



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

THIRD SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

SENATE

TUESDAY 27TH MAY, 2025

***Sitting of the Senate
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
on Tuesday 27th May, 2025***

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Attendance

PRESENT

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

- | | |
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| Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas | - Minister for Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture |
| Senator the Honourable David Evlyn Andrew | - Minister for Education |
| Senator the Honourable Quinc Britton | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture with Responsibility for Culture |
| Senator the Honourable 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 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 Rep.) |

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ABSENT

Senator the Honourable Dr. Myanna Charles - Opposition Member of the Senate
(*Excused*)

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***Prayers
Minutes***

The Sitting of the Senate began at 9:07 a.m.

(Senate Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Madam President: Pray be seated. The Senate is convened.

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

Madam President: Good morning, distinguished colleagues. Privileged to call on the Leader of Government's Business, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President, and a pleasant morning to you and your staff. Pleasant morning to my colleagues here and my friends on the "Other Side". Madam President, I stand for the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday, 18th March, 2025, and Thursday, 20th March 2025, at 9.a.m., to be taken as read.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

Madam President: Honourable Senator Adrian Thomas.

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***Minutes
Announcements***

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I stand for the confirmation of the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate held at the Parliament Building Mt. Wheldale, St George's on Tuesday 18th March 2025 and Thursday 20th March 2025 at 9.a.m., be confirmed.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

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

Madam President: Honourable colleagues, we haven't met since March, little over two months ago, and much has transpired since that time. I am certain you have conducted your affairs with much enthusiasm and success. Let me first bring you the apologies of Senator Dr. Mayanna Charles. Her absence is explained by her attendance at a medical conference. Her excuse was submitted and accepted.

I wish to highlight one or two matters that I've been involved in during this passage of almost two months, if I'm correct. We did not meet in April, did we? We attended a meeting on March 25th, actually. The Speaker of the House and I attended a meeting in Washington, D.C., convened by ParlAmericas, which is all the Parliaments of the American hemisphere, from Canada to Chile, not including the Parliament of the United States. 34 or 35 members.

The meeting was principally an annual meeting to look at issues facing the hemisphere and to prepare strategies for the year. And the topic that was most central was the question of responding to security. It is in preparation for the Summit of the Americas. The Tenth Summit of the Americas will be convened in the Caribbean, in the Caribbean state of the Dominican Republic, and the theme will be on security. So, the Parliaments of the Americas examined their advisory and consultative role vis-à-vis the

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executives, heads of state, and governments who will meet in December in the República Dominicana.

I think it's clear to say that the North Americans, particularly the United States, tend to have a different version or different understanding of security than do at least some Caribbean and other parts of the Americas. And so, in looking, let's say, in preparing for this meeting, the region wanted to get its understanding, which I daresay is much more comprehensive than that of military security, primarily by the United States. So these documents have been prepared along with other topics of climate change, open government, and so on. For the meeting in December, parliaments are expected to play a big role and thus the meeting.

I want to bring before you this morning, in this context, the work of one of our own scholars here in Grenada. I have been circulating her work around the Americas because I think it really addresses the way we look at security. The work is produced by Dr. Wendy Grenade, who is chair of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at SGU. Dr. Grenade has published this book entitled "Multidimensional Threats and Regional Responses to Caribbean Security".

I commend you to it because when the debate comes on in December, we in the Caribbean would like to have in the forefront our own understanding, advocacy and prescriptions concerning security. My notion that is also, I think so much of it is in the book, our securities, economic, it's climatic, its military, you know, the entry of small arms into the Caribbean region may not be of concerned to the producers of small arms, but we certainly and Dr. Grenade, I believe looks at that as well. So, I commend it to you. "Multidimensional Threats and Regional Responses to Caribbean Security", Wendy Grenade. You can find her, you know, in and around St. George and in and around Grenada.

My second report is another parliamentary meeting, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), which is over 100 years. It evolved logically, one would say, from the Commonwealth countries. Now, it is the Commonwealth plus. I think I mentioned here that countries like Togo and others are indeed attempting to become members. The CPA highlighted in the meeting, which was convened in London on May 13 and 14, highlighted its transition from being a charitable organisation to being a non-

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charitable international organisation, so it can be more of an advocate. It can have a stronger and more open agenda. It can partner with other groups and so on. And at the CPA annual meeting, all the members will be... Last year, we convened in Sydney, Australia, and this year again, the Caribbean will be hosting the annual meeting of the CPA in Barbados in October. So we are going to see quite a bit of parliamentary diplomacy in the Caribbean region this year.

The other announcement I'd like to make relates to all our internal work, to report that our four committees... The Senate has four standing committees, and these have finally convened under our watch at the beginning of the year. I want to thank all the Members of the various committees.

- The Committee of Selection;
- The Standing Order Committee;
- The House Committee; and
- The Committee of Privileges.

Thank you all for your attendance and your contribution. The reports are being prepared, and it's a long list of to-dos, so you'll certainly be hearing from us.

On May 5, I received a visit from the president and one of the officers of the Grenada Sickle Cell Association. Senator Gloria Thomas, you would be interested to know that they consider your Ministry a partner. The Sickle Cell Association has been going around Grenada testing for sickle cell. The figures are quite high. I don't want to give a false figure here.

But I think in some, either in one of the parishes or nationally, I was told that the figures like one in 10 people in Grenada, which is extremely high, either has a trait or the disease, and that is very, very high if it's correct. I hope somebody will advise me if I'm incorrect before the end of the meeting. But, they are seeking a number of things to go forward, including, you know, a location since they work virtually.

I must say that it's headed up by a former Member of Government, former Senator Ann Antoine, who is giving it, along with others, a lot of energy and support and the testing, particularly with children, because it affects their ability to study.

For those of you who don't know. The sickle cell disease was discovered when a Grenadian, Walter Clement from St. Patrick, went to study dentistry in Chicago in 1919

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or 1914, very early in the century, and he was ill. He couldn't study. He was always in pain. He was suffering, and he was ground zero for the discovery of sickle cell, and he is celebrated worldwide.

I think I may have said this here already in Parliament. The Sickle Cell Foundation wishes that Grenada and Grenadians know about him and celebrate him. It is incumbent upon us to learn more about Walter Clement. There is no monument to him in Sauteurs, and the Sickle Cell Foundation is interested in making that happen, and many other activities relating to treatment and diagnosis. It is a disease in which the red blood cells curve like a sickle instead of being round, and therefore they cannot pass through the veins easily, causing a lot of pain, and so on. We again thank and celebrate the leadership of Ann Antione for her work there in private-public health support in Grenada.

And lastly, I'd like to report on a meeting I had with a young woman, Jenella Edwards, of the National Youth Parliament. Forgive me for naming individuals. But Senator Francis, and all the other young Senators in the Parliament, I'm sure you would be keen to know that there are 18 elected Youth Parliamentarians. They have given us a list of their interest; climate change being one of them, the decoration of the Parliament grounds and the building, the research centre and library for the Parliament and various topics.

If you are interested in having a Youth Parliamentarian as an intern as a youth collaborator, please contact the Clerk, Andrew Augustine, who is actually the mentor of Jenella Edwards. You may contact Jenella Edwards herself directly, who works out of the Ministry of Youth, or you can contact Senator Seville Francis, who is close to that whole operation and a product of Grenada's Youth Parliamentary Organisation. And on that note of youthful success, I end my announcements and thank you for your patience, because I'm sure I had some repeats in there. Thank you, Madam Deputy Clerk.

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

Madam President: Our delightful Senator from St. Andrew North East, Senator Gloria Thomas.

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Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Pleasant good morning to the entire House. I stand to share some developments from the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs.

We continue to work at this Ministry to meet the needs of society's most vulnerable people. Despite challenges, we remain committed to fulfilling our mandate to the citizens. Over the last couple of months, the Ministry has implemented several initiatives, and I take the time to highlight some of these initiatives.

Review of the SEED Targeting Tool

Madam President, we are in the process of reviewing the SEED Targeting Tool through technical assistance from the World Bank. The Grenada living condition index was developed to ensure that the selection of beneficiaries is transparent and objective. The Grenada Living Condition Index places different weights on variables that are closely related to consumption and observable household characteristics. The weights were determined using information from the 2011 National Census and the 2008 Grenada Poverty Assessment, which is now outdated and does not reflect our current socioeconomic realities.

Therefore, the review of the tool will improve targeting by facilitating more accurate beneficiary selection, and the review process includes a technical review and training of Seed Officers in the use of the new tool. This activity has already been completed. Piloting of the tool using a small sample size of households for technical testing purposes; this has already been completed. A preliminary analysis will be conducted for initial assessment. Implementation of the pilot phase two using a larger sample size and a comprehensive analysis will be conducted to inform final adjustments and full implementation of the new tool.

Parenting

Throughout May 2025, a series of parenting sessions were conducted in selected communities across the island, including Mt. Horne, River Sallee, Willis, St. John and St. David. These sessions were broadcast live to allow more people to benefit from the information shared. The session aimed to enhance parenting skills by promoting effective strategies and approaches in raising our children.

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Madam President, the Ministry also hosted a Corporate Partners Award Ceremony at Spice Island Beach Resort to recognise organisations that have supported the Parenting Educational Unit over the years. The event was held under the theme, “*Strengthening Families, Building Futures, Honouring Partnership for Resilience and Growth*”. This saw, 31 plaques being presented to representatives of various partners and organisations.

PHAST Collaboration—Disabilities Support Assessment

Madam President, in an effort to strengthen support for persons living with disability, the Ministry collaborated with the Public Health Action Support Team (PHAST) from the University Of Michigan School Of Public Health to conduct a week-long evaluation to assess Grenada’s readiness to provide accessible services across public sectors and schools.

Their assessment included evaluation of facilities, services and policies for compliance with disability access standards, focus group discussions with individuals living with disabilities and related organisations, key informant interviews with Ministry officials and a site visit to various public buildings. Madam President, stakeholders were engaged to better understand the perceptions and identify service gaps that need to be addressed.

National Population Policy

Madam President, we have successfully completed the draft Evidence-based National Population Policy. The aim of the policy is to guide sustainable development planning by integrating population trends into policy and programme formulation. It focuses on demographic resilience, youth empowerment, migration and ageing. This framework emphasises the importance of demographic resilience and enhancing the capacity of the population to adapt to social, economic and environmental changes, whilst fostering linkages between set targets and our development outcomes.

Grenada’s High-Level Policy Dialogue and Disability Inclusion

Madam President, the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs is presently in the process of finalising arrangements to host a two-day high-level policy dialogue on disability inclusion, rights protection, and state responsibility, scheduled for June 3 and 4, 2025, at the Radisson Beach Resort.

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The event will be held under the theme, “*Advancing Equity and Dignity, Strengthening Disability Inclusion In Grenada’s Development Framework*”. This two-day dialogue will convene Government Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments, Development Partners and organisations of persons with disabilities to examine national priorities, enhance policy coherence and accelerate inclusive development outcomes.

The programme will include keynote presentations, panel discussions, thematic breakout sessions and a policy round table on accessibility, accountability and institutional collaboration. A key output will be the adoption of a call to action, a road map of recommendations, timelines and responsibility to guide implementation and integrate disability inclusion across national frameworks.

This road map will be part of Grenada’s presentation at the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of People with disability, which will be held from June 10 to 12 at United Nations Headquarters. Madam President, Grenada looks forward to being part of this very important forum.

As a Ministry, we continue to champion the rights of our people, improve access to social protection, educate our young women and men, and provide opportunities for their empowerment as we strive to ensure that no one is left behind. Thank you.
(Applause)

Madam President: I thank the distinguished Senator and would also just like to echo the significance of your two-day seminar on disability rights focusing on inclusion. It is truly an important development in our human rights reality in the country, and I do hope that it is well attended. And to underscore the importance of it in a second sense, in that it is the local that we can then take to the global. If we do our work at home, then when we participate in the global reporting sessions, we are on firmer, more credible grounds. So, thank you. Thank you, Senator Thomas. Continue your good work. Senator St. Clair, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. Thank you again, I want to have my note record of the appreciation to Senator Thomas for always, I

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will say always. I don't think there was a session, maybe if once at all, that she hasn't provided an update from her Ministry.

I keep saying this because we speak a lot about the other things, but the issue of the social and our people and so on is so important, and we must not lose sight. We speak about this society and what is happening, but the fabric is contained by the efforts in this Social Ministry, and all the support that is necessary, morally and otherwise, needs to be given. You know, we speak about the youths and how people misbehave in all of these things, which is tied into the parenting and all those things.

So, I always want to commend her for the obligation she provides to keeping the nation abreast. We speaking about, you know, the debt service levy and what's going on with the national debt. All of this is good, on one end, and then if she doesn't come up with this part, we forget that it exists, and I think that she had to be commended constantly for this effort, and her staff too, for the work they are doing regarding.

The issue of the selection tool in terms of the SEED Programme is good. From time to time, you have to recalibrate from science, I would say recalibration of situations and improvement based on lessons learn. And so, this is good, because what exists then, the circumstances and all of those things, would have changed. And so this is good to have it be current. Of course, whilst we use the expertise of the World Bank and others, we at the same time also have to try to make sure we build our local capacity in terms of the continuity and sustainable independence in the way we handle those things.

The other one I wanted to note, Madam President, had to do with the national population policy. You know, this is so important because there is so much discussion about whether we have enough population if we want to develop, but also, there are a lot of things. We have a sustainable development plan, but how does the population fit into that, not only for a human resource capacity standpoint, but also in terms of consumption? Consumption is not necessarily in eating, but utilisation, so that businesses, and services and economics can survive. What does the population look like in the next 30/ 40 years? How would that person be? You know? What should they be able to do? You know?

These are the sort of things we have to imagine downstream and not just the general talk about we are the increased population, but what would they be doing? How

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would they be generating wealth? How will they make the country better? Would it be worse with more criminals or with better people? What would that frame be?

And I think that conversation... I don't want to use the word "that conversation". I strike that back because that is becoming a cliché "this conversation" is more talk. But the action that would be necessary to drive that sort of output that we're looking for downstream needs to be taken on board now, so that youth who are there now, the next 30 years, 40 years, how do they see they sell fitting in and continuing that dream.

So I think this is commendable but I think the youths, the younger ones has to be involved and how do we get the elderly also to impact knowledge of their learnings and experiences from the past. So this is very good.

And of course, the last issue of disability is very important because you know people must not be left out or feel left out, you know. Because maybe you don't know the deal with it. Maybe they don't know how to accommodate for it. You know. Not only in the way we build our buildings, but in the way we offer services, the way we reach out to people, and the way we treat them or the way they are accommodated. They mustn't feel less and so on.

So, I think this effort needs to continue in all walks of life, and it must not be used as a poster initiative, but as a genuine initiative where you want to really make people not feel, but... Feeling is not it. There must be part of it. They must be really sitting at the table and contributing in all different ways. You know, and particularly, for the younger ones, I mean, you may say well the elderly one well they live their life already, but the younger ones who have a future of 20 or 30 years in front of them how do they see themselves fitting into this society that we're speaking about.

So, this is very important... How do we cater to them, whether it's in the education system or in business services? How do we facilitate all of these things? I trust that there will be broader discussion at the local level in terms of how we accommodate. And also get these folks to participate because they alone know how they feel. As they say, "Who feels it knows it". You know. To what extent are these individuals actively involved in contributing to their feelings and expectations, and how do we design to accommodate them in the way we live?

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So, I wanted to share these comments and commend Senator Thomas for the continued work and her staff because she's not doing it on her own. Her staff have to be dedicated and be there with her. So, these are my remarks. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. On behalf of Senator Thomas, I thank you for your thanks to her. Other ministerial statements and comments? Thank you. Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Good morning, Madam President, and thank you for the opportunity. Just a brief comment with regards to Senator Thomas and the work that she is doing. We all want to live in a productive society. When we ask ourselves, "What is the value of a human being? What is the value of a citizen of this country, and how do we shape that citizen?" That's the role that Senator Thomas plays in her Ministry. A very, very critical role that is often overlooked, and my colleague just touched on it.

Because the services that we provide to our citizens especially the most needy of them and in terms of their well-being, the honour that we give to them so that they can be dignified even though they may be less fortunate than others will have an impact on their education, their outlook in life, will have an impact on the labour force in the future and will have an impact on our business and our economy.

So, I just wanted to mention that because sometimes we think that, you know, youth who misbehave, also certain programmes, we don't have that problem. That is not our problem. The Government has to deal with that, but that is a job of every leader in the country, whether you belong to a church, whether it's Parliament, whether it's labour, or whether it's business. We all have to look out for the people that her Ministry seeks to uplift.

So, I didn't want the opportunity to pass without making mention of that, so that we remind ourselves as leaders that we don't just punch in and punch out, and we have a greater responsibility to those in society who don't have that, and can't help themselves. So, I thank you for the good work that you do, Senator Thomas. Thank you.

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Madam President: Again, I thank you, Senator Rahaman, for your thanks to the people who are taking care of the people of the country. It's very important. Both of you, Independent Senators who responded and have commented on the impact of the Ministry of Social Development, not just the youths of today, but the preparation of the youth for tomorrow. And that itself is the subject of a large conversation; suffice to say, how grateful we are that it is happening. We have so much more to say, but just thank you and move on. Yes. I think Senator André Lewis is requesting the floor and is being offered the floor, but not before I extend my congratulations to the workers of Grenada and to the nation on its celebration of May Day, which just concluded on May 1st. Thank you, Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam Senator. President. Also, a Senator, so I don't have it wrong. If you would permit me, because you complimented the workers on their celebration of May Day, there was an omission that I made on May Day that I think I ought to have done and to recognise, I want to do it here, to recognise the contribution of Senator Quinc Britton. Comrade, thanks for the contribution that you made to us in St. Mark. Those of us, including myself, who face some challenges called him at various times in the night, in the morning, in the day and as per usual, you have stepped up to the plate. I ought to have made that recognition on May 1st, but I did not do it, and for this, I wanted to use this opportunity to do that, because you introduced the aspect of May Day, I sort of latched onto it. Thank you very much. Thanks for your contributions, my brother. You're a good guy, yes. **(Laughter)**

Madam President, I too wish to compliment the Minister, but I want to go on the other side of the spectrum, that is at the homes to the people who have contributed to our society and who have challenges today for us to continue the work that we are doing as we look after their interests.

And just indicate that Labour, certainly one of our unions, did meet with the Minister. Our approach to these industrial matters, you know, is not a traditional or what you may call "classic". Many times, you do not hear of it because we are constrained by the nature of the people in the homes. And we are therefore using this opportunity to once again also... We were in Carriacou most recently, one of the unions, the Technical

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and Allied Workers Union, where we distributed water to all of our members in Carriacou, right, and even beyond our members, because there is a water crisis in Carriacou in terms of drinking.

As we continue to look out for the homes, Senator, I am giving you our commitment to continue to work along with you and get more engagement as we come up with ways and means of ensuring that these colleagues, our parents, our grandparents, our friends who have contributed to our society and find themselves now in not some of the best conditions, that we continue to look after them.

So, I wanted to publicly give that commitment, and therefore, I look forward, not too long from now, to a continued re-engagement with you and the union that met with us as we discuss ways and means of bringing practical benefits to the people in the home and for the workers. As Senator St. Clair indicated, your Ministry workers played a very important role, but the workers who toil every day, sometimes not under the best conditions, and we understand the limitations and challenges we have to continue looking after them, and we give that commitment to work along with you. I look forward to a very soon engagement with you to continue that discussion. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Such collaboration warms our hearts as citizens, and we look forward to residents and workers in residential homes benefiting from this pledged collaboration. Thank you all.

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

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

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to present the following Papers and Reports from Select Committees, with three presentations here.

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Presentation of Papers / Reports

1. Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee (FROC) 2024 Annual Report (April 23, 2025);
2. Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee (FROC) 2024 Annual Report at a Glance (April 23, 2025);
3. Proceeds of Crime (Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Guidelines, 2024 (to be laid for negative Resolution).

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Thomas. Honourable Members, the following three Papers are laid before the Senate.

1. Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee (FROC) 2024 Annual Report (April 23, 2025);
 2. Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee (FROC) 2024 Annual Report at a Glance (April 23, 2025);
 3. Proceeds of Crime (Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Guidelines, 2024 (to be laid for negative Resolution).
- Senator Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Could I speak on any of the Reports now before...

Madam President: That's correct. There is no vote. Acknowledgement and conversations. Conversation begins with you, Senator Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. I just briefly wanted to touch on the FROC Report 2024, which is the main report, and just draw attention to a few items. On page XXX, statutory bodies to highlight the report from the FROC which speaks about the need for the, and I'm making a plea for the audited accounts to be laid in Parliament from the statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises. I'm just pulling that out of the report, and to highlight that we need to get acting on those things. So the ministers and ministries responsible for these should look into them.

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Then on page XXXI, this must be of concern. Under compliance with fiscal transparency, given how much we currently place emphasis on accountability and transparency, I will just read what was said under the part that I am referring to. It says, "In relation to the medium-term debt management strategy and audited public accounts, those were not submitted to Parliament in accordance with the legislation". This is from the FROC. This is from the Committee. It also says, "The report on Tax Concessions has not been submitted to Parliament". I'm not clear on what that means, whether or not it ought to be submitted. I would like it to be submitted. Yes? I'm just reading. It says, "A report on Tax Concessions has not been submitted to Parliament". So these things are extremely important for us as we review the different performances and guidelines.

I am now going on to the recommendations on page XXXII. Recommendations. I'm just pulling out one because it is one that the Labour Movement has been clamouring for, for years, and it has become a constant refrain of ours, especially as we head into a new round of public sector negotiations. You see, time is longer than twine.

Three years must pass because that is the term period of the agreement that we have. Therefore, by the end of this year, certainly by about the start of the fourth quarter, we ought to commence negotiations for a new period to do the wages and other benefits.

It says the FROC recommends the following in relation to the Fiscal Resilience Act, and this one is of most interest to me. It says, "Elimination of the Wage Bill Rule". Yes? In other words, the Wage Bill Rule we know puts a statutory constraint on negotiations. That's our analysis. That may not be the reason that the FROC has made that observation, but it dovetails with something that we have been clamouring for. I just wanted to highlight that.

And if I go quickly, now to the FROC 2024 Annual Report at a Glance on page 3. I want to make an observation and ask a question. It's on page 3. It's under the Executive Summary, I think, on page 3. I am reading the last sentence of the first paragraph, where it starts with, "Information is available on social indicators", but I will just go to the last sentence. It says, "The results of the Labour Force Surveys of 2023 indicated that there were relatively high levels of unemployed human resources, particularly between the ages of 15 and 19".

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Now, my colleague and I, Senator St. Clair, had a brief discussion on the matter and my comment to him based on his observation... My comment now is from a different angle. So we recognise that in 2024, 2025, up to age 18, you ought to be in school. I am correct, Minister? Education? Right. So, it therefore, means that this 2023 was before that legislative change. Having said that, it highlighted, and that can be one of the, if one says—positive, if properly done, impacts of the changes that 16, 17, 18 ought to be in school. So, they will not be included, or ought not to be included, in the unemployment rate, which was high.

The question that would arise going forward is—because this is for 2023. So, I'm accepting the data. I'm accepting the data. I'm looking forward to see what it would be for 2025, 2026 and to find out is the new legislation being implemented and the rate of success to ensure that these age group that was significantly impacted by a high rate of unemployment regardless of the reasons; whether or not there was a mismatch in terms of your education system, whether or not the youthful exuberance from youth didn't allow them to look for work.

