 2021.

And without a parliamentary Opposition, they came to the realisation that the Bill that was tabled was woefully inadequate and pulled it from the Order Paper themselves. Recall in 2021 there was no parliamentary Opposition. So, like with so many other things, they actually had an idea what to do, some of the policies, programmes, and projects that should be pursued, but they just did not know how to execute. So once again, we are showing them how to execute and how to execute properly. **(Applause)** So the 2021 attempt was aborted on their own volition, recognising how woefully inadequate it was. And in fact, it's a good thing that they did because we would have been sanctioned if they had passed that legislation.

So I wonder whether they had a conversation because, on one hand, they were saying that they support, they support in principle, they support whatever. Everybody was supporting with a proviso; their colleagues in the "Other Place", supported and adamantly that they didn't get it right, but we are going to get it right, Madam President.

So this notion that the limitations that are in this legislation with respect to smoking in public places, limitations four planting trees, the question of obtaining licenses and permits, to criticise those provisions, I think, is a really reckless thing. Because if we do not, for example, make legislative arrangements for a regulatory and licensing regime, we will be in breach of the international law that we have signed on to.

Hence, we must provide in this legislation, as we have done in section 13, for the enactment of further legislation and regulation to treat with the use of cannabis and cannabis resin for medicinal, therapeutic, and scientific purposes; that is what we are permitted to do under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. We are decriminalising based on our constitutional provisions. Our Constitution protects, in

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section 9 thereof, the right to freedom of conscience that includes freedom of religion.

And I hear it being touted that the Rastas are not recognised as a religion. Is there any Rastafarian grouping right now in Grenada that is prevented from practising their faith? Because if they are, they should let me know, and I will immediately advise whatever government agency is preventing the Rastas from practising their faith that they are breaching the constitutional rights of the Rastas. So I don't know what is meant by they're not recognised. Everyone knows that the Rastafarians have several tabernacles operating throughout Grenada, and have done so for many years.

As a matter of fact, this is the first administration that included them on the national stage (**applause**) as we celebrated our 50th anniversary and continue to include them whenever we have an ecumenical occasion. So it is just posturing, politicking, and theatrics to say that the Rastas are not recognised. Anybody could open a Rastafarian Tabernacle just as you can open an Evangelical Church or any other church.

We have full freedom of religion in Grenada (**applause**), and what we are doing with this legislation, yes, I see my Muslim Brother tapping the table because it is so true, and what we are doing by this legislation is extending and further recognising that right that the Rastas have.

So, although the convention says you can only legalise and regulate for medicinal, therapeutic and scientific purposes, we have said to the international body that other countries have done, we need to go further because our Constitution, which is our supreme law, is so supreme to the convention, giving people a fundamental right. It's a human right, enshrine to the freedom of religion and conscience.

And in the case of the Rastafarian faith, the plant is treated as a sacramental herb; it's religious and sacramental. And it's integral to the exercise of their religious faith. And therefore, in keeping with their fundamental right under the Constitution, we must pass this legislation, so that's how that is treated with.

The other aspect is the smoking and use, not just smoking. Let me not focus too much on the smoking, but on the use of the plant for personal private use. Because, as you mentioned, a lot of the people who use the plant for personal private use do so for medicinal and therapeutic purposes. They don't necessarily smoke.

I grew up hearing stories about my grandmother, who apparently was asthmatic.

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She passed away before I was born. She was asthmatic, a very conservative Catholic woman, and she had a ganja plant behind the house, because the tea helped her when she had asthma attacks.

So we are decriminalising so that persons in the privacy of their home, again exercising their constitutional rights to privacy; and the home doesn't mean inside the house. You know, when we are speaking to the public, we must do so with honesty and intelligence because, as Members of this very noble House, the highest institution in the land, the public listens and they take it to heart what we say.

So I heard one of the Members of the Opposition suggesting that when we say in the privacy of your own home, you can't be anywhere but inside your house. But your private property extends to the boundaries of your land, so you could sit down on a rock outside. And if you want to smoke, that's the privacy of your home; the police can't do anything.

