



GRENADA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**SENATE**

THURSDAY 6TH NOVEMBER, 2025

***Sitting of the Senate  
held at Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's  
on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025***

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***Sitting of the Senate  
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on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2025***

***Attendance***

**PRESENT**

Madam President

Senator the Honourable Dr. Dessima Williams

*in the Chair*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas      | - Minister for Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture   |
| Senator the Honourable David Evlyn Andrew | - Minister for Education   |
| Senator the Honourable Quinc Britton      | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture with Responsibility for Culture |
| Senator the Honourable Seville Francis    | - Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry of Youth and Sports  |
| Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph   | - Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs   |
| Senator the Honourable 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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**Attendance**

**ABSENT**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Senator the Honourable Gloria Ann Thomas  | - Minister for Social & Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs (Social Security)<br><i>(Excuse tendered)</i> |
| Senator the Honourable Norland Cox        | - Opposition Member of the Senate (Deputy President)<br><i>(Excuse tendered)</i>  |
| Senator the Honourable Dr. Myanna Charles | - Opposition Member of the Senate<br><i>(Excuse tendered)</i>   |
| Senator the Honourable Dwight Hosford     | - Opposition Member of the Senate<br><i>(Excuse tendered)</i>   |

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***Prayers  
Minutes***

**The Sitting of the Senate began at 9:23 a.m.**

**(Senate Prayer was said)**

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

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

**Madam President:** Pray be seated.

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

Item 4 – Confirmation of Minutes.

**(Madam President and Clerk conversed privately)**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President, and good morning to you and your staff. Good morning to my colleagues on the "Other Side" and good morning to my colleagues here.

Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate held at Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 25 July 2025, be taken as read.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

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

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**Minutes**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate held at Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday, 25 July 2025, be confirmed.

**(Madam President signalled Senator André Lewis to speak)**

**Madam President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Before we do the confirmation, I'm asking, or seeking clarity, for the possibility of correction. When we list absences, if it's notified, don't we normally indicate that the person has been excused, or so? Is it? Yes, in other words...

**Madam President:** Senator, I've heard nothing that you said; it's quite muffled.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Sorry. I don't know if it's the heat that's causing that; the sound can't go out properly, probably. I'm saying... I'm enquiring whether or not a Senator is absent, and an excused was tendered, because you are required to inform whether or not that should not be reflected in the Minutes, because in my case, it just indicated absent, but I'm not seeing that a notice was given of my absence.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Clerk?

**(Madam President and Clerk conversed privately)**

**Madam President:** Senator, we are seeking clarification for you. Proceed. Come forward.

**(Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis approached the bench and conversed privately with Madam President and Clerk)**

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**Minutes**

**(Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis returned to his seat)**

**Madam President:** Thank you for your patience, Senator Lewis and other distinguished Senators. The Minutes will be amended to reflect that your excuse was sent. With that proviso... You are in agreement, thank you kindly. With that proviso, we will proceed.

**(Madam President proposed the question for the Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament)**

**Madam President:** Senator?

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, just to bring to your attention, I think we are confirming the second set of Minutes, but I moved the Motion to confirm the first Minutes.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. I did pause and look at you because my second... that one I read, is listed as our second Minutes in my Order Paper.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament of Grenada held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday the 12th of September 2025, at 10:00 a.m., be taken as read.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes taken as read.**

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***Minutes  
Announcements***

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament of Grenada held at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Friday the 12th of September, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Minutes confirmed.**

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

**Madam President:** Pleasant good morning again to all. We'll begin with an announcement that has just come in; as soon as it is printed and I receive it, I shall read it. Meanwhile, I would like to draw to this Honourable House that since our last meeting, we have lost three former Senators, three former Senators, and I ask for your patience as we pause to pay tribute to them in the record, having served in this body.

First, Godfrey Ventour, due to his exuberant optimism regarding life and problem-solving, was popularly known as "No Problem". He served in the Senate and passed away on the 13th of August 2025. A condolences book was opened for him on the 5th of September at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the 8th of September, former Senator Ventour was buried in an official Grenada government funeral.

On behalf of the Senate, the President extends condolences to the sons, grandsons, and all other family members, his dear friends, and associates of former Senator Ventour. He was a colourful and expressive Grenadian personality. His voice, his ideas, his language, his relations, and in being a full embodiment of a Grenadian patriot drew him to the public. He was eternally affable. He dearly loved the people, and he was a hard worker with big visions, an entrepreneur, and a caring citizen always serving.

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***Announcements***

Gordon Godfrey Ventour, also known as “A Straight Case” and “Rocket,” was sworn into the Senate of Grenada on the 6th of April, 1990. Senator Ventour represented the tourism sector. He was a successful and widely known hotelier, and he became an advocate for hoteliers and more broadly for the hospitality and tourism industries in Grenada. The Grenada Hotel Association, as it was called at the time, knew that they had a true champion in him whenever he spoke or presented himself in the Senate.

We thank former Senator Ventour for his service to Grenada in all the places he worked, volunteered, and generally engaged, and we thank him for his work, particularly here in the Senate. His time as Senator, Parliamentary Secretary, and Minister, nonetheless, was very meaningful though short, as he always gave his best and, with sincerity, he went the extra mile. We who have come after him can indeed learn from him. We are confident that his legacy makes his family proud and our nation better. Thank you, Senator Godfrey Gordon Ventour, and may your soul rest in peace.

Second, Joseph McGuire, a former Senator, passed away here in Grenada on the 2nd of October after a short illness. On behalf of all distinguished Senators, the President extends sincere condolences to his widow, Nancy McGuire of Salisbury Road, St. Andrew, who, by the way, was the former Press Secretary to Sir Eric Gairy. Condolences are extended to Mr. McGuire’s sister as well, the well-known media personality, Josephine McGuire, and to all his family members, his friends, and all his former Senatorial and other Colleagues.

“Joey” or “Baggies,” as people in St. Andrew called him, was an avid political organiser, serving Sir Eric Gairy and the Grenada Trade Union Movement. Baggies was a <sup>1</sup>GBSS graduate, a teacher, and, for most people who remembered him, a social worker, for which, as I said, he’s best remembered. Mr. McGuire served as a Senator and the Deputy President of the Senate from 1990 to 1992. The former Senator never ran away from a challenge; he was seen as a very strong personality.

The story told to me is that on one occasion, Senator Derrick Knight called on the Opposition to leave Parliament in protest, but Senator McGuire disagreed, and he remained, staying behind to voice his disapproval on a certain matter. Senator

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<sup>1</sup> Grenada Boys Secondary School

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**Announcements**

McGuire always wore a big smile, which I believed came from a big, warm, sincere heart. Today, the Senate says, “Thank you, Senator McGuire, for your service, and may all that you’ve done for Grenada, in and out of the Senate, resonate pride with your family, and remain a contribution to the building of our nation, and may your soul rest in peace”.

Neilon Franklyn entered the Parliament of Grenada in August of 2022 following National Elections, after serving as a Youth Parliamentarian. He served with commitment, which was revealed in his level of preparation, his engagement, and even his thoughtful engagement with the President and the conclusion of the Sittings. All this changed when on September 9, 2024, I received a letter from Senator Franklyn which said impart,

*“I am formally informing you that I have issued my letter of resignation to the Governor-General of Grenada, Dame Cécile La Grenade, which will take effect as of September 30, 2024.*

*It was indeed a pleasure serving under your leadership. I have become a better Grenadian because of my experience in the Senate. I look forward to finding new ways to contribute to the betterment of our country, as I remain committed to the principles and values that have guided my service”.*

We were all distorted to learn of the sudden and unexpected passing of Senator Franklyn. At his funeral, a statement was read on behalf of the Senate, which read impart,

*“On behalf of the Senate, I express sincere thanks to former Senator Neilon Franklyn for his service in the Upper House of Grenada’s Parliament, and equally, we express deep sadness that the Senator has passed at such a young age, and so unexpectedly. We extend our sincere condolences to the family, friends, and other colleagues of the former Senator. We pray that, like us, they too will find comfort in the legacy of his service.*

*During his brief tenure in the Senate, the Senator endeavoured to fulfil his duty as a National Youth Leader, and he did capture the respect and admiration of all of us. It was clear that he had so much more to give and that he could, if he so chose to blossom into a dedicated and inspiring national voice”.*

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This tribute continued and was read by the Deputy President of the Senate, on behalf of the President and the Senate. We stand by those sentiments of loss, of appreciation, and of confidence that his record is one of inspiration, in and out of the Senate.

Finally, let me say that in the field of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Grenada has continued, and we attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Associations, 68th Session, which was held in Barbados. Grenada was returned to the International Executive, and we are continuing to serve at the regional level, as a member of the Caribbean Atlantic and American Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Here ends all of my announcements, and I thank you for your kind attention. Now, I've been presented with a letter that I should read to you.

**(Madam President searched for the letter on her cell phone)**

**(Clerk tried to give Madam President a copy of the letter to read)**

**Madam President:** No, I have it.

**(Madam President continued to search for the letter on her cell phone)**

**Madam President:** Oops. First, an excuse on behalf of Senator Norland Cox, who said,

*“Due to urgent personal matters, I will not be attending the Senate today. As it regards to my colleagues, I have sent a letter indicating the same. I wish for a smooth Sitting today.*

*Regards”.*

And here is the letter,

*“Dear Madam President, I write on behalf of the Opposition Senators, to formally inform you that we will not be attending the Sitting of the Senate scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2025. This decision, taken after careful consideration, is made in solidarity with our colleagues, the Members of the Opposition in the House of*

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*Representatives, and in defence of the integrity of Grenada's Parliamentary Democracy.*

*The recent conduct within the Parliament, particularly during the Sitting of the House of Representatives on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, reflects the troubling erosion of Parliamentary norms and a deepening disregard for the constitutional role of the Opposition. The unilateral determination of the adjournment date, the failure to provide critical documents in a timely manner, and the public scolding of the Speaker by the Prime Minister all underscored a pattern of disrespect and disregard for due process.*

*Our non-attendance is therefore an act of principle. It is a call to conscience against the marginalisation of the Opposition, the silencing of alternative voices, and the creeping authoritarianism that threatens the foundation of our democratic governance. We stand united, not in defiance of Parliament, but in defence of it.*

*We trust that this position will be duly recorded in the official records of the Senate.*

*Respectfully,*

*Senator the Honourable Norland Cox  
on behalf of the  
Opposition Senators."*

I have just received the letter, so I have not been able to formulate an adequate response except the following: to say that the Senate does not normally concern itself with, if I may say so, concerns or quarrels, in the "Other Place", one. And secondly, I wish to vigorously reject any implications that here in the Senate, there is marginalisation of the Opposition, silencing of alternative voices, or creeping authoritarianism, absolutely rejected it for the Senate.

I will reply to the letter formally at a later time. I thank Senator Cox, and as I have tried to reach him to tell him over the last few days, we have business to do, and we look forward to his continued presence and participation. Thank you.

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

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**Madam President:** Senator Quinc Britton, you have requested the floor, and I'm delighted to ask you to take it. Thank you, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton:** Thank you, Madam President. Good morning to my colleagues on "This Side," the "Other Side", to the staff, and everyone who's watching or listening to us online. Madam President, I, too, would like to join and associate myself in offering on my behalf, my family's behalf, and by extension, the constituency of St. Mark, in offering our condolences to the families of the former Senators who passed over the past couple of months, especially the family of our dear brother, Neilon Franklyn. This one really hit home to us, so I just wanted to offer our prayers and thoughts as they embark upon this journey of healing, Madam President.

So, I also rise, Madam President, to offer a brief Ministerial Statement from our Ministry, the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy, and Culture. More so, one initiative... Well, two things I would like to highlight, Madam President, that most recently, as of yesterday, the Ministry... from the Ministry, the Grenada Office of Creative Affairs, had launched this multi-media course, as well as, multi-media together with animation, getting our creatives, training them to go to another level, Madam President, and this is an excellent initiative. Another initiative under the Office of Creative Affairs, ensuring that our people get the necessary training so that they can sharpen their skills...

The other thing, Madam President, which we have upcoming in a few days, on Saturday to be exact, is the handing over of some steel pans. And it is an initiative, a community steel pan initiative or a steel pan programme, and it goes with the acronym COMSPAN, that's C-O-M-S-P-A-N, and we carry the motto or the theme, "Where every Community find its Rhythm".

So the initiative, Madam President, it's the brain child or an initiative of our dear Minister, the Leader of Government's Business, Madam President, where it's an initiative that would go over a five year period, where we try to establish new bands in the communities, start up new pan initiative to get more people playing and learning to play the steel pan, because it's one of the instruments, the only instrument, as a matter of fact, that was created by we in the Caribbean in the 20th century. And the programme's goal, as I said, is to expand community steel pan and cymbals as a hub

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for youth development, cultural celebration, and sustainable growth, ensuring Grenada's Steel Pan heritage thrives for generations to come. The acronym, COMSPAN, means—

- C – Communities united;
- O – Opportunities for youths;
- M – Mentorship and capacity building;
- S – Steel pan sustainability;
- P – Performance and exposure;
- A – Artistic excellence; and
- N – Nation building.

So, Madam President, we were able to secure and procure approximately 240 pieces of pan from Trinidad in collaboration with... We had a partnership with a company from Trinidad called MITTCO, which is Musical Instruments of Trinidad and Tobago Company Limited. MITTCO. Yes. They, Madam President... We saw... We visited them at their factory; they showed us not just the production, but they went through the process of outlining what their programmes are and making recommendations. So, they are here with us as well, and the pans have been shipped from Trinidad.

This initiative will take into consideration all the parishes in Grenada, including Carriacou and Petite Martinique. So, with that, we'll be starting up in every parish a new community band, in every Parish across the tri-Island state, and as I said, it's an initiative that would go over a five-year period.

So, on Saturday, God's will, from 5:30 p.m., I invite everyone of you to come down to the Tanteen Netball Court, where you will see the... We would have the official handing over of the instruments to the various parishes, as well as, you will get to listen the... Because we've pulled together a number of players from the existing bands, to play those instruments for the first time, so they formed a sort of national steel orchestra, if you want to coin in that way.

So, we are excited. It's an initiative that has never been undertaken by the Government on that magnitude, and we hope to see a lot more benefits coming from that because it's not just about training people in music, but arrangers, pan tuners, all those things, Madam President. So, I'm very happy to update the nation on what that's

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happening in our Ministry and invite everyone to come down to that event on Saturday, God's will, at the Tanteen Netball Court. So, thank you very much, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Thank you very much. We look forward to much music across the country due to this initiative. Thank you. Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President, and I would also like to join you in expressing my condolences to the Senators who have passed away, especially my good friend, former Senator Neilon Franklyn.

Madam President, I would also like to make an observation to the House. I have observed... I came here at 8:15 a.m., this morning because I thought it would be good to come and prepare myself to deal with the business of this very important institution, and knowing what took place in the "Other House", in the "Other Place", I thought, and I prayed that this would not have happened here, knowing the level of camaraderie that we have in this House and the level of seriousness that we have here.

Unfortunately, when you read the excuse coming from the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Norland Cox, I was a bit taken aback because I did not expect... We did not have any problems in this Honourable House; we did not have any issues, and I think everything flows smoothly, so there's no reason why we ought not to have had a full House for this Sitting.

And it's quite unfortunate that apart from satisfying whatever political needs one may have, first and foremost, we have to, and we ought to consider the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. They are the reason why we are here; we are here for no other purpose than to take care of the people's business (**applause**), and it's very unfortunate that on the "Other Side" we are seeing empty chairs. So, I hope that in the future, we will give consideration to what is more important than our own personal party politics ideas.

Having said that, Madam President, I would like to expand a little on one of the issues that Senator Britton raised a while ago, Madam President, the whole question of the master class in animation and multi-media. Madam President, the Ministry of

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Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture, under the watchful eyes of the Grenada office of Creative Affairs, has organised and executed a one-month training programme in Multimedia and Animation Training.

Madam President, what is interesting about this training session is that the main facilitator, Mr. Francis Browne, is a gentleman whose name is Mr. Francis Browne, and interestingly, Madam President, nature has taken its course. This is a gentleman who was born and bred in the heart of Africa, in Ghana. I'm making the point because it is very important to know that Grenada is leading in that reconnection with our African brothers and sisters. I feel so happy to know that we can look to other places for alternatives when it comes to the development of our country, especially in the development of the Creative Economy.

This is a brand new department, division that we have established after taking office in July 2022, and the level of progress we continue to make, Madam President, I can see that the creatives in this country, they are rising and they are coming forward just realising their potential and that this Administration, is putting our money where our mouth is by injecting heavy financial investments (**applause**) in this very important industry. (**Applause**)

Madam President, we have explored all possibilities; we are giving grants, soft loans, and vouchers; we are enhancing businesses that already exist but cannot exploit their full potential. Madam President, we are also working with people who have ideas, ideas, and dreams, but they cannot go forward; we are taking them from the cradle, and we have no intentions of bringing them to the grave, but all our intentions are to help them to master the skills and talents they may have.

Madam President, the economic benefits that the Creative Industry can bring to Grenada are overwhelming, and therefore, in the early days, when you are planting your seeds and nurturing your plants, it takes time for it to fruit and production, and the realisation that the benefits can come to our people... And most of all, Madam President, this industry is helping so much with creating the level of employment, it's amazing, because people no longer have to come with their hands begging for assistance, but rather than, they can really and truly assist the Government in employing our young people, and creating the platform for them to move forward.

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So, Madam President, I'm so happy to stand here today and be a part of, and associated with this very important industry, the Creative Economy, under the guided leadership of the Grenada office of Creative Affairs, and I look forward to many more activities of that nature, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President, this month, the month of November is also Tourism Awareness Month, and we are cognisant of the fact, that while Tourism contributes almost 35% to the GDP, between 30 and 35%, we realise that even though as kids growing up, we heard the slogan, "Tourism is everybody's business", but are we, as a Grenadian community, really feeling the business, really feel that we are part and parcel of it? And so, the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Economy and Culture, is taking on the bold responsibility to educate our citizens about this very important industry. We want them to be a part of it, we want them to feel it, and we want to make sure that the necessary link to the conscious linkages is developed.

We must have the linkage between schools, education, and tourism; the linkage with agriculture and tourism; the manufacturing sector, the vendors, the taxi men, so many areas we can link tourism with, I believe that we do have a responsibility and therefore, while we will emphasise in the month of November, I want to assure this Honourable House, that on a daily basis in times to come, from 2026 going forward, Tourism will be in the face of every citizen of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank the Leader of Government's Business **(applause)**, reporting in his capacity as an associate, as he says...

**(Inaudible comment by Senators)**

**Madam President:** ... with the creative sector. Thank you, Senator Thomas, and I offer the floor to Senator André Lewis. You have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. I rise to just follow up on probably two or three matters in particular raised by the Leader of Government's Business, and to... In terms of his first observation and

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presentation, where the need for us to attend to the nation's business here, I want to completely identify with this. However, I wish to point out the following...

**Madam President:** Thank you for pausing Senator Lewis. You see my face? I can hardly hear what you are saying with a level of clarity.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I... Well... I know that there seems to be some mechanical or alternative provisions to keep us... to blow some breeze. I'm not sure if it's because we are hot, I'm not sure whether or not this is disturbing... because unless this is not working properly, so I'll try to elevate my voice. Thank you very much. Because... I guess I'm competing with... Because the AC appears not to be working, and fans are... and I therefore wonder how the staff is making it. I offer my concerns for the staff, not just... first and foremost, as a Trade Unionist and as a human being, because it is not comfortable working in these environments.

Therefore, I call upon the relevant authorities to please give urgent attention to ensuring that the staff, first and foremost, is comfortable, and then for us because we have accepted leadership roles, and the fact that they are here, we have to be here. In some other workplace, I may have asked us to excuse ourselves, probably, but we are here because the Clerk and others are here; I know it must be... even yourself, Madam President, permit me to make that observation because from time to time, the camera would focus on you, and I have seen you fanning yourself, yes, and I assume that this part of the atmosphere or the environment inside here.

So, to all of our colleagues here, even the Police Officers and everyone who is in this building, I offer my concerns as to the conditions that we are currently existing... certainly, today, I was not here yesterday, and I really wish that something could be done. Thank you very...

Yes, Madam President, as well as indicating, I rise to identify with the observation made by the Leader of Government's Business, of the importance of this House, this Senate, and the need for us to be present. But I myself... To be... I have had discussions with you, Madam President, and I was not sure of being able to be present here today. I understand in the call of duty, and understanding the need to raise the concerns that have developed relative to the Standing Order, in terms of

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preparing one selves, the Standing Order to the Senate that we are accustomed to and we know that part of the roles and functions of the Clerk, and the Clerk, under his duties, is obligated to send out the Standing Order which will contain the business of the Senate within six clear days. There can be exceptions, and I know exceptions are made.

These exceptions would be like if you have an emergency, or so because if that is not the case... That is not the case. Anyone who argues differently would mean that our highest office or House, in terms of the democratic process, can be handled willingly, meaning that if the norm... and it's not the norm. Let me just say, it is not the norm, but I will explain what I mean.

If, under normal circumstances, unless there is some extenuating factor preventing that notice period, if it means that that can happen just so, it would lead to uncertainty and to the Clerk or the person responsible for setting the meetings, doing just so. I'm not saying that this is the case, but because I was involved last week recognising what happened in the "Other Place", and being fully aware that the Standing Order or the Order of Business, emanates from that "Other Place", and understanding the roles and functions of the Clerk, as I said, there are exceptions because the Standing Order make provisions for that. The same... under a set... rule six, I think it's c or d, when it gives the six clear days, it says except where meetings are scheduled, but that ought not to be interpreted as a factor where normal circumstances, or there is no extenuating factor to prevent that from happening.

So, I was involved... I called the Clerk. As a matter of fact, when that happened in the other place, I called because I needed to prepare; we represent... I represent Labour, and the way I operate, and I am sure that my colleagues on the "Other Side" here, too, just as the "Government Side", would need to engage for guidance on matters.