Although I will think, given the definition that is normally used to determine unemployment, which I disagree with, sometimes people just get fed up and do not show an interest in looking for work. If you recognise that all of your efforts have failed, so that when the survey is being done, and if you show a lack of interest in looking for something to do, like hanging out on blocks, they may not include you. The unemployment rate is normally influenced heavily by the outlook of the individuals who are unemployed, whether or not they are interested in looking for work. These scenarios can be impacted by whether or not the targeted group has confidence in the system, as to whether or not the conditions are okay. In some instances, you find people are not satisfied with the working conditions.

So, I will be looking forward, through you, Madam President, through the Minister for Education, on what I call the front end from 18 down. Because once you're below 18, you ought to be in school or engaged in some educational, academic or skill training engagement to see what we do with this group of individuals who will not be reflected in the next Labour Survey. Because in my view, and if I'm wrong, the minister or some other

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government official here can correct me, because they are now expected to be engaged outside of working, the next survey will not capture them.

If it does not capture them and we are not staying on top of what ought to happen to them, we might have a group of people who is left out of the system that can impact the concerns that our Minister for Social Development has, and our Private Sector Representative indicated where you can have the more deviant development taking place.

So, I wanted to flag that from the FROC Report and to develop a bit and make a request through you so that the "Government Side" can give us a report at some stage as to how effective the new legislation has been, the support systems that have been put in place, and where are the provisions or facilities to have them engage. So, that can help us in having an appreciation of where we are heading. Those are just some of my cursory observations, comments, and questions. Thank you very, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Lewis, for your correction, or I wouldn't say apology, but your correction to include Senator Quinc in your Labour Day. I think it's generous in my animus of you. As regards your comments on the FROC, like others, it's insightful, and that is a very interesting and sometimes problematic demography to capture. At 15 to 18, it's really a period of transition, as you correctly state. The Minister for Education will provide some input on that, the Minister for Social Development and the Minister for Labour. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Pardon? The Minister for Youth. It's really quite an interesting demographic in the country. So, thank you for zooming in on it in relation to the standing in the labour market, educational system and otherwise. Senator Roderick St. Clair, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make some contributions towards the FROC Report. In particular, I use the "At a Glance", as the summary document. Whilst we do have it here, we trust that the general public can also have access to this because it really gives us what is happening around us in a fair way, I would say.

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I want to start by making a comment and complimenting the Committee for the work that they are doing. In fact, I noticed on page 26 of the report in the recommendation section, chart 12, the Committee is actually asking to have two economists on board because I guess they realise now that their work is so demanding and to give a proper report, they need that support. I was briefly trying to get to the Act, which I didn't really get to, to see if there'll be a need to make some adjustments to mend the Act in terms of the composition. But from where it sits, I think that the support that they need is important because they provide information for everybody. I say, "*Tout moun bagay*", you know, suck that we can get a better oversight of everything that is happening. So, I want to start with this.

Of course, the Chairwoman's message, Ms. Bain. Her message was very insightful on page 3, I think it was. Just let me make sure it's on page 3. Chairman's Message; page 3. What is important for me in paragraph two, you know that was very significant, was some very telling information that the FROC captured as shaping the whole economy. They speak about the issue of heavy rainfall. In fact, there are some specific dates, such as the 8th to 19th of November. You know, November is normally the wettest period for the past few years, with a lot of rain and how that would have interfered with agricultural outputs. I think we, from the agriculture sector, want to recognise the dilemma we face, but as you go deeper into the report, it also speaks about the drought earlier in 2024, and of course, we know the issue of Beryl.

So, I said this to say, Madam President, you know, here the FROC is telling us almost what we know and validating a very important factor of output from agriculture, which has to do with food, livelihood, employment, all of those factors. We see three issues all tied to climate change, and all of those factors. So it means as a country, notwithstanding everything, our whole resilience in terms of handling that is very important.

In fact, it was interesting to see that it also highlighted the floods in Grenville in December. I mean, every day we get floods in Grenville except maybe when there is sun. Grenville could flood three times a week once there is rain, and we know there is a long-standing issue that needs to be addressed, and we in that parish, in that town, want to really make some noise about that.

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All the businesses in Grenville would suffer. I mean, from the Nutmeg Association, we have one of the biggest buildings, and there's water from all corners. So, the fact is that I am happy that the FROC has highlighted that, and we can really spend some effort to really find that solution in Grenville with this flooding, because it's very disruptive.

But, more so in light of the agricultural outputs. What is interesting in the report is that later on, under the economic and social context of the report. I didn't flag the page. I think it's somewhere around page... I didn't flag the page. I think it's just before page 21. It's somewhere in that space. What is important is the whole issue of the increase in imports. And we know a lot of our imports again relate to our whole food security and all of those things. So I am saying that it's critical that we really pay attention and see how we can use these reports for tactics, not just strategies, but for tactics. Two important things were highlighted by Madam Chairperson of the Committee on pages 3 to 4 of the report. She spoke about building resilience, and they looked at everything.

The issue of governance and institutions, and how we respond to all of these challenges, and the whole issue of human capacity. It comes back to the same point we were speaking about this morning. I was so happy because when we had that discussion about the effect in the north and the threat to our food security. I remember specifically making a contribution to that audience, and the issue of institutions in terms of our governance and so on was highlighted. I am really happy to see that. This is being flagged, and the issue of governance is being flagged specifically in this report on two issues.

The issues that my dear Senator André Lewis raised in terms of our public account audits. You know. Whilst the FROC is calling for more persons to do economics, the FROC may also need to ensure that our Government Ministries are properly staffed so that the sort of outputs that those ministries need to provide are not hindered by a lack of human resources. So, a word to the wise is enough. So, I think that might be the first part that the FROC needs to see. Ensure that we have proper staffing, such that the reports that we need can be good. Because if the system is not proper, the FROC will always be off and saying, well, we didn't get the reports.

The issue of the Public Accounts Committee, which I sit on, having had one meeting some months ago, and the call for this to be more active. I endorse that because

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it provides a very important role, not only to find wrong things, but also to help support the system. How do we ensure that we understand what the challenges are, and we can better lobby and ensure that the executive side, when it comes to budget and resources, can get the resources that they need? It's a good thing to complain about things, but if the system is not right and the resources are not there, we could sit here hoping and leave with some sort of expectation that would not happen.

So, I put that in this context. I commend the Chairwoman for highlighting this issue. Then the issue of the human resource capacity to fill the skills gap and all these other things. I think that's a whole discussion on that this morning. I think it's something that we should not leave unwanted in the process.

The last area I want to speak on very briefly is the issue of the recommendation. Of course, one of the... In chat 12, one of the recommendations had to do with the two economists, and the other issue had to deal with the overall compliance with the various aspects of the Act, and how we support. I think that is what I want to say. How do we support them in their work, because it should not just be seen as a group of persons on the side doing something there, because you could see they are genuinely trying to catch up, and in whatever way, they need the support, we would need to give them. I rest my case pertaining to this matter. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair, and I do hope that the FROC is listening to you and your colleagues' review and compliments on the usefulness, effectiveness and tartness of the report. It is in order to capture your sentiments and through the Members on the "Other Side", and the Leader of Government's Business, to convey the Senate's appreciation to the FROC for its insightful and effective work. Thank you, FROC. Other comments from any side of the aisle? Senator Rahaman, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. I, too, would like to commend the FROC for the work that they have done and continue to do, the excellent work, because if we don't have figures, Madam President, all we have are words, and

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words really mean nothing if you don't have figures to verify them. Many people are quite good at speaking, but the figures speak clearly for themselves.

So, a few comments from it, starting off with what my colleague just mentioned. In order to do the work and crunch the figures, one of the recommendations they asked for was at least two economists. We need to make sure, and I'm repeating it because I support that, we need to make sure that they have the tools that they need to report to Parliament accurately on the state of our economic affairs, so that we can debate the issues currently that are present. We want real data as current as it can be, and for that, if they need support, it is essential for our economy and for predictions that they have, that support is made available to them.

In addition, in the FROC Annual Report on page 67, in the middle of 67. To support what I'm saying, they said, "The publication of timely and regular fiscal and debt data and information is an important element of fiscal transparency. The FROC, therefore, continues to urge the timely publication of the monthly. So they need what? The timely publication from the ministry of the monthly Fiscal Summary Report and the establishment of a 'Release Calendar'. Very important. The establishment of a 'Release Calendar' allows for the predictability of the dates for the publication of the fiscal report.

Remember, they have to submit reports to the Parliament, by law, at certain times, and so the establishment of a 'Release Calendar' will set those guidelines as to when they will get it to make sure that we have the information before us.

So, looking into the report briefly, we see that from 2023 to 2024, the Government took on an additional EC\$48.3m in debt. So the debt figure went from EC\$2,739m to EC\$2690.7m. We see that from the business in terms of liquidity in the country. We see that the banks from 2023 to 2024 have given out more credit, primarily to the private sector. The banks' lending to the private sector increased by 10.4% from 2023 to 2024; that is to the tune of EC\$192m, and that's just the banks, not the credit unions. The credit unions also, we see from their report, had an increase of 10.6% in lending. Primarily again to the private sector, which is EC\$106.9m.

So in total, almost EC\$300m. EC\$298.9m, that's \$299m, was lent by these institutions. A 10% increase by both of them, 10.4%, 10.6%. Two people in this economy,

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which bodes very well for these credit institutions. I mean, they are doing quite well because they have a 10% increase in their loan portfolios.

At the same time, we see from the FROC Report that the percentage of non-performing loans for banks decreases from 3.4% to 2.9%. So they have fewer people defaulting, so that's good for their business. We see with the credit unions, which generally take on a little more risk than the banks, because when you look at their clientele, their members, they have also dropped from 8.8% in terms of their non-performing loans to 6.5%.

What comes to mind, Madam President, and what I would like to see, is the average percentage of these loans. What are our people getting themselves into in terms of what it costs them in the long term? And I say this to say that whilst we want liquidity in the market and whilst we are happy to see the 10% that the credit unions and the banks are actually lending and providing, than in prior years, they were asked to do...

The other concern that comes to mind is that, and the reason why I mentioned this is in speaking over the years to young people and when I say young, I mean under 25, so 18 to 25, that takes more loans, which are loans under EC\$20,000. When you ask them what the percentage rate is that you got for this loan? The vast majority of them I have asked cannot tell me what the rate is. They don't know or they can't remember. And so that is the most crucial thing: what percentage are you paying? What percentage are you paying? How long are you going to be indebted for? Because the purpose of debt is to help build, not to restrain. Right? So, that is important. If it is possible for us to get that type of data in terms of averages every year from FROC. What is the average percentage amount that is lent across the board?

The report spoke about climate change. The report speaks about wars, and I would like to mention this with regard to our economy, and economies in the region, the OECS and to some extent CARICOM. There are major economies in the world that, in recent times, have done some very serious things. We saw it with the tariffs. We saw a trade war that we have never seen in modern history unfold before our eyes, and it is still going on, although there is a 90-day reprieve between the two largest economies in the world: China and the United States.

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We saw that tariffs have ranged from 10% all the way to 145%, making it unprofitable to continue business, such that goods that were headed to the United States, those ships turned around and went back to port because it didn't make sense for them to buy it. What does that mean to us? That means that when the United States, for example, and China had their trade war, there was a glut on the market of goods. Many of us saw on social media a lot of Chinese companies going to the world and telling the world how much they've actually produced a pair of sneakers for, how much they've actually produce a bag for and how much profit these international companies are really making as part of their outreach to try to get business elsewhere.

What that did for a lot of us in the world is that it allowed individuals as well as businesses to drop the price of goods and allow John Public to buy from sources that they didn't previously know of and to get them at good prices. So, freight rates actually fell during that period, and in Grenada, too, they fell to about EC\$7,000. Now, with the 90-day window that China and the United States have agreed to, where the percentages have dropped from 145% to 30% on the American side and 10% tariffs on the Chinese side, freight rates are going back up. So now freight rates last week to Grenada from Asia are up to about US\$10,000, so a 30% increase in one month in freight.

That has an implication on the cost of goods here locally in Grenada. Why? Because the US is the primary market, once they open back up for business, all the available spots that were there for the rest of the world are now heading back to the US. This might be boring stuff to listen to, but it's very important because it has an effect on your pocket, my pocket and the nation's finances. And so it is important to understand what's going on in the world and how it impacts us. So even when we debate on something and financial things locally, we have to look at what's going on abroad, and we have to make sure that within the region, we put policies in place to try to lessen these impacts.

In addition, when we talk about lessening the impacts and we speak about the climate, Madam President, we have been affected by the various wars that have happened recently and continue to happen. It seems that every time, if it's not a hurricane, it's a war or something that's affecting us, when they talk about climate change.

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We speak and we hear that the manufacturing economies are the key polluters, and so they should pay a greater share.

But, we don't ever hear about the effect of wars on climate change because when a bomb explodes, doesn't it produce heat? What is the quantity? What is the effect of these wars that are happening very often today on climate change? Where is that study, and who should pay? Because if they are paying for the effect that they have on manufacturing, because they manufacture more and they give countries credits, shouldn't they be giving countries like us, which are peaceful countries, credits when they go to war? Shouldn't they be paying the rest of us for destroying the climate?

I've recently read a report where the amount of bombs dropped on Gaza is five times the amount that was dropped on Japan; more than that, the report said. I am being very conservative. So that begs the question, in addition to the humanitarian crises, which the global leaders don't seem to have the appetite to solve, the climate cost to all of us who live in this world needs to be addressed internationally. So when you speak about security at the security conferences that are coming up, these things need to be addressed because we are affected by it. Climate change is serious. It affects us, and they have to pay for the decisions they make. Those who enter into the wars. Those who benefit from the wars. Those who supply the ammunition. These have an effect on our climate, our economy, and the world's economy, and I am not hearing people speaking about that.

Moving on. Madam President, the Wage Bill. I heard my colleague for Labour say it is his hope that they would remove the rule, but I differ. We have seen that the rule has been extended when necessary. We have seen that in recent times, while we here have been serving, that it have changed from 9% to 13%, a huge increase and so we have seen that, that was set before as a gauge and that the Government realise the necessity to make some changes because of the increase in minimum wage and so on because of the increase in the cost of living and the private sector did support that in consultations with Government.

But you must have rules in place. You can't just abandon the rules. You must have rules in place to provide these guidelines so that governments know the areas that they have to perform within and if they need to make adjustments. They have the ability

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to make the adjustments. They can make the adjustments when and if they need to make them. But, the rules must be in place, because it's not a little bit, it concerns a small, insignificant part of the Budget. The Wage Bill is a significant part of the Government's finances, and that's why those rules are there, and that's why the economist suggested that we have those rules.

I differ with my colleague, of course, they would have to enter into their negotiations and so on. When that time comes for that rule to be changed, then it will be debated by whichever Parliament, and then it can change. Those rules are necessary for checks and balances in the economy.

Finally, Madam President, on a positive note. We see from the report that the Government is meeting its targets in terms of the reduction of debt, and that is partly also because of the increase in nominal GDP. So the economy is growing. Right? So they are meeting their debt target, 60% by 2035. They got a green on that, so I commend them on that, and the economy is projected to grow a little more than it was anticipated to grow. So that is a good thing. It means that we're in a better position or we're in a good position coming out of Beryl, even though it is difficult for the economy. We didn't plan for it. And so the effect of Beryl is not as dire on the economy as it would have been if the economy weren't resilient.

So with that, I thank those who have prepared the FROC Report. One, that report is 155 pages. If we don't read it or review it (a lot of work has gone into that), then we are doing our people a disservice by coming up here and passing something without commenting on some of the issues that are in the report. I didn't intend to take this amount of time, but there is a lot more to discuss in the Report, and I am trying to be brief. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you so much, Senator Rahaman. You are doing the country a service by analysing carefully and pointedly critical areas covered by the FROC. The real service was done by the person, since you are speaking through that person, the one who taught you to love mathematics—your parents, your teacher, your math teacher, and others who taught you to love math. We thank them.

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I want to pass that on. I heard that and I am listening with my ear for youth, my ear for children and my ear for women. With my ear for youth, I heard how you love math, and I want to pass that on to young people and to say to young people who may or may not be listening, and math teachers, see how far it can get you. Fall in love with math. Thank you, Senator Rahaman, for your oversight function. This is what we are here for. Sorry to be talking so much this morning, but this is what we are here for, to focus on reports and information that's in circulation in the society and to comment on it, whether it is on wages, trade, debt, loans and so on. Thank you. Thank you for your attentiveness to the report. Any other comments or observations? I see the request for the floor by our first-time morning speaker. Your morning maiden address, Senator David.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning to you, good morning to all of the staff here at the Parliament and my colleagues on the "Other Side" and on "This Side" and to viewers and listeners wherever you are following the proceedings in this Honourable House.

I just rise too to join my voice in commending the Members of the FROC for their dedication and commitment to Grenada and to seeing the business of the country being done and carried out in keeping with established guidelines and to be able to critically analyse, make recommendations, give the green light where they're appropriate, and point to the amber and the red where they're not. So I want to commend them and put on record commendations to them.

But I want to take the opportunity for the average person listening in Telescope or listening in Soubise or in Café or Mama Cannes, I am choosing just to share a few critical things from the report, "At a Glance", the growth performance of the economy. The report highlights that the impact of natural disasters, Beryl, the rain, and even the flooding that Senator St. Clair alluded to were the context in which this economic report was being considered and conducted. And even before I go on to what they say in the report, I am happy to report Senator St. Clair that in the context of the Grenville and the flooding issue, there is ongoing research and activity concerning the flood mitigation.

There is the GRIP Project that is actively engaged in studies looking at the water flow where the major catchment areas come from, and the recommendations to have

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various interventions to treat with the water. I was privy to some of the discussions, and some of them included ponds, changing the waterway, and windmill discussions. A number of different options are being considered in this review. I am very optimistic and very confident that in short enough order there will be a meaningful presentation to the public as to viable options that can be pursued. I am a Grenville man too, so I am very concerned about this development and want to see it happen and happen well.

But the report indicates that the economy registered an estimated growth of 3.7% in 2024. I mean that's in the context of Beryl, in the context of the floods, in the context of droughts that we had just a month before Beryl; the report highlights that. The report says this follows a growth of 4.5% in the previous year. So it shows that there is a growth trajectory, and that is commendable.

The report goes on to highlight that the inflation trended downwards as the rate fell to 1.2%. The inflation trended downwards as the rate fell to 1.2%, and inflation usually refers to the rise in the cost of goods and services. It is saying that this is trending downwards from 2.7% in 2023 to 1.2%. And I know there are very commendable measures that this Administration has put in place in the last few budgets well, to mitigate the cost of living; strong cost of living measures, ranging from subsidies on payments towards utility bills, to reduction in VAT by 50% from 15% to 7.5%, the reduction in the fuel charges at the pumps from EC\$5.50 to EC\$3.50, I think it is. So there are a number of measures and then the extension of the list of zero-rated items for persons, including baby formula, sanitary material and a number of things, but we are aware that those interventions contributed to that reduction in inflation. So I am commending the Government for that too, and the FROC for their astute observation that those things have happened.

It goes on to say that the tourism industry continued to register growth in 2024, as total visitor arrivals increased 4% to 524,708. It goes on to say that stay-over visitors are 9.5% and cruise ship passengers are 2.8%. Right? It talks about a decrease in the yachting sector by 24.5%. I think we can understand why that happened. A lot of the yachts in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, we saw how they folded up and ended up wherever they ended up during Beryl, and so that wasn't a good period for that sector.

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But the Report goes on to say the construction sector registered moderate growth of 2.7%, coming from a decline in the previous period of 11.7%. Now that is a tremendous comeback and, of course, we can attribute a lot of this to post-Beryl construction, but it points to massive growth in that sector for the economy.

It says the activity in the wholesale and retail sectors received a boost from the recovery efforts. The sector grew by an estimated 5.4% in 2024. The last one I want to say, Madam President, is that manufacturing, even the manufacturing sector, grew by an estimated 5.9%. Now, for me, those are commendable observations that were pointed out by the FROC as part of the growth projections and observations within the last fiscal year.

And so I want to commend all of the statutory bodies, because the Hotel and Tourism Authority, all of the authorities involved in working to see these good figures realised, the positive growth that is being realised and reported here. I want to commend them all, and then again, I want to commend the FROC for the preparation of these reports. I thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator David Andrew, for your insightful discovery of where the growth and inflation reduction would have occurred. And as a farmer up in Mama Cannes, I could become more interested in the economy, plug myself into the growth and attach myself with the reading of the FROC Report. Thank you. Thank you all very much and commendations again to Ms. Bain.

- Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 9 – Petitions.
Item 10 – Government Notices.
Item 11 – Unofficial Notices.
Item 12 – Questions.
Item 13 – Personal Explanations.
Item 14 – Motions.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

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Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I am happy to rise at this point in time, after my colleague has outlined some very important aspects of the FROC Report. Despite what he has outlined there, I am quite conscious that many of us are very cognisant of the fact that Hurricane Beryl did have some serious economic impact on our economy and I know that the Business Representative in the Senate is here to make sure that the business community is well taken care of and also we depend on the Business Representative to assist us; the Government in making sure that the business community is well taken care of.

Madam President, after Hurricane Beryl, many of the businesses in the northern part of Grenada and Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in particular, needed significant assistance from the Government, and we stepped forward and we did exactly that. And we are still concerned that some of them need to be renovated...

Madam President: Senator...

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I am just giving some preamble before I present the Motion.

Madam President: Okay, you choose your order, isn't it? **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, the business community...

Madam President: Senator Cox approves. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: No, no, no, I am very conscious, Madam President. I am very conscious. And so, because we are quite aware that the business community needs the necessary assistance, I am happy to stand here, Madam President, and present this Motion.

**RESOLUTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF SECTION 33 (3) OF THE EXCISE TAX ACT,
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WHEREAS it is provided by Section 33 (3) of the Excise Tax Act, Chapter 94 of the 2010 Continuous Revised Edition of the Laws of Grenada (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) that the Minister may by Order publish in the *Gazette* and approved by affirmative resolution of the Parliament amend the First Schedule and the Second Schedule of the Act;

WHEREAS the Minister proposes to amend the Second Schedule of the Act, in accordance with section 33 (3) thereof, to exempt from excise tax any machinery and equipment that are imported by a registered business for the purpose of replacing that business’ machinery and equipment that were damaged, destroyed or otherwise negatively affected as a result of the impact of Hurricane Beryl, provided that in respect of each business, the exemption must first be approved in writing by the Minister, on the following conditions—

- a) the machinery and equipment are imported for use by the businesses and not for sale or exchange;
- b) the machinery and equipment are imported for the purpose of replacing machinery and equipment that was owned by the business but was subsequently damaged, destroyed or otherwise negatively affected as a result of the impact of Hurricane Beryl; and
- c) any other conditions pertaining to the ownership, use and disposal of the machinery and equipment as the Minister sees fit and admitted as such by the Comptroller of Customs;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that the Excise Tax (Amendment of Second Schedule) Order, 2025, which seeks to amend the Second Schedule to the Act, be approved by Parliament;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to section 33 (3) of the Act, the Excise Tax (Amendment of Second Schedule) Order, 2025, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution, is hereby approved by Parliament.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas, for your innovation and presentation.

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Question proposed.

Madam President: All those who are in agreement with the proposal will speak to that matter. All those who are in agreement with the proposal will speak after the Leader of Government's Business has spoken. You again have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, I beg to second the Motion as presented by the Leader of Government's Business.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, it seems as though the Opposition likes to hear the good stuff that is coming from "This Side". So I will not miss the opportunity to reemphasise or over-emphasise the importance of this Motion to this House and what it means to the Grenadian community and the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, in particular, especially those who were affected by Hurricane Beryl just coming close to one year.