But recognising the concerns that many of our stakeholders, with whom we consulted, raise, and perhaps we will come to a point where we say no smoking period, cigarette or marijuana in public places. **(Applause)** Right? But we have the opportunity to do so now. We are doing this now, so we say, smoke, plant your four trees per household, not per person, per household, and use the plant as you see fit in the privacy of your personal space, your home, and that includes your yard.

So don't confuse... We don't want to confuse our Rasta brethren because we know how their tabernacle is constructed, you know. There are a lot of outdoor spaces. When you go to one of the Rasta tabernacles, there are a lot of outdoor spaces, and they are in close contact with nature. So we are not saying you have to sit down in the tabernacle. You stay within the privacy and confines of your property. So I just wanted to clarify this matter.

Madam President. Excuse me. We are particularly pleased to be able to pass this legislation because we know our Rastafarian brothers and sisters have had a tough time over the years. Things have gotten better gradually, but they were ostracised and demonised as the CARICOM report itself recognised, because of the myths and propaganda that surrounded cannabis. And so, we are happy to, in this legislation, recognise not just the Rastafarian faith, but their right to use cannabis as a practice of their faith. And this is the first legislation in Grenada that recognises the

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right of the Rastafarian community (**applause**) to treat the herb as holy.

Madam President, this movement that we are on is a two-phased project; you can call it a project, yes. First, we decriminalise, and then we legalise for medicinal, scientific, and therapeutic substances. So, Madam President, in the second phase, we will pass legislation that will establish the licensing and a regulatory framework for the establishment of the Medical Cannabis Industry.

And Madam President, again, we are not doing something that is so dissimilar to what other countries have done. So in the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, mind you, it's one of the few countries that have not been cited or anything by the International Narcotics Control Board, so that means they got it right the first time. They established the Medical Cannabis Industry in 2018, the Medical Cannabis Industry Act, then they amended their Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, as we are doing now, to decriminalise, so it's two phases, all in how you look at it.

Similarly, Barbados in 2019. Jamaica did something slightly different in that it amended its Dangerous Drugs Act, which is the equivalent of our Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act. And at the same time, they inserted a new section into that legislation that established the Medical Cannabis Industry, so they call it the Cannabis Licensing Authority. So there are various permutations that we might adopt in order to bring about the decriminalisation and the establishment of the industry.

Madam President, again in relation to places of worship, the planting of the trees and so on, all of these steps are to be regulated so that we are conform to our international obligations.

Hence, the minister may, by Order published in the *Gazette*, authorise any person who is 21 and who is adherent to the Rastafarian faith or group of such person, or an organisation, which could be an individual group or organisation, comprising the Rastafarian faith authorised to cultivate on lands designated in the Order, so it may be lands they already own, so we identify the land in the Order, or it may be land allocated for that purpose to cultivate in quantities, et cetera, for their religious purposes. Right.

And you will see throughout section 13, in the new insertion there, it allows the minister to do certain things by Order. Now, let me speak to this thing about a minister because I heard, I'm sorry Mr. Horsford left because I know he knows better. I am not asking. I know he knows better.

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So, when a law says, “The Minister may”, it gives the minister the discretion or the authority to perform certain acts. Firstly, when our law says, “Minister”, or gives a minister any authority, it does not mean the minister acting on his own accord. It means the minister acting in Cabinet, so that’s one. So the minister has to come and get Cabinet approval with whatever he wants to put in the Order, that’s one.

Secondly, the minister, through his technocrats in his ministry, will prepare whatever document comes to the Cabinet, because imagine I’m the Minister for Health. I’m a lawyer, right? Under this law, the line minister is the Minister for Health. Imagine I’m the Minister for Health, obviously, I would have to consult with my technocrats who are knowledgeable in the area. The technocrats may advise, “Minister, we may need to get specialists”, right, “to give us proper advice”. We also don’t have the specialist advice that’s needed. We also need to consult with relevant stakeholders.

So, there is no way, for example, that an Order will be published, whoever the minister is. There’s no way that an Order will be published identifying places of worship and identifying places that the Rastas may cultivate for religious purposes without consulting the Rastas. There’s no way that’s going to happen. But for the thing to become law, for it to be actualised, there has to be an orderly process, an orderly decipherable process.