So, although sometimes these Bills and others are sent out at the same time to the public, for us in the Senate, the official document would come when the Order Paper comes, or within the six-day period, and therefore, what I do, what I do in terms of my preparations, I like to come prepared. I immediately called the Clerk and was expecting that because there was a movement from the previous meeting date, I think

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it was the 28th in the “Other Place”, last Tuesday, and then our seven-day period, six, seven-day period, would take us into next week.

As a matter of fact, there were discussions among Senator Cox and I. Based on the information I’ve had from him, Members of the “Government Side”, and there was a tentative agreement, or understanding that we would meet next week. First, it was next week Thursday, then it was said that... and I wouldn’t identify the office, had to travel on Thursday, so the “Government Side” said, they can’t make it on Thursday; then we looked at Wednesday, the Wednesday created a challenge, and then it was agreed for Tuesday. So, I was operating on the basis of Tuesday.

Lo and behold, on the evening, apparently, of the finishing of the “Other Place”, which I saw the next day, I recognised that the Order Paper came out, which means to say that we had one day. We had one day, which would be Wednesday, because today is Thursday.

And I can tell you, Madam President, up to last night, I left that office late, meeting with the unvaccinated workers of SGU, who, after four years, have not been able to solve the matter that has been outstanding. These are people that the school has sent home because they were not vaccinated, have not paid them, and we have been constantly grinding on the matter. I must attend, and the Union must attend to that business. So, it puts us under pressure from Urbanised Labour in terms of being prepared. So, I’ve made it my duty to be here.

So I’m just wishing to appeal that in the future, unless... and we could understand that... So, for instance, I know last year or the year before, because the Government, the State of Grenada, sometimes have deadlines to meet that may come in late because, you know, we have to respond to the international community, and certain things need to be done by the 31st of December or the 30th.

We have come here, we have made the observations, but based on the discussions that I had with Senator Cox, and based on the discussions that I’m accepting, that he held with Members of the “Government Side”, Members of the “Government Side”, I certainly form more than the impression that there was a willingness and an acceptance to meet next week. And on that basis, I’m just raising that I’ve accepted everything the Leader of Government’s... And you have a complete commitment, my brother, you know that, right?

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We're making this request for this due consideration, especially under normal circumstances. Maybe, for instance, a reason was advanced, you know, it's difficult, or a number of people would be absent, then one would be able to understand that, yes? So, I just thought I should place that there because the Leader of Government's Business raised the need for us to be here, and I totally, totally, identify with that, only to say, in repeating, that I came close to not being sure if I should show up because I would not be totally prepared, but I think we are capable enough of dancing on our feet to address the nation's business.

Of due concern to me, the fact that in the public and in the "Other Place", the Clerk, who's a worker, who's a Member of the Grenada Public Workers' Union, and by extension, by extension, under the Grenada Trade Union Council, and by extension, who himself was a former Vice President of the Public Workers' Union, a colleague, mister and brother, that I have tremendous respect for.

In my view and in the view of Labour, he was unfairly bashed in the public and those who may be in public office, who may have been involved in that, and who may have called upon him to make... or his office, because he is a part of the Parliament staff, to issue whatever apologies if as it appears that whatever may have happened, may not be able to be laid on his doorsteps, he may be wanted...

**Madam President:** Senator, thank you. We are not discussing the issues of the "Other House" in here, please.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I accept, I accept, Madam President. I merely ventured along that line to explain why... because the Order Paper is tied to that office and it is linked... I take it, but I was just explaining... because the seven-day notice or the six-day notice, in my understanding, starts from that period, so I'll go on, thank you very much, Madam President. You have my utmost respect, Madam President. Thank you very much.

And just to offer my deepest appreciation and solidarity, to my colleague, someone who I have tremendous respect for, who has been in battle with me and the movement, and even at moments when he could've backed away, he never backed away, he stood on the basis of integrity, so that I know of him, and I salute you on this.

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Moving on, Madam President, and I merely did this because it was raised by the Leader of Government's Business that matters.

Moving on, Madam President, I wish to note the points made by, certainly, the Minister for Agriculture and the secretary, sorry, Culture... Tourism and Culture, Agriculture, yes, because I want to make that point. For the tremendous work that I have seen paid towards what you call the creatives. I mean, they are always in the news, I've seen that effort, so I want to recognise that. And as he spoke about the aspect of Tourism, I wish to put which one will develop later, I mean, in another Sitting, just to posit that there, but I think that we already have, in terms of the tourist that currently visits us, that we can take more of that tourist dollar, even if there isn't an increase in the tourist arrival by having more locally produced goods and services.

So, I would wish to recommend that again, and to ask that the creatives pay attention too, I'm not saying that they don't, but I've not heard it, but I'm making a request that the creatives pay attention to, and also the intellectuals aspect of it, to link with agriculture, to make agriculture interesting to our youths, so that our youths in school, can look forward to working in agriculture; not by using a knife, cutlass, fork or a spade, as our grandparents and fore parents did, but to use apps to manage agriculture.

So therefore, I wish to just identify with the observation of the role played by the Administration, relative to the creative, which over the past, certainly two years, I must admit, has been given significant attention, and I look forward to the fruits of that labour in a very pronounced and organised way. Thank you very much.

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. I want to respond to two or three points raised. First of all, regarding the heat, I wait... I see your request from our distinguished...

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President.

**Madam President:** Madam.

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**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Thank you. I do crave your indulgence at this point just to make a few comments of correction, so to speak, in relation to certain of the matters raised by my learned and distinguished colleague, representing Labour in this Honourable House.

First, I fully associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the Leader of Government's Business in this Honourable House, which, Madam President, you have been managing with impeccable decorum, fairness, impartiality, and dignity. **(Applause)** No Member of this Honourable House can seriously accuse you, Madam President, of being in any way disproportionate in the way you treat Members of the House. **(Applause)** Absolutely no one can accurately say that. And therefore I join with you, Madam President, in taking serious objection to the contents of the letter.

I also add that I 100% agree with you that matters that occur in the "Other Place" ought not to impact how we conduct ourselves in this Honourable House. **(Applause)** They are two separate and distinct houses of the Parliament and, Madam President, we have our own Standing Order in this House, so that we are not to look to the Standing Order of the "Other Place" to interpret or to guide how we proceed in this Honourable House.

In that regard, the reference to the six-day notice required by the Standing Order of the "Other House" for the offices of the Parliament to give notice of sittings is totally misconceived, with the greatest of respect to my Senator on the "Other Side".

Madam President, in the Standing Order governing this Honourable House, Order 24 titled, "Period of Notice", reads as follows: "With the consent of the President, a notice of a Government motion may be placed upon the Order Paper for the sitting of the day following on which it is given to the Clerk". So any Motion intended to be debated can actually be placed on the Order Paper the following day for debate the following day. That's my interpretation of Order 24. I may be missing something, and I could be corrected if I am wrong, but I have not been able to identify any Standing Order in the Standing Orders of the Senate that requires a six-day notice period as obtained in the Standing Order for the Lower House.

Added to that, Madam President, the Parliament took the precaution of sending the matters to be debated even before the debate in the Lower House took place. **(Applause)** Madam President, we have had sight of these papers since October 24,

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that's when we received them from the Offices of Parliament, which causes me, Madam President, to seriously doubt the veracity of the claims of non-receipt made in the Other Place. Because I know we got it since the 24th of October, and so, Madam President, we had documents in advance...

Okay. So I am now directed to Standing Order 7, which speaks to the "Duties of the Clerk" and the Order Paper needing to be circulated. Standing Order 7 (6), which speaks to the responsibility of preparation for sittings. So the Order Paper concerning the business, but does not obviate Order 24, which allows the Clerk to place on the Order Paper a matter received the day before, and that's the point I am making. And in this instance, there was no breach of the Standing Order in "This Place", considering what Order 24 says.

And so I indicated that we got notice of this Sitting since the 24th, so there is really no basis for the Members of this House to complain about the proceedings here, and that's the point I rise to make, Madam President. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Madam Senator. I offer the floor to Senator Lewis. You have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much. Because the public is listening, I must respond in terms of this Standing Order of the Senate, and I recognise, and I didn't expect anything different, that once my learned friend recognises that she was not fully apprised of the rules governing Notice of the Order Paper, she was immediately correct, so I don't need to address that.

I will address, however, section 24, Period of Notice, because the public is listening and remember we have Youth Parliamentarians that will be following this and would be patterning their discussion based on the understanding of what we do because one or two of us are currently engaged with them and they are looking forward to our debate or discussion today. So I am obligated, just to point out here...

**Madam President:** However, I do hope you... Thank you, Senator. I do hope you are speaking as part of this conversation more than you are speaking to the listening public.

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**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** No, sure. I am speaking to this conversation because the listening... This is being broadcast live, and therefore, the listening public is following the discussion here. So I am speaking... If it was not broadcast live, I may have said during lunch time, I can raise it with my friend and colleague, but I will not have that opportunity to do that, and therefore we are obligated to...

Period of Notice and it says, "With the consent of the President", but that is with the consent of the President, "... a notice of a Government motion may be placed on the Order Paper for the sitting of the day following that on which it was given to the Clerk". That's okay. However, let us go to 24 (2), which is of concern to us because we are... I will read 24 (2). 24 (2) says, "Except as provided in Standing Order No. 69..." I have put No. 70 here so there may be something I need to correct, but I will just read what is written here. "... Except as provided in Standing Order No. 69 (Reports from Select Committees), a notice of a private Senator's motion shall not be entered into the Order Book, or placed upon the Order Paper, for a day earlier than 12 clear days from the day on which the notice was given to the Clerk".

So why would the six-day be important? ... Is that you can count before, so at least you have an idea. So once we know, I can only speak for me, in terms of my working period, once I know I am aware that the "Other Place" is meeting, I know that we have to buckle down ourselves to get a Motion out that will fall within the six-day period plus six... Six plus six, so that's why it is important for that guide. So it is not there just willy-nilly. I am just pointing that out here, and just to explain further.

"Duties of the Clerk" No. 6. It says, "The Clerk shall be responsible for preparing for each sitting..." And I read, "(a) an Order Paper containing the business for that sitting..." So the Order Paper is not merely a piece of paper, but it is the Order Paper that will contain the business for that sitting. And therefore, the business for that sitting, the Clerk cannot... I shouldn't say cannot, let me back up. The Clerk may not be able to provide a Standing Order for the Senate unless the "Other Place" meets, and I stand to be corrected on that, but that's my understanding. The Order Paper... because the way...

Although it is called the "Other Place", it is called "Lower"; it comes from there to us, and therefore it is not just a willy-nilly function. As a matter of fact, the Order

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Paper can come out before with more than six days' notice, but it will not be able to come out until the "Other Place" meets, so it is important for us to understand that, and I am not doing this to create any issue.

I am doing this so that we can understand, and therefore, when the Leader of Government's Business or some other person from the "Other Side" reaches out to us because we do discuss with one another, when is the best time to hold a meeting, especially when there are issues. We have done that in the past, and I wish that it continues so that we can accommodate everyone.

So I am not just saying this, just be the flip of a hat, and so (a) says "an Order Paper containing the business for that sitting" and (b) says which speaks about the Order Paper to be circulated about six clear days. So the Order Paper will contain the business. I know that the Attorney General has accepted that this is there, and I note that, and I know very much so, and that is why I will not bewilder the issue. So thanks for that recognition. I just wanted to clarify this.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Madam President, I want to talk.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I just want to... I want to speak on the Ministerial, but I just want to take part in this little discussion. I actually put up my mic when the Attorney General was speaking to invoke a Point of Order, but I guess you didn't see...

**Madam President:** I apologise, I did not see.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** That's okay. But the point...

**Madam President:** You have the floor now.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** But the Point of Order is, Madam President, the fundamental issue that comes out of this whole debate here is that on that email

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of October 24, where was the Order Paper? So all this thing about to put on Order Paper, where was the Order Paper, even to add to the Order Paper, the question is, I am looking at my email on the 24th of October and I have not seen the Order Paper which means the Clerk has not done his work, which means that the trigger for a meeting was not sent out, which means that even if the 24 (a) and (b) and (c) want to be invoked, as my dear friend Senator Lewis said, it has nothing to sit on because there is no Paper. That's my contribution to this. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Any other comments on this matter? I see the light of the Attorney General. You have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President, as the learned and good Senator for Labour mentioned, this is being broadcast live and when we cite the Standing Order, we must do so in a fulsome way so that the full meaning and effect can be appreciated.

So, Standing Order 7 (6) (2), which speaks to the six days within which the Order Paper is to be circulated, goes on to contemplate Standing Order 24, which allows for a Motion to be placed on the Order Paper the day before the debate takes place. Because it says, "The Clerk shall be responsible for preparing for each sitting, and he or she shall cause the Order Paper to be circulated to Members at least six clear days before the day on which the Senate is appointed to meet; except in cases of the sitting of the Senate where short notice has been given". This is Order 24, now, "In which event the Order Paper shall be so circulated at least one day earlier than the day on which the meeting is to be held".

So that actually takes me back to the point that I made earlier that there is no mandatory requirement in the Standing Order for there to be a lapse of six days before issuance of the Order Paper and Sitting of the Senate. Because the very rule that speaks to the six days contemplates what Order 24 provides for when it says, "Except in cases of the sitting where short notice has been given". So it does contemplate that and Order Paper may be circulated one day before the Senate sits. So I thought I would offer that clarification. Thank you, Madam President.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President, and taking off from where the AG left, Madam President, I think it is very important also that the public get to know a little more.

Madam President, sometimes I get a little caught up when we...

**Madam President:** Speak to us, Senator. Speak to us.

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

**Madam President:** ... and the public will know.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes. I don't believe in the principle in making people law. I believe in making laws for people, and based on circumstances, from time to time, you have to amend and change laws because people's behaviour changes.

Madam President, if my calculations serve me right, we have met here over 30 times, and we have no problem. These circumstances here, Madam President, are not the regular circumstances; no one of us here anticipated that the sitting in the "Other Place" would have come to such an end, and therefore our planning was in anticipation that the meeting on the 24th would have been completed. However, we ought to know... Let me make the point before I go there.

I spoke to the President of the Senate. I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition on the "Other Side" extensively on the subject matter as to whether we should have the meeting on the 6th or if we should change it. And I said to each one of them, bear me out, Madam President, if the Order Paper in the "Other Place" in regards to subjects on the paper, if there are any changes and anything new or anything was extracted from it, I am willing to talk to my colleagues and ask that we change the date from the 6th and go on. There was no sign of dissent. Nobody objected to that, and therefore I ask in a very polite manner that we send out the notice again, reminding

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the Senators that the meeting... We are recommending and suggesting that the meeting take place on the 6th.

When the question was asked that all the important documents that are necessary for intensive debate here today was sent and presented on the 24th and the paper that was missing was the Order Paper which is very, very important but, Madam President, in regards to debate and preparation, I think every Senator in this Honourable House can say that they had the important documents in their possession.

Further to that, Madam President, I personally had access to the Order Paper in the "Other House", and if you are an astute Senator, that can be found. It can be found here, it can be found in the public domain as to what is being discussed, and as a matter of fact, if I were not a Senator inside of here, I would have wanted to see the Order Paper in the "Other House" as an ordinary citizen.

So to come and say and give the impression that I did not have access to the Order Paper in the "Other Place", Madam President, what are we talking about? Are we playing semantics? I really and truly want us to focus on the very important matter, the very important documents which were all circulated long before the Senate was supposed to meet on the 6th.

**Madam President:** I thank the Senator, and I offer the floor to Senator Rahaman. You have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. I would like to suggest that, in the interest of time and the country's business, we move on because we cannot change the past. I would also like to make mention as a reminder to the Leader of Government's Business that whatever happens and is given to the Lower House or the "Other Place" has little or no bearing here. So that's an important distinction, but we know and we take the point that the Leader of Government's Business has made that for the past 30 or more sittings, everything has gone smoothly and this is the first time that we have had such an incident, so I think we can all move on with the understanding that it doesn't happen like that again.

With regards to your comments, Madam President, while you were speaking about the independence of the Senate, I wrote the following words, and of course, it

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is local language: “The Senate does not drink bush tea for other people's fever. **(Laughter)** If we do get a fever, we control it with respect and clarity, with an understanding that sometimes you have to agree to disagree and get on with the nation’s business.

So I just want to say that I agree with you in that regard, and also in commenting on the Leader of Government’s Business Report with regards to tourism, I am happy to see that they are broadening the product through the creatives. They are broadening and enriching the tourism product because we don’t want that when tourist come to our shores, that they go to see the same thing at every different site that they visit and it is very monotonous, we want them to have different experiences, unique cultural experiences and in order to do so we have to invest in our creative which they have been doing a fine job of. **(Applause)** So I would like to commend him on that and his Government on that. I thank you.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make some remarks on the Ministerial Statements provided to us, specifically on the creative and tourism sectors. It’s good to see the whole issue of the multi-media and that part of the direction. Of course, it was mentioned that it is for one month. We trust that we can have a repeat and that we can see good opportunities coming from this, and that the proper persons are also targeted. Because sometimes people attend things, yes, it's one, but how do they take it forward? So, people who have the potential for good uptake to show success are important. I have a specific interest in those things since I was young and have pursued various engagements in that area. So I sort of have personal support for this direction.

The idea of tourism and specifically, I must say that in my regular work at the Nutmeg Association, we have had extensive and continuous dialogue with the Board of Tourism and the leadership there, exploring a lot of opportunities in creating linkages with Agriculture and... I am not too sure if it’s because of the Minister's position and his history, but there has been a profound connection with the chairman in particular, who takes a personal interest in engaging us, as he said he wants to

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make the place spicy again. And there are a lot of initiatives we have discussed, including right now, we also produce a syrup, Grenada syrup, spice syrup, in collaboration with the tourism industries. There are a lot of other things that they are mentioning that I wouldn't speak of because that is the Minister's portfolio.

So I must say that I have seen it personally in that collaboration, and as I have mentioned before. We operate two museums in Victoria and one in Belleau, and so we are deeply showing how that agriculture connection is in the system, and you are speaking about 7,000, 8,000 farmers from that sector alone, and so whatever can be done in that space, definitely we would be on board to collaborate accordingly in that area. So I wanted to commend, and we hope that it continues in that thrust. Thank you.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator, as you lead us into the business of today. Senator Seville Francis, you have requested the floor; you have it, madam.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Thank you, Madam President. And thank you for also accepting my tardiness this morning, as expressed prior to the sitting, that I was going to be a bit late, and it was unavoidable.

Madam President, I take this opportunity to welcome back all of my colleagues in this Honourable House. It's been a while since we've met or seen each other in this respect. I also want to place on record my deepest condolences to the families, friends and everyone who loved and cared for our fallen Senators who served in this Honourable House. Madam President, I also wish to place on record my profound thanks and deep, heartfelt gratitude to everyone in this Honourable House who has been a support system for me throughout this trying time in the loss of my dear friend and brother, Senator Neilon Franklyn. And as you can see, Madam President, this morning when you started, I had to exit the room. It was a very difficult time for me this morning, keeping it together, and I keep wondering how I'm going to proceed for the rest of my time as a Senator because of the memories that we shared and the things that bonded us in this Honourable House.

Nevertheless, Madam President, as we say, the people's business must go on. And I'm here this morning to speak particularly or to provide updates from the Ministry,

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as the month of October is recognised as Youth Month. As the Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for Youth, Madam President, it would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to enlighten the public and this Honourable House as to what we've been doing and what is planned for the month of November.

We've started off the month giving thanks and praise to God with our national church service, which was held at Christ the King Roman Catholic Church in Grand Roy St. John on the 2nd of November, under the theme, "Our Youth, Our Strength, Our Country", and that will be the theme for this month's celebration going forward.

Madam President, the church was packed, and that is a great sign that our young people came out in numbers. The church was filled beyond its capacity to accommodate our young people who came out to ensure that this month, which celebrates who we are and what we do, started off on the right path.

And I must give special commendation, Madam President, to the Coordinator of Youth and her team at the Ministry of Youth. They have been doing an exceptional job, Madam President, and I want the record to note. **(Applause)**

Madam President, we move forward with the financial empowerment webinar series, and that will be done... It's a continuous series throughout the month of November, which will be done every Tuesday. It's called Lunch and Learn. So we don't want our young people to say, well, they're at work, and so they cannot, you know, join in the webinar series, and it was very specific that we utilise our virtual platform to cater to the flexibility of our people. So every lunchtime from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., and we know that lunch ends at 1:00 p.m., but it's okay, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., every Tuesday in the month of November, we have that financial empowerment webinar series, and this series aims to provide young people with practical knowledge, strategies and industry insights to strengthen their financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.

And I'm happy to announce that after this series is completed some of our young people will have the opportunity to meet with some of the experts in the field who has been assisting us with this series would have the opportunity to have one-on-one mentorship opportunities where they would actually get to go to lunch not just lunch online but go to lunch with these experts to broaden their horizon and understanding in financial literacy, Madam President.

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In addition to that, Madam President, just yesterday we had our M-Power graduation. The M-Power Programme is one that targets our young men, giving them a second chance at life to upskill and upscale themselves to be better individuals. They now qualify for grants, and they would also be able to venture out into entrepreneurship, and they will be given, not just given, but rather, they would have that hand-holding support to procure items that will help take their businesses, whether it's a start-up or continuation, to the next level.

We started the programme with just about 400 young people, but we completed with over 200 young people, Madam President, and although the attrition rate may seem alarming to some, we left room for that. Initially, we agreed to host this programme with 200 young people, but the number of applications we had increased, and we ended up with over 200, almost 300 young people graduating yesterday. **(Applause)** And when you hear the testimonies from these young men, Madam President, you would be so, so, so surprised. I'm not sure how many of us or how many of you look at the Tuesday show DM's with PM, the young man that hosted the programme on Tuesday this week at the TAMCC level, he was one of our M-Power graduates, Madam President, which shows that our programme is working and our country is indeed the safest of hands with our young people. **(Applause)**

Madam President, I want to also... There was one young man in particular who stood out to me, and he was one of the people giving their testimonials at the ceremony yesterday. Madam President, I remember when at the orientation, I wrote a letter to the young men entitled "Dear young men", and I admonished them that I want them to be better individuals so that our daughters and our nieces will have the best husbands and fathers for our future generations. Madam President, there was one young man who spent eight years in prison, and I went to visit them last Thursday at NEWLO. He was pursuing the bartending course. When I walked into the assessment room, I had to ask the instructor, "Who are these young men"? I genuinely thought they were persons that NEWLO hired to assist on the day, not realising that those were the boys that turned into men being a part of the programme, and Madam President, the transformation is very much visible and very much real. **(Applause)**

Madam President, the next item that we have and most of the activities that we have would be replicated in Carriacou as well... Carriacou and Petite Martinique, so

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they are not left out. On November 10, we will be launching our National Youth Awards, and in Carriacou, there will be a Youth Public Speaking Seminar that will be happening simultaneously.