Madam President, I am quite assured that the business community will welcome this initiative. Many of them have been renovating, rejuvenating, and reorganising, and they are moving on, but at the same time, there are quite a few who really and truly need some more assistance, and the Government sees it fit to come back to this House of Parliament to see how we can assist these people. And I really hope that this Motion would be supported unanimously, and the people in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique would rest their heads, especially the business community, very well tonight. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas. The floor is open. I see a request for the floor from Senator Cox, and you are welcome, sir. I note that you tendered an excuse and apology for your lateness. Thank you for doing so, and you have the floor.

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Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me say a pleasant morning to colleagues. Madam President, as regards the Motion before the House at this point in time, it is clear that we understand the intent of this Motion and what it seeks to do in terms of bringing relief for businesses that have been impacted by Beryl and are trying to recover.

However, Madam President, I think when this policy decision was taken, there were some challenges. I think in retrospect, I believe it is something that we need to take a lesson from going forward, and I think successive administrations have made that mistake in terms of bringing these Bills thereafter. While there are some businesses still recovering, you would want to bring these measures at least as soon as possible. We had quite a few sessions after the hurricane, so there was an opportunity for this Bill to come.

The reason why I am saying it is because some the lessons were learnt, some of the issues that have arisen from the implementation of this policy decision. For example, which is not stated here, but in terms of the rules and regulations, what was allowed... For example, businesses were only allowed, I think, one particular appliance. So, in some cases, you are allowed to bring in one refrigerator, and there are some businesses that do have two or three, so those were some of the loopholes that were not captured. You might say, for example, a bar, like a sports bar, a sports bar would have sometimes two or three televisions, and basically, you're only allowed to bring one. Those were some of the issues that came about from the implementation of this policy. So I wanted to flag that as something going forward. It is something that they need to review, and it should be on a case-by-case basis, based on the nature of the business. For example, a restaurant would have several appliances as against a supermarket.

So those were some of the issues. Even for some of the households that were allowed to bring in appliances, they were only allowed to bring in one of each. So most homes have more than one television, of course, and a home might have more than one refrigerator that was damaged. If you have an upstairs and you have a downstairs apartment, you probably would have a fridge upstairs and a fridge downstairs, and they got damaged in the hurricane.

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So if the response is to bring easement in that regard, it should take everything into context. I am just saying this to give feedback on what actually transpired, but all in all, as I said, the intent of this Motion is what is most important, but I think the implementation of it, there were some setbacks. So I just wanted to raise that for what it's worth, so that going forward, it's something that we need to look at. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox. I am curious too whether there will be a retroactive application for my third, fourth and fifth television set, my sixth deep freeze, my ninth polluting vehicle and otherwise. Any other comments or inquiries? Hearing none. Senator André Lewis, you have requested the floor, and you have it, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. Certainly, from Labour's perspective, anything that can assist business in terms of recovery and development, we must support. You know, some people have a misplaced view, I am not saying you and I don't accuse you of this, that unions are there to just fight business, but if you don't have business, you don't have workers, you don't have members. We are not yet in a society where we probably would want to be one day, in terms of our dreams of having this broad-based grouping.

In relation, I would just like to ask the following or make a request. The objective of this amendment is to provide relief to businesses affected by the passage of Hurricane Beryl, can it therefore be treated, (if it is treated and I have not recognise it, I stand corrected), as a sundown, with an expiry date to be able to avoid abuse in the future? If it is there, and I may have missed it—whether or not there is an expiry time. Question. Is there a definition of machinery and equipment? Example... So we are using this as an example. Does a truck belonging to a haulier qualify? So that is the context in which we are asking. When we review the provision from Labour's perspective, these are the questions that we had to help tighten, and if not tighten based on the answers that are provided, it will help us with a better understanding.

We support anything that will allow businesses to recover, especially those that were impacted by Hurricane Beryl. The flip side of that is that the businesses that have not recovered or are not where they were have also impacted the ability of our workers

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to continue working. We still have instances where people are off the job that they had because that business has not been able to recover.

We have a direct interest in this matter and will call upon the state, what I would call the supervisory arm of the state, that deals with implementation, to ensure that wherever these concessions are given, they are being properly used.

The objective of the Government, I hasten to say, is to ensure that our people find employment and those who are impacted are able to be re-employed. So we have no issues with it, but these are the two questions or concerns that we have. In terms of the sundown nature, because of the impact of Beryl and two, if there is a definition for machinery and equipment based on the examples that we used.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Lewis. I offer the floor for her maiden intervention this morning and to thank her for her contribution to Labour Day and for workers in general.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: You're welcome. Thank you. Morning, Madam President, and other Members of the Honourable House. I just rise to lend support to the Motion posed by the Leader of Government's Business. And I wasn't going to comment, but to offer clarification to this Honourable House as requested by the Senator for Labour.

Thank you, sir, for your continued contribution to Labour and your continued support for the tripartite arrangement, acknowledging that without Labour, there would be no business, and vice versa, without business, there would be no Labour. I would certainly be reminding you of that at appropriate moments.

Just to speak to the particular query you raised, the Motion seeks to amend the First Schedule to the Excise Act as provided for by section 33 (3) of the Act. And the First Schedule to the Act includes motor vehicles because you asked specifically about trucks, and it speaks to motor vehicles for use of transport of goods, and that covers trucks, new and used. So that's the short answer to your question. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Claudette Joseph. Senator Rahaman.

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Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you once again, Madam President. I rise to support this Motion wholeheartedly. How could I not support it? Because it brings relief where it needs to be. Relief when you have a hurricane, and with those of us who have been through more than one, you have different needs at different times, and so the immediate need is shelter, food, and security. These are immediate needs. But after these needs are satisfied, you have to get back to where you were, and this helps businesses to do that.

Madam President, you know sometimes, as it relates to the relationship between businesses and labour, you know when you have a partner, your partner in your relationship is the easiest person to get angry with, but that is the person you are closest to. **(Laughter)** Right? So, that is why we have to have proper consultation and meet so that we can find solutions for our nation.

Because at the end of the day, business people do really take on a lot of risk. To be a business person is not easy. You mortgage your house. You mortgage your land for this idea. You see a need and you take a risk, that's not the average person. The average person does not do that and is willing to take risks to lose what they already have in order to gain something. That's what business is about: taking calculated risks. And so, of course, when that person takes a risk, they need to be rewarded.

And in addition, the business, when you look at what we just discussed, the FROC Report, we see that the tax revenue of the Government from businesses rose by 5%. I forgot to mention that; their collections. They often say the Government calls it a collection, but in reality, it is payments because the Government don't go around collecting all the time. Business people, most of the time, voluntarily pay, and they pay in advance. So it's really "payments" (not really "collections"), the better word. **(Laughter)** Right? But we're not going to split heads on words and reporting. But the fact is that business people take that risk, and business people take that risk in order to help themselves and, by extension, they employ others and so on in the economy. I commend Government for doing this.

Time. When we hear the Member for Carriacou speak about the timeframe, we have to listen when we are on the ground, so we take the point. But, definitely it has to come after the initial period of recovery, and so now, when they are building back, in the

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last few months, machinery and equipment are really important, and I commend the Government for this initiative as they have done others for the business community and not only the business community but the society in general. I commend them. Thank you.

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

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. It would be remiss of me not to comment on this because it's very important having understand what it means to go through disasters in my personal life, hurricanes and other things. Being affected by Hurricane Ivan, we had our fair share. Whilst this Bill doesn't specifically speak about Carriacou, I think we have to be careful. I don't think I saw Carriacou on the Bill, being that it was affected.

So I trust that the people in Sauteurs, St. Patrick and those neighbourhoods that would have likely been affected and would likely participate in this much generous support, I would say, for recovery. Of course, in the direct sense, what I would say is raw, primary agricultural activities, the Government would have done its contribution there. Of course, being one of the main pillars in agriculture, but, of course, the downstream of the business initiative, whether it's manufacturing, retail, trade, etcetera, they are also investors doing their part and it's only fair to reach out and to treat it somehow as needs be.

Of course, the tax resumptons are one of the easiest ways. Understanding that because 90% of what happens, you have to import either machinery, import goods, import whatever it is and that of course, the Government in no way, will go and buy stocks for you and buy this for you. You would have to maybe go to the banks and do your different negotiations, but, of course, when it gets here, what it would cost for doing the border transactions is being offered. I think that is an important gesture.

Of course, Senator Cox raised an important point. And, of course, given in his own experience, in terms of time, but sometimes timing in bringing it here is one, but, of course, it's being implemented, I think that's what is important, and that persons can ensure that they are given a chance to, I wouldn't say retroactively, but, of course, if they can bring

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their defence supporting information that due consideration is given to them. Understanding, of course, it's not insurance. Meaning that, if you lose five televisions, we are not going to support you by giving you five televisions. But I don't think that is how it has to be.

We have to understand the context of the business and the situation, and fairness. I think this is what it should be. I think if it's not like that, people have a right to do the appropriate complaining using the appropriate channels. The Chamber of Commerce, etcetera, are there to ably do those negotiations and representation. I think that what we have to look at, though, is always good, how do you move forward?

So the question arises, as we move forward, the only issue of business risk in those contexts, how do we treat with that moving forward, ensuring that people are getting insured? Ensuring that the businesses are insured is very important. So that will help to augment and reduce whatever other stress that the businesses are under. We are getting the reports, not only a storm, but you have fire, you have different sorts of tsunamis, all of those things are around.

And I'm raising this thing from businesses in terms of dealing with business risk and insurance, and how we treat that in one year's time, six years' time. Do we come back here and have a similar Bill, or would we improve on the way that there is a sort of mechanism in place, as Senator Lewis was saying, in terms of this Bill resting at some time?

So I think it is a learning experience, and those things should be duly considered, just like how we want to plan for natural disasters and plan for food security. We need to have planning in place for those sorts of mechanisms and relief measures that would be called upon, so that we don't act quickly and then try to do it afterwards when it could be done in a really supreme way by doing the different scenario planning.

So maybe even within the NADMA framework. Whilst NADMA is a broad-based disaster management system organisation, the issue as to what the types of legislation and relief measures are that need to be considered as another arm of the NADMA resilience system. So I wanted to share that because whilst we are looking at businesses, we also look at people, you know, and that could also reduce how we manage those social challenges that happen post-disasters. If there are mechanisms in

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place, then it can be easily administered versus persons having to subject themselves to some sort of on-the-spot thing. I think that would be how we move forward, 10, 20 years down the road. As you see the future, this is the sort of vision we have to have. So, I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. I think we've exhausted our debate. Senator Adrian Thomas.

Senator Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I rise to express my gratitude for the contribution that has been made across this House and for the support that has been given to this very important Motion, and I look forward to the implementation. Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Item 15 – Bills.

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

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, the Payment System and Services Bill, 2025.

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business.

Clerk: A Bill to introduce a comprehensive licensing regime, shortly entitled Payment Systems and Services Bill, 2025.

Madam President: I thank the Clerk. Leader of the Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question proposed.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, as I stand here today, we are quite aware that the world is changing and it's changing rapidly. Things are being done differently. Things are required to be done differently if you want to survive. I look at a sector like agriculture, where we all grew up using a cutlass, a fork, a hoe and doing mass production, but today we have so many ways of doing things. Some people use the term "sexy agriculture" if you want to survive in this industry.

Madam President, we look at the way people shop. We look at the way they spend their money, and if you're in the business of buying and selling today, and you're not prepared to accept electronic cards, you may get left behind. We look at the ways, Madam President, monies are being transferred, and we look at the development of some of the non-bank institutions and non-bank payments and services. We have no choice as a Government to assist this state in adopting the new technology that is present.

Madam President, we have to align ourselves with the regional and international community. We have to find ways and means to make sure that we don't get left as a society, as this global village moves forward.

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And so, Madam President, in examining the current Payment System Act, Cap. 227B, we recognise that it lacks the licensing framework that is necessary for emerging non-bank payment services driven by financial technology. We observe, Madam President, that there is no explicit legislation under which non-bank payments and settlement service providers can be licensed to operate. And so this Bill that we are presenting to this House here today, Madam President, the new Payment System and Service Bill, 2025, aims to repeal and replace the existing legislation so that we can become aligned with the region and the international community. And so this Bill, Madam President, offers four main objectives.

1. It introduces a comprehensive license regime tailored to risk, promoting innovation and financial inclusion;
2. It expands regulations to include non-bank payment providers;
3. It improves safety, efficiency and financial stability within the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union; and
4. It strengthens consumers' protection and boosts confidence in electronic payments.

And so, as I present this Bill, Madam President, it is important to note that it contains 11 Parts and 72 clauses. In Part I, which contains three clauses, the first three clauses in this Bill basically deal with preliminary provisions, such as the definition and purpose of the Bill.

Part II, Madam President, covers nine clauses in that particular Bill, from clause four to clause 12, and it outlines the administrative matters and Central Bank functions. Part II, Madam President, highlights some of the functions of the Central Bank in terms of oversight and the support of payment systems and participants. The Central Bank, Madam President, has the authority to own or operate payment systems and act as a central counterparty.

Within that Part, Madam President, the Central Bank also has the power to enforce interoperability among payment service providers. Another function there, Madam President, is that the Central Bank also has the opportunity to cooperate with other regulators, and in doing so, this Part gives the Central Bank the authority for the

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establishment of the Eastern Caribbean Payments Council to advise on the payment systems with provisions for its composition, appointment and operation.

Madam President, maybe the largest part of this Bill is Part III, which contains 14 clauses, from clause 13 to 27, and basically it regulates the licensing of payment system operators and service providers. Under this section, it clearly outlines, Madam President, that operating without a Central Bank licence is prohibited and punishable. We have many different ways of doing business in the past, and sometimes we all become victims of systems that don't have rules and regulations, and many of us may remember the famous SGL fiasco.

Madam President, within that section, there are four classes of licence, with the possibility of implementing more as the banks see fit, obviously with consultation with the Minister. To achieve a licence, Madam President, obviously, there are processes that have to be followed, and the applicants are required to get a response within three months.

The Central Bank, also, Madam President, has the opportunity and the authority to impose or alter licence conditions, based on risk assessment and based on who they are doing business with. There may be some straightforward companies, but there are others, obviously, you may have to do extra assessment and make the necessary adjustments in order to secure and make sure that the citizens are well protected.

Madam President, in Part IV of this Bill, there are 10 clauses, clauses 28 to 37, and basically, it deals with the oversight of payment systems. In this section, the Central Bank is empowered to outline the Central Bank's oversight powers over the payment system. This includes issuing rules, putting systems in place for monitoring, and requesting information from the relevant institutions. The Central Bank, Madam President, has the authority to conduct audits and enforce compliance. It also regulates agent authorisation and outsourcing operations. And the Central Bank, last but not least, under this section, sets standards and criteria for payment services and systems.

In Part V of this Bill, there are three main clauses, clauses 38 to 40, which describe or set out the factors of how the Central Bank designates the payment system. The criteria clearly outline that it provides a 30-day window within which an aggrieved party may wish to appeal. If they don't agree with what the Central Bank has outlined, there's

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an appeal process, and also there is an opportunity for a revocation of the designation order if the conditions under section 39 do not apply. So this section is not that large, but Madam President, it's very important.

Part VI of the Bill contains three clauses, clauses 41 to 43, and it sets rules for payment system governance, requiring operators to establish clear management rules subject to. It gives them the opportunity to make their own rules, but those rules have been subject to Central Bank review, which can vary or invalidate such rules if necessary.

Part VII contains four clauses, clauses 44 to 47, and it focuses on consumer protection. Very important section. This section, Madam President, this Part in the Bill gives the Central Bank the opportunity and the authority to ensure that there's some level of transparency in terms of fees and the terms and conditions that are being offered. It requires fee notifications, disclosure of terms, and providing a complaint and appeal process for customers.

Part VIII contains five clauses, clauses 48 to 52, which deal with settling and finality of payments. This Part, Madam President, mandates settlement accounts, irrevocability of transactions once accepted, and the protection of rights in insolvency. Those are the features of that particular Part, Madam President.

Part IX contains seven clauses, clauses 53 to 59, and basically it deals with winding up and administration. It's not everything we get right, Madam President, and therefore we have to make provisions, and the Bill makes provisions for when, as we say in local parlance, we have to wheel and come again. And here, Madam President, it clearly states that system operators, participants and payment providers must notify operators if insolvent entities are unable to meet obligations. Operators must notify others. No winding up will take place unless the Central Bank has been notified. If winding up starts, affected parties cannot operate until the issue is resolved, and final payments remain valid despite winding up.

It further went on to state, Madam President, within that Part IX, liquidators must honour netting arrangements, and also there's the right to enforce claims. But very important, Madam President, one of the last features of that particular section is the issue of foreign participants in the cases of insolvency, and it dictates that any foreign participant's insolvency is governed by the Laws of Grenada. Right?

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Part X, which contains six clauses from 60 to 65, addresses administrative action and penalties. And it goes on to say that the Central Bank can direct a sanction to unfit directors or officers. Penalties apply for non-compliance with key sections within that Part, and participants' disputes can go to and must go to arbitration.

In the final Part of the Bill, Madam President, Part 11, which contains six clauses, clauses 66 to 72, it covers miscellaneous provisions, such as electronic funds transfer. Records are enforceable under the Laws of Grenada. The Central Bank can make related rules. A public register of licenses and agents is required. The Central Bank and the Ministers have the power to issue rules and regulations to enforce the Act. In closing, this particular section says that good-faith actions by officials are protected from liability.

Madam President, this, in a nutshell, is what this very important Bill is presenting to this Honourable House. With that being said, I now commend this Bill to this Honourable House for discussion and ultimately approval. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for your careful summary presentation of this Bill, with its many clauses and its rationality. The floor is open for the debate on the Bill. By right, we go to the opposite side of the room. Senator Horsford, you have the floor, sir, in your maiden morning statement.

Sen. the Hon. Dwight Horsford: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning, Madam President. We're still in the morning?

Madam President: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Dwight Hosford: ... and to my colleagues and all present here.

I rise briefly to indicate that I am in support of this legislative measure. I'm familiar with it. This and the other measures that are Eastern Caribbean Central Bank-related Bill; the Asset Management Corporation Bill, and the Deposit Insurance Agreement Bill.

In particular, the Payment Systems Bill, the intention, the objective, and the animating intent clearly are to bring e-commerce up to speed with the emerging technological instrumentalities of payment conveyance and e-commerce. I know the

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Central Bank is very keen on that. In a former role, these were the discussions. In fact, these Bills have a long provenance, really. They're not legislative interventions of any domestic origin, really. These are piloted by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

But before I take my seat, Madam President, we need to be very, very careful. Speaking for myself, I hold the view as I held it when performing a former role, engaging this or the first or early iterations of this Bill. I am not quite satisfied or sure that the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank can sufficiently and effectively regulate these things. And you would notice in many of these Bills, the Central Bank is actually ballooning in terms of centralised power. We have to be careful with that. You know the concept of too big to fail? We have to be very, very, very careful about that.

Certainly in Payment Systems, I understand the central role for the Central Bank, but I also would recommend, not on this occasion, because I guess these are the harmonised legislation that has been agreed upon at the level of the heads to at least have first implementation, but it does not prevent us from examining them in our local context and adjusting them.

What I suggest is that, certainly, on this Payment System Bill, given the role that the Central Bank is given under this legislative measure, I think it is useful to have a domestic entity empowering it to collaborate somehow in regulating the payment systems law in the territory. As we've seen since the collapse of certain financial institutions, many harmonised legislations like this one were passed hurriedly with massive and sweeping powers afforded to the Central Bank, and the financial transaction business is not as simplified as some of the legislative provisions conceive it to be. They're very complex, and we are seeing in certain instances, I don't need to name here, because some of them are developing through the court, the collapse of certain businesses that transact, money lenders and also these payday loan people.

Notwithstanding, what was passed before in response to the collapse of major financial institutions, the Central Bank and satellite institutions under it for regulation, couldn't keep up with it. They couldn't effectively prevent some of these collapses. They couldn't effectively intervene in time to avoid losses.

So in some, this is a good measure. It has a long provenance. I support it, but do avail yourself of this opportunity now that you have passed it in its current form to revisit

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that aspect where we must allow ourselves, certainly, domestically, our Government here must have some input in regulating the application of this law. I would suggest the formation of some entity, because we can't rely on this council; this council is merely advisory. They're getting technical people to tell them how to keep up with these things. And so we need to be very wary of that potential risk, and try to have some meaningful input of our own, not just to receive this harmonised thing and apply it. We look at a domestic situation and try to have some regulatory input of our own, and that would be my contribution. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. I'm sure the "Other Side" will take it forward, the recommendation. Other speakers on the Bill? It's a request on the floor? No? Yes. "This Side". Your side. Senator Joseph yields? Senator Cox, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you. Sorry, Madam President, I wasn't seeing any movement from the "Other Side". So, you know, just have to keep things... I am working with the Leader of Government's Business. Keep things moving. **(Inaudible comment by Senators) (Laughter)**

Madam President, I just want to say that I think it's a clear understanding of what is happening in terms of the world, in terms of development, and us staying in line with technology and types of services. A number of our local businesses are going to be challenged if we do not maintain the requirements that are taking place globally.

And as such, one of these growing issues is how payments are done. You know, when you travel, we see people make payments through Apple Pay, PayPal and other payment forms. Of course, the Central Bank itself has started, I think a couple of years ago, with an e-wallet or so, but I know they are working towards having something similar to that nature.

However, Madam President, one of the things that I do recognise. There are some key areas of the Bill that are quite suitable and fitting in terms of having an oversight committee, in terms of having regulations, in terms of having the licensing and having a

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process for administering and handling all those. For me, one of the biggest challenges, Madam President, has to do with the security measures.

We, in this space, electronically, most of our people are now slowly getting involved in terms of doing banking. And so, from an electronic standpoint, you still see people standing in long lines. Some of the things they can do from the computer or at their homes, they still don't trust. The trust issue is still a big issue for our people. The pen and the paper, the black and white people trust that instead of this electronic, and so that is the challenge that we have had.

Over the past five years or so, we have had several incidents of some of our financial institutions having hacking attacks, and even the Government itself is also susceptible to that. So I think for me, that is where the real challenge is going to be. How are we prepared for that aspect, the security aspect, as we go more and more into the technological aspects of our payment services? That, for me, is really where the challenge is going to be.

You know, Madam President, I always say, every time you hear a financial institution has some challenge, I always hope that call and say that my mortgage is zeroed **(laughter)**, but oftentimes we don't hear that. We hear our savings are the ones affected and not the debt. **(Laughter)** Madam President, I just say it for what it's worth. I'm certain that most of us would want to hear if they hack the bank, why they didn't hack the debt. You know? **(Laughter)**

So, on a serious note, that is a big challenge for us, and I think it's important. I'm not certain that the legislation speaks to that, but maybe on the local side through GARFIN, some assurance could be given so that persons can have that certainty, so we can get buy-in. Because if you have those services and people are not buying into them, then they are not going to make sense, and as I said, we are still seeing long lines. I just wanted to raise that. I believe that is the key issue, the key concern for me as regard to this Bill and how it will really take off in terms of implementation. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox, for your point on trust and therefore buying underscored by security. We're waiting for that... I wouldn't say "the hacking". We're just debt elimination. **(Laughter)** Senator Joseph, are you ready, madam?

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Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, thank you. I just rise to lend support to the Bill now before this Honourable House. As Senator Horsford pointed out, and as the Leader of Government's Business, this Bill is part of a suite of legislation piloted, not by domestic Governments of the OECS but collectively, aimed at strengthening our financial landscape and environment.

And I hear the concern raised by Senator Horsford, which does have merit, but we must recall too, that we have a few institutions in the Eastern Caribbean, which have all withstood the test of time and of which, as a people in the sub-region, we are very proud and justly so.