So you consult, and they may say we have land in Red Mud. Right? They may say that. Whoever the technocrats are, people from the Ministry of Lands, they go out and check the land, whatnot, right. And it’s the land that the Rastas identify is what will end up in the Order; the minister is not going to pull land out of the air and put it in the Order. Is a tabernacle because a tabernacle exists already, so it’s the Rastas to say we have a tabernacle here, here, here, and we list the tabernacles in the Order.

So it’s not in the minister has some arbitrary power; it’s not like the law gives him some kind of power that he exercises arbitrarily, and on his own decides well, that’s what I’m putting in the Order, that’s not the way it works. All throughout the minister does so on the advice of his technocrats. Most times, the technocrats say we need a specialist consultant.

As a matter of fact, for the preparation of the policy that will inform the legislation for the establishment of the Medical Cannabis Industry, the committee, the Cannabis

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Committee, is now in the process of engaging a specialist in cannabis, a specialist consultant, so that's how it works. And I'll tell you that the Cannabis Committee they are very few technocrats, public service technocrats on that committee. It is members of stakeholder groups that make up the Cannabis Committee, including the Rastafarian Committee. **(Applause)** They are represented. So that's who the cannabis committee is, you know. Ms Noel, who is the CEO, is not a public officer; she's a scientist.

So, all of this is drawn and developed with the assistance of technical and specialist people. So, no minister this cheap politics nonsense, or the minister has too much power. The minister only performs a formal act here. When policies are developed, the minister comes to the Cabinet and says, "Look, this is a policy the technocrats and the experts have advised us on". Cabinet discusses it.

The technocrats themselves sometimes come to the Cabinet, because sometimes the minister can't even articulate it. They what? The people then come, and they do a presentation just as in the corporate world, where management make presentations to a board. Same exact thing that happens with the Government.

The specialist, the people the Government engaged to do the work and develop the policy, come, they make a presentation, and they say we have consulted. They give a list of all those they consulted, all stakeholders. Sometimes we say... As a matter of fact, if this system doesn't happen, that's why we take so long, because sometimes we say, "We don't think you consulted enough rules, go back and consult with this person. Did you talk to this person?" So we send them back to do consultations sometimes, so when you pass a law, it reflects the will and the wish of the people, especially the stakeholders.

So this notion you're trying to give to the public is that the minister has too much power. And the minister this, the minister that thing, it's the same thing. Go and check the Electricity Supply Act 2016; that's what's dangerous, the powers of the minister, and we know what that then minister used to do because he was an expert in the area, so he didn't use to listen to anybody; that's why we lost the case against WRB.

So when the opposition comes talking nonsense, let them go look at the Electricity Supply Act 2016. **(Inaudible comments by a Senator)** Who represented WRB? A very good lawyer, and they get licks, and that very good lawyer represents

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the people of Grenada now. **(Applause)**

So, Madam President, I think I dealt with the question of the grey zone that Senator Lewis spoke about, that there is no grey zone, anything under 56 grams they charge you with possession. Right? 71 above... 56 to 71 possession, 71 and above trafficking. Right? I see you shaking your head, but that's how it is.

So, Madam President, I would just like to address one section of the legislation that I don't think was really addressed before I wrap up. Before I say that, so next we're going to have regulations. This particular legislation, Madam President, the regulations will require a negative resolution of the Parliament. So the regulations will actually go to the Lower House; the negative resolutions don't come here.

But the Schedule, if you look at all the Schedules in the Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) Act, they form part of the legislation itself. So there will be subject to negative resolutions, so there will be an opportunity in the "Other Place" to debate those regulations. Madam President, the other thing is... So, what happens immediately? The possession of small quantities is decriminalised.

The next thing, Madam President, that I would like to raise is the rehabilitation of offenders. Madam President, in this legislation, we have inserted a new Schedule, the consequential amendment to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act No. 25 of 2017. And Madam President, under that legislation, there is an opportunity for persons who have been convicted of certain crimes that are specified in the legislation to appear before a Rehabilitation of Offenders Board after, I think, about four or so years, I think.