In addition to that, on November 12, we will be having our National Youth Walk, and that will be held in St. Patrick, the parish of St. Patrick, so young people from across the country will be heading up to St. Patrick. The walk starts at 4:00 p.m. at the Madeys Junction, and it will end in River Sallee Playing Field next to the River Sallee Government School. Madam President, I can tell you that we're going to have prizes for our young people. They will all be adorned in branded t-shirts that are in collaboration with our National Sports Council. Madam President, I also would love to place on record that our National Sports Council is working, it is effective, and we are very, very proud to be a partner with the National Sports Council for all of the initiatives that they've been doing.

We move on to November 15, where we will be having the National Youth Sports Night, and I think by now we all know how bright Progress Park is right now, Madam President, **(applause)** and that is because of this Administration and we're really proud to announce that Progress Park, St. Andrew now has a place that our young people can utilise at night time. So we will be having our national sports night there, and just to give you some details about that...

Again, that will be in collaboration with our National Sports Council. We will be having games like seven-a-side football, seven-overs cricket, volleyball, athletics, fun events, and it will start at 3:00 p.m. and go all the way up to 10:00 p.m. As I indicated, we have lights, and so we're making use of those lights, Madam President, but our young people will be safe because transportation will be provided. And, in addition to that, we are giving our young people the opportunity to vend, come out and showcase what they have as young business people, so they also will be benefiting from that, Madam President.

On November... We are not forgetting our youth staff, Madam President, because year go, year come, the staff at the Ministry of Youth, catering to our young people in society, are doing a wonderful job, and so we thought it best to utilise the time during youth month to spend some time bonding and seeing how we can improve. So we will be having our youth staff retreat, which will start off on a very spiritual note

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to ensure that God is in the centre of our plans and what we plan to do going forward, and then we're going to end the day in a more jovial and sociable manner.

The Youth VOLUNFUN weekend, Madam President, will be held from November 22nd to 23rd, and it will be held in every constituency. Now, our youth workers in the different constituencies, together with clubs, groups and other organisations, will be going around the various constituencies looking at ways that the communities and the constituencies can be improved, and they will be taking on those initiatives in a very fun manner. The Ministry will be providing support in the amount of EC\$2,000 per project.

So, for example, a project can be the repainting of the speed bumps or pedestrian crossings. A project can be a community clean-up or recognising that a school might need picnic benches, for example, so they can undertake projects like those to ensure that, in a very fun but sustainable manner, projects are being done.

Madam President, on November 30... Sorry... on November 26, we will be having our National Youth Parliament debate with our National Youth Parliamentarians, and they are going to be debating our national budget, not the one that will be read on December 1, but in a more generalised manner. They will be debating the budget as we prepare for the upcoming budget period.

On the 27th of November, we will be launching the Youth in Business Programme, and I'm happy to report that we have gone ahead and signed the MoU with Grenada Development Bank for the unveiling of that project. So everything is on the way, but we will be launching officially on the 27th.

On November 28, we will be having our cocktail and award ceremony, and that will be happening in Carriacou. So, unfortunately, my dear friend on the "Other Side" is not here, but I'm sure an invitation will be extended to him to join us in Carriacou for that.

On November 30, we will be having our Youth Caravan and Youth Concert, and that will be hosted in La Sagesse in St. David. It is going to be an exciting day. It's one that I am really, really looking forward to. We will turn La Sagesse Playing Field into a hub where we will have entrepreneurship on display, we're going to have family section, we're going to have youth section, we're going to have our key stakeholders from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and throughout the various ministries and

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statutory bodies being present so that our young people can benefit from the opportunities that exist out there. So in a nutshell, these are some of the things that we have planned for Youth Month, Madam President.

But before I take my seat, Madam President, I also want to highlight that we officially launched CARIFTA 2026 last Thursday. The 53rd CARIFTA Games will be held in Grenada in the month of April next year. The specific date has slipped my mind, but it's usually the Easter Weekend? **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Madam President, I am happy to announce that the Government of Grenada, through the National Lotteries Authority, have pledged our support in the amount of EC\$1 million towards the Grenada Athletic Association to ensure that the 53rd CARIFTA Games is a major success. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator) (Applause)**

Madam... April 4 to the 6th; that's the date for CARIFTA 2026. Madam President, the theme for CARIFTA Games is "Passion Drives Performance", and the slogan is "Feel the Passion; Celebrate the Performance". Our mascot this year... I'm even more excited to say that she is female. So over the years, the mascot has been male, but next year, Welsie, the beautiful Welsie, will be our mascot. Madam President, I am very excited about that, and that was one of the benefits of my travel to the CARIFTA Games this year in Trinidad and Tobago. So I am happy to say that there was a reward in the travel, Madam President. So thank you for your time, and that's my presentation. **(Applause) (Inaudible comment by a Senator) (Applause)**

**Madam President:** ... mines working. Now, I have noticed two requests for the floor. I did not notice in which order, but I would offer the floor to Senator St. Clair first. You have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I rise to just make some remarks on Senator Francis's presentation. Three comments... One, I was very happy to see the innovation because I like the idea of using the lunch time. I was having a chat with someone recently, and I said, "How do we use lunch time"? Maybe to have a cultural show, you could just go sit down and relax, maybe listen to poetry and so on. So, using it in whatever way you are using it for the purposes of whoever you are using it, in this case, the youths. It is not something that maybe after

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this month is finished, you can have a series every month, you have something during lunchtime, you pick a day where you can discuss different issues and virtually 45 minutes or 30 minutes, is something that can boost a lot of different topics and issues and so on. So I think it's a model, and sometimes innovation is transforming different ideas to the maximum levels. And so the idea is for you, but other persons may take this idea and replicate it in whatever form of globalisation for good purposes, and it's a good model. I think we have a business model, and this is a good model.

The second point I want to raise is the matters raised regarding the Youth Parliamentarian. Senator Lewis and I had one meeting called upon by the Ministry of Youth, I think Ms. Edwards is her name, as they prepare for the debate. We appreciate being asked to help them, and they were very energised meeting with them after five, six, seven into the evening, and they don't even want to go. What was very good, we noticed that transport was provided for them to get back home because we were concerned about that, myself and Senator Lewis found out that the facility was available for them.

So we are scheduled to meet with them again because of this seesaw that has been going on. We could not lock down a time with them and trust that this is out of the way. We trust that by next week we should be able to confirm another date as we work with them to prepare them for this upcoming youth debate.

And the last part is regarding the CARIFTA and having a woman person, I think that is very important. Because we have to do a lot of the time, demasculinise some of these positions. I feel strongly about that, and I am happy to see that it is done in that way. Thank you. "Demasculinise", I think that's the correct word. **(Laughter)**

**Madam President:** I would have said the opposite. Thank you, Senator St. Clair, and the floor is offered to Honourable Senator David Andrew, who has requested it, and a pleasant, good morning to you, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Good morning, Madam President. Thank you very much. Good morning, all of you distinguished Members of this House, both on "This Side", my colleagues and those of you on the "Other Side", and to every

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Grenadian following and listening, both locally at home and abroad, through whatever medium you follow the business of this House.

Madam President, even before I share a few updates on a couple of key things taking place at the Ministry of Education, I want to solemnly pause just to empathise with our brothers and sisters, north of us; Jamaica, Haiti, the Bahamas and some of the other territories that were ravaged by Hurricane Melissa not too long ago. Just over a year and some, we had our own share in Carriacou and Petite Martinique; we are still recovering. I know it's a long journey ahead for them, and so we just pause solemnly to empathise with them. I know that as a Government, we have started discussing at the Cabinet level ways we will be able to support even Cuba, those territories that have been affected and ravaged and affected, we have students in Jamaica studying who we've been able to bring home, thankfully. The colleges have reported that some of them are ready to resume face-to-face classes. We are happy about that, but still, we have to consider the availability of amenities and all of that. But we just pause to empathise with them and pray that they will get all the support needed from sources they may least expect in their recovery journey.

Madam President, I, too, want to put on record my disappointment with the letter that was served to this Honourable House in relation to the absence of the Senators from the Opposition. For me, it reflects a dereliction of duty because this is the people's business, and I heard it echo, but it would be remiss of me if I didn't add my voice to this conversation. This is the people's business. This is not a place where we get hung up on egos, and we get hung up on I don't want to call it trivial matters, but less substantive matters. There are many more substantive matters to treat with, and I see it as a dereliction of duty, and I'm disappointed, very disappointed.

Madam President, for any reference to insinuate that you, for instance, as President of this Honourable House, are in any way complicit in compromising the integrity of Grenada's parliamentary democracy is a statement that needs to be almost apologised for. Because we know with the degree of integrity with which you have conducted the business of the people in this Honourable House. **(Applause)** And so, for you to receive a letter that suggests somehow that you are part of some kind of cabal to attack the parliamentary democracy, as a Member of this House, I feel offended. And I take offence on behalf of the people because the substantive issues

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that will affect the lives of the people in Telescope, in Crochu, in Soubise and other parts remain undone and unattended by the Members of the Opposition. But thankfully, you have a Government, and you have Senators on the “Government Side” and independent Senators from different sectors (**applause**) who are still concerned about the business of the people. (**Applause**)

And I want my people to understand and take notice, their individual pride and individual egos come first and before their business and their concerns and the things that could affect the people and the lives of the people of our country. I am disappointed with that.

Madam President, I can even go back and say, we talk about attacking and silencing the voice of opposition, I think it's just appalling that, that would even be mentioned because I don't know that this Government, sorry not the Government, that this Parliament, that the Houses have a history of silencing the voice of Opposition, at least not in recent history.

But I remember a time when we had an Opposition who was then Honourable Tobias Clement, and the disdain with which his office was treated under a different dispensation. (**Applause**) It leaves me to wonder what moral authority the current disposition has to even suggest that there is disregard and contempt for the Office of the Opposition. When the then Opposition was not even afforded a proper office or amenities to function.

If for one thing, Madam President, it's in this dispensation that I know that the parliamentary democracy is being most substantively supported. (**Applause**) Parliamentarians now receive a salary or a stipend to do the work that they were previously never able to afford. This strengthens the ability of Parliamentarians to do their work. (**Applause**) Madam President, outside there are some vehicles that are marked for parliamentarians, not Senators, not us unfortunately, but I'm talking about the parliamentary democracy and strengthening that institution. (**Applause**) While we cannot benefit and in some cases we get chided for that in the public space, but that's okay because we will take this chiding to support and strengthen the parliamentary process and the parliamentary democracy in this country. (**Applause**)

So when I see a letter... but don't worry, that will change soon. When I see a letter that suggests that there is an attempt on the path of this House to undermine the

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parliamentary democracy, I take umbrage, and I feel offended given all that is given to strengthen the parliamentary democracy in our State of Grenada.

Madam President, I will move quickly from that idea, though, and just remind the House, there are a couple of critical things that are happening across education. The Ministry of Education was able to make good on its commitment to procure and begin delivering laptops, military grade laptops, to the students of forms **(applause)**, one and two in secondary schools, and so we had a launch of that, and the distribution process is ongoing.

I know sometime in October we started the distribution, we met with parents and started the distribution. We started with one of the schools in St. Andrew, the Grenada Christian Academy. So I want to again mention that some EC\$9.2 million were invested in our students for the development of an electronic learning ecosystem in military-grade laptops. So some 3,875 laptops were procured for distribution to students of form one and two, with 33 electronic titles, e-books that are actually aligned with the booklist. So it's not e-books as supplementary study material, it's the actual e-books. It's the e-books for the actual books that are on the prescribed book list. That eliminates the heavy book bags, and it allows people to be able to access those resources online as well as offline. So, people who don't even have internet can access the tools as we strengthen our e-learning ecosystem within the education sector. We are happy to report that.

Madam President, we continue to face the challenge of low and poor performances in mathematics across our region and, in particular, in Grenada head-on. We are currently engaging our math teachers in training, continuous training, to ensure the pedagogy and the methodologies for instruction in mathematics that the teachers are well au courant and up-to-date, but we're happy that we have approved a strategy at the level of the Cabinet that we have started implementing, so we had a...

In July, we had a fantastic two-day national mathematics symposium that addressed the practices in mathematics. We had a study conducted by our own doctor, Andre Martin, on the practices in the instruction of mathematics across the education sector, which is very instructive; it can be reviewed. We had Dr. Lois George, the senior mathematics professor at the University of the West Indies, Mona

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Campus, who came and delivered the feature address, and we talked very substantively about key challenges for the delivery of mathematics instruction.

But part of the strategy also sees us introducing specialised mathematics instruction at the primary level. That has started, and I'm happy to report and yes, **(applause)** it's a good place to tap, thank you. So in some 14 primary schools, we have started the specialised instruction of mathematics because we recognise that if we get mathematics instructions to be a lot more successful at the primary level, the earlier we get that, the greater the likelihood that persons will develop a correct attitude to mathematics, they would develop an aptitude for it, they will develop a likeness for it and the outcomes will potentially be better. So we are working, we are training teachers continuously and ensuring that as we flesh out a total specialised mathematics instruction across all primary schools, we continue to boost and train our teachers and prepare them for that. And just hint that it is also being considered for language and literacy instruction from the primary level.

Madam President, I want to put on record here our sincerest thanks to Mr. Aliko Dangote, because within the last week **(applause)**, we have had a lot of distribution of the cricket kits in our schools. Mr. Aliko Dangote, as we all know, is a well-known African Businessman, reputed to be one of the richest in the world, who was here for our 51st Independence anniversary celebration with the fireside chat with our Prime Minister. He donated 1,000 cricket kits to Grenada to be distributed in our primary and secondary schools, and even some of our clubs.

And so, within the last week, several of us were going to schools within our electoral districts to distribute those kits, and I had the pleasure of distributing to cricket captains, both male and female and to coaches; those kits, which we know will stimulate an interest in sports and cricket.

We were emphasising the importance of seeing sports not as an afterthought, not as something you do well because you don't want to do academics, but as something you do and pursue as a potential career path, as a career opportunity, because sports is a multi-million dollar industry that if we prepare our youth, rightly for, many of them can be meaningfully engaged. So, we put on record our thanks to Mr. Aliko Dangote for his generous donation of the thousand cricket kits to Grenada for distribution in our schools.

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Madam President, there are several other initiatives happening in education, but I will probably save the others for another time because we have other business to take care of. But I thank you very much for your time, your attention and your listening. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator. Senator Rahaman, you have requested the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Madam President, thank you, and thank you for the presentation, Senator Andrew. I would like to make one suggestion that came to mind when you were speaking. The mathematics course that you want to deliver to primary school students, which is a breath of fresh air to hear about, I would like you to also consider a business project that perhaps the private sector can be involved in to teach these young students math in action, how to start small businesses, and how they can even sell to other schools, produce a product and within different primary schools they can offer their product to each other of their peers within the same age group. So, I'd like to suggest to you that you can engage the private sector and develop that idea a little further.

I'd like to commend you on the laptop initiative and the cricket kits, which are so important, although they are not directly related to business; well, sports are business, but it keeps the children out of the bars and the blocks and on the field, and so I commend you for that initiative as well. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Rahaman. I would also say that I wanted a little clarification on the math. I didn't quite hear what you said about how it was configured. I'm very excited that there is some focus on math. I'm very pleased to hear that, and maybe afterwards you can elaborate for me what exactly is happening because I'm taking an interest in it.

Thank you very much Senator Rahaman. We are not supposed to comment and comments and so on, but hey, this is our House. The mention of the children with the kits, the cricket kits, I must say that when I saw it on television, I was so proud and intrigued. They look like little golfers. **(Laughter)** That's all I wanted to say.

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Thank you. Senator, one of you on "This Side" ask for the floor. No? Senator Lewis, you have the floor, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. I, too, wish to recognise and applaud the continuous effort of the Ministry of Education, my dear colleague Minister who has charge of that ministry, for the focus being placed on math. Yes. This is extremely, extremely important.

And just to say for a moment, my heart almost skipped a beat when I heard him speak about saying yes to military grid laptops. I thought he was going to military grade radar, to which I'm saying no. **(Laughter)** Yes? I mean, when I heard him say that, so I'm really glad that it's not a yes to military grade radar, but military laptops, which I'm saying no.

I wish to... While we compliment you for that focus attention on math, I wish to raise again, a matter that we had addressed before, and I know that you are aware of, but I'll address it publicly here, what appears... Certainly, I accept the information about the recurring instance of some teachers not receiving their payment on time. I think it is something that we really need to keep working on to ensure that does not happen. Yes. So I just wanted to... Because understanding the important role that teachers continue to play, and understanding the aspect of solidarity, which you yourself will appreciate given your history, I am in no way, in this, in terms of a personal responsibility, but he who wears the crown, yes, has a particular responsibility.

So I think it is important just for me to highlight this, on behalf of the teachers and the Grenada Union of Teachers, to make that appeal to you again for us to continue to work to have those matters resolved and not recur again.

It is also... Well, as I said on the question of maths, probably after this session, I'm aware that there are one or two individuals who conduct private classes, math classes, and I have found and in conversation with other people, that they are extremely good at addressing the primary school in particular and from one and from two students, in grasping maths and get into like maths and you may wish to consider the possibility of a collaboration, because I'm aware one of them have indicated that they have reached out to the Ministry of Education in the past, and their offer may not have been taken up. There are colleagues outside who may be willing to collaborate

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and try to address the aspect of grasping maths from an early age, which can be beneficial to us. I just thought that I should just rest that there for you.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Lewis. I take it there are no more Ministerial Statements? Yes? There is one request from Honourable Claudette Joseph.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President, thank you very much. I would just take a few moments to share with this Honourable House, by way of Ministerial Statement, the fact that the Division of Labour continues to grow, to serve the public, and to fulfil its mandate.

In that regard, Madam President, the division, in September, published the annual report for the division. I must say, Madam President, that I highly commend the Labour Commissioner and her staff at the Division of Labour because we checked and couldn't find a prior annual report for the Division of Labour. So, it must have been a very long time since a report was published.

I will not venture to say that one has never been published. I wouldn't want to believe that. Senator Lewis might be able to, with his memory of great vintage in the field, may be able to render some clarity, but we suffice it to say, Madam President, we couldn't find a report. And I would just here, Madam President, like to highlight some key aspects coming out of the work of the Division of Labour.

Madam President, with the steady and sound stewardship of our country, the rate of unemployment continues to decline, Madam President. **(Applause)** Madam President, when the report was finalised towards the end of June, and it represents the work of the Division of Labour in 2024, the unemployment rate was 11.1%. It has since declined based on information from the Central Statistics Office to 9.8%, Madam President. So, we continue to trend in the right direction. **(Applause)** We do note, Madam President, that there still remains a gender gap in employment.

Women's participation in the workplace has increased. However, they continue to be disproportionately represented in the low-wage and informal brackets. Even though, Madam President, the data shows that women are more educated than men, women are more certificated than men, yet, they continue to occupy the lowest

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spectrum of jobs and as such earn lower wages than men and they are disproportionately employed more than men in the informal sector.

So, Madam President, these findings cause us to want to press for labour market policy reforms, reforms that can enhance our labour laws, again, review minimum wage policies, strengthen worker protection and promote equitable employment opportunities. So, we continue to work on that.

Madam President, in the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Programme, we notice a decline in the number of men who mainly participated in this programme, and we only had 44 in 2024. So, Madam President, we are addressing this, and in that regard, I intend to travel at the end of this week, I leave on the 9th, to the region of the regional ministerial meeting relating to the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme, and then you will have some of the farms in North America represented with all of the Ministers, so, that we can be present at the table seeking the interests of our people to ensure that we have more workers participating in this programme because there's still a lot of interest out there for the programme.

Madam President, as unemployment decreases in Grenada, the demand for workers increases, and in that regard, we issued more work permits in 2024 than we did in the previous year. 960 work permits were issued in 2024 and that represented a 9.47% increase in applications and issuance of work permits; 9.47%. And the way we are looking in 2025, we're going to have a further increase, because I think we are just past the thousand mark in terms of work permits issued in 2025.

Madam President, interestingly, 74.8% of the applicants for work permits in 2024 were males, and only 25.2% females, and we have quite a number of applications for work permits in the construction sector. We see there's a tremendous shortage of skilled and unskilled workers in the construction sector and in the marine sector.

So, Madam President, for instance, construction represented 27.4% of all work permits issued. We had 17.1% in the tourism and hospitality sector, and then interestingly 19.3% in the missionary religious and NGO sector, and after that it was entertainment, the arts, culture and sports, 8.3%, and the rest smaller numbers. So, healthcare services 3.7%, business owners, that's non-nationals opening up their own

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business in Grenada, 1.6%. So, Madam President, again, we see where our focus should be headed in training persons in the construction and marine sectors.

And Madam President, of course, we have a high number of applications from North America, for example, and also interestingly from Asia. So, Madam President, again, and of course, we have original applicants, regional people coming through applying for work permission in Grenada. We have Barbados, Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, and Haiti. These are the Caribbean countries making the most applications for work permits. And then, of course, the Asian countries include India; well, India was really high up there with a really large number. So, Madam President, this is just a snapshot of what we are doing at the Division of Labour.

I would also like to commend, Madam President, the Labour Advisory Board and that board mandated by the legislation, comprising the tripartite arrangement representatives from Government, the employers sector, and the employees, have been constantly working, Madam President, as we moved to enhance the labour relations climate in Grenada, to enhance the labour code. They continue to work on that, Madam President, and it is my hope that we shall shortly see debates in this Honourable House relating to some key amendments to the labour code. In that regard, I commend the board. They have been doing an excellent job.