The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank stands tall among those institutions, along with the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, of which we are very proud and which actually stands out as a global model coming from this very small space. And so, while the concerns are noted and understood, the Central bank is the best institution in our sub-region to assist our respective countries in transitioning to the new and technologically driven modes of conducting financial transactions.

And we know that largely, these new methods are unregulated except where they are conducted by the transitional banks that already fall under the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, and even so, in some respects, they are not fully regulated. And this is what this particular Bill seeks to do to ensure we bring some order, predictability, and regulation to the other modes of doing business, as we move with the times and with the technologies, we do not get lost in this new world of doing business.

So, I commend the Bill to the Honourable House as I hear my other colleagues on the "Other Side" are also doing. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, madam. Thank you for your commendation of the Bill. It's our process here this morning, and the "Other Side" has the floor. I think Senator Rahaman has requested the floor. I offer it to you, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. So, because it is a harmonised Bill... In general, I support harmonised laws within the region. It ought to

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bring us closer if we have laws that are very similar or the same, as it makes our economies easier to integrate. So generally, this is something good, and I support it.

However, I just want to point out two things. In reading the Bill, it reads... Part of it... I'll read two parts. It says, "Since 2008, the payment services landscape has changed dramatically and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (the "Central Bank") is keenly interested in nurturing a payment system environment to attract innovative payment services from non-bank service providers, in the interest of financial inclusion and the reduction in the use of cash". But we know that there is a push globally to reduce the use of cash. We have to make sure that our people are properly educated, and this will take time, and so on. There are many parts of our economy that still operate on a cash basis, and it is still very important.

However, it says here that the words used are "Keenly interested in nurturing a payment system environment to attract innovative payment services". So they want to attract innovative payment services. So they want to attract these services. Well, these services already exist in many countries. There are many apps that you can use to pay for this or pay for that. Right? We have WeChat, which is a very popular Chinese App. In Asia, you have, you know, Alipay and others. Other platforms, and so on... So many.

And so I guess the Central Bank is saying it is interested in nurturing a payment system, and that I like. However, it says further down in Clause 5, and I read, "Clause 5 of the Bill empowers the Central Bank to support the operations and participants of a payment system..." So, they are going to be participants in a payment system. So, they are going to be participants that may not be owned by the Central Bank. So, "Participants of a system including ownership and participation..." Right.

So, "The Bill empowers the Central Bank to support the operations and participants of a payment system, including ownership and participation". So the bank is interested in owning. Right? But, "Clause 6 of the Bill empowers the Central Bank to establish, own, operate or participate in the ownership of a system; act as a central counterparty; open and hold accounts..." So they have the potential to own and to regulate. Organisations are not very good at regulating themselves. You own and you regulate, and so that is something that is a conflict there for me. Right? How do you regulate yourself?

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And if you have an interest in a particular system that is your system that you have nurtured, which we trust the Central Bank, right, I mean they provide their services and their liquid and all of that stuff and if they do have a home-grown system that is great, but if they have other systems that is competing alongside their system, how do they regulate that independently? How do they regulate that? How do the others get a fair chance to compete with their system? Will there be some subjectivity in their system? And in addition to that, their system might be a safer system for us, because we know that it is less likely that they will rip us off, rather than another system that could pose risks or have backdoor problems.

So these are just some thoughts that came to my mind. Personally, I would prefer if it were a nurtured system, as it says, a system that is ours and run by them, rather than a system that is outside. But the reality is that's not how the world works, and that's not how the financial systems in the world work. When you go into, you know, different parts of the world, you can just download these apps and you can use these services, and I'm sure that once this opens up, the same will apply here, and they will have to be able to regulate. So, the ability to regulate properly is key here. But in general, this is something that is needed, something that is overdue, and it is something that the business community supports. I thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Representative for Business for his comments on the proposed Bill. Senator St. Clair, you may take the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes. Thank you, Madam President. I was wondering where my friend Senator Rahaman was going, and then I saw he went and he came back. I then wonder why. It's like telling Bill Gates, although he's not fully involved in his company anymore, to develop another suite of office software when he has maybe one of the most well-established software suites. I would explain.

Madam President, of course, this topic is a very interesting one. Payment Systems and Services, Bill. I heard my good friend Senator Andrew speak to the people a while ago in Mamma Cannes and all of those places, and the truth is, what is this payment system that we're talking about? The truth is, I've been doing a lot of research while this

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is going on because I'm trying to understand what this is. Maybe in my own way, I would try, and see if I understand clearly, such that if I don't, there are enough learning people here to add that clarity.

I understand that consumers and businesses will be doing transactions. They can pay hard cash. They can pay with cheques. They can do wire transfers as we know in the past. We can very well receive money through Western Union and MoneyGram. I understand that, in time, we have our debit cards that go through the banking systems. I understand that businesses that want to do online transactions must establish a special account such that if someone purchases a product from Japan or wherever, they can get paid.

I read that these are called "merchant accounts". Of course, as was mentioned, there are third-party payment systems like PayPal and all these other things, and then you have other types of payment services. I heard the issue about payday loans and all of those different... So, it's a lot of things happening.

But I also heard, more importantly, the issue of non-cash, doing things differently, and paying things online. How do you facilitate this emerging approach? Whilst we did have a payment legislation before, it didn't regulate it; consumers, maybe, were not properly protected and guided. And so, what we learn from the first page of this Bill in the explanatory notes is that our good bank, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, is very interested in having the sub-region, that's the OECS countries, which uses the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (that's very important we have one currency, so it's easy to manage collectively) is interested in this payment system, particularly to reduce the use of cash.

So a few things immediately went through my mind, and every time you do something, there has to be a motive. I'm not talking about all these things. What do they call it? "Harmonisation"? I'm dealing with motives. The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank is not operating for itself. The Governor and his team are not operating for themselves. There is something called the Eastern Caribbean Monetary Council, which is made up of the Ministers of Finance who provide governance to institutions. It's my further understanding that you have, like, the permanent secretaries of the various Ministries of Finance also operating, likewise.

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In fact, we heard that whole situation recently with the Prime Minister in St. Vincent and his colleagues talking about what's going on with the bank and the big buildings. And, of course, the region quickly came to the rescue of the Governor and his team and said, "There are oversights. We are Ministers".

So, I say this to say, Madam President, and Members of this House listening, that the Central Bank is driven by our Ministers of Finance and our Prime Ministers. Our Permanent Secretaries are directly behind this. So, to my good friend Senator Horsford, whilst, yes, we speak about coming to Grenada and to the individual countries, I quip on the side to say that our countries must have participated and given direction to this initiative.

So when we speak of the Central Bank, having an interest basically, it is our Ministers of Finance, and governments in the region that have an interest in doing that. And so the question is, what is the interest? Of course, it is to drive the economy and all of those things, but to reduce cash is a key thing. It is not that people will rob you of your money in your pocket. I don't think people would grab, run and take your EC\$20 in your pocket, but the cost of printing money is a significant cost. The cost of paper, the cost to the environment, is significant.

If you realise what has happened to our money, our dollars, in the OECS, it basically could get wet. Before, when I was growing up, a dollar, if it was wet, you had to be careful that it would start to tear. So they have moved into a sort of polymer kind of technology because the cost, or maybe using recycled plastic and all of those things, to print money becomes cheaper. Likewise, with the coins, if you look at what has happened.

So, the issue of less cash, the question arises, is it a matter of reducing costs to the business? And so, it will be interesting to know, over the years, how the different types of money printed in time have reduced the overall operating cost of the business of the Central Bank, and what the projection is in the strategic planning that this initiative will reduce the overall cost of operation. If you reduce that, what it means, therefore, is that the money value of the institution will become stronger because it has less cost of doing business. So I think that is one motivation I am interested in seeing, and I guess others are too.

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The second part has to do with the whole issue of a DCash. The DCash is an initiative... It comes back to Senator Rahaman's point in clause 5 of having your own system, and if you are reducing cash, what is the alternative? We know the Central Bank has been advocating this issue with the DCash. The question is to reduce physical cash, and the question that arises is, how successful has that initiative been? What has been the uptake? How many people are using the DCash?

It's like buying a bus, but there are no passengers on the bus. What is the uptake, and should we spend a lot of time trying to get this DCash up and running? Of course, one can argue and say, "Well, you know you need to have the system anyway so that even if the DCash is being used by five people, they need to be protected, legislated and regulated". That's okay, I understand that, but the fundamental question is, what is the market, and how many questions are involved in DCash?

Because what I'm worried about there is something called "Crowding-in". And you see it in different business systems, where, because something is new, something looks lucrative, you find everybody is now trying to come in. And so the fact that this ECCB is now saying we can issue licences and permits to different people wanting to offer payment systems.

So, let us suppose you're PayPal and all of these people who right now are operating, I would say technically, without being regulated in our space, so that regulation would provide protection for us, and it is okay. So, if you do a suite of all these different payment systems, you in Grenada, St. Vincent, would be buying things throughout the world in China. Wherever it is, those systems that you have to use, to click and pay, you might use PayPal, you might use Suite, there are different things.

But they are technically operating without the regulations. So if something happens to you as a consumer, and you have to get a refund, and you didn't get it, how do you regulate to get your money? And I guess the bank may say, "Look, we need to protect that". So it's okay.

But now, do these persons have to have a license to be listed as one of the options when you pay? There is something called "corresponding banking" because this money would not just leave China. If I click on one of the payment systems in China or even India, it wouldn't just leave the bank because money doesn't exist in your pocket. It exists

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in some institutions. So when I click PayPal, or let's suppose something in China, it has to leave a bank in China and move across to the ECCB, and then move into a banking system.

So, would these people be blocked if they don't have a license or a permit to operate in this region? This is the question. And so it may look far-fetched, but this is real because you have to get a license to operate and to provide services for a person in that space. But of course, it's an opportunity because if we are doing business in Grenada online, we would want somebody in China, or in Africa, to access our products and be able to use a similar system. But where is our money? Our money is in local banks and credit unions.

So they now, in the banking sector, need to also have this thing built into their systems. So ECCB's interest to me, my good friend Senator Rahaman, is to sort of provide that kind of oversight in terms of the movement of the different currencies from country to country. They have to provide that oversight. But if they are also participating as a DCash operator and want to also develop other systems, provide permits and then also regulate, then I think we have a problem.

I actually had that as one of my points, where competition, whilst we say competition reduces price, competition in this case, will bring us nowhere. And so whilst the ECCB may have all of this situation, they speak about this commission that is supposed to be established. Maybe it needs to be sort of hands off and they provide that sort of regulatory oversight, like how we have the FROC, and provide the guidance in that because ECCB can't want to participate, unless ECCB find some other subsidiary that will deal with the DCash or they fan it out to some other person as a third party and they operate independently.

So, these are my concerns in the whole operationalisation of this payment system, and not really the legislation per se, is the whole mechanics, because consumers who depend on us to make the decision that will have them protect it. And I think this is the concern. Now, I'm not too sure about the banking institution because it will be interesting to understand what the banking institution's position is, and this is because whilst the Bill speaks of the banks and credit unions, they are not directly impacted by this system because they are already in the governance structure. The question is, money doesn't

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reside in your pockets or in your house, and moves across countries using these other systems.

And then the last point I want to raise is the whole issue of Bitcoins and those that are sort of, of course, non-hard currencies and other types of e-currencies, how do we treat that? Of course, you know we would have passed legislation dealing with those digital currencies and so on, but the question is, how do we treat with that? So, the concern about the ECCB's fairness in addressing a lot of these things still resides and resonates in my mind notwithstanding we need to do it and then we will fix it, and then consumers start participating and then we have a whole set of things to handle and in our individual countries we end up like CLICO and BAICO, to each its own.

What commitment is ECCB going to give us that, notwithstanding all of these things, whatever happens in our individual countries will be protected? But who is ECCB; our Prime Ministers, and Minister for Finance. So, we would like to hear in those clear terms that sort of feedback to give some confidence that this is a proper tool and it is not a tool for just being a facilitator.

And so the last point I want to make, Madam President, is what has been the experience? You know, India and those places have a lot of those systems, African and so on, because of their large land space, so moving cash would take days moving from community to community. So, a lot of their transactions are done with eCash, you know, Nigeria and those places, Ghana, in Pisa and all of those different types of digital currencies, so it's easy. We are a small country, you can move cash from Sauteurs to town in a second, but we're now speaking globally, and what has been their experience? It will be good to hear the presenters of the Bill relate that, show us the confidence that this is not just a car, but a car that has worked and a car that could work, and so we can drive safely and don't worry about our safety. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair, for raising all these functional and oversight matters with many suggestions contained therein. Thank you. Senator David Andrew, you have the floor, sir.

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Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to offer my support to the Bill as presented. Madam President, the reality is that these forms, in fact, as alluded to by many of the speakers on the “Other Side” and even on “This Side”, many of these forms of payment are with us. They are being used actively by Grenadians, by people in all of our communities, and they run the risk every day, and I'm sure all of us know of somebody who made a payment somewhere and the products never arrived, and they have no redress really. We could call the names of some of those agencies and some of those organisations, and so, in fact, we have a lot of them.

In fact, from the credit card, debit card, mobile wallets, you have heard of PayPal, mobile banking and QR codes. To talk about QR codes, even at the Ministry of Education, over the last two years, we have been using QR codes to assist parents in the Uniform Assistance Programme, so even that technology is being used here. I can tell you, I can confess that there's one challenge we have had that we are trying to work on, where the software developers had a back-end issue, where what you plugged in was not adding up accurately so that the vendor still had some challenge and as much as you do it over, it just comes up short and there had to be a backend fix in this software, but that's another story.

But I'm just saying, you have all of these potential challenges, and these software and these payment modalities that are currently with us, being used by our people every day without protection, without regulation and for me, this is an important step in the right direction. I'm aware that not all of the potential incidents have been conceptualised, but that's why future amendments may come. If you wait for a day when we can see all of the possibilities, we might lose so much more than stepping in the direction and being vigilant as we go.

But one of the things I want to point out is that we are in a global market space. And, in fact, quite a lot of businesses survive and thrive simply because they can access markets in other parts, and people can use these modalities for payment. It's good and it's something we encourage. But rest assured, too, what happens in the non-banking sector, if the non-banking sector fails miserably or is terribly affected, the banking sector gets affected too.

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We have our own examples of that in our history here in Grenada and in the region, where some investments in some places, in some companies, were not necessarily banking; they fell through, and it affected the banking system too, and probably still affects the banking system in some respects. And so to me, the economic survivability of our economies and our region depends on adapting to some of these measures, some of these modalities that the world is heading towards and that are already being used. And so, moving to regulate, to put a legislative framework in place as a region... And it's critical.

The ECCB, for me, is a very critical partner in this fight as the overarching body that sits and regulates the Currency Union operation. In our part, it's important to have them there. And even if in time, they become a provider of those services themselves in a more practical way, there could and would be adjustments. But, Madam President, given where the world is, given our current use and the frequency of use of these non-cash payments, the risk associated with their use without regulation, I strongly commend this Bill and see it as a correct step in the right direction which will serve as a protection of many of our citizens who use those forms of cashless transactions to effect their businesses. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew. Thank you. Protection of the citizen, I like that. Senator André Lewis, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam President. I guess we could all agree on the importance of this step because a number of these services are already in existence. As said by our side and the "Other Side", these are all regional initiatives.

But more than just regional initiatives, there is the big brother or the big stepfather or stepmother, right, after September 11, that is handing down those things. Right? So, we can come here and just simply say, "Well, look, we have been directed to do those things and if we don't we may be cut off from certain services", or we can come here accept that you are operating in this environment, but at the same time make some interventions that may or may not change anything, but indicate concerns that we have.

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I guess that's what we are all doing. I think it is important to capture that. It is important to capture that.

We understand the environment under which we live, because these days, all it takes is an Executive Order in some white place to chop up some things or to change some things or make a change today or come back tomorrow, etcetera. So we understand that. But understanding that we have a role where anything that comes before us, we should look at it critically. I therefore posit the following observations and concerns.

One is not questioning the role of the ECCB. I mean, it's one of our leading institutions, so that goes without saying. But, in ensuring that we can bring teeth to this Bill that is expected to go into law, that we should also call on the ECCB and for us to ensure that the heads and the others do whatever is necessary to ensure that is proper and adequate staffing within the ECCB and the other institutions that have to oversee these regulations.

Let us not forget that we had... There were oversights or there was supposed to be oversights either by the PS's, the Ministers for Finance, etcetera, when some of our leading institutions in the region here collapsed and our working class people, as well as, businesses, but our working class people were impacted by millions of dollars and couldn't retire. When they retired, they did not have their retirement to get.

So, we are not questioning whether or not there's oversight, but what we are calling for is to learn from those experiences. Because what we are now doing is bringing more under the supervision of the ECCB, and therefore, the corresponding resources ought to be put in place. So we are supporting this, but you are making those recommendations.

I am on board with all issues raised here by our colleagues on "Both Sides". I wish to focus on the following. Under objective three, it says here, "The objectives of this Bill are to (ii) broaden the scope of regulated activities to non-banks to accommodate a wider range of payment services and activities". So, it's not just payment activities, but it is also services, too, and the focus here is on non-banks.

We know, as a fact, that the traditional banks have been having difficulties with the credit union sector, and they have been trying to muzzle the credit union sector by

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bringing them to become similar to them. The ECCB is also guilty of that. Let me make that point absolutely clear. The traditional banks have had difficulties with our credit union system, a credit union system that, sadly so, seems to have lost its way because a number of the credit unions today, if we were to take Grenada where some of the larger credit unions came out of the labour movement, yes, they are now divorced from the labour movement. They run on their own, and they run similar to the traditional bank, where the ordinary man and woman have difficulty in accessing certain services that were easier to access in the past and herein lies my concern for everything that will safeguard our hard earnings in whatever form.

But I'm wondering if this is not part of the window or back door or side door through which the ECCB and our local banks, the Bankers Association, etcetera, can use this to pull in the credit unions, because there has been this fight. We have been involved in it, and those of us who have been involved in the movement of the credit union movement for years, we have steadfastly opposed the attempt by the banks, including ECCB, to put us on the same pedestal as them. Our mandate...

Remember, the credit unions are owned by their members, unlike the banks, whose shareholders own the banks. In other words, they take our money. It is not a lot of work. You know? In other words, what they do is manage our money, you know. So, when we speak about production, that's not productive. In the scheme of things, you take our money. In other words, we go, we put our money in the banks, we pull our money together, and then they make hototo amount of profits. Right? Two years ago or three years ago, our workers in Republic Bank, predominantly female, had to be on the street fighting for a little increase and then the next year or two, after you see record-breaking profit from the banks.

Why am I linking this? I'm linking this because I'm making an appeal to our credit union. Some may have already... The horse has already been bolted. But the Credit Union Movement was designed... It came out of the working class. It came out of the Labour Movement, right, to assist ordinary folks. It was difficult, almost impossible, for ordinary working-class people to go to the bank and get loans. That's a fact. It's easier now to get a loan to buy a car, not to buy land. That is a fact.

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Our Prime Minister recently commented about the difficulties with banks, something that we know and have been clamouring for years. This is not rocket science. The financial institutions, the banks, have been some of the more lucrative businesses over the past few years. And yes, the foreign banks, some of them have left Grenada, but in other parts of the region, we can guess their profit margin is dropping, but they have been going to other parts of virgin territory like Africa and the Americas, etcetera, Latin America, etcetera, right, but we must not allow our credit unions to reach that stage where our ordinary folks finds it difficult to do business; during the period of COVID-19 proved that.

There are a number of small credit unions that can tell you about the almost daily or weekly intervention from workers who are looking for \$50 to buy some medication. They're looking for \$50 to send their child to school or to pay for the bus because they can't get from the banks, they can't get from the two or three big credit unions, because it's difficult.

And therefore, if we are not careful, this number two, I am seeing this as the potential for the wide reach of the ECCB and our local traditional banks to try to bring the credit unions, right, on that playing field where a number of them will have to fold because they have been preaching amalgamation. Right. They have been preaching for them to join together, all. Right. So I'm seeing this as that potential for this to happen and to make a plea for our local and regional trade unions, through which the credit unions came from, to those who still have an embryonic link with their credit unions. A number of their names have changed, so you no longer have the Public Service, what, you no longer have the Teachers, what, because they have distanced themselves from their origin, but for those unions both locally and regionally...

I daresay, I'm aware that in Trinidad, which has been one of the leading countries in terms of credit unions, that discussion has been taking place. The Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies have organised discussions in the past to address the credit union movement, recognising the distancing of the origins and objective of the credit union, and as to where we are now and what that means for ordinary working people.

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So we are okay. We're putting regulations in place, and that is needed. As everyone has indicated, a number of these services already exist, and you can't stop it. You wouldn't stop it. So if you can regulate or have interventions to help protect us, it is highly commendable. But in doing so, we need to also ensure that the human resources and technological resources are put in place to help manage this. A plea to the credit union movement not to follow. You must be prudent. Yes? You must follow proper financial procedures and guidelines because at the end of the day you want to make a surplus for the credit union so that members can get something, but you want to ensure that your services are not made almost impossible for your regular members and ordinary working-class people to be able to access it. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator André Lewis. As per usual, your focus on the rights and opportunities of the people, in this case, your focus on credit unions to bring them into the regime, is well noted. Other speakers? Hearing none. Senator Adrian Thomas.

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

Madam President: We still do have four more Bills to go. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: You're evolving right. Thank you very much, Madam President. And let me say heartfelt thank you to all who made their valuable contribution to this very important piece of legislation. I have taken notes of your concerns. I think some of them are genuine concerns, but I definitely believe that overall, this piece of legislation will bring a sigh of relief, and it's our hope and our dream that the people who are mainly the participants and our people will be the main beneficiaries of this piece of legislation. I thank everybody for their presentation. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you Senator Thomas.

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Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): Payment System and Services Bill, 2025.

Madam President: 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 Senate to consider the Bill, Part by Part.

Madam President: Thank you Senator Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

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

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Senator Adrian Thomas.

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Bills: Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act entitled, Payment System and Services Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Senator Seville Francis, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis: Madam President, I beg to introduce for the first reading a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025.

Deputy Clerk (Ag): A Bill which seeks to provide fiscal support for the timely recovery and reactivation of businesses that were damage, destroyed, or otherwise negatively affected as a result of the impact of Hurricane Beryl, shortly entitled, the Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Honourable Senator Seville Francis.

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question Put and Agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

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Madam President: Senator Francis.

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Seville Francis.

Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis: Madam President, Honourable Members of the Senate, I rise today to present the Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill of 2025. Madam President, it is a critical piece of legislation crafted not merely as a fiscal response, but as a compassionate and strategic measure to assist our people, particularly our small to medium-sized businesses, recovering in the wake of Hurricane Beryl. Madam President, we are on the home stretch of the anniversary of that traumatic experience, one that I wish we never had to re-live ever in this lifetime.

Madam President, the purpose of the Bill is rooted in a simple but very powerful purpose. You see, Madam President, this Bill is to ease the financial and administrative burdens on businesses affected by Hurricane Beryl, thereby providing aid in their timely recovery, reactivation and ultimately their resilience. It proposes special measures including tax exemptions, extensions for filing tax returns and deferrals of tax payments.

Madam President, while we may see this Bill just as exemptions and extensions of deadlines and as a fiscal aid, Madam President, we cannot overlook the fact that this Bill provides way more than that. We have to take into account the human impact that this Bill will have on the people that it so deserves to serve. These measures apply specifically during what is termed the relevant period, June 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025.