I'm speaking from memory now, I think it's after about four years they can appear before the Rehabilitation of Offenders Board and make an application, and make a representation for their criminal record to be expunged. So that they are given a second chance in life, and that generally has to do with minor offences, so certain offences like sexual offences, grievous harm, bodily grievous harm, murders, that kind of thing. Those are not subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, very minor offences.

And what we have done in this instance is to provide a shortcut for persons who have convictions for minor offensive 56 grams or less in terms of possession to have their record expunged under the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation or by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Board.

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And it will be, I said a shortcut because the intention is not to have them go through the entire process of expungement, where they have to get character references and all the different documents that they have to submit to get a record expunged. What the board will be considering is the fact that the person has a previous conviction for a small quantity and has that record, as a matter of formality to comply with the legislation, cleansed; that's what it is.

Many young people, Madam President, with very minor marijuana-related offences; they lose opportunities for employment, for admission to institutions to further their studies, and employment locally, as well as locally and abroad, and for obtaining visas to travel. They lose opportunities because of a minor infraction, which we now do not deem as an infraction. So that is some immediate relief that will come to our young people.

So, Madam President, with that being said, with all these submissions, I commend this Bill to this Honourable House for passage. I trust that my colleagues on the "Other Side" will also say, "aye" when the question is posed. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you. I wish to thank the last speaker, Senator Claudette Joseph, for her onus presentation, which included responses sorted by the "Other Side". Thank you for undertaking as much of that as you did. And now that all of us have commented, I offer the floor to the Leader of Government's Business in Senate. Senator Adrian Thomas. Presenter

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Long marathon, Madam President. I'm happy, as we bring this deliberation and this historical Bill to a close, I wish, on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, Carriacou, Petite Martinique, to express sincere gratitude to this Honourable House for the depth and seriousness of its contribution.

Madam President, I wish to extend special appreciation to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, and many other portfolios, Honourable Lennox Andrews, whose leadership and collaboration were critical to advance in the reform. Madam President, his ministry's engagement ensures that the Bill was approached, not only

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as a legal and social issue, but also with an appreciation for agricultural realities, rural livelihood, and regulatory responsibility.

I also want to commend the CEO of the committee for the last two and a half years or more; they have stuck to it, they have gone through too many difficulties, and she's not her, but Ms. Nandy Noel has been a tower of strength in ensuring that we go through all the bits and pieces to make sure that this helps here today.

Madam President, I would also like to place on record our sincere thanks to the Attorney General and the Ministry of Legal Affairs for their legal guidance, constitutional scrutiny, and drafting expertise. And I would also like to mention Mrs. Ciley Browne, who really and truly was also involved in helping us draft and reach this distance. So, I would like to put a record of her contribution.

Madam President, please permit me to read this paragraph. I also wish to express profound appreciation to the Rastafarian community of Grenada. For decades, Rastafarian brethren and sistren bore the burden of stigma, criminalisation, and misunderstanding, even as they consistently advocated peacefully and persistently for recognition of their cultural, spiritual, and sacramental rights.

Madam President, their participation in consultations, their submissions, and their lead testimony have been instrumental in shaping a more humane and constitutionally grounded approach to cannabis reform.

Madam President, equally we thank the wider Grenadian community for their contribution in their in the consultation process. This Bill, Madam President, reflects not the will of a few, but the considered input of a society ready to evolve.

For many Grenadians, particularly those who rely on cannabis for medicinal purposes or as part of deeply held religious and spiritual rituals, this legislation brings genuine relief to the vast majority of people, Madam President.

Finally, we recognise the shoulders upon which we stand, and as I said in my opening statement earlier, the cultural aspects and the cultural struggle must be placed on record for bringing us to the distance. Across the Caribbean and the African diaspora, cultural icons and freedom voices challenged injustice long before reform was fashionable or politically convenient.

Madam President, we honoured pioneers such as Peter Tosh and others who use music, culture and conscience to demand equal rights, justice, and truth. Their

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courage laid the moral and cultural foundation that makes today's progress possible.

Honourable Senators, the Bill is not the end of the journey; it is a responsible step forward, it reflects a Grenada confident enough to learn from its past, compassionate enough to correct its course, and wise enough to place people, rights and public health at the centre of this policy. Madam President, I commend this Bill to this Honourable for approval. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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

Madam President: Honourable 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 consider the Bill, Clause by Clause.