As we move forward, Madam President, into 2026, we are hoping to focus on occupational safety and health legislation, which is one of the main focuses because our laws do not currently adequately provide for a safe system of work for our workers in Grenada. We do not have specific occupational safety and health legislation, and that's one of the areas we want to improve on.

The inspectorate, though, at the Division of Labour has significantly improved in its operations, and that is reflected in the report. So, for example, we had the Inspectorate Division issuing... Let me get the actual figures. I am looking for it here. So, they noted 107 violations from inspections done of workplaces; 107 violations and out of which, 92 were workplaces in the retail and commercial sectors. So, that is quite noteworthy.

The good news, Madam President, is that once verbal warnings were assured, compliance letters were issued, and follow-up visits took place, the majority of these

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violations were remedied. So here we see rarely a great improvement in issues relating to inspections and making sure the labour code is complied with.

So, Madam President, I will stop here for now, just the flag that a lot of the complaints we received at the Department of Labour concern employers, and I want the business representative to take note. Of the complaints we received, I'm trying to get the actual number here, 220 complaints, formal complaints, Madam President, were received from employees, and by far the largest number comprised complaints relating to the failure of employers to pay wages to employees, either paying them their proper termination allowances on being terminated or some are still flouting the minimum wages order. So, this is something we have to look at.

Of the 220, 77 had to do with non-payment of wages, and 48 had to do with employers refusing to pay outstanding vacation leave. Sometimes the worker is terminated or leaves the job for whatever reason and has earned vacation time. That is a period during which the worker should have been on vacation but stayed on the job and is therefore entitled to be paid for that period, and the employer is refusing to do so. Again, termination allowance. Some employers think that when the relationship ends, they don't have to pay the employee what is due by law.

So, these are the nature of the complaints, but as I say, the staff at the Division of Labour have enhanced capacity there, and I think they are doing a great job in resolving conflicts and helping employers and employees alike to comply with the labour code. In most instances, once it is pointed out, the employers comply. So that we have an 82% resolution rate at the level of the labour officers, so it doesn't even get to the labour commissioner or the Minister. Right? So 82%.

So, I would really like to commend the labour space, employers and employees alike, for having an 82% resolution rate at the level of the labour officers. It just goes to show that in some instances, the employer knows what they have to do, but it just needs a little nudging and a little compelling from the Division of Labour.

We had 25 trade disputes, and that's different from your complaints for termination allowances and so on. So, proper trade disputes on section 45 of the legislation, we have 25, the majority of them driven by termination of employment or salary increases and fringe benefits negotiations for collective bargaining agreements. Of the 25, we have a 64% resolution rate. So here we see the vast improvement in

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the functioning of the Division of Labour, and I will again compliment Labour Commissioner, Mrs. Sparkle Grenade-Courtney, in really steering her staff and leading them to a more efficient operation at the Division of Labour.

And finally, Madam President, on a good note, in terms of assisting with the settling of collective bargaining agreements, most of those trade disputes had to do with settling of collective bargaining agreements, and of course, a lot of them centred on salary increases, and we have had an average negotiated salary increase in Grenada in 2024 of 4%.

So employers, if you're listening to me, that's the average negotiated increase in salary in 2024, 4%. So, before you get to the Division of Labour, be reasonable, take all matters into account, including prevailing market conditions, and negotiate fairly with your employees because by and large they do provide good work and fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

The Trade Union Movement continues, I would say, Madam President, to grow and be strengthened in this current dispensation, and the Division of Labour has been of assistance in ensuring that more workers join trade unions and have that level of representation. And we've conducted several polls, in fact, four industrial polls, in 2024, and 96.6% of workers voted for union representation in those polls, 96.6%. So, we can see that the Trade Union Movement is alive and well in Grenada, and our Administration continues to support the Trade Union Movement and all elements of labour, employers and employees.

So, Madam President, I thank you very much, and I am only too pleased to give this synopsis so that the progress we are making in labour in Grenada can be duly read into the Hansard of this Honourable House. Thank you very much, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Speaking in your capacity as Minister for Labour, very interesting reports. I would have liked to hear what percentage of the work permit applicants are from the Caribbean as a whole, if that is available.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Yes, Madam President, I can give you that. Just one second.

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**Madam President:** And while you look for it, let me just say that I, too, am taking note of the gender mentioned there, that while the women are more credentialed and more formally educated, still they are congregated in clerical, informal and generally low-paying jobs. I think that's shifting. I think that there is a large presence of professional women in society, in the workforce, in the labour force, but that gap is not closing.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** So...

**Madam President:** Thank you. Go ahead.

**Sen. the Hon Claudette Joseph:** Madam President, we had of the applications received, I said 960. That's the figure I gave?

**Madam President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** 206 were from the Caribbean of 960 and of that, Cuba had the highest number 46% being 94. So, we had—

- Barbados 14;
- Cuba 94;
- Guyana 11;
- Jamaica 27;
- Trinidad 42;
- Dominican Republic 5;
- Haiti 7; and
- Suriname 6.

And then outside of the Caribbean in the commonwealth, we had India having the highest 234 out of the commonwealth, not including the commonwealth Caribbean 234, with India having 107—

- South Africa 26;
- The United Kingdom 26;
- Canada 17;

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- Nigeria 13;
- Great Britain 13;
- The United Kingdom 26, which includes England, Ireland and Wales;
- Canada 17;
- Australia 2;
- Cameroon 1;
- Kenya 4;
- Malaysia, Mauritius and Mozambique 1;
- Pakistan 4;
- Samoa 2;
- Sri Lanka 2; and
- Tonga 2.

So that speaks to the Commonwealth Caribbean. And then interestingly we have in from Europe or other non-commonwealth countries we have—

- France 21;
- Germany 20;
- Italy 8;
- Spain 5;
- The Republic of Ireland 2;
- Portugal and Ireland 2;
- Greece 1;
- Austria and the Czech Republic 1;

And of course we had some from Russia, Switzerland, Ukraine, Egypt, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe. So people are coming from all over the world to live and work Grenada.

- China 147;
- Philippines 74;
- Lebanon 14;
- Syria 13; and
- Indonesia 5.

And we also had a small amount from Armenia, Israel, Nepal, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, and French Polynesia. So Grenada is attractive globally, Madam

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President.

**Madam President:** Yes, Madam. Thank you very much. I think this is a good...

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Of course, we do have the Central American countries, Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. Venezuela having 16 and the United States of America, 143. So from the Americas, the United States have the most. Thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Clearly a for subject for a brown bag lunch. Now, are there any other reports, Ministerial Statements? Seeing the request from no one for the floor except Senator Rahaman, you have requested the floor, and you have it, sir.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. I'm grateful for the information that we have received from the Honourable Senator responsible for Labour. I would have liked to see it in a report so that we could review that information. So if that is...

**Madam President:** So let us ask for that report and circulate it.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** So if that's possible, perhaps you can share it, especially as the budget is coming up. I would like to make the point that the private sector and business, in particular, are always mentioned as the engine of growth of an economy.

So, the business sector apart from IMA, CBI is burdened with paying everybody in the country, and when I say everybody, when you look at trade and you look at fees collected at the port and you look at taxes and you look at land taxes and you look at that VAT and all these are the taxes that are levied on business, I don't recall hearing one positive statement from Representative of Labour with regard to business, but more cautions and advices.

And I think that at times she sounds, with all due respect, like a trade unionist

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in some of the comments that she has made, which I have written down, and this is the first time I've made mention of this. But it's important to know that the principles that I see the Government applying with regard to what we've heard this morning, Ministerial Statements, actually encourage business and encourage small business. And we heard from Senator Francis when she spoke about the young businesses meeting with GDB, I think on the 27<sup>th</sup> of this month. That is encouraging. I'm not sure if I got the date right, but I know it's in the latter part of this month. GDB, the Grenada Development Bank. So if there's anything that the business community could lend or be part of, we would love to do so.

My point is that you could only squeeze so much of an orange. If the economy is growing at 3% to 4%, how are you going to pay 4% increase every year? Where is it coming from? We're talking about math, and teaching our children math. Right? You can only give what you receive.

And so it is so, so important not to look at business people as those who like to flout the law because the vast majority of us don't. The vast majority of us don't. The vast majority of us pay our dues, and that is why the country can collect more from the port and from income tax. Read the reports for the years gone by. So, I would appreciate more fairness when speaking about the private sector.

And yes, they are people who don't conform, and the truth is that because the private sector is the engine of growth, there are many new businesses forming every year, and a lot of them don't know the rules by which to operate. So yes, they do need correction. And that's not to see that they don't need correction, and that's not to say that, you know, people want to try certain things here and there. The law is clear, and you have to abide by it. Some people may not know it, and that's why the labour department is there to bring them up to speed.

But I want to make mention of one thing when you speak about the quality of labour. We do have a strain in the business community with regard to being able to meet the needs of growing businesses. The Honourable Minister mentioned it with regard to construction; we have a shortage of competent contractors in Grenada, qualified contractors. We have no real way of measuring the competency of a contractor until you spend thousands of dollars and learn a hard lesson, and many of the same things apply to other skills. So, we have to rely on other businesses to tell

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us, "Yes, boy, this fella did a good job for me". Referrals. You have to rely on other businesses.

We want a more formal system of grading, so that when a man quotes, we can know that okay, he's worth it, because he has this qualification and that qualification, and that's where the strength of the TVET programme and other such programmes comes in. We are really interested in seeing those programmes, you know, looked at in a different light. Recently, there was a stakeholders meeting in Grenada on that issue, which was very beneficial.

And so another issue that the private sector deals with on a daily basis is lateness and absenteeism, and this is an understatement. I have reports from businesses 15 times a month, one employee is late, 18 times another employee is late, and if you want more detail, I would be happy to provide it to the Ministry of Labour and even to the unions.

Yes, when they are there, the vast majority of our people work, and they work well, and that's why our businesses are able to grow. So, and yes, they need to be paid properly for proper days' work. There's no argument there. But I've spoken about this before, if work starts at 8:00 a.m., you cannot come to work at 8:00 a.m. and 20 past 8:00 a.m., and you can use this excuse of transportation every day. And so that is one.

Another shortcoming that we see in the private sector is sick leave and abuse of sick leave, where doctors are free to give any amount of time. If you look at the laws with regard to that in Trinidad, you'll see there's a limit. I'm not sure that those things exist here. And so I have heard an employee of a hotel say... Of course, many people don't recognise me outside of a suit, because most times I don't wear one, and I've heard an employee say, "I feel a go give them a week. I feel I will give the hotel a week". So he just goes to the doctor, and tells the doctor something, and the doctor gives time off, and the employer has to pay. That is an abuse of the system, and that is part of the reason why NIS will have to adjust and adjust and adjust all the time. And if we don't control these things, it will be a strain on the NIS system.

So, I make mention of some of these things not because I intended to, but because they were raised by the respectable Senator for responsible Labour, and these things came to mind. More of this, God willing, I will be clearer on when we

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have the chance to speak in further detail on the budget debate. God willing. I thank you.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Representative, of the Business and Private Sector in the Senate. There is a light on from Honourable André Lewis, and you have the floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam President. Even if I had no intention, and I did, of speaking, I was obligated to identify with some of the comments made by the Minister for Labour, in terms of the quality of improvement at the level of the Ministry. Certainly, the report is a welcome development. The quality of the report must be commended. I mean, just the detail that you have been able to provide to the President, in terms of the work permits, is a clear indication of the level of detail that has been paid to particular matters.

That is why we continue to call for continued investment in the resources in the Ministry of Labour, because we are confident that once these matters are addressed, in terms of equality of personnel, investing in the personnel, working conditions...

And I use this opportunity through you, Madam President, just a draw to the attention of the Minister matters that she may be aware of, that there may be some concerns in relation to some of the working conditions that may have existed in the past and somebody current challenges that exists and I am confident that the Minister will do everything to continue to help address some of these matters. I mean, I would not go into details, you know, you could rely on this unless it gets to a particular point, but I thought I should just place that there.

I note the figure of the unemployment rate of 9% only to say that I note it. Right? It's not an endorsement of it. Yes? But I noted it. Yes? There are other places and times for a more elaborate term discussion on these. Certainly, we look forward to the aspect of the occupational safety and health laws and acts, and that should include well-being, because the well-being of a person is extremely important in these aspects.

The aspect of the breakdown of the work permits, 960, and coupling that with the points made by the Representative of Business, and recognising and accepting that there has been a continuous discussion and call, especially by the business

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community, for the importation of labour. Yes? I wish to place on record that the Grenada Trade Union Council, and I'm sure all Grenadians, will not support calls for the non-acceptance of any non-Grenadian deportees, whether they are skilled or unskilled. Because... Yes? I'm saying that whatever we go into must be at the deliberate will of the worker who wishes to come to Grenada to provide work that our locals are not capable of providing at a particular level, and we shall put systems in place to ensure that there is a transference of knowledge. I want to repeat, we should ensure.

Part of the responsibility of the Department of Labour in granting work permits, part of its responsibility must be, in granting work permits in such a manner, in discussion with the applicant, because it is the employer that makes the application, which must result in the transfer of this knowledge and these skill sets as we continue to develop our people.

I listen to my colleague on the question of... Let me put up my hands. I know that there are challenges as it relates to absenteeism and lateness. We are calling on all our members, all workers, to take your work seriously because of your benefits... In order to... With rights come responsibilities. But we are also aware that a major contributing factor to absenteeism has to do with the lack of national property transportation.

If we drive along at any time... My colleague, from the employers... If you have the time, I suggest that you make the time, so that we can work on this together, drive along the western corridor, the eastern corridor and look at the number of people that are standing on the side of the road from early in the morning waiting for transport.

I daresay to make the colleague Minister for Education that this is also seriously impacting the learning capacity of our students because the number of students I see on the side of the road after nine in the morning waiting on transport, certainly, and the number of build-ups in transport... And what do many of us do? I go to work too. Right? I may leave at 10:00 p.m.

The build-up of traffic... If you live in Westerhall or any part of St. David, if you do not leave home at about 6:30 a.m. or at 20 to seven in the morning, if 10 to seven takes you on the road, you can almost guarantee yourself that going to Grand Anse or even into the Town of St. George, you are reaching late. What that does is that it

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places a strain on parents, because remember, you have to get your children ready, because there's a preparation for work, and I'm making this appeal to the state.

I know that there is a Pilot Programme for students in St. David, and I applaud that. Time is important. We can't always have a pilot, pilot, pilot. I'm saying just how the Administration has demonstrated boldness in some of its decisions that it has made, the aspect of transportation is enough, in our view, to be as bold as that it gets some transport, and to also call on my colleague to help me. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Well, yes, well, it's coming, but it cannot always be heard, "It's coming". I wanted to reach. Right.

My colleague from the private sector, there's absolutely no doubt that the southern part of the island, the tourism belt, is doing extremely well. There is absolutely no doubt that the vast majority of our employees, and our members, which works in the tourism sector, the hotel sector are female. There is absolutely no doubt that these workers work up to probably 10 at night, some up to midnight. There's absolutely no doubt that the vast majority of them are dropped off at dismal places, so I'm using local language, dismal places and they have to find their way at home that exposes them to all kind of risk and danger and causes them to reach home at all times in the morning and they have to get up and come back to work that creates strain.

So, I'm making this appeal. We in the movement have made that appeal to the private sector, the direct hoteliers. We have not been able to be successful on this to help us address this issue. I'm giving an opportunity for solidarity, which may not be best for labour, in terms of when you organise it, you might put your head in one to fight us, but this is not about fighting. This here is an area that we can cooperate on. So, the hoteliers in the south and the other major business places in the south or major businesses, can come together to help address that issue.

Madam Minister for Labour, you'll be happy to be part of this, just to repeat what my good Senator has said here, the Leader of the Private Sector Business here. You are indeed the leader. Yes? It's not only the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Government. You are the Leader of the Private Business Sector, who has given his commitment to be part of that discussion as we seek to address these issues.

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I must note that, on the aspect of sick leave, the law allows for paid sick leave, and a worker will be violating that, well, let me put it this way. A worker can't violate sick leave once it is issued by a doctor. Secondly, because the labour code says that "An employer shall be responsible to pay an employee for a two-month period in any one year with the provision of a medical certificate".

We have had instances of employers questioning sick leave. I can't get in this. I have to have confidence in the doctors. Is there a possibility that some workers may wish to see if they could walk close to the edge? Highly possible. In the same way, my brother Senator from the Business Sector has admitted that a number of private sector people, he gave the excuse that they may not know the law, but they have a responsibility when you're going into business to acquaint yourself with the law, maybe doing things or have done things that violate the law. And Governments have been able, many times, to come against employers of businesses that have been under-invoicing their business or the transactions.

I am only making the point that we must admit and sit as a people, discuss these things, and I'm not going to defend my colleague Minister for Labour, she's quite capable of doing that. I think both physical, given her background. **(Laughter)** Don't take this... Right, and intellectually and academically. My understanding is that the Minister was reporting as a Minister for Labour, and probably we may need to look at whoever is responsible for it, in terms of business, and there's nothing preventing my goodly colleague from those reports and some of the comments he made, probably in some other area, may be beneficial to you when the time comes, I'm not saying '26 or '27, right, identifying you as a trade unionist. I don't know.

But just to end by saying that in 2024, there was a high record of successful trade union applications for workplaces. I cannot say the same for 2025. In a particular instance where, for the first time in my living memory, we have had an application to represent workers which is the right rejected by the Ministry of Labour, and that is the workers at Grenada Airport Authority, a matter that was in the news, and I'm placing it there because it can have implications or will help implications going forward.

I know the report was for 2024, but because I'm dealing with 2025 just to place on record our concern that this Administration has developed a reputation, a record for probably the only administration to have rejected an application for a group of

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workers to be part of a trade union to belong to a bargaining unit. So I'm making that distinction, because individuals can join a trade union if a trade union want, but the purpose of joining that trade union is guaranteed under the Grenadian Constitution and under all labour laws, so that they can look after the collective interest.

So it is not just enough to say that a worker is out or a person can join a union, but the purpose of a trade union is to collectively represent their interest. So I'm making that appeal, hopefully good sense will prevail because we take extremely seriously the aspect that our founding fathers have fought for, because before 1979, because the Constitution goes back to 1973, '74. Before 1979, an employer was not bound to recognise a trade union. So yes, workers could have joined, yet they didn't require a poll per se. They could have joined, but the aspect of representation is that it is a fundamental human right for workers to join and belong to a trade union for the purpose of representation and not just for membership. That there is a distinction between membership and representation.

And for the first time in my living memory, and for all who have spoken to me, and I'm not claiming that I've been able to speak to everyone, certainly in my living memory and especially an administration that continues to speak about what it has done for workers and continues to do for workers. The fundamental aspect is that you see it is one thing that you can do things as individual workers, but when it comes to what you call the collective, and it is urbanised labour that represents the workforce.

If you deny workers from being able to enjoy the benefit of belonging to a trade union of their choice for workplace representation, you are doing a grave injustice and a grave injustice that will not be accepted by union, in this case, the Grenada Technical and Allied Workers Union, whose General Council is meeting on the 20th of this month in which a resolution will be brought to the membership of all the workplaces that we represent to ensure that these injustice and violations not allowed.

I'm putting this here because we crave good industrial relations. It is okay, as the Minister reported, the level of resolutions of disputes must mean that both parties, mainly the unions and companies, have been able to agree. So, it is okay to compromise on salaries, it is okay to compromise, even on dismissal.

Many times you compromise and say, "Look, boy, it does not make any sense continuing that relationship, right, so let's part our ways. Yes. Let's part our ways,

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and let's pay so that we don't continue, in terms of termination allowance. It gives something more". But the aspect of denying the trade union application is an attack, it is an attack a frontal attack that must be seen as a hostile move on urbanised labour.

So, through you and through this medium, I'm making this request; there is time to reverse this matter. We cannot in 2025 with all the engagements we have made at the level of the International Labour Organisation, with all the advances that you have made in the Ministry of Labour, of all the advances that we have made relative to honouring and the number of benefits for workers, deny a group of workers.

What that means? We have read this to mean that it's a deliberate decision to ensure that a group of workers cannot be unionised, so that other employers will follow suit. Once it is granted and we have been successful with this group within these categories of workers, even when employers have rejected the Ministry, correctly told, let me repeat, the Ministry has currently told employers who have rejected a certain group of workers to be unionised. By saying no, this is their constitutional right and the labour code, and Grenada in particular will not take away that right, but the state, the Government, is doing that because it is a state-owned enterprise.

Grenada Airports Authority belongs us and the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Labour is part of this state machinery. Therefore, we have to make an assessment. We know who the players are in this environment. We know who the players are in this environment, and we will not allow any precedent to be set when the private sector, and it is our view that may be part of the considerations, broadly speaking, for the state to do this.

So, Madam President, I rest my case on this, and I end once again by congratulating the colleagues at the Ministry of Labour, the workers of the Ministry of Labour, for the tremendous work that they continue to do. We have seen a more tolerable approach in terms of addressing issues, and therefore, once there's this development, matters that will normally turn into disputes, right, we will feel comfortable in going to the ministry and even waiting on the ministry while they sort out the issues. Thank you very much, Madam President. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Well, I thank you, Senator Lewis. Thank you very much. I'm watching to see if there are any other requests, and there are none.

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***Presentation of Papers / Reports***

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

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

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

1. Grenada Development Bank Annual Report 2022;
2. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2019;
3. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2020;
4. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2021;
5. FROC Report on the Medium Term Fiscal Framework 2026-2028, 22nd July 2025;

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. I see the request for the floor from Senator André Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much. My blood is still a bit warm. I almost thought of asking for an agreement that we could probably take off our ties. Which is some... Well, I mean, I don't really like it in the first... But anyhow. We are here, you know what...what could we do but you know that's the road.

**Madam President:** Senator, you may remove your jacket.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I may? What about the tie?