Madam President, this Bill contains three parts: the preliminary provisions, tax

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exemptions, and deadlines and miscellaneous provisions, respectively, and eight clauses which will be addressed in a more detailed manner, Madam President. And, Madam President, the reason why I'm ensuring that this Bill is presented in a very detailed manner is because I wish for every person within the hearing of my voice, even those who are academically challenged, the simplest man on the street, Madam President, should be able to understand how important this Bill is and what it's seeks to do.

And I know in my last presentation in this House, Madam President, I mentioned and I referenced that context is key, but today education is definitely key for a person, well, every time. **(Laughter)** But today in particular, I wish for people to understand the significance of this Bill. Madam President, I recall listening in the "Other Place" and the statement was made that the people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique don't understand the significance of this Bill, and so I am taking the opportunity to ensure that this matter is resolved.

I started Part I, which speaks to the preliminary provisions. Clause 1 establishes the short title and retroactive commencement of this Act, backdated to July 1, 2024. Madam President, I wish to draw special attention to this retroactive clause and the emphasis here being retroactive.

This is more than a legislative formality, Madam President. It is a deliberate and compassionate policy decision. You see, Madam President, by applying the Act retroactively to July 1, the Bill ensures that from the very moment businesses began grappling with the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, the fiscal relief offers were already in place. This means no business owner will be penalised for obligations falling due during a period when they were struggling to reopen, when they were assessing their losses, or even accessing basic utilities, Madam President. It sends a clear message.

What we are saying through this Bill is, yes, we acknowledge that the deadlines may have already passed, but we are making it clear, no penalties will be imposed for the period in question because we understand that a natural disaster struck that was entirely beyond our control, Madam President.

So, Madam President, to the ordinary man in the street, what does this mean? When the officers of the Inland Revenue Department are conducting their audits or

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reviews they can come across a business, let's say Ms. Seville Francis a shopkeeper from St. Patrick or Petite Martinique, I'm still deciding where I want to live, Madam President, who did not meet her filing or remittance obligations under the Income Tax Act during the period July 1 of 2024 to January 31, 2025 the Inland Revenue Officers will immediately recognise she's covered. These lapses fall within the protected period legislated under the Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support Act. This ensures that no enforcement action, no penalties, and no interest will be wrongfully applied; instead, the law will reflect compassion, context and clarity, Madam President.

And so I move on to clause 2, which defines key terms and references four principal Acts:

- The Annual Stamp Tax Act Cap. 16A;
- The Income Tax Act Cap. 149;
- The Value Added Tax Cap. 333A; and
- The Tax Administration Act, No.14 of 2016.

Madam President, clause 3 clarifies the purpose. The purpose here is to offer fiscal breathing room by lightening tax burdens and enabling businesses to focus on recovery. Madam President, that is a Bill worth supporting.

I move on to Part II of this Bill, which is the more detailed and super important part of the Bill because it provides and it lays the conditions of the course that it will take. So, I move on to clause 4 under Part II, and I start with the VAT exemptions.

Now, the Value Added Tax or the VAT Act Cap. 333A, I want to explain what this Act is about so that we will understand what the exemption here is or the significance of the exemption. So the Value Added Tax Act, what it does is, it imposes VAT on goods and services supplied in the State of Grenada. What it requires is, for the registration of VAT-eligible businesses, the filing of VAT returns and remittance of VAT collected to the Inland Revenue Department. The key sections applicable here, Madam President, would be section 8, which establishes the requirements to charge VAT on taxable supplies, section 44, which requires VAT registered persons to file tax returns and section 46, which requires payment of VAT collected to the Comptroller.

The relevance of this to this Bill, Madam President, is that it exempts affected

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businesses from having to charge, file or remit VAT during the relief period, and the relief period is stated in sections 1 and 2, respectively. Madam President, it also suspends penalties and interest related to VAT obligations during the same timeframe. It ensures that VAT is not levied on supplies from affected businesses between July 1, 2024, and January 31, 2025. Now, who benefits from this, Madam President? All businesses in Carriacou and Petite Martinique are automatically qualified, and it's for obvious reasons we know, we've seen, we've heard.

Madam President, and before anyone asked, what about Grenada? Yes, the Bill provides mixed provisions for mainland Grenada. However, once businesses fall outside of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, our sister Islands, they have to prove that their businesses were affected by the hurricane. Madam President, we could understand why that is stipulated. We know that not every part of Grenada was affected, but if we were to just leave it open, what you would find happening is persons taking advantage of the system. So we are ensuring that businesses in Grenada who were affected prove that they were damaged.

Now, this is not a waiver of previously owed taxes, Madam President. Right. So there's a stipulated period. It's not for previously owed taxes, but it is a forward-looking approach to get businesses back on their feet. So, let me give an example of how this will impact a person in real life. So let's say we have a food vendor in Petite Martinique struggling to reopen after the structure collapsed. That vendor, Madam President, will not have to worry about VAT compliance and penalties while she restarts operations. Madam President, that is definitely commendable.

We move on to clause 5, the exemption of corporate Income Tax prepayments, and I go back again to reference what the Income Tax Act, Cap. 149 is all about. So you see what the Act does is, it governs the assessment and collection of income tax, including Corporate Tax, the Pay-as-you-earn deductions from employee salaries and advanced payments on Income Tax Liabilities.

The sections relevant in this Act pertaining to this Bill would be section 93, which requires monthly advance payments of Corporate Income Tax. Section 96 obligates employers to remit to the Employee Income Tax deductions, and the Fourth Schedule,

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paragraph 9, which requires annual returns of tax deductions.

Bringing it back to this Bill, Madam President, and what it exempts would be companies from making advanced Income Tax payments during the relief period. It extends deadlines for employers to file and remit Pay-as-you-earn deductions until January 31, 2025, and it shields employers from penalties for non-compliance during that time. You see this clause, Madam President, temporarily, and I am stressing here, temporarily, lifts that requirement for affected companies. Again, it's automatic for Carriacou and Petite Martinique and conditionally for mainland Grenada. The impact here would be that a small manufacturing business, for example, can redirect the cash from Tax prepayments towards rebuilding and rehiring. Madam President, this is what this clause seeks to do.

I move on to Clause 6, which speaks on the extension of Annual Stamp Tax deadlines, and the Act solely responsible for that enforcement will be the Annual Stamp Tax Act Cap. 16A. This Act imposes a flat rate tax on all businesses based on gross receipts. The sections relevant to this Bill with the extensions require payments of Annual Stamp Tax, require businesses to file a tax return, which will be sections 3 and 6 of that Act, respectively.

The relevance to this Bill, Madam President, is that the Bill extends the deadline to file returns and pay the Annual Stamp Tax for affected businesses until January 31, 2025. There'll be no interest, no penalties, nor late fees; none of these will be applied for non-compliance during the relief period, and it offers businesses time to recover without punitive consequences, thanks to a specific override of section 50 (5) of the Tax Administration Act.

You see, Madam President, think of a local tailor who would not be penalised for delays in filing Stamp Tax returns while repairing their flooded shop, Madam President, or think of a shopkeeper or a small supermarket owner having to do the same.

Clause 7 creates the provision for the extension of the Pay-as-you-earn Income Tax deductions. So under this section, Madam President, generally, employers must file Employee Tax deduction returns under paragraph 9 of the Fourth Schedule and remit employee tax deduction under section 96 of the Income Tax Act. This Clause, however,

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extends the deadlines for both again to January 31, 2025. Remember, I said that this Bill is retroactive.

So, Madam President, think of an employer in Carriacou, who lost power and records because they were using a computerised system they now have the time and the space to comply without fear of punishment or a small employer in Sautuers, for example, who had to halt operations due to damage, they now have the time to comply without being overwhelmed by the red tape.

I move to Part III, which speaks to the miscellaneous provisions, Madam President. Clause 8 of Part III refers to sunset and savings. Madam President, this Bill, once enacted, will expire on January 31, 2025. However, any rights, obligations or proceedings arising during the relevant period remain valid even after expiration. This ensures continuity. It ensures predictability and legal sustainability. Madam President, you see this ensures that this amnesty, if we wish to call it such, is managed and is not taken advantage of, Madam President.

Madam President, this Bill does more than suspend tax obligations. You see, Madam President, this Bill provides cash flow flexibility. You see, employers and business owners can now utilise the time to restock, to repair and reopen to buy supplies instead of paying taxes. And, yes, we know taxes they're super important and what it does for the economy, but, Madam President, we cannot ignore the human impact, for this Bill is way beyond just fiscal support, Madam President.

Madam President, what this Bill also seeks to do other than suspending tax obligations is the administrative relief. Madam President, we know about all the red tape. So you see, Madam President, what Bill would do is navigate disaster recovery without the headaches of the red tape so that persons in the affected areas can focus on recovery, not compliance at this time, Madam President. We know what happens during disasters. And the most important aspect of this for me is what this Bill seeks to do, Madam President, is a psychological relief. And we know, as a mental health advocate, I cannot ignore the psychological assistance that this Bill will give to people.

Yes, it is a fiscal support, but, Madam President, the mental and emotional space that this Bill will allow for business owners to have is a chance to breathe and to rebuild

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without thinking about the penalties and having the tax pressures looming over them, Madam President. If it does nothing else, that psychological relief is super important.

Madam President, you see this legislative piece of work is almost like a legislative handshake from this Government to the affected people. And we are saying to our family and our friends and our business owners in the sister isles as well, that they have borne the brunt of this national disaster, that we are here to help. Madam President, we cannot lose sight of the real faces behind these provisions, Madam President.

You see, these are fishermen whose boats were destroyed. Madam President, these are market vendors whose stalls were blown away. Madam President, these are shopkeepers who woke up to a flooded store room and their goods and their stocks were gone. Madam President, this Bill is not just about a fiscal policy, and I cannot stress this enough. It is a message of hope. Madam President, it is a message of stability and responsive governance.

It says to our business owners, you are not alone. Your Government stands with you not just in words but in law, Madam President. **(Applause)** This Bill says to our people, we see you, we hear you when we are legislating, not just for numbers but for normalcy, Madam President, for livelihoods and most importantly for dignity to restore that dignity to the people who have lost it, Madam President.

Madam President, with that being said, I therefore commend the Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025, to this Honourable House and ask for your full support in its passage. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Francis. Am I correct? This is the first time that you have introduced a piece of legislation in the Senate? **(Applause)** I note and I congratulate you. Thank you. The floor is now passed to Senator Horsford.

Sen. the Hon. Dwight Horsford: I give way to my distinguished friend.

Madam President: Go ahead, Senator Lewis.

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Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you. Before I make my presentation, I just wanted to ask a question that could influence what I say. Madam President, what we are discussing here is a period that has already passed. Yes? I just wanted to make sure of that. Yes? So, the period has already ended as of January 31, 2025? I'm seeking clarity on that because...

Madam President: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: ... that would influence what contribution I wish to make. Under the glossary, it says what the relevant period means, and the presenter has been reading the same thing over and over. I guess this is what's there. So it says that the relevant period is 1st June 2024, and ended on 31st January 2025. So, that would influence whatever contribution one wishes to make. So, I'm seeking clarity on that.

(The Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas, Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph and the Legal Drafter converse privately)

Madam President: Your clarity is forthcoming as they consult. I am not sure what the rules call for. I believe the presenter has to supply the clarification or the Leader of Government's Business would also be eligible. We'll wait and see.

(The Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas, Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph and the Legal Drafter converse privately)

Madam President: We ask the listening and viewing public to continue to be on standby as the answer is sought. Senator Lewis, you may wish to clarify the question because I think the answer is forthcoming. What's your question, sir? Please repeat.

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Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Repeat the question? I just wanted to make sure that the discussion we are having is for a period that has already passed. Yes? Just a simple question.

Madam President: Thank you. Government Senators. Leader of the Opposition? Senator Lewis, are you satisfied?

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Yes. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you very much.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: It can help me with how I pose my contribution.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator Horsford.

Sen. the Hon. Dwight Horsford: Thank you, Madam President. I wish to indicate that I support the measure contained in the Bill now before us. But I wish to briefly stress that, although it is better late than never, although it is a retroactive measure, it is important to stress that it is a fiscal stabilisation measure of the kind that we have seen before. In other words, this is not a novel intervention. It is not a novel initiative, so to speak.

In fact, following Hurricane Ivan, which was a full nationwide climatic catastrophe, broad-based fiscal stabilisation measures of similar and even more extensive character has been taken in this country. At the time, of course, there was no VAT. It is GST that had been reduced on certain things, tyres, etcetera. The Property Tax was reduced, having regard to the devastating impact on families, households and property in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And so it is not any special handshake from a loving heart. We have seen this before. In fact, this is necessary to give relief, and we are quite happy to support it, Madam President.

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But more pointedly, to what my distinguished friend was inquiring. I think the heart of his inquiry was that period from June 1, 2024, to January 31, 2025, that is the relevant reporting period for compliance and so on, in relation to which relief is given, and we support that. We are not objecting to that at all. And so with these few words, I wish to indicate that I support this measure.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Horsford. Senator Lewis, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam President. One understands the importance of the measures that are put in place. But I have two or three questions and or possible concerns.

Because it is retroactive, that's why I specifically ask the question, and December 31 has already passed, what happens in cases where a business may have already collected VAT? VAT is not the business's own, but the consumer would have been charged VAT, and it has not yet been paid. Let us say it is outstanding, but the person was... Because businesses do not always pass on their VAT immediately, what happens in cases where business transactions took place, because we are now in May, and business transactions took place? We are now saying, well, look, you are not required to pay VAT for that period, yes, and because the sunset aspect says that wherever you have already earned that benefit, it would continue beyond December 31, and I guess that is why the sunset legislation section is worded accordingly. What happens when the consumer has already paid the VAT, which is not the property of the business? What happens in cases like this?

Also, what happens if... Because it is retroactive, it would also be a hypothetical question. If we have businesses, because this seems to imply... because it is speaking about pay-as-you-earn for employees, I am not talking about the business now, pay-as-you-earn is deducted from the worker. Under the law, if you make above, I think it is, EC\$3,000 a month, you have to pay income tax. Do we have cases where, my brother you might be able to help me too, do you have cases where businesses actually collected

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the money from the worker and did not pay it?

Because for this thought process, I am assuming that this legislative proposal came about because discussions were also held with the private sector. For this to make its way there in May of 2025 recognising that the period that we are speaking about have already gone, it clearly states that in relation to pay as you earn, you are not obligated to pay it at the due date, there is some changes in this but we are speaking for a period that is already gone. So I am hoping that we did not have cases where employees' salaries were deducted in terms of income tax, and as we speak now in May, it was not paid as at the end of January, 2025. This is not the business's money.

It is the same thing as NIS. I am speaking about NIS in the context of the worker contribution, because this here will also imply here, to me, that because NIS is a joint contribution between the employer and the employee, I can understand where you may tell a business after discussion with NIS, you will have to get NIS blessing on that anyhow, I am using this as an example, that the employers' portion because of the impact of Beryl, you can make some provision for that contributions.

But in any case, where it was deducted from the employee, I am talking about hard cash now. So, for instance, you are entitled to receive, let us say, your salary is EC\$4,000 a month, the first EC\$3,000 is exempted. The EC\$1,000 you have to take off, I think anything under \$5,000 you take off, I think it is 10%. So you take \$100 from that employee's pay cheque. I can't understand how permission can be given to an employer or a business to hold it and use it for their business. Because on the converse, I will then argue, probably it might have been... Because employees and individuals were also impacted themselves. Some people don't have water, cost of things went up because as business says, when there is a scarcity, price goes up.

When, for instance, from a human point of view, when there is a scarcity, especially from a hurricane, one would expect the business class to minimise their profit margin because you want people to be able to purchase. So on the converse, one would expect for that period, its retroactive so it's gone already, but to have told the employee in Carriacou, for instance, or Petite Martinique, that as a means of helping you wherever you get pay, I am asking the employer not to take out the income tax from on your salary

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and we can make an arrangement of how you pay it going forward.

But I can't see, to be very blunt with this House, if I may use that word, that we are saying that it is okay, if that is what this is saying, if my interpretation is wrong, I stand corrected and I will humbly withdraw what I have said. But I can't see how on this piece of proposed legislation or Bill that we have here, I am getting the impression that as it relates to pay as you earn, the individual worker, it is giving the green or yellow light, I want to be mutually correct here. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** I identify with red. It is not close to the movement. I don't think. You introduced this, my brother. **(Laughter)**

I am just putting that there, and probably the "Other Side" can help clarify that for me as to whether or not the intention here or the purpose here is to say where the employee was deducted, pay-as-you-earn, that these monies were okay to be withheld from paying to the state. I am not speaking about the business contribution, wherever the business have to contribute, I support that. Let me make that point.

Anything that would allow the business to be able to use its resources, and I am saying its resources, but the pay-as-you-earn is not the business's resources. That is the worker resources. That is the worker's money, and that is what I wish to raise in terms of just... I am seeking clarity, recognising that the sunset clause says that once you incurred that benefit before January 31, 2025, you can continue to enjoy that benefit beyond the deadline. I am seeking clarity on this. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Any other contributions to the Bill? Hearing none... Yes. Senator Cox.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I, too, want to make some contributions on this Bill. Just to say that any relief to businesses, especially after undergoing such an impact from the hurricane, is one that is welcomed, and of course, as a business owner myself, I do understand the plight that other businesses and business owners are having.

With that being said, Madam President, I do have a similar question in terms of the Bill being retroactive, whether or not people are going to receive compensation for

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whatever monies that were paid before. That is easy. The “Other Side” would say whether yay or nay on that.

I do recall, Madam President, some time back, standing in this very same place when fiscal measures were announced previously, and I did say the conditional measures were not appropriate. There were conditional relief measures that were announced by the Government sometime right after the hurricane allowing persons, I think one or two pieces or two boxes or two barrels or something of the sort, and I did say that it should be open, just allow persons to be able to bring stuff, all that they need in terms of household and rebuilding materials, just remove it altogether.

But, we are seeing now that this is coming almost a year after, Madam President. So, I just wanted to underscore that, and I think the Hansard can reflect that those comments were made and that call was made by me in this Honourable Place, Madam President. I really wanted to say that.

However, I think this Bill should have gone a bit further. I recognise that they're just trying to cover the tax period for 2024, but Madam President, as it stands now, there are a number of businesses that have not recovered as yet or even built back as yet. So I think it's an opportunity for the Government to look at the possibility of extending it to at least December 2025. I think that is one that is fair. And since the mover of the Bill speaks so much about compassion, I am making a compassionate plea on behalf of businesses to allow for this measure to go to December. At least, I think that is fair and a reasonable request, Madam President. So I just wanted to underscore that.

Because, you see, Madam President, just now, I mean literally, this month, some places are now actually making some movements and different businesses have different challenges. Some businesses have to relocate. Some businesses where they are their lease arrangement has changed. In some cases, the owners of the buildings... the tenured issues of the building also create an issue. So there are a number of intricate matters for consideration, which allow or prevent some people from rebuilding early. Sometimes not because they don't have the resources, but because of other issues affecting the recovery process. So it has brought some good, it has brought some bad, Madam President, this hurricane. So I really wanted to underscore that and to really ask

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to give some consideration to extend that period to December of 2025, I think that is a reasonable request.

Madam President, I think those were the main issues that I really wanted to highlight about this, and just to underscore my previous comments this morning about the time in which these measures come. A lot of emphasis was placed on compassion, but I believe that, Madam President, compassion will be more felt closer to the time of impact and so probably six months ago we had a Bill like this coming, it would have been a lot more meaningful and a lot more impactful in the context of compassion.

And so I just wanted to underscore that and to close on the invitation put out by the mover of the Motion in terms of where she wants to reside, Madam President. I believe, as the only Kayak in the House, that the invitation was levelled to me. She made it publicly, and so I am accepting the invitation publicly, Madam President. I just wanted to close on that note. Thank you very much.

Madam President: I thought when we started, we were a little bit stiff. **(Laughter)** We are certainly not stiff anymore. **(Laughter)** Thank you for the offer of a homestead for one who may come from a parish where she may have been dislocated. Thank you for your contribution, Senator Cox, and I am not sure if you want a response to your question about the extension. But I see the light on from the Leader of Government's Business, he may wish to respond. You have the floor, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, not specifically to what Senator Cox raised, but first of all, I stand in support of the Bill as so eloquently presented by Senator Francis. I think she really and truly deserves a table knock for her first presentation in the Senate. **(Applause)**

Madam President, I just want to make a quick point, and Senator Francis did emphasise the importance of the Bill being retroactive, and I want to say that in many instances where you have cases of emergency, the administrative work may have already been done. And so, I can remember a lot of instances, scenarios like this came to Cabinet, and Cabinet would have given the green light to go ahead, and the legislation is

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coming now. So, in cases where the issue of VAT... the measures may have already been put in place, and the VAT may not have been collected, but the legislative support was not there. So it is coming now for that purpose.

I understand your concern in regards to the Income Tax. I am sure in a lot of instances, Income Tax may not have been collected at the same time, but the legislation will ensure that there is no penalty for that period of time, or it would not be enforced then. So I could associate myself with some of the concerns that you are raising, especially when it comes to income tax and VAT, money collected, but I want to guarantee you that a lot of these administrative measures have already been put in place previously.

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

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. And thank you, Leader of Government's Business, for your clarification because those points were valid points that were raised with regard to filing, who would have paid, and who did not pay, and making sure that people are treated equally.

But I rise to say that I support this Bill, of course, because even though much of it would have been granted already, actually, it is something that is necessary, and as we heard, it was done before, and it is only necessary that it is done again. And whether it is to be extended is an issue for the people on the ground as to how many people have actually recovered, how many businesses have actually, and it should be based on math. It should be based on reality; a survey as to how many people have already recovered, how many are left, and so on. As to whether this should be extended. But in principle, it is good. I commend the Government for doing it, and I support this Bill. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. The independent Senator for Farmers and Fishers.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes. It would be remiss of me, like the resolution regarding the machinery and all of those things, for businesses, it is always

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one package of complementary support, and so we endorse it. I think the issue is the mechanics and the mechanism. I understand Senator Lewis' concern in terms of businesses trying to, what I would call, pirate the system. And, of course, it is something that we have to look out for. In every system, there would be people trying to pirate the system, and of course, it is something to always be looking out for. The measures, of course, you say would have been done before, but at the same time, I want to go back to a basic note of lessons learnt.

What did we learn previously, and what have we learnt now? Of course, the administrative component, meaning the Cabinet, decision and all of those things, must have directed the formation of the Bill and how it is going to happen afterwards. So I think those things are understandable, but at the same time, as I mentioned this morning, some of these things are not unforeseen. There are certain things that we know are going to come up, and so we have a mechanism in place that could even be better served if we put a plan through NADMA focusing on some legislative component in the whole disaster relief.

We're speaking about businesses, but there are other components that we haven't even looked at that might become relevant as new things emerge on us. So I think as we develop as a nation, we get different experiences, and it is a matter of how we cater. Because again, notwithstanding the GRIP Project, as my friend mentioned from St. Andrew, Senator Andrew, regarding the flooding issues. We have to be careful because of the rate of flooding and other destruction that can happen.

If everybody in Grenville says we'll have a disaster too, and we have flooding going on, how do we reach? Because it is something that we are prone to. That always happens to us. So I am saying these things, such that we have to be mindful of the scope, fairness, equity, justice and so on. We commend the effort of the GRIP, and we look forward to speedy action and results. I heard some Dutch people once. I heard about Greater Grenville once, and now I am hearing about the GRIP. I don't know what I may hear about afterwards, but we do look forward to the results. I think that is what everybody wants at the end of the day. Thank you, Madam President.

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Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair, and I believe that closes the debate on the proposed Bill. Sorry, madam, you must close, excuse me. Senator Francis.

Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis: Thank you, Madam President. I really did not mind you wrapping up. But, nevertheless, I take this opportunity to thank all Senators present here today, especially those on the “Other Side” and the Independent Senators, for commending this Government on this initiative and for fully supporting this Bill. We hope that the people who so deserve to benefit from this Bill, which will be enacted, will get the grace that they need to restore their dignity, to restore their businesses and to continue building our economy.

In closing, I also want to re-emphasise that the Bill not only speaks to exemptions but also speaks to the extension of deadlines. So, based on some of the questions and the dialogue or the presentations from those on the “Other Side”, it seems like there was a slight misunderstanding, so I just wanted to re-emphasise that the Bill speaks to exemptions and extensions of deadlines. Thank you all for your contributions.

Madam President: Thank you for your clarification in your wrapping up. Thank you. And again, congratulations on your maiden.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025.

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

Question put and agreed to.

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Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

Madam President: Distinguished Members, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed with good discussion and no amendments. Senator Francis.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Senator Francis.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Tax Administration (Post-Hurricane Beryl Fiscal Support) Special Measures Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Thank you. Distinguished Members, we've done an excellent morning's work and we are now on the door of 2:00 p.m. We will break for lunch and resume no more than one hour. Enjoy your meal.

Senate adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Senate resumes at 3:02 p.m.

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Madam President: The Senate is resumed. Senator Claudette Joseph, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I hope all of my colleagues here had an enjoyable lunch.

Madam President: How could they not? I saw them chatting with you.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Thank you, madam.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill which seeks to give force of law to the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement in Grenada and provide for its implementation, shortly entitled, the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Thank you, madam. Senator Joseph.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Senator Joseph.

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Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, this Bill seeks to enact the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Agreement and to provide for its implementation. Madam President, the Heads of the Eastern Caribbean States on 19th July, 2024 entered into an agreement with the aim of ensuring that participating governments that recognise the Monetary Council's systemic and strategic policy response to the global financial crisis that occurred in 2008. Against that background, the heads agreed to implement a deposit insurance system in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union to protect small, vulnerable depositors, promote sound financial stability of the financial system and strengthen consumer confidence and protection.

Madam President, as I said, the agreement was signed on 19th July, 2024, by all the Ministers for Finance of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, and this Act seeks to enact into domestic law the provisions of this agreement so that it may have legal force and effect in Grenada.

Madam President, the Act contains 13 clauses and one Schedule, and of course, the Schedule contains the entirety of the agreement. Madam President, I wish to not necessarily go through all of the clauses in this presentation here, but to highlight some key ones, including and especially, Madam President, the clause that includes the agreement. I will speak to certain aspects of the agreement itself, which is really the meat of the matter, so to speak.

So, Madam President, the agreement that we seek today to incorporate into domestic law, in clause 3, sets up the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation. And it provides that the Corporation shall be a body corporate with full legal responsibility in each member state of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. So again, Madam

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President, this is another of the regional harmonised bits of legislation which, together, Madam President, make for a stronger, more stable Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. And the Corporation set up by the agreement will have the capacity to enter into contracts, acquire, hold and dispose of personal movable and immovable property and also to institute legal proceedings, so that, Madam President, their corporation will have full legal personality.

Madam President, Article Five of the agreement sets out the main objectives of the Corporation, and listed there are three main objectives: to establish a deposit insurance system; to provide insurance against the loss of part of all deposits, promote or otherwise contribute to the financial stability of the currency union and carry out the objectives set out above in a manner that will minimise exposure of the Corporation to a net loss.

Madam President, the principal beneficiaries of this legislation will be small depositors, the small and most vulnerable depositors in our financial institutions that fall under the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. So, that would mainly be our commercial bank. By Article Five of the agreement, the financial institutions will be required to take out policies of insurance against loss of deposits.

Madam President, and by Article 15, I will jump to Article 15, every financial institution shall be deemed a policyholder. So all financial institutions, Madam President, are obligated to take out policies of insurance against small deposits, and as provided for in Article 15, small deposits are deposits of the amount of a limit, a maximum of \$50,000.

So, Madam President, we know in the recent past, we had financial institutions collapse before our very eyes and persons with small amounts of deposits, our most vulnerable people, suffered as a result of these losses; in some instances, they were never able to recover their losses. So this legislation will require financial institutions to take out policies of insurance with the Corporation to secure these small deposits. So we're looking after the interests of our most vulnerable people.

And, Madam President, clause 9 of the Bill makes it an offence for a financial institution not to comply with Article 18 of the agreement. Article 18 is the clause that provides for an initial deposit to be made on coming into force or into operation of the Corporation by the financial institutions, and thereafter an annual premium as assessed by the Corporation and notified to the policyholder.

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And so if these steps are not taken by the policyholder of the financial institutions, section 9 of the legislation, that is now before this Honourable House, states, "A financial institution that fails to comply with Article 18 is liable to, in addition to the payment of outstanding premium

(a) a penalty of \$500,000; and

(b) a penalty of \$20,000, in the case of a continuous failure to comply, for each day or part of a day that the failure continues, from the date immediately following the period specified in subsection (3)(d).

Subsection (3)(d) says, "Before imposing a penalty under subsection (1), the Corporation shall serve a written notice on a financial institution stating certain particulars and spelling out the amount that the institution is liable to pay.

So we see, Madam President, this being quite a stringent bit of legislation bearing in mind its purpose and intent and the desire in our Currency Union not to have a repeat of some of the instances we've had in the recent past where depositors lost their funds without recourse.

Madam President, Article 20 of the agreement requires the Corporation to make a compensation payment directly to the depositor in certain circumstances, including where the policyholder is liquidated or wound up or otherwise unable to make payments. And, Madam President, if we go to section 20 of the legislation, we will see that the intention is that policyholders who are to be compensated are to be compensated promptly, so that... Let me get the section I don't want to speak from memory.

Section 20. Yes, Madam President. The Corporation is to give prompt notice so that a supervisor, because there will be local supervisors in all of the jurisdictions and territories, and the supervisor must notify the Corporation at least 24 hours or within the occurrence of an event that may require the Corporation to make payment, so that if a bank or any of the institutions falling under the agreement is in a position where it is apparent that they will fold or go under or find themselves in a position where they will not be able to make payment to depositors, the supervisor will be required to give prompt notice to the Corporation.

Madam President, on receiving the notice, the Corporation must notify depositors of the event and the procedures for receiving compensation, and they must do so within

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72 hours of receiving the notice. So we see how promptly they are required to act. The policyholder shall provide the Corporation with information in a form as may be determined by the Corporation so that the Corporation can collate the details and amounts of any compensation payment that may be due to the depositor within 14 days.

And then, Madam President, article 20 subsection (6) of the agreement provides for the Corporation to make compensation payment out of the fund and that shall commence no later than three months after the notice is provided to the depositor.

So, Madam President, this, too, in cases where a financial institution finds itself in problems, will help to maintain the stability of the financial system by avoiding a run on the institution because we know how these things happen. Word gets around that an institution is in trouble, and then everybody is rushing to withdraw their deposits. So, the comfort of the insurance will also help to prevent a run on an institution that has financial difficulties.

Madam President, I think in terms of the areas of the agreement that I want to highlight, these are the areas I would want to highlight also, Article 22, which gives a 24-month window within which a depositor may make a claim for compensation. So if your bank finds itself in a situation where it can't pay deposits held, its depositor has a 24-month window to make a claim to the Corporation for compensation payment. After 24 months have elapsed, if you didn't make a claim, you will have to do so against the financial assets of the institution. If the institution is in liquidation, for example, you would have to submit a claim to the liquidator and usually be ranked in the usual order of priority and of course, when a liquidation is taking place there's an order of priority and I will stop to assure the Labour Senator that wages and salaries usually rank I think second after the liquidators fees, either second or third. Sorry. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

Yes. The liquidator's fees, I believe, are outstanding taxes on NIS contributions, and then salaries and so on. So that the regular creditors of an institution would rank lower in priority, but there's a 24-month window within which persons can make their claims to the Corporation. They have also built in their provisions to avoid instances of potential conflicts of interest arising, corruption, self-serving claims and so.

So, Madam President, in a nutshell... Let me see if I should make reference to any other particular section in the legislation. Yes. Madam President, section 8 of the

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Bill provides for the Central Bank because the Central Bank would be the main authority having regulatory and supervisory power over the Corporation, and of course, the board of the Corporation would be headed by the Governor of the Central Bank. So we see the role of the Central Bank expanding here to protect small depositors.

And in so doing, the Central Bank may open accounts and hold funds of the Corporation on such terms and conditions, including the payment of interest and charges, as the board determines. And the Central Bank has certain powers to raise funds, invest, borrow and lend.

So, Madam President, this is just basically a snapshot of the provisions of the agreement, which is in the Schedule, and that really will form the substance of the obligations under this legislation. I therefore commend this Bill to this Honourable House. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph. This opens the consideration of the proposed legislation to Members. Starting across the table. I take it there would be no discussion. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Madam President, of course, whilst our Attorney General presented very well and gave us the good story, we need to speak on that matter. There are a few things. I was all over the place in understanding this, but the message I am hearing is that there is this Corporation that seems to be, and the question is, was this Corporation existing before, or is this a new agreement? So you know agreement expires. So, is it the first time we are doing this initiative whereby we are protecting the interests of small investors in our banking system? That is the first question. Or is this novel in that, for the first time, this type of agreement is established, and for the first time, you are having this Corporation?

I take it, based on my understanding, that it is a suite of Bills coming from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank across the Monetary Council to manage different things, and I will explain that in a while. As I mentioned earlier, when we were looking at the whole issue of this payment system, and I asked the question, leading from my good friend Senator Horsford, in terms of the ECCB not overloading itself, trying to handle

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everything and I suggested maybe they can form some subsidiary or some separate corporation to handle that independently with proper advice and of course the ECCB provides that oversight.

Interestingly, instead of this ECCB, which is supposed to be an expert in handling money, taking the same funds and having them deposited and managing them as an insurance to protect small investors, smaller investors, I call them investors in our banks, you have accounts in banks, a corporation is set up now. So, a new business is set up. Okay. A corporation, like a statutory body, that will have to pay rent, has all sorts of administrative costs that basically put the small depositors at a greater expense. The banks already, Madam President, have charges everyday on all sort of stuff and now to protect the little money that you have that you place in the bank, while yes, you want to secure it, we have to pay a whole statutory body a set of money in big buildings, offices and different stuff to protect this. Interestingly.

And that is what I was reading quickly there. I say, well, if you're depositing all this money, not depositing, but you have to pay all these fees into this corporation, what are they doing with this money? The Central Bank know how to manage money, but you have a corporation managing its money. So, I am asking myself what is happening with this money, only to realise, Madam President, that, I am trying to find the clause because there is so much, under Article 14, clause 5, because so much different things going on with this Bill, it's an agreement inside a Bill.

So we are talking about page 13 on the agreement, which is the real thing, it says, "The Corporation..." And that is a corporation that would be managing these monies that the different banks would be putting in to buy insurance and secure the deposits of depositors. It says, "The Corporation shall not invest part of the Fund unless the investment complies with the policy made by the Board pursuant to Article 10(3)." And of course, Article 10(3) is what I was just trying to read there.

Article 10(3), on page 11, speaks about "Subject to subarticle (4), the Board shall make policies regarding the investment of monies from the Fund." Right. And of course, four speaks to making policies for the fund. They gave a whole set of examples on how that can be done. So I raised that to say that, I then asked myself, well, if we are doing

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that, what are these monies doing? Would the money be walking or would the money be sitting? And of course, they said it will not be, but if they want to, they can invest it.

And of course, there are different ratios of exposure, and so the question really begs, should the money really be invested, and if the money have to be invest then why is it that the strong institution (the ECCB) cannot just hold this money in account, versus setting up a corporation with all the different expenses? We would see it hopefully sometime when it comes to Parliament; the report on this Corporation to see what it is costing us, to run this operation for monies that you do not really have to invest, when it could have just sat in ECCB coffers.

This is what really came out to me in all of this from my quick read of the Bill. And I find this interesting bearing in mind, when we look at the Payment System Bill, that we're questioning, which is the same kind of elaborate mechanism where you can meet many different expertise that may not immediately reside in the ECCB, we find it difficult maybe to form another corporation to do that. Why? This one, there is no money passing through. It is just a facilitation. So, the ECCB, I guess, would have to take money from their coffers to finance such an organisation to manage the payment system that we spoke about earlier this morning. We would all see where all of this will land, and we have to think and be smart. Not because it has to happen in certain ways, but because 10 years down the road we'll all sit back in our rocking chairs and realise the consequences of what we may blindly let pass through our eyes and fingers. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Next. Senator Seville Francis, are you taking the floor now or not? Senator Thomas Gloria, is that your light? Across the room to Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam President. I mean, as our colleagues and the "Other Side" when it's part of their responsibility to pilot everything that comes, and even if they see areas to raise critical concerns, I guess in the tradition of the Westminster style that we practice here, they may hold them out. Right? **(Laughter)** You know, it would be good one day when we get past that, especially where

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this is not your Bill, but is something that has been given to us. You know. It is regional and therefore, well, it is part of us in terms of the leadership of the countries.

As we indicated, and we all know that this is part of the regional Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, just one or two quick observations on page 9. On page 9, it is more from a well, administrative... Page 9, Article 7. Under Article 7, Board of Directors. That's Article 7, 7(a). Yes. Article 7, 7(a). I had to Google the meaning of "incapacity", although I thought I knew it, and it corrected my understanding. So it says, "A Director appointed under subarticles (2)(b) and (c) shall be removed from their office by the Board on –

(a) finding, by a simple majority vote of the Board, of permanent incapacity..."

And there are other factors here, but what I found interesting is that I guess at some stage there may, and the Attorney General may help me here, develop procedures for these because you may not want to have your colleagues... I mean, things can happen because permanent incapacity has to do with your mental and physical abilities to function. Who makes that determination? If it is, as it may imply here, it may not be the case, but the straight reading of that just says by a simple majority. I haven't seen anything further in the document which says how one will go about establishing whether or not you'd be referred to some medical board or get some assessment done. Right. How would that be done?

So I'm here to just flag that. I've skimmed through the document, and I have not seen how one will come up with that, taking into account that the board of directors, I think it is a five-person board, at least two countries. There is one of the positions that requires at least one person each from two of the countries. The other two did not say whether it can be from a single country, right, or if it has to be two separate countries.

Taking that into account, a simple majority will be five, and if you end up in a position, we understand regional politics. Yes. We understand, for instance, the point raised by Senator St. Clair, when you're speaking about comments that were made about the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, and you heard all kinds of rationalisations as to why those points may have been raised. If, for instance, three people can come from the same country, for example, I'm just saying, and someone can be removed by a simple majority in terms of physical incapacity, it will be good to know what some of the criteria will be to come up with those.

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I now go to page 11, Article 10, Powers of the Board. So that will be subsection (2)(b). It says here, "Without prejudice to subarticle (3), the Board may make policies on matters including –

(b) the functions, duties, remuneration or removal of a Director..."

The board will determine its own remuneration; I am gathering from this. The board will determine its own remuneration. I'm not sure what the guidelines will be for these or if there will be guidelines. Right?

Whereas when we go under Article 13, under the manager, and quite understandable so, the remuneration of the manager will be determined by the board, and that's quite understandable. I mean that makes sense, and I'm not here to cast any aspersions. It is just that I find that, without guidelines, based on what is before us, it says that the board will determine its own remuneration. Right. That, for me, is something that I will just flag without making any aspersions on the matter.

But having said that, it is part of the original process. The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, based on the suite of Bills that are coming before us, is taking more legislative and legal actions to try to address some of the challenges that we have had in the past. Yes. But for me, from where I sit, these are some of the things that I'll flag also in the interest of the individuals. Because there is an individual director, all depends on the relationship that may or may not develop in a meeting, just a simple majority, you may be able to be removed on the basis of permanent incapacity. I guess you can take up the matter; there might be some recourse.

Although later on in the document, it states that no legal actions or so shall be taken against the Corporation. I do not know how the board fits into that. There are certain areas that it can be done in relation, I think, to investments, etcetera. So, that's just some of the immediate concerns. Observations. It may not necessarily jump to concerns, but observations. If one can be given some reassurances or explanation, or if that is available to the Attorney General. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you very much, Senator Lewis. And you will be followed by? You will be followed by Senator Francis, I see there? Senator Joseph. Claudette Joseph.

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Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg... Sorry. Yes. Yes, Madam President. I think I want to wrap up too quickly. Thank you, Senator Lewis, for the contribution, and I guess we can get into more details at the Committee stage.

Just to say that the query in relation to Article 7... Article 7, you raised a query in relation to Article 7. The procedure. Now I remember. The procedure to be followed, and the answer to that, may be found in Article 8 (1), which speaks to the board determining its own procedure. And if a member is to be deemed incapacitated, the assumption would be that the principles of fairness and natural justice would apply, so that the board will take every reasonable step to ensure that those principles are applied before determining that a member is incapacitated. And in terms of the procedure to be followed, the agreement allows the board to set its own procedure. Madam President, I don't think I am required to add much more at this time, or should I add much more at this time? Right? Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for your summation.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

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on Tuesday 27th May, 2025***

***Bills: Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement Bill, 2025
Bills: Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025***

Madam President: Honourable Members, I have to report that the Bill was considered in a Committee of the whole Senate and passed without amendment. Senator.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that the Bill be read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag.): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Eastern Caribbean Deposit Insurance Corporation Agreement Bill, 2025.

Madam President: I offer the floor to Senator Gloria Thomas. Madam, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to introduce for the first reading, a Bill for an Act entitled, Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Deputy Clerk (Ag): A Bill which seeks to amend the Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation Act, No. 2 of 2016 (the "principal Act"), shortly entitled, Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

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Madam President: Senator Thomas.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

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

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Madam President, the Bill contains two clauses. Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title, and clause 2 seeks to amend section 5 (1) of the principal Act, which lists those enactments from which the Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation is exempt by deleting the general exemption from all of the provisions of the Banking Act under paragraph (a) and substituting it with a limited exemption from all of the provisions of the Banking Act except for Part X, which speaks to receivership and compulsory liquidation provision, and section 178 which speaks to confidentiality requirements.

Madam President, the Monetary Council of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank at its 107th meeting convened on February 16, 2024, considered that an amendment to the Eastern Caribbean Management Asset Corporation was necessary in order to clarify that the Eastern Caribbean Management Asset Corporation is eligible for appointment as a receiver of financial institutions under the Banking Act, No. 20 of 2015, and as such,

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Madam President, should not be exempted from the act of 2015 totality, but must remain subject to the receivership and compulsory liquidation provisions and so it should be subject to confidentiality under section 178 of the Act. These amendments bring the Corporation's legal framework in line with the other ECCB financial laws promoting consistency and harmonisation across Member States.

Madam President, the amendment will enhance regulatory oversight. The amendment removes Eastern Caribbean Assess Management Corporation exemption from all provisions of the Banking Act replacing it with a limited exemption. This, Madam President, means that the Corporation is now subject to the receivership and compulsory liquidation provisions ensuring it operates under the same regulatory scrutiny as other financial institution.

Madam President the amendment also gives better protection for stakeholders. Financial institutions, depositors and the public will benefit from clearer legal protection and more predictable outcomes in the event of the Corporation's financial distress. And so, Madam President, I now commend this Bill to this Honourable House for consideration. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Gloria Thomas, and the floor is open. Starting with the "Other Side" or not? Okay. Hearing no discussion. Senator Lewis, you want to make remarks?

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: I was trying to, without success, unfortunately, I don't have a copy of the Labour Code. But, in relation to... I see there is a saving provision under section 10 that has to do with the authorisation of payment that the Attorney General has spoken about.

I was just trying to get, I think, for instance, in our Labour Code, where there is liquidation or so, I think, the workers' benefits in terms of salaries, and even in terms of compensation for years of service as a first call. I think it has a higher priority than this, so there might be a contradiction here because that section is saved from under the Banking Act. If my memory serves me right, discussions are being held at the level of the Labour Advisory Board, raised by the Trade Union Movement, that the Banking Act sort

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of drops down the priority level for the payment of workers where there is liquidation, versus the Employment Act.

The Attorney General may be able to find that faster than I. I'm sure if that is the case, I don't think it will have any difficulty in Grenada to change that because, as Senator Horsford indicated, these regional harmonisation documents or legislations allow themselves to be localised. So, for instance, I know Antigua, for instance, say what we want about Antigua, just as a comment, under the Banking Act, some of the concerns that we had in 2015, 2016, whereas it has endured some ongoing discussions, all were not implemented, Antigua when they brought theirs to the Parliament, the harmonise legislation, they made those changes one time.

So I'm saying this to say that if there is engagement and there ought to be engagement, we can make those amendments once they are identified. It's not necessary to pass them, and hopefully, come back a long time from now. That's just the extent of the point that I'm making. So I'm hoping that my colleague, Labour Minister, Attorney General, Senator Claudette Joseph, will just pull that up for me because I know that this is just a discussion that we're looking for the betterment of everyone.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Any other contributions? Senator Thomas.

Senator Gloria Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolves itself into a Committee of the whole Senate to consider the Bill... I wish to thank Members who made contributions to this Bill. Your points are noted and appreciated. Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolve itself into a Committee of the whole Senate.

Madam President: No, the Bill be read a second time. Thank you, Senator.

Question proposed.

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Madam President: I'll wait. If there are no more discussions on the Bill, we will put it to the second reading. Anyone else wishing to speak on the Bill?

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, the debate has already been wrapped up.

Madam President: Yes, I think Senator Thomas... Senator Joseph is not quite ready. Did you want to speak? Are you preparing to speak, Senator Joseph? I think Senator Thomas closed the debate, so I'm not sure what's happening there. Okay, then we can proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolve itself into a Committee to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Madam President: Thank you. Thank you. There's a little confusion, but it can be easily sorted out. Thank you very much, Senator Thomas. First, we will put the question for the second reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Deputy Clerk (Ag): A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Eastern Caribbean Assets Management Corporation (Amendment) Bill 2025.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolve itself into a Committee to consider the Bill Clause by Clause.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

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Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

Madam President: Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed without written amendment, oral or otherwise, but with discussion. Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: I beg to move that the Chairman's report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Honourable Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Deputy Clerk (Ag): A Bill for an Act shortly entitled, the Eastern Caribbean Asset Management Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator from St. Andrew, Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce for first reading a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Agreement on

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Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada Bill, 2025.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to give the force of law to the agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada, shortly entitled, Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

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

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Madam President, this Bill, the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and

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Grenada Bill, 2025, is a very timely and instructive Bill. We commonly refer to this “CAF”, as it’s shortly called, “CAF”, and you might hear me using that acronym “CAF”, C–A–F, is the Development Bank of Latin America, which was established in 1970. It’s a multilateral financial institution. It aims to promote sustainable development in the region and was incorporated under international law on February 7, 1968.

Now, the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada and the Series C Ordinary Capital Share Subscription Agreement between the CAF and Grenada were both executed by the respective parties on the 17th of April 2024. As a result, Grenada became a member of CAF, given that both parties had signed that agreement on the 17th of April 2024, Grenada subscribed to the purchase of a number of Class C Shares.

There are different classes of shares. Class C Shares speak to having a prescribed payment schedule for use of funds for promoting, marketing and all of that, so that’s afforded there. So Grenada subscribed to the bank as a shareholder by the purchase of a number of Class C Shares. And this gives Grenada the entitlement to access funding and financing up to \$20m.

In addition to those loans, the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF) also offers other products and services, namely financial consultancy, guarantees, collaterals, partial guarantees, equity investments, treasury services, technical cooperation, credit lines, co-financing and structured financing.