Madam President: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

Madam President: The Committee is closed. The Senate has resumed. I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed with one amendment. Leader of Government's Business.

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

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Bills: Drug Abuse (Prevention and Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026
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Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

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

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

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

Item 17 – Adjournment.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I rise to beg for the adjournment of this meeting, *sine die*.

Madam President: Senator Andre Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. I know my colleague on the "Other Side" will like to say something, but while he seeks guidance... **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** No. No. No, that's okay.

Madam President, on the Adjournment, I just wish to express solidarity with the people of Venezuela and to condemn, most strongly, the kidnapping of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. You know, we must call out when there is a clear violation of international law. We recognise right now the miraculous disappearance of narcotics in the Caribbean. No longer are the boats carrying narcotics to be bombed because Venezuelan oil seems now to be under the control of the US, and we must condemn the kidnapping of President Mad...

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What does that mean for any Caribbean leader, for any world leader? Does this mean that he who disagrees with anyone who has that power might or can wake up one morning and find that they are no longer around? Therefore, we need to strongly condemn this. It certainly will not be easy for the people of Venezuela. Yes? If there are disputes concerning how a particular country is governed, the people of the country will ultimately determine its fate.

We stood here, I stood here, basically I've been saying, together with the Grenada collision and the Grenada Labour, Trade Union Council, that we are always convinced that the US issue with Venezuela had nothing to do with narcotics, all it had to do with was wanting to place their hands on the Venezuelan oil.

I also wish to call on the Government of Grenada; not to accept, not to accept non-national deportees to Grenada. Colleagues, you know, we spoke earlier about the trials and tribulations that a number of our people have gone through, and we as a black people. We didn't use that terminology, but that's what it meant. We are in this part of the world because our fore parents who were brought against their will to this part of the world.

How could we in good conscience accept third nationals against their will? Regardless of how we may try to frame it, regardless of how we may try to say that we have a labour shortage, because I'm hearing all the... You know, academicians are really good. Intellectuals are really good. You can always justify what we want to do. Let me say, I know it's not an easy period in the life of any leadership of any country, based on the geopolitical nature of what is happening in the world. Where will it end? At what stage will we say no? At the end of the day, we must ensure that whatever mechanism we use, no one is sent against their will to Grenada.

You know, I remember probably about two years ago, or thereabout, there were young people in the UK, same immigrants, they considered undesirable were to be placed on a plane and be driven off or flown off to certain countries in Africa, and there would be legal interventions that prevented that from happening, or were able to restrict.

Grenada, I know that Caribbean countries are falling. I don't know what maybe held up on them, but, you know, we must not be privy to, or a part of, the function and of illegal activities. Therefore, I am also throwing out that challenge to the state, and

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we can work together collectively and collaboratively.

Let us go to the communities and identify on the blocks or in the communities those who are not employed. Why don't we put them through training, because we are now speaking about making requests for skilled-deportees, skilled-prisoners, because they are being sent against their will, and we have a labour shortage? Let us work together and give whatever incentive to avoid a number of our nationals, who may not be gainfully engaged, from going down in the trenches. You can get electrical or wiring personnel, if you are to call them that. People can learn to wire a house within six months; it wouldn't make you a full electrician in terms of the technology, et cetera, but you can wire a house.

There are certain skills that, for instance, in the days of GTVI (Grenada Technical and Vocational Institute) were taught. I know we have been speaking about skillsets because the cry right now for us entertaining human beings against their will, that for whatever reason their country of birth is not prepared to accept them, we are finding a way to rationalise it from our leaders; that can be right.

What makes it even worse, I have not yet heard Grenada's pronouncement, but other CARICOM nations, big and bold, Haitians are excluded. No, not Grenada. I said Grenada has not yet said that, but they say when your neighbour's house is on fire, wet yours.

The talk was out quite a while now about we saying that we want skilled deport... Well, not deportees. I take deportees to mean your nationals who had been picked up for some violation and sent back to your country. So I do not want to... I'm talking about non-nationals being sent to Grenada, third-party nationals or third-country nationals, being sent to a country.