**Madam President:** It's a bit... Yes. Are you feeling better? I hope it does.

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

**Madam President:** Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** We are moving places. I remember the days when there used to be something above your head; if it fell, it could burst your head. We are moving places, and it's all... And you know I look forward to taking the Oath to Grenada, you know, if I come back. Yes. Yes. In relation to these different papers, I just want to make a brief comment on the aspect of the FROC Report.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Thank you, Senator. The Papers have to be laid, and then you can comment, so allow me, please. Honourable Members, the following Papers are now to be considered as laid before the Senate, and there are five;

1. Grenada Development Bank Annual Report 2022;
2. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2019;
3. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2020;
4. Report of the Director of Audit, Grenada, on Child Protection Authority (CPA) for the year ended 31st December, 2021;
5. FROC Report on the Medium Term Fiscal Framework 2026-2028, 22nd July 2025;

All these reports are now laid before the House; consider them laid. Senator Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, and it is good to see that we have been able to get some outstanding reports, certainly for the CPA Child Protection Authority. I think it goes back to 2019? Yes? It goes back to 2019, so we have to commend the relevant bodies of people who have done that.

I want to make an observation. I will not go much into the FROC Report because the overarching concern for me has to do with under, that's on page 3. Page

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3, "Summary and Recommendations", because it says... That is concerning the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework MTFF and I just went to the paragraph which says, "The following is a summary of the main findings from the review of the MTFF that has been spelt out above and the accompanying recommendation". I'll just deal with the first bullet point because to me, that encapsulates everything.

It says here, "In assessing economic growth, which is a quantitative indicator, the information presented is mainly descriptive and qualitative, and hence, the realism of the rates of economic growth could not be examined, except for comparisons with previous projections. Quantitative indicators for the main sectors should be included to support the estimated and projected growth rates."

I just want to flag that for us to do and make the relevant appeal, given the importance of the FROC and given the importance of the guidance of the medium-term plan. To me, that captures almost everything. The others me are takeaways, but I just want to flag that to see what assistance can be given to have the FROC be presented with the relevant information that can assist them in their work. Thank you very much, Madam President.

**Madam President:** I thank Senator Lewis, and I offer the floor to Senator St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I stand to make some contributions towards the reports that were submitted. Of course, Senator Lewis rightfully said the three audit reports from the Child Protection Authority all come together. I wonder if all that may have been done one time, but we have to commend those initiatives and, of course, having served on the public accounts committee in the last year and our interactions with the director of audit and the company. They have to be complemented because they do need some help in terms of support staff to be able to do a lot of the work that they are doing. In fact, in other cases, they recommend that private auditors be engaged to accomplish those tasks because their hands are full.

At least we have this coming to us, and they have to be complemented, and of course, we trust we will see the others very soon. The other report, Madam President,

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the one from GDB and from... Of course, I've been commenting a lot on GDB and what they are doing, and we see that, really and truly, that agricultural support has really disappeared in the report. It is not a major focus, actually, as before I see housing, education, and business, of course, business can be interpreted as agribusiness, but we're speaking at that farmer level development side.

We haven't seen much activity there, well, that's 2022, so we pray that the other years may yield something. Of course, one may argue in the report that the bank was managing one of the G-CREWS projects that has to do with water challenge and supports irrigation to the farming sector. Of course, some equipment and so on were distributed earlier this year, which I was present to witness, but that's 2025. So, I say this to say that for almost three years, I trust that money was sitting and turning around inside GDB with nothing getting out until earlier this year.

So, it means that some action is needed, and then that was a project, so when these funds are finished, EC\$1,300,000, I saw it as surplus generated by GDB. The question is how this money is being used to support other sorts of sectors. In fact, this was part of the report. The year before 2021 was EC \$1,400,000, then the following year, which was 2022, was EC \$1,300,000, and I take it that is accumulated. I'm not too sure if they have that cash in the bank. How is money being used to further stimulate our farmers? This is something they may want to address in their own way.

Most importantly, Madam President, the matter of the FROC, and this is significant, we all endorse and support the work of the FROC. I'm very highly complementary. I know they were asking for more staff and more capacity. We're not too sure if that actually took place, but one of the major concerns they had was how they could get more analytics and statistics that were on the last page in the conclusion of their last report. Not the one that we are looking at now, the 2025, is the one that we got ending for 2024, but I was shocked and amazed, really shocked to see this report from the FROC.

I see frustration among a list of competent persons in that we move from wanting more data and more analytics. I used to enjoy looking at the FROC report with all the charts and all the trends, and all the different subsectors. It was a joy, now the FROC is complaining, and Senator Lewis raised the first part, but it's deeper than just the first part.

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Qualitative data, so somebody or a set of people, may not understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative. My conclusion is that I think maybe FROC needs to sit down, sometimes you need to do that, sit and have a discussion, or maybe some people fall asleep. So, in the report, what FROC is saying to us here is that we can't really say anything and even this projection of growth, we are not sure about it, because it has to be based on mathematics, Senator Andrew. Mathematics, statistics, numbers, and we definitely know that it used to happen, so we are not too sure if maybe workers changed or if the computer had a problem, but the report we used to get up to the last report has disappeared. In fact, Madam President, there were some specific bullets that got my attention. In fact, all the bullets have attention **(laughter)**, but I only pick out a few.

On page 3, I think the third bullet says about the difference sectors, what happened in the fishing sector, the agriculture sector, and in various sectors. Again, the data is not sufficiently forthcoming, such that they are able to make proper advice and projections. This, to me, has tied the hands of the FROC, but in addition, it's interesting that we commended highly... And I was happy that Senator Britton and Minister Thomas spoke of the creative economy, and we are all excited that it's a dimension of growth to add to the country's policies. FROC is saying, "Hey, this is a major area of parity of the Government, and they cannot even get any information on statistics to show what is happening there". They're not saying anything is not happening, but where is the evidence? We're not saying it's Senator Britton or Senator Thomas, but the industry could be the private sector, too, maybe when asked for a survey to collect certain data... Different. Where is it collected? How is it collected? Maybe it is a qualitative approach. So, we have missed an opportunity as to how the government invest. How do other people invest? How do other people plan their life and their career path along that major pillar?

In fact, the FROC went further, saying that the data and statistics should be aligned with all the different pillars of the economy and projections. So, whether it is health and wellness, so that you could be able to monitor. In fact, only yesterday I was in a session, dealing with performance-based management, talking about indicators and all those sorts of things. Of course, we spoke about qualitative data and quantitative data, but the FROC is saying now that, okay, qualitative is present,

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but quantitative has disappeared. You definitely would need that to be able to monitor and even to write projects, and seek funding. How do we justify? I can see a very frustrated FROC.

In fact, the FROC went further, Madam President, lower down that page or unto the fourth page and say, but hold on, where are all the audit reports from statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises? These represent different sectors, whether it's Gravel and Concrete, whether it is whatever. So, they represent various sectors; in fact, they speak specifically of the MNIB and Petrocaribe, so that these are big directions that the Government wants to go. These areas of focus have no data, no reports.

In fact, Madam President, the FROC also speaks about data from the banks that are not in line with what they would want to see, such that they can able to see what is going on in the economy. So, is the banking sector hiding information? Has it been requested? Can they suddenly not provide it anymore? I think that this Madam President, needs serious attention, such that the FROC can able to do its work as it has excellently done in the past.

In fact, the FROC has done some modifications to the Act, which we all agreed on and supported, so that they can get more support. They asked for more personnel, which we also agree with and have given them because they have done an excellent job. In fact, the last point I want to make is not repetitive because they all address different areas, as they concluded at the end that they would like to see more data for the sectors, so they are able to do their job.

My conclusion, Madam President, what has changed? Someone told me that whenever you see something different happen, ask the question, "What has changed"? Some experts might try to speak about a theory of change, and so on; those things are too sophisticated for me to understand. What has changed? This report came out in July 2025. What has changed? We had a budget that was read in March 2025. What has also changed, and I could be wrong, as we are just into November, and we have not seen a supplemental budget.

So, I'm wondering if the corollary cause and effect are not necessarily related. Is it because the details of the supplement are absent? The guards have been dropped because there is no real need to really make a case in that supplemental that

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could be concluded as a scientist; it is a hypothesis, and it could be debated. Of course, we know 1st December is the date announced publicly that we can expect the budget. So, I'm really frantically looking and frantically might be an interesting word... Looking forward to seeing how this FROC Report will aid, and we'll say aid and abet, the impending budget presentation and debate in December 2025, for the 2026 budget.

I'm very curious, and I would not be surprised that knowing the FROC, they should know that their information is very important in what the budget support. It is like that foundation that meshes, and I would not be surprised if we see a supplementary FROC report before November. To sort of create some hope and confidence in the data that will be provided, because you're basically standing on thin air in the absence of real analytics. I thank you.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator St. Clair, for your comments and suppositions, and hypotheses will be taken as that and that only. Since you have requested more clarity, and I hope the government side has heard your request, which has come through the chair, I will monitor it. Thank you. Senator Rahaman, private sector rep.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. Thank you for the opportunity. My comments on the Child Protection Authority documentation that was provided are as follows. I would... Two things stood out to me, really.

One, which is under Foster Care Allowances. The report mentioned how many employees, for example, work under that authority, 63 in one year, 65 the next year, and so on, with regard to how many children are being assisted, how many are in foster care, and how many receive foster care allowances by this authority. I thought that the report should have included that. So it did mention that in the year 2020, EC\$543,000 was spent on this foster care allowance, and in 2021, approximately EC\$489,000. So about 50-something thousand less. But really, what I would like to know is how many children are being assisted through foster care yearly, and what that assistance entails. What does that assistance look like? Is it EC\$1000 a month? You know, I would have liked to see that in the report, so that is lacking for me.

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Then we move on to... I'm grateful for the reports, by the way, but many of them are dated when I say dated 2020, 2019, 2021, and 2022. I mean, we really need to get up to speed in terms of accurate reporting at least 2023 and 2024, you know, timely reporting. Thank you, my brother. With regard to GDB, I note that the NPLs Non-Performing Loans percentage remains about the same in 2021, at 2.24, and in 2022 is just a little bit higher. Which means that the bank, in addition to making profits, is really collecting at a stable rate, and the non-performing loans are low for a development bank that is very good, to give an example. In 2009, non-performing loans in the United States, when they had their crisis, were almost up to 5%. 4.9% of loans in the United States were non-performing loans, and in 2022, it's about 1%.

So, to have a development bank that many people don't want to lend to these small businesses. A government has taken the responsibility to do this, to fund this, and to lend to small businesses. The risk percentage of default is about 2%, and that is excellent. So good job to the GDB and the government that supports them. Well done.

With regard to FROC, and I want to read from page 20, so, in addition to what Senator Lewis mentioned, he spoke about point one on page 3, on that first page 3, there are three points: one, three, and four. On that one page at the beginning of the document where they talk about insufficient data, it's a real problem, and this is not the first time last year the same thing happened. It's just that this year there's more of it, there's more I don't want to say, complaining, but it has been brought to our attention that we can't give you what we don't have.

So, on page 20, jumping all the way down to page 20, it reads, "This report does not..." that's under 2.5 real GDP. "This report does not include comments on the realism of the projected real economic growth rates for 2025". Then it further says, "There is a descriptive and qualitative analysis. However, the quantitative data to inform the assessment of the growth rates for each of the years is not presented in this medium-term fiscal framework". It further says, "The detailed assumptions accompanying the data underlying the projected performance of various sectors are necessary to evaluate the growth forecast for the period of 2025 to 2027".

In other words, we need to know exactly where we're going, and if we don't have the data, we don't know where we're going. The GDP growth is primarily driven

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by the performance of the construction sector, hotels, and restaurants, which are part of the tourism, wholesale, and retail trade. We see that from collections at the port and the education sectors, such as SGU, and so forth. As such, data should be provided on these sectors to support the projected growth rates over the medium term. I continue to read that the MTFF, Medium Term Fiscal Framework, should include: the quantitative indicators for the main sectors and those of strategic importance like agriculture, construction, hotels, and restaurants, wholesale and retail trade, real estate, and the education sectors that informed the projected growth rates.

The FROC notes that no mention is made of the creative and digital economy, which is a strategic priority of the government, and reproduces the following from the 2024 annual report. So they just reproduce what they had from before, and we heard that the minister responsible for tourism gave a very good explanation of what they are doing, so the data needs to reach them.

Finally, with regard to FROC reading, just before 2.6, which is page 20, the top of page 22, it says here that the FROC is cognisant of the lowering of the initial projected growth in global output for 2025 to 2026. What that means is that the FROC is aware that the global economy is projected to shrink. So, not just speaking about Grenada, what happens outside of Grenada also affects Grenada. The global economy is projected to shrink in 2026. Notwithstanding the factors contributing to such a deceleration in the growth rate for the main sectors relative to the original estimate, it says here that the FROC notes that although there is an expansionary fiscal policy for 2026, with elevated capital expenditure of 13.1%, GDP real economic growth is subdued at 3%. Now, 3% still means growth, which is very important to understand. So it may not be as it was projected in the last report, but it is still in the plus, it is still in the plus, so it is still good news for Grenada.

It says here that the MTFF should provide more details on inflation, as this is one of the variables identified in the Public Finance Management Act for inclusion in this report, and it is used to estimate components of the fiscal projections. It is also necessary for labour force service to be undertaken quarterly to determine the rate of employment and so on. So we hear some of that data in the reports, but that data is not found in the FROC presentation. So I think there is definitely a gap there, and we look forward to seeing what the budget document looks like to be compared with the

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last budget documentation document. So we can take all the data as a whole and be able to give some more meaningful feedback to the public, I thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Yes, I am on the margins of this discussion, but I do note that the FROC projects 3%, the IMF records 4.4%, and we are still awaiting the Government's Budget to come in. So, in relation to what Senator St. Clair says, you know, there may need to be some lunch bagging, I call it, around the quantitative economic data for the country. It keeps the sector of economic data reporting very active, and I like that part, so thanks to the FROC.

Are there any other comments? If there are no other comments, I would like to thank all the reporting bodies, the Child Protection Authority, the GDB, and the FROC. Thank you for your reports; some of them are a bit dated, but they're forthcoming now, and to say that you would have heard some of the concerns of the real overseers of these reports and processes, I'm sure there will be responses. Thank you for your continuing work, and the question is whether these reports are now accepted by the Senate, hearing no other comments.

Ladies and gentlemen, Leader of Government's Business, it is 1 o'clock, we proceed with good health in this House. I consult you colleagues, both sides of the aisle, whether we should take lunch now and come back, as I understand lunch has arrived. Leader of Government's business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I know that many of us may want to go upstairs for a while, but I want to suggest that we take the formation of the committees and then we can break.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Yes, that's noted. However, we still have several reports.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Unless you want to take five minutes?

**Madam President:** We have a large number of reports. I would like to take

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those. I'm not sure how many conversations you will have on them, but we do have maybe 18 or 19 reports.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** No, no, no. Madam President, we passed that we.....

**Madam President:** Okay. So, we'll just take the committee formation.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes. That should not.

**Madam President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Should take five, 10 minutes.

**Madam President:** All right.

**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:** Thank you, Ms. Gulston. Leader of Government's Business.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President.

**WHEREAS** the debates on the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor-General on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Fourth Session of the Eleventh Parliament on Friday, 12th September 2025, was deferred to a date to be announced;

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**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the said Address be now further deferred to a date to be announced.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President.

**WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1a) The Committee of Selection of the Senate's Revised Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and two other Senators to be known as the Committee of Selection;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** this Honourable Senate doth now appoint the two other Senators to the said Committee.

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

**Question proposed.**

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I would like to nominate Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman and Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** **WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1b) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and two other Members to be known as the Standing

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Orders Committee, which shall be elected as soon as may be after the beginning of each session;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** this Honourable House doth now appoint the Members to the said Committee.

**Question proposed.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I would like to nominate the following persons to the Standing Orders Committee: Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair and Senator the Honourable David Andrew to join the Chair.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** **WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1c) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and two Members to be known as a House Committee; **BE IT RESOLVED THAT** this Honourable Senate doth now appoint two Members of the said Committee.

**Question proposed.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** **WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1d) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and four other Members to be known as a Committee of Privileges, which shall be elected as soon as may be after the beginning of each

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session... Sorry. Sorry, Madam President, I think I took the last one. House Committee. Sorry...

**WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1c) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and two Members to be known as a House Committee;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** this Honourable Senate doth now appoint two Members to the said Committee. Madam President, I would like to nominate Senator the Honourable Norland Cox and Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** **WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1d) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chairperson, and four members to be known as a Committee of Privileges, which shall be elected as soon as may be after the beginning of each session;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** this Honourable Senate doth now appoint Four Members to the said Committee.

Madam President, I would like to nominate Senator the Honourable Dr. Myanna Charles, Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis, Senator the Honourable Seville Francis, and Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator, and noting that we've skipped the step, we've combined.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Motion approved.**

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**Madam President:** Ladies, gentlemen, I think with your concurrence, we now break for lunch and aim to come back swiftly in an hour to have a fighting chance to end the day. I do want to say I had some copious remarks, but I will not stand between us, between me and lunch, so I will summarise them in three quick points.

First of all, thank you for the language, Senator Rahaman. There is no fever in the Senate, none whatsoever. No fever. **(Applause)** Even this morning, we got evidence of the comfort of the confidence that Members have to speak, interact, agree, and disagree freely. There, and I think as has been said by you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this is upholding parliamentary democracy, nothing to the contrary, that's my first remark.

My second remark is that to the extent that there may have been a single gap in the Order Paper not being sent out on the 24th, this does not negate, especially among the veterans, you know that we have indicated the 6th as our meeting, and we did have some discussions among everybody, I gather, as to whether or not the sixth date would hold. It was proposed alongside other dates; the Standing Orders No. 7 (6) (b) tells us six days or one day; in this case, it was a day and a half, so we are somewhere in between. No, absolutely, no disrespect was intended on the part of myself, the Clerk, or any members of the staff, and as has been said in the 30-plus sessions I have presided over, we have never defaulted on our membership with the papers for presentation. There may be... This is the first and possibly the second, but this is the second case, second case, I think it happened in July, when we were a bit late with the Order Paper.

But I draw on the veterans who know the procedure I know it was missing, and please draw it to my attention to myself; you are the veterans, and I'm the novice. So, if something is amidst, open door policy with this President, open door policy, so no disrespect was intended, I think none was transmitted.

And my third and final remark, before lunch, is to say, in summary, how I am always happy to get the reports of what's happening in the state sector. Not that they are faultless, not that they are perfect, but they are forthcoming in the main, in the vast main, they report what I consider to be positive policy and programme developments for...for people, and we all welcome that. We can give lots of remarks, one for example, about CARIFTA being held in Grenada, and please, I'm very pleased, and I

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think we will all rally in the Senate to support our country as a host of the CARIFTA games. Thank you, Senator Seville, and we wish you success in that endeavour.

I also want to endorse and support the month of tourism, the month of youth, and many other positive or interesting, and wonderful opportunities, particularly the young men. Senator Seville, thank you for preparing husbands for all the young women in my life. Thank you for taking them off the streets.

And let me close by thanking the last two, saying to Senator Seville Francis, you do not have to come here and plead for support. We are here for you whole Senate, and though we were not touched or devastated the way you were with the loss of your friend Senator Neilon Franklyn, who we know came from another side, another background, you embraced him, and your loss was intense. It was always a pleasure for me to see how you all interacted as two young rising parliamentarians, and I... and I applaud that, and please know that you don't have to appeal to us for support for yourself, we willingly give you our support.

And enclosing, I say thank you to those of you who believe that the Chair...the chairing of the Senate is conducted with impartiality and dignity that you all bring to the process. We will continue, and we thank you all, and I draw a line, a thick, firm, definitive line under this conversation line says, "no fever". **(Applause)** Enjoy your lunch.

**Senate adjourned for lunch at 1:22 p.m.**

**Senate resumed at 2:26 p.m.**

**Madam President:** Pray be seated. We recommence.

**Deputy Clerk (Ag.):** Item 15 – Bills.

**Madam President:** Senator Seville Francis, you are on your feet in front of the podium, which I now give to you.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Thank you, Madam President. I beg to

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introduce for the first reading a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to amend the Marriage Act, Chapter 184, (the “principal Act”), to increase the minimum age at which a person may marry from 16 years of age to 18 years of age, shortly entitled, Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator Francis.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Madam President, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Orders 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:** Madam Senator.

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

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Madam Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, the Bill before us today is a very significant Bill, and I am happy to be the one presenting this Bill because it says to me that the consideration of our women and girls, in particular, is a priority, Madam President.

Madam President, this Bill seeks to amend the Marriage Act, Chapter 184, and (the “principal Act”) to increase the minimum age at which a person may marry from 16 years of age to 18 years of age and to remove any exceptions thereto, with

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consequential amendments to related regulations. The Bill contains 10 clauses and one Schedule, Madam President.

Clause 1 provides for the short title of the Act for which this is the Bill. Clause 2 provides for the non-application of the Act to marriages solemnised before the date of its commencement.

Clause 3 provides for an amendment to section 3 of the principal Act to prohibit the solemnisation of marriages where either of the parties to the marriage is under 18 years of age.

Clause 4 provides for an amendment to section 19 of the principal Act to remove all references to the requirement of parental consent with respect to the solemnisation of marriages.

Madam President, clause 5 provides for the repeal of section 20 of the principal Act to delete the provisions relating to the procedure when the content of a parent or guardian is required.

Clause 6 provides for an amendment of section 21 of the principal Act to remove all references to the requirement or refusal of parental consent with respect to the solemnisation of marriages.

Clause 7 provides for an amendment to section 31 of the principal Act to prohibit the solemnisation of marriages in *articulo mortis* where either of the parties to the marriage is under 18 years of age.

Clause 8 provides for an amendment to the First Schedule to the principal Act to remove all references of the requirement of parental consent with respect to the solemnisation of marriages in Forms one and two respectively.

Clause 9 provides for an amendment to the Fourth Schedule to the principal Act to remove all references to the requirements of parental consent with respect to the solemnisation of marriages in Form one thereof.

Clause 10, Madam President, provides for consequential amendments to be made to the provisions of the regulations set out in the Schedule.

The Schedule sets out the specific consequential amendments, as referenced under clause 5, to be made to the Marriage (Special Licences) Regulations, Chapter 184 and the Marriage (Special Licences–Destination Wedding) Regulations, 2013 SRO No. 12 of 2013, respectively to remove all references to the requirement of

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parental consent with respect to the solemnisation of marriages.