Now, Madam President, the reason this agreement is so important and Grenada becoming a part of the Development Bank of Latin America is that we live in a time where the financial certainties of traditional sources, sometimes, are not as reliable as they’ve always been and we are moving to strengthen our financial sourcing and sources. So we’ve gone before to the Afreximbank, which is a very lucrative and promising market, and now we’re partnering with CAF, the Development Bank of Latin America, which is extremely huge and probably much bigger than the Caribbean Development Bank, given the number of members that make up the institution.

Notwithstanding Grenada's signing of the agreements, Madam President, both agreements must be incorporated into the domestic law of Grenada through an Act of

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Parliament, and that is why today we are here to talk and to have these Bills passed.

Accordingly, the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada Bill, 2025, seeks to incorporate the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada and a Series “C” Ordinary Capital Share Subscription Agreement between CAF and Grenada into law by giving them legal force and effect. This Bill, Madam President, contains seven clauses and two schedules.

Clause 1 seeks to provide for the short title of the Act and for its retroactive commencement from the 17th of April 2024, to facilitate the Act coming into force on the date when the respective agreements were signed, in compliance with Article 20 of the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges.

Clause 2 provides for the interpretation provisions and includes the definitions of the terms used throughout the Act. So it talks about the “corporation” and other similar terms used.

Clause 3 provides for the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges as set out in Schedule I. So, Schedule I talks about the agreement, what exactly the immunities are, what exactly the exemptions are, and what exactly the privileges are, both for CAF and for Grenada. So, clause 3 provides for the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges, as set out in Schedule I to the Act and the Share Subscription Agreement, as set out in Schedule II to the Act, respectively, to have the force of law in Grenada. So it must pass through this process to take effect and be legally binding.

Clause 4, Madam President, provides for all monies required to be paid by the Government of Grenada for the purpose of meeting its obligations under the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges and the Share Subscription Agreement to be charged on the Consolidated Fund.

Clause 5 exempts the Corporation from the application of certain legislation enactments and from the payment of specified duties and charges. And you would see listed in the legislation or in the Bill examples, stamp tax, income tax, property tax, are some of those that are listed, so in case CAF decides to set up property here, they would

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have the entitlement to some of these privileges. They can have offices. They can have spaces on the island should they choose to do so.

Clause 6 provides for amendments to the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges and the Share Subscription Agreement, as agreed to by the parties, to be reflected in the respective Schedules to the Act, by Order published in the *Gazette*. So it's whatever amendment that can be made or that may be made over time that will be reflected officially and published in the *Gazette*.

Clause 7, Madam President, empowers the Minister to make regulations to give effect to the provisions of the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges, the Share Subscription Agreement and the Act. So the Minister is empowered to make regulations to operationalise much of the Act.

To bring to your attention. Schedule I, of course, sets out the text of the Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada, and of course, the exemptions from stamp duty and all of these details are given there. Schedule II sets out the text of the Series "C" Ordinary Capital Share Subscription Agreement between the CAF and Grenada. It speaks to the number of shares, the cost of the shares, and the schedule of payments in relation to the shares. All of those details are outlined in Schedule II as they both form part of this Bill.

And, Madam President, given the necessity to diversify our financial reach in this particular period of this global space, I think this Bill is very timely and very appropriate. The Latin American market, for instance, is a very vast market that we have not sufficiently tapped into. And so, I think it's very timely, and very appropriate, and I therefore commend this Bill for discussion and approval by yourself and the Members of this Honourable House. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator David Andrew. The floor is open. I've seen a request. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: We were just having a negotiation. No problem. You know... I guess we understand the pitch. Madam President... Okay. So,

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the question we can ask, in this, and basically what we are seeing here, as Senator Andrew presented, is the same as we would have joined with the African Development Bank and finding the opportunity to access funds. It's the same thing as the World Bank. You know, you have to be in, you have to pay your subscription, and you do this through shares and membership. That's how it is always done. So we understand that.

The few things that we may want to flag, as my good friend Senator Rahaman was asking me, in terms of this exemption and all the exemptions of taxes and other things, in terms of equity, how we treat with like institutions. Maybe it's the same way you think? We don't have all the documents in front of us right now, so that one. In passing, of course, different institutions would have different restrictions, but I think more importantly, once you are investing in partnering, getting involved in something, especially at a country level, we don't expect to do this for just doing's sake. And so, what is the expectation? As Senator Andrew rightfully said, where is that potential, especially in that part of the world, which is very close to us?

And so we want to hear, since this relationship started, what we have done so far. I'm not asking what the bank has done, but what have we done in terms of accessing, maybe receiving, little as it may be, and the prospects of what is down the road, not just return on investment, but what can we access? Can we access... We have this project coming up, and we expect to get funding from this institution because you don't just join things today and hope that, well, five years down the road, how would you get what you're looking for? You must have done the analysis and have some strategic relations, that's why you want to go in there. You don't just leave and say buy a piece of land there, and hope you'll get money. You would have done some research. So the question we have to ask ourselves is, does the investment make sense? Does the relationship make sense? And you could strike that question, if you want to, and then ask, well, we expect something to happen. I mean, we're not foolish. We know what we're doing.

So then the question is, what actually are we doing? We know what we're doing. What is it? What do we expect? You know. We expect to have funds to build a school, to build a hospital, to get equipment in agriculture, or to fix roads? You know, over what period of time, and do we have projects in the pipeline that we can already pull off the

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shelves and look for a streamline of funding, or haven't we heard anything yet? We have to wait for the Bill to pass first, so that's why we haven't done anything as yet. I don't know.

So, I think, this will be of more interest to me. We'll like our dear friend on the "Other Side" to assist with, but those relationships are important. Particularly, we see what is happening in the north. We must diversify the areas from which we can have benefits. You know, we see China, we see Africa, we see Latin America, but it means also that outside of Government, what is there for other investors within the private sector? Can other consortia access different types of improved financing, rather than going through local institutions or maybe the Development Bank? You know, they have their own issues, but the Development Bank can access affordable financing for various initiatives.

So these are some of the questions. What does that mean for us? What is the purpose, and how do we intend to make this make sense in the medium to long-term? I think that is my interest right now. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Senator Adrian Thomas

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I, too, would like to stand and support this Bill as presented by my colleague. Madam President, for centuries, maybe for more than a century, we have been looking north every time. Synonymous with borrowing and debt in the Caribbean, when you speak those languages, you talk about the World Bank and the IMF.

I'm very happy to be part of an Administration that is coming to terms once and for all regarding our neighbours, and not only our neighbours, but also our mother country, in the form of Afreximbank. We have had them visiting Grenada. They will be here in Jul again, and now we are going even closer, Latin America. I've heard the cry and the call for us to establish more relationships with South America, and I'm happy today that we are doing just that.

From my research, Madam President, I found out that this institution has a love for

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sustainable development, and that is the key word in many countries today in terms of developing their own infrastructure and developing other important sectors. I came across agriculture, tourism, and if an institution of that nature would support projects that will help us, I think we are making a very good move in terms of exploring the possibility and taking concrete steps, not just talking the talk, but walking the walk.

I hope, Madam President, that we will support this very important Bill, and that we will see some fruition taking place as soon as possible. Madam President, I once again want to support the initiative, and I look forward to this House having a discussion and approving this Bill, pronto. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas. Any other contributions? Hearing none. No request for the floor? Senator Rahaman, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. I'll be brief. We were always taught not to keep all our eggs in one basket, and that's what this is, and you are more vulnerable when you can't turn left or right, and so the more options you have as an economy, the less vulnerable you are.

So in that context, this is a good thing in the same way that our relationship with the Afreximbank is a good thing, and we'll see what's coming on with that in the next month, that trade mission. And so, this has the same opportunity to bear fruit with our brothers and sisters in South America, and we look forward to that.

The only thing I find is that we give up a lot. We give up a lot. I find that it is like... You know... We don't give that to anybody else, in terms of whether it is any particular Act that would apply to a foreign entity or foreign corporation and so on... We roll out the red carpet. I guess that perhaps that is the norm, but when I read, you know, not only that the organisation, but the employees of the organisation and their family members and so on, can go and come and don't have to contribute in a sense like the rest of us do, it's a lot, but I guess that is the norm.

I'm not familiar with what the norm is around the world for membership in these types of institutions, so I can only imagine that this is the norm. I'm definitely happy to

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see that we have other partners that Grenada can lean on. Thank you, and I support it. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Senator Cox, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Madam President, while I do understand the importance of this agreement, and as the Bill indicate, the agreement was already signed, I, too, share the same concern after thoroughly going over the agreement in terms of the extent of what we're forgoing and even to the extent of the employees. You know. I think the word that came to mind when I read through it was that they are basically untouchable. **(Laughter)** It seems like they had sweeping immunity to almost everything. Like Senator said, I don't know in the context whether or not that is consistent or normal in these agreements or if all the previous shareholders were exposed to the same agreement. I would hope so, and not just a Grenada that has been subjected to that, but it's quite extensive.

I was reading, and it wasn't stopping; more was being added as I went into the different sections. And so, I do hope that this, in terms of returns for us, based on what we want to do, will far supersede what we have agreed to give up as a country. As I said, I don't have all the details in terms of precedent, but it was a little bit, for want of a better word, "scary" for me. So this is what I just wanted to point out as an observation, as well as a concern.

But as I said, if that is the precedent, then we probably ought not to worry too much about anything, but I can't speak as to extent and whether or not that is satisfactory or fine, but I just wanted to raise it for what it is worth. Thank you.

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

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. I, too, understand the need and importance of looking elsewhere in terms of arrangements,

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recognising that the traditional friends from the north sometimes do not pay much attention to us and recognising that the global south has a keen interest in us, whatever relationship that we have.

However, I, too, as a national, probably do not understand these. I don't want to say that delicacies; someone, you may be able to better help us here, someone of your repute and experience in diplomatic circles. The more I read this, I started wondering, what is happening? So let me make the point. I understand us looking elsewhere, I'm going to arrangements, but I find so much detail... I mean, take for instance, something as... Under Article 11, all of them are more or less the same, but let's use... I mean in an agreement which has the write out, it says, "Grenada undertakes, in matters of foreign and investment at exchange, control..."

Madam President: What paragraph, section or page?

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Article 11, page 5 of 7.

Madam President: Page 5?

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Page 5 of 7.

Madam President: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Article 11. And they all followed a similar trend, but I'm just pulling out this one that I find was well, I mean, so basic, but who am I? But it came to us... It says here, "An expeditious procedure for the approval of foreign investments and exchange operations, for the investments of the Corporation in any company in Grenada."

So now, in Grenada, I would think that the individual companies will be guided by the modus operandi. What we are doing here seems to be saying that the state is committed to guaranteeing these things, that individual companies will have the say on.

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Yes, my brother in the private sector? Yes? If I were to jump. I will just go a bit further on. I mean, some of the things that we seem to commit there. It says, “c”, that is in the same Article 11, so, Grenada agrees to do the following: “To allow the Corporation to access the most favourable exchange rates in the market for the purchase of foreign currency, which may be required to carry out the aforementioned money remittances”.

I don't know that the state has control over the local institutions that are dealing with foreign exchanges. When we sign things, it ought to make sense. So we are not questioning the arrangement, but the more I read this document, I can't be part of... If I'm leading a part of a negotiating team, some of these things, the way it is written, how could Grenada guarantee that? So, if, for instance, this entity goes to Republic Bank, for instance, we're dealing locally, and it turns out, I mean, could the state direct Republic Bank on what to do?

So, to me, it does not make much sense, even the wording and phrases that are being used there. Grenada could guarantee that it is a state where you have authority in terms of what you call “state activities”, so you are exempted from the different taxes. Yes. You can do that, but are we setting ourselves up so that when this Corporation goes to a local entity and it turns out that they run into difficulties, and it turns out that they did not get the best, is it we who will be held responsible?

It is saying that Grenada agrees, you know. This is the language. This is the language of a document that comes before the Senate. This is the language of a document that our leaders have sat down and put, well, not pen to paper, but are you following me, my brother? I'm saying read this. As I look at it in terms of language and commitments, I don't know that the state could commit any of us else to doing this.

So the feeling that I got, the feeling that I got, similar to what Senator Cox indicated, but I will expand it. This is a state within a state. In other words, as though we were so happy, right, that we have struck gold without recognising what it is we are saying or committing to do. I didn't feel proud reading this. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** No, we didn't write it, but it came to us, but this is Grenada. I am Grenada. I am part of Grenada. This is the Senate. This is a document written by our officials that has come to us.

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So, I'm not addressing, I mean, all agreements for going into, being part of the bank, you will get certain benefits. Right? I have not researched them entirely, but I accept what has been presented to us in terms of the importance, and we're looking elsewhere because we are with the World Bank, with the CDB, right, etcetera. But look at the language. Look at the language. Is this an agreement? I can't sign an agreement like that. And I don't know how my colleagues, how the state could bring this to us for Grenada to commit itself that they will get the best exchange rate unless I'm reading something wrong, and then most of the things that they are saying, and how the employees are being treated.

I'm all for treating people good, but it is more than untouched. In other words, we're just so happy, you're just so happy that, hear what, you come here, you do what you want. I mean, there are certain restrictions in relation to the laws, certain actions not to be taken. Grenada laws only apply in some limited respect where members of the family are employed within the state, and my understanding of this is that they are not employed with the Corporation.

So, for instance, husband and wife come, or mother and father come, and they have children and one of the children is employed with our local companies, they will fall under the law, but there will be some things they would be exempted from. They are expected to perform certain things, but otherwise they are totally, totally, I mean... I think... I wonder if I have seen it properly, their vehicle may require diplomatic plates too? **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** Yes. Diplomatic plates.

In other words, so I got the feeling... When I started, I said no, but we are in Italy; the Vatican City. You know, I think that's the only country I'm aware of, subject to correction, that there is a state within a state, but for our sake as proud people, language is important. Language is important.

So we have no difficulty, I have no difficulty with the arrangement that you're going to the bank, the business arrangement. I have no difficulty. Certainly, with the exemptions in terms of taxes on the port of entry, because these are concessions, in other words, you want to encourage, and that is okay because we give concessions for different reasons. That is okay. I have no difficulty with that because we ought to start to benefit

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more than the collection of the taxes, like the opportunities for business, the opportunities for getting access to finances, right, we bought some shares as an investment. That is all good. Bingo!

But when it comes to the way we treat people or the way we write, what is expected of us? You know, we have been looking, I've been hearing some very progressive language, certain language coming from "That Side" in different arenas, even globally on the international forums in the United Nations, yes, when we address certain regional and international forums. This here is the total opposite. The language here is the total...

I didn't feel as though, you know, we did something. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. Well, more than a blank cheque. It was even more than a blank cheque. In other words, it's not just a blank cheque, but we have written. At least when you have a blank cheque, certain things are not written, but this, here, we have written. We have written. Grenada...

And this is not... It didn't say "in relation to state institutions". So if you engage with the state institution, I may have some concerns, but I'd say, "Okay. Yes, well, I mean, okay, the Cabinet and others, you know, they are okay, so that's okay". Even in relation to the court and everything. I mean, our whole legal system? Us! When I read this, I feel... I'm wondering.

And therefore, I beg the question as I take my seat, who is it that okayed the write-up of this document? I will hate to believe that our Cabinet colleagues have had sight of this to be able to give their input, because I know colleagues and comrades better than that. And therefore, the question begs itself, who did this? I take my seat.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Lewis. The hour is late, but I wanted to inch and I wanted some clarification. I am not voting on this, of course, but I would like to make sure that we all understand and feel at peace with ourselves when we do anything we do in here. This is a basic standard, I would say.

So, to bring to the attention of the sponsors, page 4, Signing of the Agreement in Washington, DC, in April, it will be good to get some information on that later on. Where are the original agreements? I think it is in Schedule I, which is a bit short.

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On page 5, where is it... Page 5, Financial Provisions, section 4, "All monies required to be paid by the Government for the purpose of meeting its obligations under the Exemptions shall be paid on the Consolidated Fund". All right.

There is always late, and we ought not to scrutinise what we cannot do in its entirety here. So, we'll just register that, like the previous discussion, there is a need for more conversation, more clarity, I heard.

(Inaudible comment by a member)

Madam President: Excuse me?

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: That's a done deal since April. I think April 2024. I mean, so we are the rubber stamps? Anyhow...

Madam President: The documents are there, and I think we can anticipate that more information can be and should be made available to the Senate after the vote. That's my two cents. Okay, we proceed. Are there any other contributions? Hearing none.

Question proposed.

Madam President: We have to close? Senator Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. And let me thank my colleagues for their contributions towards this very important Bill. Their support and the acknowledgement of the diversification of our financing options are critical for us at this time; tapping into new markets and new sources is very important.

I think Senator St. Clair asked if there was anything we got. Interestingly, CAF has already, even before any agreement was signed, they were the ones who sponsored, I think it was US\$50,000, towards the staging of UNLEASH, the creative forum that we had

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sometime last year. Right? So, they have already been supporting, to answer Senator St. Clair's question.

Now, he also asked about what's in it? When you become a member of these organisations and groupings, you get access to concessionary financing, financing at 1% and 1.5%, and this is extremely concessionary. So, when you have major developmental projects, it's beneficial to pursue those options and imagine you have an option like that or with Afreximbank, other than probably the World Bank or one of those other agencies.

In terms of the queries raised by Senator Lewis, I kind of struggle to see all that he said. I heard more emotion than I see linguistic relevance, because I could agree that when I read, too, I did feel a certain sense of us giving a lot. So, I take that part, you know. But then I always have to remember we are the ones who are trying to attract the business, we are the ones who... So I take that too. But it doesn't mean we have to give everything away. So, I hear that.

But I'm going back to Article 11, and there's plenty of lament about who wrote it and the language that was used. But I see it says, "Grenada undertakes, in matters of foreign investment and exchange control, to provide the Corporation with: and it goes on to say, an expeditious procedure for the approval of foreign investment and exchange operations..."

Now, this sounds like an increase in the ease of doing business index. **(Applause)** This is what we try to do. We try to make doing business easier, and so if a businessman, I'm sure the Business Senator would agree, comes into a place and it's easier because you have an expeditious procedure to get foreign investment or to get your things set up this is what Grenada is committing to, and I don't see anything wrong about the language here for that piece.

And then we move on a little bit lower because I think the Senator referenced "c", "Access to most favourable exchange rates in the market". I mean, the market forces are the market forces. If you can get access to the most favourable markets... **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** "Access the most favourable exchange rate in the market for the purchase of foreign currency..." I see no reason why if we could assist with that or point them to or facilitate it, why it's a problem?

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Now, we did not say that the Government guarantees. The language doesn't say that it guarantees, but it provides access to the most favourable. Right? The top says it undertakes to provide access to. Right? **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** So, well, you say it doesn't apply. But, if for some reason, based on where the business is taking place, there's some need for some foreign exchange that has some varying rates, access to the markets, so the market forces will ultimately be determined. So I don't think it's something that we commit ourselves to so that we cannot point to.

So I agree that there may be some concerns that we are giving up some, but I think it's to attract what we believe is in our interest. I don't think it under-sells our people. I don't think it puts us in a place where we commit what we cannot give, where we say we have to. So, I still stand very committed to this Bill and see great merit in it in a period when our economy stands to benefit significantly from diversifying or financing options and avenues, hence I commend the Bill to you, and I thank all of you colleagues for your input and contributions to this debate. Thank you very much, Madam President.
(Applause)

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada Bill, 2025.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

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

Madam President: Thank you.

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Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

Madam President: Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and was passed.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Senator Andrew.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Agreement on Immunities, Exemptions and Privileges between the Corporación Andina de Fomento and Grenada Bill, 2025.

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

Item 17 – Adjournment.

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Madam President: Leader of Government's Business, and before you, sir... Yes.

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

Madam President: Senator Quinc Britton.

Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton: Thank you very much, Madam President. I mean, I know I am the only person who didn't really give their contribution towards the Bill. Although I support it wholeheartedly, I didn't get up to say so.

Madam President, quickly, just three things I would like to mention. One, I must express my thanks and appreciation to the Clerk and the Parliament. Yesterday, we had a visit from the grade 6 students of South St. George Government School, who visited the Parliament, and I had the opportunity to explain to them about the parliamentary procedures. So I just wanted to thank the Clerk and the staff of Parliament for allowing me to do so.

Madam President, also tomorrow, God willing, we are inviting those who are listening online as well as yourself to Sunset City, St. Mark. We have the national town hall meeting tomorrow, God's will, where we would normally do, and we start at 6:00 p.m., tomorrow at St. Mark Secondary School, my alma mater, where we would get updates and so on from our colleagues. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes. That's the first person I'm inviting. **(Laughter)** Let me present a special invitation to you, my colleague. All right?

And finally, Madam President, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Economy will, on Thursday, and we invite you as well to that on Thursday, God's will at the Trade Centre from 5:30 in the afternoon. We have a production called Symphony of Youth where you have the National School Orchestra. The National School Orchestra would be performing, as well as a choir, and so on. So, it's a production that would be just about an hour or so, Madam President. So it's something that you can, you know, come, listen and partake in, you know, just enjoy the musical talents of our young people,

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Madam President. So, I'd like, you know, I'd like to be very brief. Thank you very much, Madam President. Have a good evening.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Quinc Britton, for your kind invitation, and I hope Members do find a way to interact with the constituents of the Symphony of Youth. The sound of it is inviting, and I hope we're able to attend. I just want to... Senator St. Clair, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. I just want to take a few minutes to highlight one key issue. I'm not talking about Praedial Larceny today. I think there is some work going on at the Ministry of Agriculture, so there's some training being done, and we are waiting for it. It's a big issue.

But more so, Madam President, and members here and listening, a major issue that is facing us in the agricultural sector is the whole issue of farm roads. I want to highlight it because it's a burning issue, right now, for people trying to get back to their lands, especially after the hurricane, while rebuilding. The weather has been good. As predicted, it's a wet dry season, so people are excited, and this continues to be a very, very problematic factor for the farming community. It's not just one region. It can be spoken about throughout the country.

And so, I'm raising this matter to highlight the significance of the way it's affecting us and to reflect the voices that matter. It can be said that there is money in the budget, how many million dollars, and we are not saying no. However, as a good friend of mine always says to me, it's the results that count. No matter how much you do, if at the end of it you're not seeing the result, you're not seeing more roads accessible, you're not seeing vehicles able to go up that road, then there's no action. What you want is results.

And so, notwithstanding, there might be some actions. There are a lot of small roads. We are speaking about grading, drainage, trimming and overhanging. We're speaking about concreting such that persons can go and prospect and sell properties at high value afterwards, which is a matter that can be addressed differently, but it's the normal grading, binding, and so on that need to be done on several roads.

I see there are different focuses and many different things happen in this country,

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whether they are budgeted for or not, but we know that there are some budgeted allocations for farm roads, and so this appeal here is to see if we can target at least one road in each constituency per month. One road.

A lot of the issues, because we have done our own research, even at the GCNA. It's sometimes like half a mile of road that needs just some grading and binding so that people can move from one end to the other. So, you may start, and then after about two or three miles on the road or two miles on the road, there is that bad spot that may just be a quarter mile that just needs grading. So in most cases, it's not about fixing 10 miles of roads, but those small interventions that serve sometimes 10, 15, 20 farmers with farm workers and acres of land that are inaccessible.

There is one lady who took a set of photos and videos because she just can't understand why, like, there is no attention, you know. We're not talking about the visit and putting it up on Facebook, you're going to check out a road. We're talking about grading the road and preparing the road. In most cases, the farmers are even willing to contribute in some way, whether it's to use a truck or something like that, to assist because, at the end of the day, it's for their own benefit.