So, for the CARICOM countries that are accepting third-country nationals, a few of them have excluded Haitians. Grenada has not yet said anything. I know Grenada is saying that they are looking at and may be prepared to sign some agreements, but there are certain conditionalities attached. It will be good if those conditions can never be met. At the end of the day, it is for us to be in a position not to accept anyone. It is just the wrong thing.

Today, it is our fear or concern about requests for us to accept non-nationals. Tomorrow it may be our support for Motherland Africa or some issue, because we

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know the pronouncement that has been made about what is happening in South Africa. Yes? Would we ever reach that stage where we would be prepared to turn against those principles that we have? Where does it stop?

In relation to Haiti, I know we can do that regionally through the Caribbean Congress of Labour, so I'm using this opportunity here. The situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate. My information is correct. Even the interim administration seems to be falling apart, and therefore I am making this call that all the parties in Haiti ought to be engaged, whether you call them gang, whether you call them whatever, they need to be engaged, and we must not be afraid.

As we speak, the Leader of Syria was on one of the most wanted lists, and I think there was a bounty or reward of, is it US\$10, US\$15 or US\$ 25 million dollars, but he was recently accepted, it is in the White House? I'm saying this, that even those who are designated as gang leaders in Haiti, and I know, and we know how easy it is to label certain individuals... I'm making a call for all of their engagement as Haiti seeks to stabilise itself.

For those in the Caribbean region who normally demonstrate their concerns as to how the powers in the north may respond when we engage in activities that they may not be pleased with, as I say, take from this, the development in, as I said, Syria as an example. Yes? Therefore, we must do what is in our best interests, Madam President.

So with these few words, I just wish to repeat our condemnation of the kidnapping again, because that's what it is, that's what it was. I mean, it was rather, you know, heart-wrenching to recognise that a leader of a country, and not just a country, but Venezuela, which has done so much for us, right, that their citizens and the rest of the region and the world can wake up one morning to see the president in shackles.

After all, this is it, this is the leader of a country; this is a leader of a country who has been engaged in international activities, who has been attending international activities, this is not a rogue state, this is not a rogue country. At the same time, we are seeing that the rest of the regime, the US, is engaging with them, so what is the issue? What is the issue?

I know these are difficult times, colleagues. I know it is not easy for you who sit

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in Cabinet. I know it's not easy. Those who are attuned with history will know that these challenges do not remain forever and many times they come out on the better side of history, or stronger by showing resilience, and many times is not what you do, but how you do what you do, diplomatic approaches, but knowing the end result that we want.

Although the issue of the radar may still be alive, I am still repeating, "No to military-grade radar in Grenada. No to non-nationals being sent back or accepted in Grenada"; that will be very well for us.

Just to report, when I last sat here, Madam President, and my colleague, the Minister for Education, I'm pleased to report so far that things are happening. At least the TAMCC matter for 2025 is resolved in terms of the 5% that we knew most of took place, because it was agreed upon. I know that. Yes? So, I'm pleased to report on.

We look forward to the continued engagement with labour because the world right now, as the challenges become more difficult, especially for what we call less developed countries, we have to ensure that our labour practices, as the bastion of that defence against regression of our rights, are not eroded. We in labour will continue to do what is necessary, not just for urbanised labour, but for the labour movement, and the working class, as we seek to hold on to the benefits that we have over the years. So, thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you for all your expressions of solidarity with people across the region. I see the request for the floor from Senator St Clair. You have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St Clair: Thank you, Madam President. I just wanted to make a few comments on the Adjournment. One...

Madam President: I trust they are structured shortly.

(Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St Clair: Yes, they are. We're not asleep as yet.

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One is... We know we had the situation with the fisheries ban to the US, which is a matter that is still unresolved, notwithstanding the submission of the various information to the US. It is a call that I made in the last sitting to both the US and the Government to continue to find common ground on this matter.

The fisherfolk have made one month plus, and we are into February now, and we have to be understanding that they have to live. Yes, they are private businesses, people, et cetera, but as you do cross-border trade, there are issues that are beyond their requirements. Country to country has obligations just like anything else. So, we are calling.