Now, Madam President, I have said a lot, but I want the layman on the street to understand what I just presented, Madam President, because it is important. I am going to use this opportunity to do an analysis and a breakdown of the Bill.

Madam President, generally, what the Bill seeks to do is to modernise Grenada's Marriage Act by raising the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18 years, by eliminating all exceptions, including parental consent or special circumstances and updating related forms and regulations accordingly.

Madam President, this aligns with Grenada and global and regional human rights standards on ending Child Marriage, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the CARICOM Regional Strategy to end Child Marriage. Madam President, I am not sure that our Grenadian population realises that we were enabling child marriage for so long. Madam President, this Administration sees it very fit to remove that to prioritise our children to be children to ensure that the society we are living in is one that is worthy of living in.

Madam President, I'm going to do a quick analysis of what the principal Act says and what the amendments are. Section 3 of the principal Act allows marriage at age 16 with parental consent. This amendment raises the minimum age from 18 years with no exceptions. So the effect of that is to legally prohibit all marriages under age 18.

Section 19 specifically required proof of consent where necessary in the principal Act. The amendment removes all references to consent requirements; therefore, no consent mechanism is required.

Under the provision in section 20, the principal Act details procedures where parental guardian or consent is required. In this amendment, this is repealed entirely, and the effect of that is the abolishment of all legal roots for consent-based minor marriages.

Madam President, those are just some that I prefer to highlight in this instance. But, Madam President, this Bill ensures that, regardless of parental or judicial permission, no person under 18 can legally marry in Grenada. That is commendable, Madam President. But I also like to contextualise why we are doing this.

You see, this reform, Madam President, what this is doing essentially, is

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protecting children's rights from early or forced marriages. One may argue that it's not something that is a customary practice, although it's in our books, it's not something that we see. Madam President, we never know when. As my grandmother used to say, "One day, one day, congotay", and we do not want to take the chance for a what if because it is on our books. We are ensuring that in the event that one day, one day, congotay, Madam President, someone wishes to do that, it is not practical here in this Pure Grenada.

Madam President, this Bill also supports national development goals, and I would like to ensure that this is emphasised, because this Administration ensures that we have a vision for this country, Madam President. Under Vision 75 and under the National Sustainable Development Plan of 2035, particularly pillar one, the Human Capital Development is a perfect alignment of this Amendment, which we are seeking, Madam President.

This policy rationale also says or recommit, rather, to Grenada's commitment to youth protection, gender equity and well-being. I'm sure if we put on our realistic lens, we would know that a Bill of that nature, without the amendments, affects mainly the women and girls, Madam President. The men are the ones, unfortunately, who are the beneficiaries of this Bill remaining as is, Madam President.

It also ensures consistency with the increased mandatory school age, and I'm sure my dear colleague would agree... We have just moved our school age mandatory school age to 18, so tell me what business our young people have before the age of 18, at least being married.

Madam President, we are ensuring that our women and our girls, in particular, our teenagers they are preparing for a life by building themselves for the future rather than succumbing to the pressures of society.

Madam President, today we are debating a statement of principle, and I saw a letter circulating earlier that talked about this as an act of principle, and we're boycotting Parliament as an act of principle. Madam President, this is an act of principle because we are saying (**applause**) that our children need to be protected. This is the principle, Madam President.

Madam President, the principle is simple. Childhood is not a time for marriage. The Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2025, represents Grenada's firm commitment to

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protect our children, to empower our young and align with our laws, with our moral responsibility, more than anything else, to uphold human dignity.

Madam President, we're all adults in here, and we know what happens during marriages. We know the engagement and the interaction that happens, and sometimes, as adults, it's even difficult for us, so imagine a child.

Madam President, under the current Marriage Act, imagine a 16-year-old being given away by their parent. Madam President, I'm even tempted to say this is an act of child trafficking, Madam President, because you're giving away your child. Madam President, with this Bill, we close that door once and for all. The new minimum age of 18 years without exception sends a clear message that our children deserve protection, not permission to wed. Madam President, what our children should be asking permission to do is to send out applications to different colleges, to different universities, to pursue career development. Madam President, those are the permissions our children are supposed to be asking for at age 16.

Grenada now joins the growing number of CARICOM Member states such as Barbados, Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines who have legislated to end child marriage. Madam President, this amendment honours our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and I know, Madam President, this is something that you're very passionate about as well.

You see, Madam President, all of those unions, all of those regional organisations, we are saying, through them we are saying, or we are honouring the obligations rather, under those conventions and treaties that we have signed on to. Evidence shows that early marriage often results in disrupted education. Madam President, just think of a teenager having a boyfriend or girlfriend and how, as simple as it may be or sound, it disrupts education. Imagine if they are in a full-blown marriage, Madam President.

Early child marriage also disrupts economic or leads to economic dependency and a higher risk of domestic abuse and mental distress. By raising the age to 18, we empower our youth, especially our young girls, to continue schooling, to pursue their dreams and to define their own path to adulthood.

Madam President, the Bill also repeals outdated references to parental consent, guardianship declarations and special permissions. The new text ensures that law

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speaks one clear language, marriage is a contract between two consenting adults and Madam President, we know that at age 16, you are not considered an adult.

Madam President, so we're saying, and I think my last presentation in this House, I said that I don't want to be on the side of confusion because we're saying one hand that at age 18 you are considered an adult, but at age 16 you're saying to me that I can engage in adult behaviour, which is being married.

Madam President, just the thought of marriage is scary, the commitments, the requirements. It's a scary task for an adult. I am sure we can jog our memory, and we would know of one or two adults who have backed away from an engagement before getting into a marriage because of all the challenges and the commitments that it comes with, Madam President. So imagine a child having to forcefully agree to those things. Madam President, what kind of society are we raising?

Madam President, in conclusion, I want to remind us that this is a moment of moral clarity and legislative courage more than anything else. I have realised that this Administration has taken on a task that no other administration has ever sought to do, Madam President, and this is what I consider when I say legislative courage, Madam President, we have been doing just that. Madam President, we are firm that the future of our nation lies not in a child bride or early union but in educated, empowered and protected youth, Madam President.

Let us pass this Bill not just as law or out of obligation, Madam President, but let us pass this Bill in conscience, and I would like to think that every one of us in here has a conscience that makes a very soft pillow at night, Madam President. So let us use our conscience in passing this Bill as a pledge to every child in Grenada that their dreams will not be shortened to premature vows.

Madam President, let us raise the age and raise the standard of protection of our girls in society, Madam President. Adulthood must not be rushed, protection must not be postponed. Madam President, this Bill reaffirms that in Grenada, childhood is sacred. Madam President, I therefore commend the Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2025, to this Honourable Senate for its consideration. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank Senator Seville Francis for her presentation, analysis and clarion call for the Bill. I pass the floor to Senator the Honourable Salim

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Rahaman. You have to floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. Thank you very much. When I saw this Bill, I read it very carefully, and I noted that the intention was to change the age of legal marriage from 16 to 18, two years, and that is the defining factor between a child and an adult, two years. 18 seems to be a magical figure age that you wave something, and when you reach there, you become an adult, and to remove the parental rights that will allow those younger than 18, from 16 to 18, the right to get married, upon, and only upon approval of the parents...

Myself being married for 23 years and knowing the benefits of marriage, I'm not sure of how many people today, by God's mercy, how many people today have done that or have achieved. By observing my parents, who have been married for 53 years, I think I have a little bit of experience to speak on the issue. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** A little bit. So I thank you for the opportunity to speak on it, and I thank God Almighty for giving me the clarity that he has given, and to say some words on this subject, perhaps beneficial. I ask him to grant us the understanding of all things pleasing to him that we may act in a manner that will earn his pleasure and mercy today and every day. Amen.

Madam President, by and large, Grenadians are God fearing and spiritual people. However, we sometimes fail, and we fail in the flesh and in our actions. Many times, our actions do not match up with our beliefs, and so we fall short. Madam President, this proposed amendment to the Marriage Act is one such example in my view, and I'm willing to stand alone on this, is one such example of falling short.

Madam President, there is a saying in Islam, "Support your brother whether he is wrong, or whether he has been wronged", and so a companion remarked, "O' prophet of God Almighty, I can understand that I can support our brother if he has been wrong, but how can I support him if he is wrong", and the prophet, may God's peace be upon his soul, "Stop him from doing what is wrong, that is how you support him".

Madam President, when we speak about marriage, we speak about a blessed and secret union that has been gifted to us by the maker and owner of creation. We're not speaking about increasing the age for education and reducing the licence from 25

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to 18. We're speaking about a moral issue. Madam President, when we speak about this union, marriage is the prescribed vehicle by which a man and a woman must come together, but the reality is that boyfriends and girlfriends are coming together at much younger ages than 16 in Grenada; that is the data.

When you make decisions in business or in government, anyway you make decisions, you make decisions based on data; if not, you run the risk of making decisions based on emotion, based on what somebody else says, based on feelings and so on. You must look at the data and see, based on that data, how best to protect your people. It's not a one-size-fits-all, all the time.

Madam President, we began this session today with a prayer for guidance, the Lord's Prayer, Matthew. That prayer comes from the same text that these next two quotes will come from. Taken from Genesis 2:18, it reads, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'..." Another verse in Hebrews says, "Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers".

Madam President, don't we have a duty as leaders, as Parliamentarians, to preserve a current law that at least helps to avoid sexual immorality? If there is a law, albeit it is not normal to us to do it, albeit nobody is getting married, hardly anybody, if anybody at all, at these ages, but you know, what's happening at those ages, sexual activity; a lot of it. You know what else is happening at those ages? Pregnancy; a lot of it.

The question is, is it better for a child, or a girl who becomes pregnant at age 16 or 17, is it better for that child to be assisted by their parents and to be married so that the man... We already know there are a lot of problems in Grenada with men shirking their responsibility as fathers; that's why we have so many households in Grenada led by women. This is not new. This is not something that is strange. These are the facts. I continue with your permission.

Madam President, the fact is that by the time girls reach 16 to 17 years of age in Grenada, roughly 71% of them have been sexually active. Let me repeat that. These are Grenada facts, and I have... If you may... Dear Sir. If you may distribute where the source comes from, so that everybody can have a copy and they can do their own research. This is not Caribbean facts.

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**Madam President:** Take this document to me for me to look at it before its distribution. Thank you. All documents, just to warn you... Thank you. Continue Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. So by the time girls reached 16 to 17 years of age in Grenada, roughly 71% have been sexually active and nearly half have already experienced a pregnancy, bringing a life into this world. Madam President, the law currently allows teens aged 16 to be married only through the consent of their parents and then at 18 on their own. What is wrong with this, such that it needs to be changed?

Do you know that according to Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, marriage is permissible after the age of puberty? All religions... All three monotheistic religions. Now, of course, over time, due to changes in our society, some people may find this unreasonable, and some people may even say, "This is outdated. That was back then. They used to do that back then. That doesn't apply to us now". But you tell me, with our current modern societal beliefs aside, the fact is, our nation's children are having sex as early as 12. Many are sexually active by age 14. Put those years into context and see why it is that our grandparents and great-grandparents were told to get married earlier. Did we turn out so bad?

So, does it mean that a child will be denied education or ought to be denied education, because they are married? Does it mean that this is for everyone, even at 18? The answer is clearly no. Most people today will not even get married at 18, but my point of bringing this up is that if at another time we were told quite recently that a child at 16 and possibly even as early as 12 should have choices over their own body, then how could you then say that they don't have a choice to marry at that age? Does that make any sense? **(Applause)** It's a contradiction. It makes no sense.

On one hand, you're saying that they should have control over their bodies, and on the other hand, you're saying that they're not mature enough to get married. So the real reason is to push morality further away from the people. I'm not saying or making a claim that this Government is doing this on purpose. I'm not saying that.

I am saying that our respected Senator Francis made mention of the UN and other people who have already led the way in that regard. As a matter of fact, the

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United Kingdom raised their age, and they age and their age was also 16, raised their age from 16 to 18 in February of 2023. We know how the hand-me-down laws happen, so perhaps this is one of those.

But I say this to say that in a report given by a gentleman by the name of Dr. Fred Nunes, a Caribbean expert, and a UWI lecturer for 12 years, a Jamaican doctor... He mentioned in a report, "16 and 17-year-olds reason comparatively to adults". They reason comparatively to adults. That's why I mentioned 18 must be a magical figure, because automatically at 18, you reason like an adult.

So, I want the record to be clear even if I stand alone, that if God Almighty had it right to say that God Almighty had it right all along, if it is that there is this strong sexual desire, and mind you there's no boyfriend and girlfriend to be found in any scripture, I would like to see it, I like to see that where that is legitimised. So it's either marriage or nothing, and if we're going to push the can further down the road, then we may have another government, because the reality is, hardly anybody is getting married today at 18, much less even getting married. So another government might say 20 or 24 because nobody gets married at that age anymore. These laws are outdated.

The point is, Madam President, my whole presentation here today is to leave... There is no material gain by changing this law. There is no material. You are not making the country any morally stronger by changing this law. I thank you for your attention. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Rahaman. Thank you. Senator Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I stand to support this Bill as presented by Senator Francis, and I'll be very short. I think I have a little more authority to speak on this Bill than my friend across there. I'm heading for 30 years in the business. So I am a notch above you.

Madam President, I want to say that sometimes we have to do things to make sure that we have a society that we can feel very comfortable with, and what may work for Grenada may not work first in St. Vincent, or what may work for the Caribbean may

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not work for Africa and some other parts of the world.

However, I truly believe that our culture in Grenada and our culture in this part of the world is to really and truly encourage family life. Family life calls for responsibility and each one of us who sits here today we can attest to the fact that many of our homes which our parents work hard to build in the 60's, 70's and 80's I grew up in a home nine of us; my great grandmother was there, my grandmother was there, my aunts were there, and there were one or two of my siblings. It was always our desire at some point in time to leave the home, and even today, you may say to your children, "All right, at 16 years, you have two more years here, and at 18 years, you've got to find your own". It's not that you want them to go or to leave your home, but you want to make sure that you instil a sense of responsibility, and at some point in time, they have to steer their own vessel or canoe.

How do you do that, Madam President? I believe the best way to do that is to ensure that you achieve some level of economic maturity. I believe that it is important to achieve some level of empowerment through education, learning skills, and putting yourself in a position where you can maintain yourself and your family. Madam President, in our society, in our culture, I don't believe that we are at a level where at 16 years you can achieve those things. I believe moving from 16 to 18 years is an opportunity for us to reorganise our society in a way we can encourage family life, and I really and truly believe in that.

Too many of our homes are presently at 25, at 30, with due respect, while our parents might be happy to have us around them, they want the children to leave, they want them to go. Maybe, they can't afford the rent, so they have to remain home to drive their parents' vehicle because they can't afford to buy one and to put that responsibility in a 16-year-old's hand, or even, in some societies, can't go as low as 13, 14, puberty...

Madam President, I believe that protecting our young and putting them in the best position to help themselves, to help their family, to help their society, and to help Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I think this law will help in this process. This is not all. Passing the law is not all, Madam President, but the programmes that this Administration offers when we say to you, if you're a school child, think like a school child and take it from 16 to 18 and help and empower yourself... The

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programmes that we are offering are in line, Madam President. They are in line. It will be a holistic approach in terms of going forward.

So, Madam President, having said that, I really and truly support this very important Bill, on this very important day, in this very important House. Thank you.  
**(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you to this very important Senator. Thank you. Senator David Andrew. Very important also.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Madam President, thank you very much. I rise to give unequivocal support to this Bill as presented. I rise as a person who has had the privilege to be married to one wife for the last 25 years. So a little more than you, my brother. **(Applause) (Laughter)** Not you. Not you, Leader of Government's Business. **(Laughter)** My brother on the "Other Side". I rise as a father. I rise as a psychologist. I rise as an educator and as a Member of this House to support this Bill. I listened to much of my brother's argument on the "Other Side", a good colleague and friend.

The issue of early sexual involvement is not the issue under trial here. It's not the issue under review here, and it's not necessarily something that may change with or without the passing of this Bill. So I don't want us to get sidetracked there. And, in fact, the issue of early sexual involvement is more so a question of values within our society, or the lack thereof, from as early as within the homes, families, and so that's where that conversation needs to be tagged if we want an appropriate redress, not necessarily facilitating early marriages because. So I wanted to point that out.

But that age, the age of 16, the teenage years, we've come to know that age, the age that developmental psychologists associate with identity formation. In those stages, quite a lot of young people are not even sure what's going on with themselves; quite a lot of teenagers don't even know what they want to be, what they feel their purpose is in life, why they exist, or their worldview. It's a disservice to enforce a commitment, well, let me not say enforce, but to have somebody else consent to a commitment that potentially affects the rest of your life for you.

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There's a lot to be sorted out physically, psychologically, and emotionally for teenagers. I do not think they need to be further encumbered by trying to negotiate another human being who, in some cases, could be of similar age because if two such parents agree, probably, but then, Madam President, we run the distinct risk of having already significantly mature, and most senior persons exploiting some of our young persons because probably they are better positioned, they have a lot more resources, they are a lot more experienced, and they understand life better.

I am not saying that this is levied against anybody, in particular, but I'm pointing out the reality that this leaves an open window for that possibility. As legislators, we have to ensure that we pass laws to protect even the most vulnerable of our people, and for me, that leaves a clear window that our children can be abused. So this, I believe, further protects them and eliminates the opportunity for exploitation.

And further, the question was asked, what the benefit is. So apart from this protection, what's also given and guaranteed is a harmonising of laws, and I know we can speak to nuances, but the age of civil responsibility is 18. We drive, we do a number of other things at 18, and you take legal responsibility for those there.

We can talk about the other Bill when that time comes. But, Madam President, I strongly support because I think, by and large, it serves to protect the interest of our children, to protect them from potential and possible exploitation, it harmonises laws and it prevents the abuse, the potential abuse of our children while allowing them the opportunity to fully find and explore their identity as they develop before they get into trying to negotiate and work out what's happening with somebody else as they try to merge two lives into one in a marital union. I therefore firmly and unequivocally support the Bill as presented. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank Senator David Andrew. 25 years of marriage to the same spouse, in which case, I must say, preceded by Senator Thomas's 30 years of marriage and Senator Rahaman's 23 years. The baby in the group so far. We continue. We congratulate all of you for your longevity in marriage, and we pass the floor to, I think, somebody who is just beginning. I am putting words in your mouth. **(Laughter)** Senator Quinc Britton, you may feel free to give your numbers.

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**Sen. the Hon. Quinc Britton:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Well, if we are going to add up the numbers, it may be even older than I am. **(Laughter)** I'm not married, but I, too, rise to give support to the Bill as presented by my colleague and some of the sentiments expressed earlier by the two previous speakers, Madam President. And not to reiterate, really, what my previous colleague said as it relates to the age of civil responsibility.

In Grenada, and by extension the Caribbean, at age 18, you're considered an adult, and that's where you're able to get a licence, get a voter's ID and many other things you can do or make decisions as an adult. Basically, the Bill is to help, to guide or to protect our minors. Whereas moving the age from 16 to 18, I fundamentally believe if you cannot make a decision or you cannot even sign a legal document at the age of 16, why is it that we still have on our books that a parent can consent to a child getting married at 16 years old? This, for me, Madam President, is a way of protecting our young ones from abuse as well as exploitation. So I joined with the sentiments expressed earlier, by giving my unequivocal support for the Bill.

Also, Madam President, let me just add. The educational opportunities for our young adults, or our teenagers... Because at 16 years old, if you get married, then the possibility of you having to drop out of school... Imagine you're going to school, you're in form four at 16 years old, and you have to go home to cook for your husband. I mean, we're just being real here. **(Laughter)** Right? So, hence the reason we want to move...

In recent times we made changes to the age of you being in school up to 18 years old so I don't see why we cannot just set the standard and join also with our CARICOM members, or CARICOM countries where as far as Jamaica in the North to Trinidad in the South, when you do the research, Madam President, at least eight of the other CARICOM countries where it's legal to get married at age 18. So, we're doing whatever we can to make all the necessary legislative changes to ensure we protect our women and girls, especially.

I do understand some of the comments or the rationale that my comrade on the "Other Side" brought. We know in some of the Middle East countries, you can get married as young as age nine. It's not a nice thing to be, to be quite honest. Thinking about a nine-year-old girl being sold or exploited in that manner.

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So, the Bill again, as I said, is about protecting our young women, our girls, so we will continue to strengthen all the legislation that would help to protect them as much as possible. So I record my unequivocal support, and I asked the Members on the "Other Side" to do so as well in support of passing this important piece or amendment to this legislation. I thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Quinc. Thank you. Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I rise to make some contribution to this Bill before us, the Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2025. I've read, and I've listened, but I live in the country and many other places. The question that comes to my mind, well, the Bill before us is to advance the age of...

You know, it's funny, Madam President, in our definition of marriage, thus far, I would think in Grenada, is between a male and a female. That's what I understand. I don't know if there's a different definition, thus far. But I've been listening to the conversation, and I'm only hearing about women, women, women, and women. I'm a little bit worried about how this marriage is going to take place if I'm only hearing about women. For this marriage to take place, it has to have, in our current context, a male. So it's not only the woman who has to be more than 16 or 18, but the male has to be there. If I follow the drift, it means that the male could be 10 years old, but the female that we are so concerned about must be 18. We had to understand the picture that we're painting for clarity.

So it is my understanding that the Bill is to address both male and females who wants to get married or who can get married if not at 16, with the consent of their parents, they then can do so at 20. So you can have, in the current construct before this, a young man at 16 who would need to get his parental consent to marry someone 20, 25, 30, as the case may be. So, just as we are worried about whether or not someone will go with a young girl, we also have to worry about someone going with a young man. We're not keeping the thing balanced.

I say this to say that when we take a look at what is happening, I ask myself a few questions. I'm not a psychologist. I haven't studied the human mind and

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development, but as you move from 16 to 18, it would be interesting to understand what is so different that this individual or individuals, because they can both be of the same age, 18, couldn't meet at 16. Meaning that, you could have removed parental consent at 16, and if they choose to be married, they marry. You must say that that's a reckless proposition. Similarly, I could say it is also reckless to bring them to 18, but the parents are not even involved; just two years difference, where they can make that decision on their own.