And so, notwithstanding all the talk and all the posters and all the videos and those things, there is still no road. One road per month in each constituency in six months, we can see the same effects as we build back houses or build back many other things. This is a neglected area. So, all the plants that we are preparing, all the propagation and all the other support can have a much wider effect on persons who are willing and prepared, but this is a restricting factor.

We can speak about all examples and so on. I know we need to have some focus on these farm roads. We're not speaking about concreting. We're not speaking about asphalt. We're not speaking about all of those things; simple grading, drainage. I know the Ministry may have their interests and say, well yes, we are working on that, and, of course, I know they have some ideas, but at the end of the day, if one month, two month, three months, four months and every time you hear, we are working on that, it means that there will be no roads at the end of December 2025.

There is a short period for the budget. We passed the budget in March, so there's

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a short window of time, and then we are going into the rainy season. You know, I listened to the report from FROC very well. FROC might be wondering why they have to report like that. It is because of things like this that the FROC will report like that. But the results can change simply by taking some action. So, this is the question on the table for us. The rules are very simple.

Of course, it might be arguable that under the SAEP project, under the MAREP project, some roads were done, but most of those roads were concrete roads that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. And not only that, they were very long, incoming, some of them don't even reach up to now that were identified. But this initiative that we are speaking about is a simple intervention, and I am making the call to all authorities. The farmers are willing and ready to assist in various ways in the area of farm roads. We have to definitely do that. I know that through Community Development, some support can also be initiated by me. So, there are multiple. I know the Constituency Offices are also receiving some constituency money. I think that money might have even gone up for this year. It wouldn't hurt with an EC\$10,000 or EC\$5,000 every month to assist in some way.

You know what I'm saying, Madam President, we have to be smart and do things wisely, and we have to do things that make sense. And you cannot have 10,000 farmers and maybe half of them catching hell to get to their farms, and here you have funds for these Constituency Offices which can be used for that. The question is, how much of that money is really being used to support little agricultural initiatives? It may be used to help with a grocery, medical bill, etcetera. But what might have been done regarding some farm roads if each of the offices took EC\$5,000 out of their budget every month, EC\$60,000 can fix four or five roads for the year. At the end of the day, multiply it by 15, and the impact we can see a significant increase. This is just a word to the wise. I thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for your persistent advocacy on behalf of our farmers of this country and in this case for the call for farm roads to be ready before the rainy season sets upon us. I'm sure it's received by the representatives of the

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Government, one of whom would like to speak. Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. So I rise on a point of clarification on this adjournment. I mean, I acknowledge the issue of the farm roads; it's something that I think is very important. So, we acknowledge that and something that we are actively pursuing and finding necessary resources to do.

But a statement was just made by the Honourable Senator indicating that constituency funds are allotted, and he thinks that they were increased. So there are two erroneous statements going there because I don't know any Senator sitting in this room that has, one, a constituency fund. Nobody on the "Government Side" has for sure. And even for those MPs, including opposition MPs, who receive it, I am not aware that there has been any increase other than the EC\$10,000 per month that's been allocated for all MPs in the Lower House, not here.

So, when is this House, Madam President, we make these statements that have the potential to mislead our populations, I take offence. Because I'll be having people out there when I walk in the community, saying the Senator said in your presence that you're getting more money, there are more allowances, more constituency... But nobody in this House gets this. And so I want to make sure that statement... I also want to say be retracted, but I just want to put on record that it is erroneous and should not be left uncorrected. Thank you. **(Applause)**

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

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Madam President, on a Point of Order, although I didn't do it whilst he was standing. I learned that there is no increase, but there is nothing wrong with making that reference to the Constituency Offices receiving funds for use.

It's part of the governing structure. Not because we are sitting here and matters are made... It doesn't mean that because the MP and the respective persons are not sitting here, we cannot speak. So, it doesn't mean that we cannot speak about the police

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because the Commissioner is not here, and we cannot speak about the Prime Minister because he is not sitting, and we cannot speak about the principal of GBSS because he is not sitting here. There are a lot of things that we say here today that we should not even be speaking about.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. I suspect that the clarification was that the payment does not go to the Senators. I think that was the clarification that was being made, and I thank you both for your contributions. Are there any other closing remarks? Senator Noland Cox, who is returning to Carriacou soon.

Sen. the Hon. Noland Cox: Thank you very much. Not soon, Madam President, I have several invitations dealing with not soon.

Madam President: Not soon.

Sen. the Hon. Noland Cox: Madam President, I have three important issues I want to raise, and the first one has to do with the issue of relief support that remains outstanding for some fishermen and farmers and so, Madam President, through you to the Leader of Government's Business you know whether the respective office or finance to look into this matter.

And I raise it because it's a serious concern. I think some promises were made to the fisherfolks and farmers a few months back, indicating that they are going to receive that support after the budget has been debated and passed, and as such, they have not received that support. A couple of them are waiting to help reactivate their boats that have been damaged, and other things. So they have raised it on several occasions, and I think it's appropriate for me to raise it here, just for the Leader of Government's Business to take note and to speak to his counterpart or Cabinet colleague about this matter.

Madam President, I also want to raise another matter of serious concern. I think it's important that I raise it here by way of advice and for the Government, through you, to the Leader of Government's Business, to look into the issue of the project in terms of the

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Build Back Better Programme that is taking place on the island of Petite Martinique and Carriacou.

I have received several reports, Madam President, of irregularities, but I think it's in the interest of the Government to look into this programme. There are number of alleged corrupt practices I mean quite a bit, Madam President, I wouldn't go into details, but in the interest as a Member of this Honourable House and somebody who understands how damaging it can be with those practices and there are a number persons who are relying on the support in terms of getting back into the home. I think it's important that, that programme runs properly and monies are not misused, Madam President. So I'm advising the Government through you, Madam President, to look into this programme seriously. There are a lot of things taking place, for want of a better word, I believe it's out of control, Madam President. It's really out of control.

Madam President, one more thing. The Government also embarked on, I think, part of the Budget Presentation, some 200 prefab homes for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Madam President, I think, if memory serves me right, about four or five of those homes came on the island and they started to assemble them, but they have not been completed. I don't know what the delay is, what the issue is.

However, one of the most critical things is that a number of persons who worked on that project indicated that they have not received any payment for their services, and as such, they wanted an opportunity to raise it for the Government to look into this as well. This is a very serious issue when ordinary persons give up the services, I know, that yes, there is an expectation in terms of how Government operate, you may have a delay in payment for services, might be a month or two for those type of services, but it has gone on for several months, Madam President. As such, it is something that people are getting to a point where they feel that their services were required, rendered, and no compensation came for them in that regard.

So through you, Madam President, I just want the Leader of Government's Business and his colleagues to take note of these three critical issues. As I said, I raised this as a concerned citizen and advice for further investigation and further review in the interest of the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Madam President. So these

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are just the three things I wanted to highlight. Thank you very much.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Cox, for raising these matters. And my office will certainly look into, with the Government, to find clarification, answers, and other information that your appeal calls for. Thank you. And the Leader of Government's Business is here, and I'm sure he will carry forward as well. Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. Just about three or four items. I wish to place on record the unions within the Grenada Trade Union Council that contributed to the TUC drive that contributed to the fire victims in St. Patrick. There was a fire that destroyed about three or four houses and St. Patrick some time back. Some unions within the GTUC made some contributions, and we were able to contribute close to EC\$20,000, which resulted in the good replacement of the roofs of the houses that are being built back. Therefore, I just wanted to place that on record.

To the committee, the colleagues from St. Patrick, the relatives and friends who have been spearheading that drive, we wish to commend them and compliment them for undertaking to ensure that something is being done properly. Right? We always felt that it was better to make what we call a meaningful contribution. Right? So, just for the notice of the public.

Also, about a month or two ago, a month and a half ago, the Technical and Allied Workers Union visited Carriacou to ask questions about some of the challenging issues that people are having, apart from the fact that some are still living in tents, etcetera. The issue of drinking water. Every individual we spoke to indicated that drinking water was a crisis in itself for them. So, two days ago, last week, Thursday and Friday, the union distributed water to all of its members in all of the workplaces.

I daresay, for the record's sake, when we went to the workplaces, we did not just focus on what we call unionised workers within the workplace, but even included management personnel. Every single person who worked within that company made a contribution to them because, at the end of the day, that is what it is about, including

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Carriacou and Petite Martinique. It is a serious, serious issue.

The two other matters. Certainly, colleagues and the nation must be aware that an issue has developed at the Grenada Airport Authority. For the record, I wish to place on record the absolute fact, in keeping with the Grenada Constitution and the Labour Relations Act, an application was made for a poll to represent the management staff of the airport and while we were meeting with the Ministry of Labour, the airport and the union, there were individuals calling our management trying to dissuade them from joining the union. I want to place this on record.

We have laid the charge that it appears to be all part of union-busting because we have understood what happened with the Public Workers Union and the withholding of their dues. As we have told our colleagues on the "Other Side" that yes, the administration has done some things for workers and there's no doubt about it, but when you come to the fundamental rights of workers, the structure, what we call the legislative aspects, these are the things that can impact strength of unions.

So, for instance, the issue of bypassing the Public Workers Union and going directly to the doctors and nurses and paying them a stipend. When we boast of our re-engagement with the International Labour Organisation, in which, for instance, there will be attendance at the International Labour Conference come next week, the question of what you call engagement with the unions as the bargaining agent for the workers is not been done to large extent by the current administration, and I'm just placing that and record so that we can understand and arrest that situation.

It is clearly understood that the application for the representation of the workers at the airport was made on May 2; since May 2. The law states that within 14 days, a poll shall be held. The poll was not held. The poll was refused without any reason being advanced. That's a fact. The correspondence from the Ministry of Labour indicated that the airport expressed some concerns and that the Labour Commissioner was awaiting a response from the airport regarding their concerns. When the poll certification was refused, in the very same correspondence, it was said that the Ministry was not in a position to advise because they were waiting for information, yet still it was refused.

And to also state, under the section of the law, the union can reapply after 90

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days, which is only in a case where a poll was conducted, and the union was not successful. But, no poll was conducted, so it is our expectation... Our council have already written to the airport yesterday. I am advising them to cease and desist from interfering in the recognition process because under our law, anyone who gets involved in trying to prevent someone from joining a union of their choice can be both fined and confined. That's how serious it is. So it is our expectation that, as we will address, what has to be done will be done to allow the workers to exercise their right to determine, and it is only a poll that will determine what can take place.

Also, there's an outstanding matter with the Grenada Ports Authority. We have been awaiting the recommendation from the Ministry for quite a while. It has not been forthcoming. It has not been forthcoming. A lot of patience has been demonstrated. A lot of patience has been shown because I know many times it is only when some action has taken place, despite what has been said publicly, that you hear that a particular union or workers are quick to take action. I am making an appeal to the relevant party or parties to take this matter extremely seriously and to do what is right.

There are some matters you cannot get away from. There are some matters once agreed between the parties and demonstrated no third party, regardless of how or where you think you may be sitting, will be allowed or should be allowed to alter that which has been agreed to, even if a party wants to renege on the agreement. Yes. I'm just putting this outside there, so that we can... Let us have industrial disputes on matters that require industrial disputes, meaning that they are complicated issues. But there are some things that are either black or white. There are some things like a switch, either it is on or off.

So our members on the port have continued to demonstrate a lot of patience, and I'm therefore using this opportunity to bring to the attention of those who have ears to hear, let them hear. And we have made the irrelevant intervention officially, but I thought it was necessary based on the passage of time, so that we will understand that this is a serious matter, and to also say that the workers know what the entitlements are. The workers know what their entitlements are. And therefore, if any state-owned enterprise may feel that they can delay the process and try to get the benefits that are agreed upon, change, it will not be wise for anyone to attempt to do that.

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And finally... Well, before finally, just to complement or recognise that we have been able to save the jobs of two workers from GRENLEC who were sent home. One of the issues that stood out... I would be careful here with what sort of information I give out because it's personal. But, you know, last week or two weeks ago, we received a copy of a maternity leave certificate. It was something that the GRENLEC workers must be credited for, and workers in Grenada and the leadership of the union must be credited for, because that maternity leave... Although the company and the department that have been responsible for trying to deny these workers their benefits are predominantly women. Our young sister, who gave the past five or six years to a company that they just wanted to send home because her union stood up for her, would not have been entitled to maternity leave in this day and age.

I salute the workers of GRENLEC who were prepared to lose to gain so that these two workers' jobs would have been saved as it has been saved. And some of them who were engaged over the years, denying workers their rights and their benefits, have found themselves with similar experiences to those workers. They themselves had been sent home under similar circumstances, and you know, many times we turn around and help them, even when workers are posted, and I could understand that.

But, we have always felt that we have a duty as leaders and as Trade Unionists, to look out for all workers, even those who, at times, are in the seat of power, denying workers those rights and benefits. We're making an appeal to all of our workers to continue to keep your side of the bargain because with rights comes responsibilities. It is a two-way street. So, as we move to this adjournment, I wish everyone all the very best. Thank you, Madam President.

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

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President, as I make a very brief statement on the heels of the adjournment.

Madam President, I want to congratulate the Grenada team that was led by Mrs.

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Kathy-Ann John for the eighteenth time they have captured the Chelsea Flower Show 2025 in London **(applause)** and as Minister for Tourism, I feel quite obligated to congratulate them in this Honourable House.

Madam President, one of the things that was highlighted in the publication is that this year's winning display, called "The Old Mill", is a tribute to the Grenadian islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and it features a replica of the historic Sugar Mill. The exhibit also includes vibrant tropical blooms, spice-laden texture and the historical architecture, all in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, which hit the island in July 2024.

I want to encourage all Members of this House to go on the web and look at some of the pictures that were taken and the display that was given. So once again, I really want to congratulate them and wish them all the best.

I must say that this Government has been very instrumental in making sure that this thing happened last year and this year. Apart from the Chelsea team, there are some key stakeholders who have sponsored them. I think the Hotel Association, the Grenada Tourism Authority, GRENLEC and there are quite a few other sponsors who make these things happen year after year. And I think Grenadians in the diaspora, in Europe, London and Grenadians at home, we are all proud of this great team for the work that they have been doing over the years. So once again, I congratulate them. **(Applause)**

Madam President, I also want to place on record that I heard Senator Cox regarding the outstanding payments for the farmers. I know we have done a tremendous amount of work in terms of compensating and reaching out to as many farmers as possible. I am not too sure if there are hundreds of farmers waiting outside for more assistance, but however small the numbers are, we will definitely reach out to see if there is anybody who has been missed. But I know we have reached out to a significant number of farmers since Hurricane Beryl. One left out is already too many, so it is our obligation to do so, Senator Cox. I want to give you that assurance.

Madam President, I also want to raise the issue that Senator Lewis in the way he referenced... I know it is just a reference he was making, but I don't think that any attempt whatsoever should be made in regards to prohibiting the largest employer on the island, the Government, from talking to its employees and from reaching out to its employees,

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even though we want to make a good gesture.

We don't have to check the union. I hope I really misinterpret you because the gesture we made to the nurses and the doctors did not come about from a demand that was made by the union, but the Government's own conscience in terms of our health sector. So, if I misinterpret you, my humble apologies, but I got the impression you were saying that the Government should not take this action before reaching out to the leadership of the union. I'm I correct? Well, I don't think we are obligated to speak to the union on matters of that nature.

The employer has every right to speak to its employees, and if the time comes where we have to reach out to the employees and to make them more comfortable, I think if our actions and inactions warrant a protest, I think, they will say so, and then they can take it from there. But to make a gesture of that nature, like that, to our workers in this country... I was a former trade unionist too, so I know exactly when the Government and employers make a good gesture, you stand up and tap them on the shoulder and say, "Well done, and I wish you could do the same in the years to come". I know it was just a reference and it is nothing cast in concrete, so I hope that you would understand this very reasonable and understanding Government.

Madam President, I also want to make the point, you know, many times I come as former Minister for Agriculture, I always come to the... We always have to wrap up this meeting, and the point of adjournment, we cannot afford Senator St. Clair to leave this House every single moment painting doom and gloom to the farmers. I don't think any other Government has done as much as this Government towards our farmers.

So when we speak, Madam President, we have to make people feel good too. We have to give them confidence. We have to make them believe in themselves. We have to make them see hope or see a way out of where they are. We cannot afford to come here on every single occasion, and the most authoritative figure in this House is Senator St. Clair regarding the farmers. **(Inaudible comment by the Senators)** That's okay. You have been sent here by the farmers, and I expect you to make the farmers feel good, and we have to stop painting doom and gloom as if everything is lost.

We have been building roads, and we're going to continue to build roads. There

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is over EC\$10m in the Infrastructure Budget to take care of roads in Grenada. Yes. We might not be moving as fast as we can, but we must accept the fact that Grenada is struggling to find construction workers now. We are struggling with the capacity to move as fast as we think. We're going to get there. But I just want to encourage my good Senator, my agricultural friend, to make sure that the farmers... Because you see, stress is a killer, and if you paint that picture and you put farmers under stress, I say no more. I leave it right there.

So, Madam President, I want to close by thanking you and your staff for this long day of endurance. I think it was a very good session we had today, and I wish you all the best and a safe journey to your home. Thank you very much.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Thomas, for your wrap-up. I realise that we have to surely set aside time for the Adjournment because it is a full session in itself. Sit tight and listen now to Senator Seville Francis.

Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis: Thank you, Madam President. I promise I will not be long, but I do know that since we last met, there have been a lot of developments that have happened within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but I want to place on record my congratulations to the CARIFTA athletes, both the swimmers and the track and field athletes. **(Applause)**

Madam President, I had the distinct privilege, and I am stressing that it was indeed a privilege, to travel to Trinidad with the team and the emotions that filled me for that weekend, it was nothing... The words filled me in seeing how well our athletes perform, and I am not speaking about their performance on the track or in the pool, but their mannerism, their deportment, the way they represented our country with class and dignity, which deserves to be commended. Hearing our anthem being played when we received that gold at the Aquatic Centre is a moment that I'll forever cherish. I've been adopted into the swimming family of the Grenada Swimmers Association **(laughter)** and I hope that I can continue to represent and serve the young people, especially those who are flying the flag in different ways.

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They ought to be commended. They ought to be recognised. I know that as a Ministry, we have done the welcome ceremony for them at the airport when they returned, but we also ensured that they got the recognition that they deserve based on our National Sports Policy. They've been awarded and we have pledged to continue to support them, not just in track and field or in sports or in whatever sporting discipline, Madam President, but sometimes we ignore the challenges that our athletes face at home, in school and other aspects of their lives.

So as a Ministry, we have committed to assisting them throughout the different aspects of their lives to ensure that they continue to perform at their optimal and they continue to make us proud. Once again, I just want to place on record my sincere congratulations and all the best to the athletes. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Seville, and do extend the congratulations of the whole Senate to the Grenada CARIFTA team, and we congratulate and thank you as well as the chaperone and chief cheerleader number one. Other contributions?

Then let me first thank the Clerk and his team for today. He seems to be under the weather, and he has shown up and delivered service before and during the session. He is out of the room, but before he left, he did provide me with a reminder regarding the question about the Money Bill and reference or clarity to that can be found in the Constitution of Grenada, section 46 (2). It would be advisable if Members could read that section. Section 46 (2).

I want to report on the Clerk and his team, the departure of Charmaine Blackette, whom you have seen in the Chair for a couple of years. Ms. Blackette, I believe, is technically now on pre-retirement leave and will not return to the Parliament. She did come to us on loan from, is it the Ministry of Education, if I am correct, and she has retired from the Public Service from the Parliament.

We send our thanks to her and wish her God's speed in the rest of her wonderful non-working years as she faces a new engagement with her. And at the same time, we want to welcome Ms. Melvina Gulston, who has taken the Chair. **(Applause)**

I am not sure what all the technical arrangements are with the authorities, the

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Public Workers. I don't know what they are called. The people who make the civil service appointment and all of that are still pending, but she is in the Chair here with us in our community serving us, and I wanted to thank her and welcome her and all others who continue to serve.

I want to thank you, Senators, for today, your role in minding the people's business, oversight and initiatives. First, the initiatives of new legislation, a pretty complex set of Bills today and an interconnected set of Bills, which, in my own private estimation, require a lot of clarification and work to be done both in terms of educating us, carrying us along and the implementation of the Bills themselves. So we look forward to their contribution to an enhanced Grenada, recognising the challenges that they are intended to face. I also think that the innovations have a lot to do with... the continuation oversight.

I think today we really dug deeply into the issues around this legislation we have passed, and that is correct. That is our oversight function as a Parliament, to make sure that the executive hears from us in a credible, ongoing and contributory manner. So I want to thank "Both Sides" of the Senate for the work, for bringing and for probing and getting us further down the goal post of a transformed, sustainable Grenada. Thanks to all of you.

I did intend to report on the Chelsea Flower Show and say how joyous and privileged I was. I was in London attending the CPA meeting at the time, but I couldn't stay to attend because, of course, I wanted to come back home. I regret I didn't stay. I regret I didn't see it, but I am among those celebrating our eighteenth goal and the wonderful, wonderful team. All of you, Kathy John and others received the thanks and congratulations of the Senate of Grenada and hopefully the people of Grenada. Thank you, Minister for Tourism, our own Senator Thomas and Leader of Government's Business and congratulations to you for your support and leadership in tourism and horticulture, which can become one of the areas of spectacular contribution to the Tourism product here in Grenada.

To remind us all that May 25 was African Liberation Day. And as we get ready to receive the African Export-Import Bank in Grenada in July, let us remember that we mark and celebrate African Liberation Day, which is a global celebration. **(Applause)** We are

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an African society, not because we are all African people, but because we've all been touched by the African reality that visited us here, both as enslaved people and as free and brilliant cultural and contributory members of an original creation called the Caribbean Civilisation. So we thank and congratulate our African brothers and sisters.

And aside from that, four days later from that, on the 29th, we are celebrating what would have been the 81st birthday of Maurice Bishop. A man who valued his African personality, his African politics, his African solidarity. Do you remember Kenneth Kaunda to Grenada. He brought Samora Machel to Grenada. He always spoke highly of Africa and understood the place of Africa. And I think wherever he is, he would be smiling at the deepening of the Caribbean-African connection. So, on May 29th, we say belatedly to our former Prime Minister, thank you and belated Happy Birthday.

And lastly, to congratulate the current Government despite whatever concerns we might have about the cost and other implications. We have, Minister for Tourism, a fabulous new expansion of Maurice Bishop International Airport. Really lovely. I arrived in Grenada, and I looked, and I wasn't sure where I was. It is a wonderful new space. We hope that the workers are treated very well. We hope that the management is supported as well. We hope that our visitors enjoy the airport, and we think that it is quite a contribution to our sustainable economic product if our tourism really belongs more and more to us as Grenadian people. So congratulations for all we're doing.

And finally let me thank, I forgot to thank the team over at the FROC for sending us the reports that we debated this morning. Thank you all and have a wonderful rest of the month of May. As we put before you the question. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** You may speak a second time if you wish. **(Laughter) (Applause) (Inaudible comment by Senators)** We maintain senatorial decorum. Senatorial decorum is maintained with full innovation. Senator Rahaman, you have the floor. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Madam President, I just wanted to say, a good level of bi-partisanship **(laughter)** with regard to the airport. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you. And I know the people from the small island want

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to say a word. I offer the floor again to Senator Cox. Senator Cox, you close it out, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Norland Cox: Madam President, I'm good. I really don't want to add **(applause)** anything. We just have a little banter about that. We good.

Madam President: All bilateral will be conducted after a vote on the question.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the Senate adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

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