Notwithstanding, all these other issues that Senator Lewis would have brought up, which are very relevant, but we're speaking about an industry that was presented here to be close to, you're speaking about almost half a billion dollars in its whole worth. It's not only in terms of the value of the export, but in terms of all the investment, if you have loans and mortgages and other connecting things. So, we are asking for some consideration and some action on that.

I want to also mention two other key matters, because as Senator Lewis mentioned, when your neighbour's house is on fire... I read recently, I think it's St. Lucia, where they had some issues again from the north, saying that their nationals would not be able to practice medicine in Cuba. We know what Cuba has done for Grenada in terms of not just the Cuban doctors and medical personnel, but also our locals who have studied there and also locals who continue to go to Cuba to gain knowledge for the country.

So, while we speak about fishing, we also have these medical issues. We spoke a lot about that, but today, it might be doctors in St. Lucia. Tomorrow it could be doctors in Grenada, engineers, economists and so on. So, it is a trying time, but we as a nation have to stand up and be firm on things.

The issue of labour. We in the agriculture sector keep complaining about the need for labour and the need for more labour. Some people are thinking about, well, we need to bring more in. The Government is speaking about, well, it is an MoU with the US. Labour is one of the strategies.

Once you go into that conversation, the question is, where are the vital sectors that we need to consult with in making that proper decision, as to a needs analysis?

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If you go into the logic, the question is, how much labour do we need, and is that really the right approach? As Senator Lewis mentioned, how do you utilise our local people and make a great effort in terms of finding that resource?

Because, at the end of the day, all this upheaval within the region, and Senator Rahaman is in the private sector, he knows, the boats are coming here with food stuff, delayed, they're on the port, two, three weeks you cannot clear them, they are delayed a whole two months. We are saying we need to feed ourselves, and that's the result. We need to feed ourselves. How do we do that, and how do we set up all the different resolutions?

So, a few months ago, and that's my closing part, we had a discussion, and we were worried about tariffs, and how to strategise, and then the tariff thing sort of died down, and everybody went quiet, but now it's coming down in a different way, and we still have to feed ourselves. I think that the Government need to start looking at revamping the discussion, strategy and support for the agriculture sector to ensure that we have that resilience. If we fail to act, we will have problems.

Individually, people might be acting, but collectively as a country, we have to take action, because any day we can wake up and we can hear some new measures. What are we doing? How are the people engaged? So, I think we need to start having that system in place, very soon, and that is the comment I wanted to share during this time, as the public issues that are affecting us daily. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, and I'm sure the Government people here have heard the messages you're sending to the Government. Thank you. Senator Rahaman, are you petitioning the floor? You have it. O' I didn't see you. Senator Britton.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Thank you, Madam President. We must congratulate my colleague on the "Other Side". He was very brief.

Madam President, just quickly, as we wind up our independence activities, I just want to encourage the nation to continue to support the activities of our independence. We had some successful ones over the weekend.

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Let me also congratulate the Independence Monarch; she has entered the competition for the very first time, and she's also from St. Mark. Miss Akada Lewis, congratulations to you, and I wish best wishes to you and success in your new endeavour as a calypsonian.

The church service also on Sunday was very well attended, Madam President, as you were there. We wind up the activities... We have National Day of Colours on Friday as well as the Independence Extravaganza at the Bus terminal in Grenville; so big parish we're coming, and I encourage everyone to come out.

On Saturday morning independence morning we start with an activity in St. Mark called "RISE 3.0". It's the third time that we're doing this activity, where we recognise some of our past prime ministers, giving them their recognition in the portrayal of the traditional mass, vieux. So, one band may have to portray fallen comrade Maurice Bishop, or Sir Eric Gairy, as it might be. So, we normally have them being featured, and that starts at 5:30 a.m. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. Those who have gone. Those who have fallen and who died, we choose to recognise.

So, we invite everyone who is listening and wants to come to partake in that, and we move on later in the day with Made in Grenada explore at the stadium, followed by the rally; that is something that we all look forward to.

I think the St. Paul's Independence Extravaganza; that's another big thing, Madam President. We look forward to that as well.