I believe, Madam President, whilst we have all these international protocols, there is nothing wrong with you having more resilience in what you do. Meaning that, we have to look at other societies and figure it out. Yes, you could go to let 20 because you've exceeded what that expectation is. We're living here today, but you may not live to see the next 20 and 30 years; that 18 will become 20 and 25, you know. Sometimes, if you want to be a leader and those kinds of things, we have to sometimes look at things in a broad way.

The decision that we are about to make today is a two-year decision for hundreds or thousands of people. Some of them are waiting right now waiting to go and get married next week because they're waiting to see what we say. Are we thinking about that? Are we thinking that, really and truly? Should this Bill really take effect immediately after such that people have a chance to go through this sort of mental transformation that they need in being able to cope with this issue of marriage?

We have seen a lot of marriages. They start, they all fall down, and they break in different ways because a lot of the time they were not prepared, so they have to do counselling and all those things. I was hoping to see, Madam President, somewhere in this proposition that notwithstanding the parent's may not be involved at 18 that there is some sort of counselling, some sort of preparation, that these persons would have gone through such that the marriage officers feels comfortable enough that they can be subjected to this sort of "marital" or "religious" or "contractual engagement".

I thought, and I think that we fall short of that. What are we doing? The same "young girls" that we seem to be focusing on only, we're throwing them to the wolves, because two years is no different to a 40-year-old, a 30-year-old, a 25-year-old, or a 70-year-old that you're trying to protect them from in the morning. Two years is not

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short?

So, this overnight change that we're trying to achieve, because you want to conform. We didn't do that for how many years, since 1966? When you go and look at the records from Central Statistics for the past 16, 17, 18... Between 15 and 19 years, there are about two to three people who are married. Most of our marriages are taking place between 30, 35, 40 in those areas.

So, sometimes we ask ourselves why we are passing laws. Do we have a problem? We pass gun control laws because we say we have a gun problem. Okay. We come here to pass a marriage control, if you want to say a marriage liberation Bill. Do we have a problem?

In fact, what we may see in our statistics may show maybe the next year or two that there is a flood because we create new opportunities, open doors instead, because we have no safeguards in this. Sometimes we have to think; what may look nice, if you sit down and reflect on the real reality, it may not appear as it is.

So in that regard, I ask myself, how does a marriage normally come about? You don't just go about, well, as far as I know, as a young man, met a lady and you say, "Watch, I want to marry you tomorrow". This thing don't happen like that, you know, Madam President. You have to check out a girl. You chat. You even if you are a "elder person", we're speaking about, you have to win the influence of the parents, you have to treat them good until the parents say, "Okay, no problem".

Senator Rahaman knows that. We all know that. André? It doesn't happen overnight. If we can marry at 18, it means our goodly children, students who are in school right now, who were in school two weeks ago, can just go and get married the next day. In fact, they can get married and stay in school, depending on how the term passes with the 18 years. No safeguards. No safeguard.

It means, therefore, if you want to go through the period of courtship, understanding, and all those things, when you should be studying your school work, being bright in maths, Spanish and all of those things, you're studying girls and boys, because you're getting ready for 18, another subject. We don't just go and marry like that since 15, 14, you know, 18 is the year, I don't have to depend on my parents, I started checking out girls a long time ago and forgetting my school work because as I know my parents cannot stop me when I become 18. I don't have any restrictions

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when I become 18. Is that right?

This is what this does. I think there is a thing called “lucuna” or whatever you call it in law. This is the loophole, the escape, and you can't stop that. But we would go and change the Education Act and now say, you cannot be married and be in school? We can't do that. So, the question then arises, again, what is the safeguard within our school system? We can teach Family Life and teach all of those things, teach contraception... Because all of those things we have to teach that... Child protection and all those things. Parenting... When we really want to teach Maths, Physics, Chemistry and all those things. Once you're married, Madam President, it's the children you want to have, you know. Children the next day. Well, in fact, we know this situation, and how things happen sometimes, but you're ready.

So this studies and students of the future to develop this country and all of those things, we're not saying we have to restrict persons, we're not saying that, but we have to have more wisdom in the way construct things such that the choices people make can be better filtered, you know, not everything could pass through and I think that is how things have to happen, the flood gate. And so, these are some concerns, serious concerns that are bothering me.

Madam President, I haven't spoken to the religious leaders to find out what concerns they have about this. And whilst I cannot speak for them, I know they are concerned about that, because they are some of the same ones that are involved in counselling, and preparing persons for marriage. So, sooner or later, what they may find happening is that a lot of our marriages may not be taking place in their religious context. They might be happening in front of a marriage officer or other people because the moral code of these people from a religious base may have a conscience that they may want to exercise.

What are the studies? What is the report that is supposed to accompany this document here to show that there was a broad consultation with parents? There is a National Parent Association. There is the Students' Body Association. There is the Religious Affairs Commission. I think it's the Conference of Churches. What is their view on that? We are making a decision for almost 30,000 or more people, and we're hopping on the girls, those are who we are concerned about, we're not speaking on the part of the boys. When you add it up, it is almost 60,000 or more persons. But then I heard the

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story about people coming into the country and getting married to our girls. I haven't heard about the boys yet. So, that is a concern.

My question is, Madam President, where are the statistics on that? Have we had 20, 30, 40 cases where these young people, 16 years old, having their parents intervene, are the records there with the marriage officers? And if the records are there, and the parents gave consent, then the statistics we read about earlier... I should not be seeing five, six, and seven; I should be seeing 100, 200, 400.

Averagely, we have about 600 and something marriages per year, according to Central Statistics, so I should be seeing at least 20% to 30% of these young people involved. What I am seeing is that young people want opportunities, they want to develop themselves, but now, we are creating a new "distraction", I would call it, in their space. What is the impact on the parents? How are they feeling about the rights that they have, which were taken away from them overnight? What is the mental impact on them? These persons... when you are married, what do you do?

You cannot stay in your parents' home; generally, you may stay, but you would have to get out. Do we have these sorts of housing accommodations and all of those things to cater to that? Do we have the social network? Can they get a loan in the morning for newlyweds, so that they can build a house? It may look simple, but if you have been there, you will understand what it means. I am not talking about a boyfriend and girlfriend staying home; I am talking about marriage, needing to find a place, having to pay bills, and having children. Do you think you would have the time to further your studies quickly and advance all of your stuff?

So I think, Madam President, well, not that I think, but I am seriously concerned that there is not sufficient safeguards in this because it is not just changing the age from 16 to 18, you have to look at all the repercussions, all the risks that are involved; the social risks and the financial risks to the society, to the parents and to the individuals; what does it mean, and how do we protect the society to be able to manage the situation? I am concerned that both boys and girls, are unnecessarily exposed overnight, like instant coffee, into a matter that they are not prepared for, and my suggestion is that we need to look at that; two, there should be a window of time before this Bill could take effect.

So, for example, you may say in three years' time, so persons now... just like

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how... we did it with NIS; you see sometimes, Madam President, you wonder how we do things. With NIS, we rolled it, we rolled it, we rolled it, we rolled it; what is so difficult to roll this one? What is so difficult to roll it incrementally and say, "Okay, in the next two or three years, so that people can prepare? If a hurricane is coming, we have to prepare. This year has had a serious mental impact on people; one, the opportunity it creates, and two, the sort of fear and scare of our parents, the nieces, the uncles, the cousins, and the aunties, wondering what is going on with my daughter or my son. "Is it a good girl you got there? We have to see who her family is, what her history is?" Overnight, we cannot even check that.

We are not saying that that has to be the case, but we understand our culture, and I think this has seriously illuminated. The question I would like to ask, finally, Madam President, what is the rush? If you do not do it today, what will happen? Do we have 500 girls and boys waiting there to get married, lined up in the morning? I do not think so. So sometimes, we have to be a little bit tempered and considerate. A good idea is that some things just need to be packaged a little bit differently, to make it be of more value because I see... but you know, we are smart people, according to Senator Lewis, "We smart".

Parents know what to do; they have more work on their hands now. They would have to start talking to their children, advising them, when they should be relaxing on evenings, maybe after a hard day's work; their role has changed rapidly because of who is turning 18 next week. With these few words, Madam President, I think that the... Not that I think, but I keep saying I think because the truth is, I cannot believe that these things were not presented in support of this presentation. I thank you.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President, and I look forward to some better clarity from the "Other Side", on some of these matters. After listening to be quite frank, some of the contributions from my side, yes? My understanding is that an attempt is not made to lower the age, but it is to increase the age, yes? And an attempt is not being made to give parents more responsibility, but you are removing the parental consent, which was required below the age of 18,

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but at age 16, between 16 and 18, if I am correct.

What is coming clear to me, even the contribution of my colleagues here, and with Senator St. Clair, is the need for us, myself included, to be able to have some deeper dive into these matters with relevant... So I accept. So let me just put it up here. I accept that if you move the age from 16 at the possibility from 16 to 18, it ought to be without scientific data. I think the older you are, the better you will be at making certain judgments, right? It may or may not always work out, yes? But what I would like to find out from the "Government Side" from... yes, whether or not we have had cases, be it one or whatever percentage of parents, using marriage, and I am not speaking about male or female because it is both male and female, for whatever activity where consent were required as a means of exploiting, benefiting for themselves, or resulting in life being more difficult for that individual; I would like to hear some of that.

When I listened to the presentation from Senator Francis, I was aware that many times, in other parts of the world, we are asked to make changes based on certain requests that may come from external Agencies. I cannot see... I have not seen, just on the surface of it, what the harm or danger is with moving the age from 16 to 18, and whether or not it would solve an issue; I do not have that data, but it is highly possible. I do not see the harm that will be created for parents from 16 to 18 because, as we speak, my understanding is correct, the existing legislation allows for parental consent from age 16 up to just under 18, because I think once you have reached 18, it is your decision to make.

It begins with one or two Senators who have addressed this, that... and I am wondering if there are more attempts now, probably there is scientific information for that, to remove parental involvement. There are a number of matters relative to the child or relative to children, I should not say the child, because we are aware that there are ongoing discussions in other matters pertaining to children, and when we get to that bridge, we will cross it. But I just want to posit here that even with keeping in line, in line with this attempt or this Act, to increase the age from 16 to 18, in terms of marriage, recognising that from the age of 16, it requires parental consent.

There is a possibility of lowering the age of children in some other material, psychological and other factors, from 18 to 16 and as low as 12, under certain

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circumstances. It may have some decisions that may be irreversible, meaning that even with an age as low as 12, unless... If we are not careful, if there is no discrimination, meaning that you allow for decisions to be made on matters that could be reversed, because there are some medical procedures that once they are done, they cannot be reversed; that is my understanding, and I can be corrected on that, yes?

So, if what we are doing here, because I think it was Senator Andrew that spoke about the aspect of harmonisation, and I will want to believe that we are not only interested in harmonising age, but we are interested in harmonising procedures, regulations, and laws that will allow for the all-round better decision-making process of the people that we seek to protect or to help.

Frankly, I am not in a position at this moment, to make a definitive position and it is also linked, probably I may not have had the time to do the complete research, but I am wondering whether or not the "Government Side", unless there is an urgency that we are not aware of, can consider to not go to the third reading while we engage ourselves in some broader discussions. As I said, if there is an urgency, that if we do not do that at this Sitting or by the end of the year, based on the Statistical information that we have, that there is a ring, there is a ring... not like the Americans said that the Cubans were involved in human-trafficking, which I totally reject, right?

Although our press release from the state seems to imply that the Americans... The time that the Americans were bringing it to our attention, I am saying unless there is some evidence, that say we need to do the now because at the age of 16 or the parental consent, just as so you may be involved in human organ sales, that we have this ring in Grenada or in the region, that Grenada is a part of, that we have found through whichever entity that engages with these activities, that this activity is taking place and parents or the existing... Let me say the existing law, the existing law, has been facilitating and is facilitating these sorts of activities.

I am asking for a consideration, and I am hearing that from our side here, Senator St. Clair, and I guess even from Senator Rahaman, that we allow for some further discussions on the matter. As I said, I can accept, and I am prepared to accept that moving the age from 16 to 18, you should be dealing with someone who is much more mature, but as we speak, my understanding is that that is a bit immaterial

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because on your own, you cannot get married at 16 as we speak, it requires parental consent.

So, I just wish to raise that as just an observation, based on everything that I have heard so far. So, this is just... If some information can be provided, I am not... they said... I am not saying no, I am not saying no. If I can be told that if we do not do that now, that is what will happen, and these are the dangers because on other presentations, sorry, Madam President, on other presentations, one must give credit to the "Government Side", whether you agree or you disagree, that there is some rational based on research or based on... well occurrences, but I have not seen that here, what I have seen is just we are changing this, this is deleted, this is replaced, right? So, it might be useful just to share some of that with us. Thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator, and I take it that the "Other Side" heard your request and is going to respond to it, or the Chair is happy to give time if you need to consult. I see the light of Senator Francis, the introducer of the Bill, go ahead, madam.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, it saddens me to stand here to wrap up this part of our discourse because I am somewhat confused. I honestly thought this was going to be an easy debate because, Madam President, for the life of me, I cannot understand why we are against moving the age from a lower age to a greater age, even if it is by two years for our children, and I am putting children here in air quotes, Madam President, to become married.

Madam President, first and foremost, from my understanding, marriage is a legal contract. Am I correct? But, Madam President, if it is a legal contract, I ask, can a 16-year-old sign a legally binding document? So, Madam President, why is it that we are saying or having an issue with a legal document, something that legally ties a person to responsibilities for the rest of their lives, and giving that consideration to be moved from 16 to 18? Madam President, if I had my way, it would have been moved higher, but that also comes with a form of being... of hypocrisy because the age of

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civil responsibilities as an adult starts at 18.

Madam President, I am not saying, and nowhere during my presentation did I alluded to the fact that next week, if you turn 18, you are waiting to get married at 18. Madam President, that has never been the intention. They have the option, Madam President, but what they do not have now is someone hanging over their heads, forcing them to do something that they do not want to.

Madam President, I keep saying in this Honourable House that "Context is key". Nobody is saying that if you turn 18, you are obligated to. I am past 30, and I am not, Madam President. So, Madam President, when I looked around the room, I thought for a moment that we were filled with very intellectual persons, but after listening to this, I am not saying that we are not. I am just left confused.

Madam President, the Senator asked, "What is the urgency in passing this Bill"? Madam President, my answer to that is simply, there is always an urgency to protect our children. **(Applause)** Madam President, that is the only urgency at hand with passing this Bill, and quite frankly, if you asked me, this is way overdue. Madam President, another Senator asked, "Why are we doing this now? It has been so for years; it is a new dispensation". So, because it was never done for so many years, that means it should not be done now? Life is evolving. The only thing constant in this life is change, so why should we be stuck in our old ways? We always talk about, you know, acceding to our colonial masters. This is another example of us; if we ask for this to remain that way, we are bowing down to our colonial masters just the same way, Madam President.

Madam President, immorality does not stem from law, but from a lack of guidance and opportunity. So, by moving the age to 18, we are not telling our young girls and our young boys to participate in immorality; that is not what we are saying. At the end of the day, Madam President, it is the responsibility of parents to guide our children, even if it means until they turn 18, and Madam President, to this day, I still call my mother, thank God she is still alive, for guidance and support. It is an ongoing thing, Madam President, but what we are simply saying is that now our children do not have to succumb to the peer pressure of families, and we know the reason why, Madam President.

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Let us make no mistake, we know the reason why a parent will consent to a child getting married at 16. Madam President, we know the reason why a mother or father would give their daughter or their son, Honourable Senator, as you rightfully mentioned, the opportunity to marry off to an elderly person, Madam President. In this life, a lot of things come down to dollars and cents, so let us make no mistake. This is a form of exploitation against our children, but, Madam President, what we are saying is that now, our children, and I am emphasising, they have an option rather than an obligation at age 16.

Madam President, allowing children to marry does not prevent sexual activity; it does not, and my dear Senator friend over there, you rightly said it, our children are engaging in sexual activities of all sorts from a very, very, tender age, but we cannot... Madam President, if marriage were the antidote to immorality, our answer to teenage pregnancy would be more teenage marriage, but we know the path only deepens cycles of poverty and abuse.

So, saying that at age 18, our young people now have that as an option, it does not prevent or stop the immorality from happening because it is now at 16, but immorality is still happening, Madam President, and that is not up for debate here, that is not what the Bill or the discussion is about. Too often, Madam President, we stray from the point. Madam President, every faith tradition represented in this Chamber calls for maturity before marriage, and there is, at least I am hoping, that this particular statement is not up for debate, because I will be very much appalled if any faith represented in here requires immaturity for marriage, Madam President.

This amendment does not oppose morality; it preserves its foundation, responsibility, readiness, and respect more than anything else **(applause)**, Madam President. Madam President, we asked for the data, and we asked for the statistics. Again, the reality of our society, we fail to document. So, while publicly available data does not provide exact counts of marriage involving persons under the age of 18 in Grenada, our laws did permit such marriages from age 16 with consent until this amendment, which will be passed, Madam President. The absence of detailed age data itself underscores the need for greater transparency and monitoring, which is another benefit to this amendment, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President, there are countries and regions in this world that believes in

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child marriage, and what the principal Act actually allows for people to come into Grenada, within the age range stipulated in the principal Act and engage in child marriage, Madam President, but this amendment is going to stop it altogether; stay where you are, practice what you made, but do not bring into our society, and this is what this amendment is also seeking to do. We are not encouraging that level of child marriage in our society, Madam President.

I do not see why anyone should or would oppose that, Madam President, and the question was asked, "What about our boys"? I explicitly said, Madam President, unfortunately, it is not that it is not happening with our boys, but in most instances, in a very significant amount of cases, our girls, our young women, are the ones subjected to this child marriage, Madam President.

Madam President, we are not legalising immorality; we are legalising protection. **(Applause)** Madam President, we are not dismantling values; we are defending futures. Madam President, when our daughters and sons stand at the Altar **(inaudible comment by Senator)** at 18 or beyond, it will not be out of pressure or parental consent, but our personal choice as an adult and understanding, and, Madam President, we are also not saying that at anything from age 18 and beyond, that our parents...

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Proposing, is this a Point of Order?

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** A clarity, not order. I do not... a clarity, Madam President, it is just a question...

**Madam President:** Yes, Senator...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** **(Inaudible comment)**

**Madam President:** Continue, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I appreciate... because she has the right not to give way. An important point that was

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raised by the Honourable Member is to... The issue of persons coming into the country and trying to marry under the age. So they will come here, and use Grenada as an opportunity because of the age of 16?

So that... This raises a new question in my mind of clarity, in that... Do we have cases of that? Is there a fear of that? I think that would help the big picture, and we know that we are not speaking about our Grenadian people, but we are speaking about persons coming into this country to use it as a safe haven to get married at that age, and if that is the case, then that should have been made very clear in the beginning. I thank you.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Proceed, Madam President?

**Madam President:** Pardon?

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** May I proceed?

**Madam President:** Please continue.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Madam President, I saw your light, not the Honourable Senator, and I did not actually give way, but I will answer the question. Madam President, there is always a fair chance once the law makes it available, once the law makes the provision, we have to expect that it can happen. Whether or not it did happen, there is the possibility that it can happen, Madam President, and that is why we are closing that door to ensure that it does not happen. Does that answer your question, Honourable? Madam President...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** That is the crux of the Bill to me.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** Madam President, our role as lawmakers is not to condone early marriage to preserve appearances, but to create systems that

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give our young people the dignity of choice, the safety of law, and the time to grow into responsible citizens before they take on lifelong commitments. Madam President, I now commend this Bill to this Honourable House. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Francis. Are there any more contributions?

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Madam President:** I cannot hear you.

**(Inaudible comment by a Senator)**

**Madam President:** The debate is concluded by the wrapping up of Senator Francis. Yes, of course. Just to confirm that there are no remaining questions or so on the table. Thank you, Senator St. Clair.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** The Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Marriage (Amendment) 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 Clause by Clause.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

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**Madam President:** I have the honour, distinguished colleagues, to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and it was passed without amendment. Senator Francis.

**Sen. the Hon. Seville Francis:** I beg to move that the Chairman'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 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, Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator David Andrew.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce for its first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the Status of Children Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to provide legal certainty regarding the status of children and their parents, shortly entitled, Status of Children Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator Andrew.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

**Madam President:** Senator David Andrew.

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

**Madam President:** Thank you.

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Senator Andrew.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Madam President, this Bill, the Status of Children Bill, 2025, is one of a series of Bills geared at protecting and preserving the interests of our nation's children. This Bill seeks to provide legal certainty regarding the status of children and their parents. It also seeks to reform the law relating to children by providing for an equal status of all children and removing any discrimination against children born out of wedlock. This Bill will repeal and replace the Status of Children Act, Chapter 311A.

Madam President, I want to simply give you some background. Since the early 1990s, 1991, 1992, I think, quite a bit of work went into ensuring that discrimination and disabilities against children in law were eliminated. In fact, they went a good way in addressing those discriminations and legal disabilities for children who were born outside of their parents' marriage. Prior to those legislations, prior to the 1990s, '91, '92, '93, terms like legitimate, illegitimate, and bastard were terms that were used to describe children who were born out of wedlock.

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Now, with that piece of legislation in the early 1990s, they abolished the use of the word, in the Status of Children Act, “illegitimate child”, “legitimate child”, because those came with a certain negative connotation. Now, the Act that gets somebody here, as a child, might be legitimate; certain indications of rape are a violation, but a child must never be so termed. The precious gift of a child, of a life, must never be so termed. That Act mandated that the term, “illegitimate child”, must be replaced by the term “child born out of wedlock” or “child born within wedlock”, and that law in the early 1990s, insisted that all children, regardless of the marital status of their parents ought to have been treated equally in Law, with identical rights, privileges and obligations.

So, Madam President, since the early 1990s, their thinking was correct in terms of moving towards non-discrimination of children irrespective of the marital status of their parents. Nonetheless, Madam Chairman, Madam President. I am still in Committee, it seems.