Next week, Kayak Mas is back in full swing, so we'll be journeying up to Carriacou to Kayak Mas to support our brothers and sisters on the Sister Isle. Most of the finals will be next week, and the following week, Monday and Tuesday will be the end of those activities or the winding up of those activities.

Madam President, we are going very well with COMSPAN, the Community Pan Initiative. It's ongoing right now in St. David as well as Carriacou, and the next stop will be St. Mark, so stay tuned, look forward to that. I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for updates and invitations. Thank you. Congratulations to your parishioner, Akada Lewis, the monarch. Congratulations Ms. Lewis. Senator Rahaman.

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Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. We do live in some trying times indeed, and from a national point of view, through consultation, we need to determine where our weaknesses lie and how, through policy and deliberate action, we can strengthen our position on many different fronts.

Of course, when it comes to labour preferences, it is local labour first always, because we are in Grenada, we live in Grenada, we want Grenadians to benefit from Grenada. And so it is important that the consultation, where necessary, is done, so that we can understand the issues that face us, and that we can deal with them in a manner that is in our national interest.

With regard to the Bill that we discussed today, I just want to remind the Government to please put special emphasis have an education programme for the do's and don'ts with regard to what it contains therein, so that there is clear understanding of what is allowed, and what is disallowed, so that this feeling of, you know, "We could do anything we want" is dismissed. Very, very important.

About a year ago, I travelled with a group of teens to Barbados. We were at the beach, and they were approached by a vendor selling what he called "Happy Candy", and when I asked the young boys, "Do you know what that is?" They said, "No", and I said, "That is candy laced with..." **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

Right? So, we have to be very careful of how this evolves and control it so that we get the good of what the Government intends, and we are protected from the bad of what can happen. I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. I echo your call for clarity and caution. I, too, would like to thank all of you for being here today.

First of all, we doubled the time that was taken in the "Other Place". I trust, then, that our input, analysis, and comprehension may have been doubled. I am not sure about that, but it's great that we have come to the end of the exposition, the critique and the recommendations that you made today under this Bill. It's transformative. Let us hope for the better, and it needs, as has been expressed earlier, responses that will point us in the intended direction. Institutional and operational clarity, which was said earlier, is the work of the next stage.

We want to congratulate Sister Judy and others in the Rastafari Community for

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their endurance in giving a clear understanding of this tropical product, this tropical herb, cannabis. Whatever opposition to it, we trust that it would be, and its decriminalisation and its new role in this society would be to the benefit of all.

I join those in cautioning that we make sure that... I think the shift is to responsibilities on families to take control of the education, the behaviour, the understanding of their children, and that's a bit uncomfortable because it's more work for the family, but that's what we have to do to raise children and participate in society in a way that would give us the results you want.

So, many, many NGO's and many institutions are there to do this, and we hope, as has been said earlier, it's a team game, it's a team game that we are into, and I hope we get it right and that we have a great success in our new undertaking.

May I thank all of you, Senators: Government Senators, Independent, and Opposition, for your contributions today? I wish to thank the staff led by Ms. Melvina Gulston, those that we have here with us, Ms Janelle Palmer, and those behind the scenes, the Hansard and everywhere else. We thank them for coming from sunrise to sundown.

I wish to thank the police officers and drivers, medical personnel, caterers and helpers, cleaners, media persons, visitors in the gallery and online, and to thank all the professionals, particularly the legal drafters. You make our work possible, and we anticipate a productive year.

Let me close by extending an invitation on behalf of the Speaker of the House and myself to all Senators past and present, all Parliamentarians past and present, and friends of the Parliament for our first-time Parliamentary Celebration of the 52nd Anniversary of Independence. We think it's the first time the Parliament is doing something because the ministries have traditionally done so. We will do ours here on Thursday, during lunch hour. So, on Thursday at noon, all you colleagues, do please join us. We will be preparing food. We will be preparing steel band music, and we will be preparing a display of our traditional life.

In fact, we are going to ask you, if you have an item at home that you think the nation needs to see bring it along, bring it along: a goblet, a cold, pot an iron, you know, a demijohn; whatever you'd like to bring, we promise we'll get it back to you at the end of the weekend. Do join us on Thursday at 12 noon here at the Parliament.

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Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the Senate adjourned sine die at 6:34 p.m.

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