Even the use of those terms, like distinguishing a “child born out of wedlock or a “child born within wedlock”, legitimised some separations and created the opportunity for continued discrimination, because you marked a child simply because of the status, the marital status of the child's parents at the time of the child's birth. That is no fault of a child; a child does not know who their parents were or are. Children do not choose the circumstances under which they come into the world, and there is no way that we should continue to legislate and legitimise stigmatising names for our children.

Additionally, Madam President, some of those terminologies persisted in other legislative documents; so while the Status of Children Bill in the early ‘90’s began to address some of those, we still had child out of Wedlock, child within Wedlock and some of the same terminologies continued in other legislative documents, some of it we will reference, when we speak to the Schedule, lower down in this Bill.

Additionally, the issue... There have been significant scientific advances in our time so that becoming a parent is not strictly a matter of child mother or child father. Science has evolved. There are all these artificial means, and these advances have allowed... There have been changes in social norms, in our social and familiar structures, methods for becoming a parent, and it is for those reasons, Madam President, that this Bill seeks to provide the legal certainty regarding the status of the

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children and their parents, and to also seek to reform the law related to children by providing for an equal status for all children, and to remove all discrimination against children born out of wedlock. This Bill, as I said before, will repeal and replace the Status of Children Act, Chapter 311A. This Bill, Madam President, is divided into five parts, contains 20 clauses, and one schedule.

Part I provides for matters and contains clauses 1 to 3. Clause 1 provides, obviously, for the short title. Clause 2 provides for the interpretation provisions and the definition of key terms, including terms like child, parent, cohabitant, parentage testing procedure, and these are terminologies that hitherto have not been included in the Bill that is going to be repealed and replaced.

Clause 3 provides for the scope and application of the provision of the Act and simply to say that it applies to all children, regardless of birth date or location, unless vested rights are affected, in other words, if there is some legal provision, probably in a will or in some other legal documentation, that allows you provision prior to the coming into effect of this Bill. It applies to every one of our children.

Part II, Madam President, provides for the status of children and contains clauses 4 to 7. Clause 4 abolishes the legal distinction in the status of children born within and outside of marriage, and the rules of consideration whereby words of relationship signify only legitimate marriages or relationships.

Now... so, there is going to be no distinction. A child, as we have come to know previously, a child is a child. Whether a child is born in or out of wedlock it is no longer going to be an issue because the child will be referred to as a child and then to all of the constructions that suggested that any referenced relationship only meant a legitimate relationship, because we know quite a significant number of persons in our society cohabit, they are single parent families and all of these realities must be taken into account as we seek to provide and protect the interest of our nation's children.

Clause 5 provides the circumstances under which a person will be presumed to be the father of a child and establishes that when circumstances exist that give rise to the presumption of maternity in respect to more than one father, no presumption will be made with respect to paternity. If you have multiple possibilities, there will be no presumption.

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To be more precise, this clause establishes a presumption of paternity based on marriage, cohabitation, and acknowledgement. In other words, the person who calls it, "That's my child, I am accepting this child and owning this child", and registration, because that can happen as a matter of policy through code to register. Right?

Clause 6 provides for the presumption of parentage, where a child is born either to a man or woman or both, as a result of carrying out some artificial conception procedure. So, this is a new element in that science has evolved significantly enough to allow for these scientific procedures to have a baby conceived, and in those cases, parentage can still be established.

Clause 7 requires that some of the instruments pertaining to the acknowledgement opportunity be filed in the Registry, and it empowers the Registrar to permit the inspection of such instruments by persons who have a proper interest in the matter. So, not only is it going to be had, but it is going to be registered. Whether it is the interest, the acknowledgement, or all of the instruments pertaining to paternity, these can be registered and can be duly inspected upon a Court Order.

Part III, Madam President, provides for parentage and contains clauses 8 to 12. Clause 8 sets out the circumstances under which a person by whom an application for a declaration of parentage to the court. This clause also empowers the court to make or revoke a declaration of parentage. Right? So, it allows persons to apply for a declaration of parentage.

Clause 9 empowers the court to order parentage testing procedures. Now, that is a little different compared to the Bill that is going to be repealed and replaced. The court can now order by law testing procedures. It ensures the best interest of the child is considered, including appointing a guardian ad litem, which is a guardian who acts and is appointed by the court in the case of a lawsuit involving a child or in the case of any such similar proceedings, where a guardian is needed, the court can so apply or appoint a guardian. It also requires medical reports and allows the court to summon experts, so that the Minister can be allowed to approve laboratories for testing and publish them officially.

These are part of the underpinning of Part III in the clauses so mentioned, clauses 8 to 12. It also points out one of the key differences in this piece of legislation,

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as presented, is that these hearings will be conducted privately as opposed to much of what takes place, which often takes place in open spaces.

Part IV, Madam President, provides for the disposition of property and contains clauses 13 to 15. So, of course, once we talk about children, the law already makes allowance for inheritance and properties to be transferred. So, this section provides for the disposition of property and contains clauses 13 to 15.

Clause 13 provides for transitional provisions relating to instruments that were executed and became effective prior to the commencement of this Act. So, if a child, prior to this Act coming into effect, was entitled to some particular inheritance under previous law, they will not be affected by this new law, right? It imposes an obligation on the executor, administrator, or trustee of an estate or property to make honest and reasonable enquiries, as to the existence of any other person who can claim an interest in the estate of property by reason only of the provision of the Act.

So, suppose there are other persons, probably other persons who might claim to be children. In that case, there is a reasonable obligation on the part of the executor, the administrator, to find and engage such persons.

Clause 16 seeks to protect an executor, administrator, or trustee from an action being taken against them by any person who can claim an interest in property by virtue of the provisions of the Bill, where the executor, administrator or trustee had no notice of the relationship on which the claim is based at the time when the distribution of estates or properties were made.

In other words, Madam President, if the trustee proceeded to administrate the property without the knowledge that there was some child somewhere, who was previously called illegitimate or bastard and who is now saying, "I have an entitlement based on this law because that is my father", the testing procedures could verify that I have an interest. The executor and the administrator cannot be held legally prosecutable because of that. They are being protected here.

In short, Madam President, Part IV does two major things, clauses 13 to 15. One, it protects the executors and trustees from liability if unaware of the child's claims, and two, it ensures that there is a transitional provision that does not affect prior wills, but the positions or dispositions. Yes?

Part V, Madam President, provides for miscellaneous matters, and it contains

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clauses 16 to 20. Clause 16 provides for the conduct of hearings under the Act, and as I indicated earlier, hearings are to be held in closed courts, unless ordered otherwise. So again, the confidentiality and the privacy of the children involved will be protected with this new piece of legislation being proposed.

Clause 17 provides for the protection of existing rights, which became vested before the commencement of the Act. Clause 18 empowers the Minister to make regulations providing for such matters as required or necessary, for giving full effect to the Act, and for its due administration.

Clause 19, the Legitimacy Act, Chapter 169, the Legitimisation (Re-registration of Births) Regulations, Chapter 169 and the Status of Children Act, Chapter 311A, are all repealed.

Clause 20 provides for the consequential amendments to the enactment specified in the Schedule, to extend the provision in the Schedule.

So in the Schedule, Madam President, we have a number of other laws where references were made to illegitimate or probably unlawful... and that is being addressed. The Scheduled list and number of laws like Wills, Interstate Estate Act, the Marriage Act, the Birth and Death Registration Act, Legitimacy Act, all of these Acts will be impacted by the passing of this Status of Children Legislation in that the terminologies that provided or supported discrimination, and the legitimisation of discrimination against children because of the marital status or not of their parents, will be pulled out and changed.

So in conclusion, Madam President, this Bill eliminates discrimination based on birth status or rather the status of parents, the marital status of parents, at the time of birth of a child. It ensures equal treatment of all children under the law. It modernises parentage determination through scientific methods, and protects privacy and dignity in legal proceedings involving children. All of these make this Bill, as proposed, a compelling and commanding proposed Bill that I confidently recommend to this House for discussion and eventual approval. I thank you very much, Madam President.

**(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank you for the presentation of the Bill, Senator Andrew. I have a question just before I open the floor, a question of clarity from me. It may be

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addressed in Part II of Part III, so there are about eight clauses there. The question is, if by previous law and practice, a child born out of wedlock did not inherit from his or her parents, can that child now petition for inclusion in inheritance based on this new Bill if it becomes law? Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Madam President, with your indulgence, yes. I think from one of the sections I just read, the executor has an obligation, a legal obligation to reasonably address the concerns of persons who can so claim based on the provisions of the law, but they cannot be... they will not be prosecutable for any such infractions for things that may have happened prior to the law or the Bill coming into effect. So, yes, is the answer. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you again, Senator. The floor is open. Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. I rise to lend my support to this Bill. There are some teachings that go way back, all the way back to what they claimed to be the time of Prophet Abraham and his two sons; one being "legitimate" and one being "illegitimate". **(Inaudible comments by Senators)** And this is part of the problem because it is never so and it was never so, because nothing happens without the will of the Creator, that is why in another part there is a statement that says, "Thy will be done".

So, it is wonderful to see this Bill recognise that a child is a child, and there must be no stigma and no labels attached to any child that will disenfranchise them in any way, either by labels, class, status, race, anyway, or nationality. A child born into this world is as equal as any child anywhere, and must be recognised as such. So, I support this 100%. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Our Attorney General, Minister for Legal Affairs, Senator Claudette Joseph, you have the floor, madam.

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**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Thank you, Madam President. I rise, Madam President, to lend my full support to the Bill now before this Honourable House. Madam President, former Member of Parliament for St. George South-East, and distinguished Attorney General, Dr. Francis Alexis, in the early 1990s, while he was Attorney General, championed what became known as the “Child is a Child Legislation”, which is the current Status of Children Act of 1991, and coded in our laws as Act number... Which one is it? 311A. No. Sorry. It is not 311A. 311A is the legitimacy... 3... Yes, 311A. Correct. Right?

So, the Status of Children Act 311A, was ground-breaking in Grenada at the time, in that it was the first time that children born out of wedlock were recognised to have equal rights and status under Grenadian Law, with children born within wedlock and, Madam President, that change pursuant to the Status of Children Act in 1991, Chapter 311A, allowed for many Grenadian men, women, boys, and girls, for the most part, inherit in the estate of their deceased father.

Madam President, as a legal practitioner, I did many such applications under the Status of Children Act, for declarations of paternity, and so, great justice was done to our people in the passage of the Status of Children Act in 1991. Madam President, times have moved on, and as current policy and lawmakers, we have a responsibility standing on the shoulders of those who went before us to improve, transform, and in some instances, transcend what they did at the time. So, Madam President, this legislation repeals and replaces the current Status of Children Act and it does so for very good reason.

Madam President, it simplifies the modes by which paternity might be established. That's one of the first things it does. Under the current regime, the only way that you can establish paternity under the law is by making an application to the High Court for a declaration of paternity, and of course, you must bring cogent evidence so that the court is satisfied as to the paternity of the applicant who is usually the child and in most instances and in almost all instances the father is deceased when the application is made. If the father is alive, in many instances, he just consents that his name be added to the birth certificate of the child, or he engages in acts of acknowledgement.

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So, in almost all instances where there is a need for resort to this legislation, it is so that a child born to a couple who were not married and the father is now deceased must make an application for a paternity order so that they may be recognised as a beneficiary in that person's estate.

In this updated and revised legislation, Madam President, under section 5 that deals with presumption of paternity—

- A person who was married to the mother of a child at the time of the birth of the child is presumed to be the father, which is actually the law now.  
So, that is just codifying what we know as the common law.
- A person who was married to the mother of a child and the marriage was terminated by death, nullity or divorce within 10 months of the birth of the child is presumed to be the father of the child, and that is spelt out in the legislation.
- A person who marries the mother of a child after the birth of the child and acknowledges by words or conduct that he is the natural father is presumed to be the father of the child, and this is where it gets interesting, Madam President, and where the majority, over 80% of our population, will benefit.
- A person who was cohabiting with the mother of the child at the time of the birth of the child, or the child was born within 10 months after they ceased cohabiting, is presumed under the proposed statute to be, in law, the father of the child. That person currently would have to make an application and prove paternity in court.

Now this legislation would recognise the cohabiting partners and presume the child to be that of the father, just as though they were married. So, Madam President, this is a major step forward, and if the person was adjudged or recognised in his lifetime or after his death by a court of competent jurisdiction, the presumption will arise.

It then goes on to speak to the father who signs and instruments with the mother of the child, acknowledging that he is the father, and if the instrument was executed by deed and deposited with the Registrar, the presumption will arise so that when that person passes, there will be no need for an application for declaration of paternity.

As it stands now, if a father swears an affidavit saying that he acknowledging that he is the father of a child and he dies before attending in person at the Registry

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to insert his name on the Register of Births and Deaths, that child still has to apply to the court, incur the expense and time of applying to the court for a declaration of paternity. Of course, that child will use the affidavit that the father signed during his lifetime as part of the evidence, but based on the current law, that alone will not be sufficient evidence.

This new insertion here... Well, it's not a new insertion. This section 5 (1) (g) allows for a presumption of paternity to arise where the father simply signs and instruments and the instrument is deposited at the registry, of course. Of course, the Registry has to be by way of deed. So, Madam President, we have all these new circumstances that will give rise to a presumption in the law that a person is or was the father of a child. It makes it easier to establish entitlement or share an interest in the estate of a deceased person.

Madam President, the legislation also makes provision for parenting testing procedure. And, Madam President, proceedings in the court may require, at the request of any party to the proceedings or any person representing the child because sometimes you dealing with a minor there's a guardian representing the child or the court on its own initiative to require parenting testing procedure to be carried out, and this of course will help to establish paternity.

Madam President, I can tell you that sometimes injustice is visited on ordinary Grenadians in relation to this because I can give an example of a case I did in the Magistrates Court, Madam President, where a gentleman, my client, was brought to court for maintenance of a child. He assumed the child was his. When the child was born, he started providing reasonable maintenance. After about a year or so, as the feature developed, he became convinced it wasn't his child, so he stopped maintaining the child, and the mother took him to court. Madam President, the mother brought a witness, and it was obvious that this was the father. The witness was the father based on the resemblance with the child, but the Magistrate, after the father expended money and had a DNA test done, the test came back saying there's a 0.00 probability that he was the father of this child, he started maintaining.

The Magistrate took the view that the Act pursuant to which she was administering maintenance did not permit her to allow this DNA test as evidence. And so despite the results of the DNA test being disclosed to the court, the order was made

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for him to maintain the child, and luckily, we proceeded to the Court of Appeal and the Court of Appeal, in its wisdom, reversed the order of the court.

But, Madam President, this legislation, together with other legislation that will be brought to the Parliament in due course, because we also need this legislation to make full sense, certain other legislative steps will have to be taken, including revision of the Maintenance Act and legislation relating to cohabiting spouses.

So, Madam President, to do justice amongst all our people and to better protect vulnerable citizens, particularly young women, girls and children, these changes are necessary, Madam President. So the Act refines and updates the provisions relating to parenting testing procedure to ensure that effective and reliable processes are followed in establishing paternity, Madam President.

So together with all of what was presented by my learned and distinguished colleague, Senator David Andrew, I will commend this Bill to this Honourable House. I am very pleased and satisfied that today we are able to stand on the very broad, strong and distinguished shoulders of Dr. Francis Alexis, who was known as, “A child is a Child Attorney General” to update and improve the Status of Children Act—changes that I am sure in this era, Dr. Alexis himself, will fully welcome and embrace.

So, Madam President, I commend the Bill to this Honourable House. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Honourable Claudette Joseph. I hope Senator St. Clair was listening that a man received justice. Are you listening? **(Inaudible comment by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)** I offer the floor to Mondy André Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you, Madam President, and it is good to see that we have reached the stage of ensuring that a child is a child regardless of the circumstances. But one of the issues that I have not heard addressed, and to me it will lend itself to that as a positive, is that many times people, I'm not just saying children, because children could be in their 40s, 60s, yes, the child off, may not just be interested in property.

We know that there are cases where based on your complexion, I mean we speaking, that's Grenada, yes, based on your complexion, based on your

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socioeconomic background, where there were correlations or relations at the workplace or correlations in the community, it is quote unquote known who the father may be, but everybody hush, hush because it is a well-known person quote unquote in society and everybody shu-shuing and we see the unequal or the indiscriminate treatment of siblings. Right?

We have known of cases where even if the father does not quote on quote accept officially that this is his child, the siblings, of what you call the official relationship, based on the knowledge that they have, have embraced that individual or individuals. So that's good.

So, I support all that it is seeking to achieve, but I also think that one of the intrinsic opportunities is that aspect of knowing, to be able to know, right, because many times you hear of individuals who may lament the fact of not having that opportunity to have known. If it is there, I may have missed it, and that's quite possible. It might be more of a medical question than a legal question, because I know the legal opportunity presents itself.

Is there a science that will allow the identification of paternity after death? For instance, what we have... because we have addressed here the aspect of property and after recognising that even if the parent, the father, dies and there was no will, there is a possibility, right, of getting some form of property. It is not mandatory for anything that existed or happened before the passing into law of this Bill. Yes? But going forward just in the event, I am just asking just in the event if somebody here can help me, I mean in that case I can Google it but just in case, because my learned colleague here may have dealt with a number of matters like this in the court, I am just trying to determine if we have the information that paternity can be determined after death? So, for instance... So, the answer is yes? So that's really good.

In other words, I suspected so because I know that... Yes, I suspected so, that's good because it can give the possibilities or probabilities for some restorative benefit, for want of a better word, or just the fact of wanting to know. So it's really a step in the right direction.

Because I recognise that on page... And I'm just making that point for whatever its worth. Under clause 9, "Parentage Testing Procedure" 9 (2) (a) (i) (ii) recognises that the court should take certain procedures, certain things into account if the person

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is sufficiently mature to ensure that they are counselled, because sometimes the revelation of that information can have a devastating impact. Because there may be the interest of one of the parties to have these things done, I'm talking about the parent, yes, and the child may have gotten so used to one set of information that if they are not counselled properly or addressed properly, it can have a far-reaching impact.

(ii)... I recognise that 12 seem to be featuring... I remember Senator Andrew speaking about harmonisation and recognising that some of these things are bigger than us, it is not just us alone. I recognise that 12 seems to be featuring because once that... It is saying that at the age of 12, that person is more or less to mature enough in this circumstances, yes, mature enough or capable enough of expressing their individual view on the matter for consideration by the court. The Court may say "yay" or "nay". That's my understanding and I...

But I recognise that 12 has featured here and it's a feature somewhere else, we just have to be alert. So I applaud the move to officially a child is a child which broaden Dr. Alexis, and the administration at the time, and I know he might be saying that if 30-something years after we can stand on the shoulder... He may lament the fact that in some other instance, when he ask us to vote yes, we voted no. **(Laughter)** But anyhow I recognise.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. I offer the floor to Senator St. Clair, representatives for...

**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. I wouldn't have very much to say. I know Senator Andrew has an appointment for this evening so I wouldn't hold him up too much, but I say this to say that Senator Joseph would have explained a lot of intricacies and operational matters pertaining to some of the ideas that I have in my head. Because you want to see at the end of the day, to me, all Grenadians should read this Bill at the end of the day and see how it relates to them in the way they would live and the way they have lived before and a lot of open matters that they need to close.

This, to me, is a Bill that everybody... "A child is a child", as it was called then by Dr. Alexis, and of course, this here is an enhancement of it. I read both of them in

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parallel, and of course, restructuring enhancement, I noticed in the original Bill of 1991 it is, there was a section that dealt with appeal, and I noticed that this was distinctly that heading was not included in this new Bill, and I wasn't sure if I go to the... It's clause 14 in the original Bill, Act No. 39 of 1991 and as amended by Act 29 of 1993, and it speaks of, "An appeal shall lie from an order or direction under 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 according to the rules of the court. Basically, I take it that is the same sort of situation that Senator Joseph just mentioned, where there was an appeal of a matter that went to the High Court. Remember, there was a matter she explained.

And so that drew my attention specifically because these are contentious issues, and notwithstanding that a man and a woman can be living together according to one of these clauses, and within that 10-month period, the woman gives birth to a child, we assume that the man within that space of time is the father of the child. And so I ask myself where the grounds of appeal are for my good friend Senator Lewis, who may find himself... This is my child, but he was not living in the house or married to that lady, woman or wife at the time.

So whilst it's tight, it leaves some windows for me that need addressing. Of course, one can argue well if he has an issue, he can take it to the court, and so what I see with this Bill is that it makes access to justice, as you mentioned, not only for men but for children more seamless and cost-effective. But at the same time, again those little safeguards can be very significant in cost eventually because sometimes I mean I am not in the law firm business, but certain things like that, the lawyer may tend to find a way to say boy, its either a high cost or find a way to, quote unquote, coax them out of that and find some way out of it. So I think the issue of appeal should be a broad-based issue that should always be there because there is a contention. So that is one.

My other comment relates to clause 6 because this is new. This was not in the original Bill, as far as I could read. "Presumption in respect of artificial conception procedure. I think this is one Senator Joseph might have elaborated on because there is a series of options inside of there of artificial conception, for example. There is one of the clauses and I could be wrong in my interpretation that speaks to if a woman would have facilitated the conception of a child, facilitated the conception, so a man and a woman would have had their egg artificially connected and then the embryo,

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they call it from my studies in Biology, would have then been placed there, it happens in the world... in the woman's womb to bring maturity. Then, if I read it right, the law says the mother of that child is the woman who brought that embryo to the end. Right.

So I say these things so people understand the options... well, someone might say they want to do that, but what is the legal guidance to know... So that woman essentially, who would have donated the egg **(inaudible comment by a Senator)** literally has no claim to this child at the time. That is my interpretation, and I am not saying it is wrong or right, but these are things we need to understand. There must be a decision that had to be made at some point, so you know what you're doing and what you're getting yourself involved in.

But the fact that technology is catered for... It is the same point we were making earlier. 1991, we are in 2025. This was not widespread to the sense that Dr. Alexis, no matter how learned he may have been at the time, might have seen that open trend, and he would sit down and tell you straight up, he is an open gentleman. He may have said, "Look, at that time we really didn't see that as a main issue. We may not have even had the capacity or the cost to do it". So at the end of the day, why even walk down that road, wait for that time when it's more affordable, and it's more in tack and so on? So this is the taught process we were speaking about earlier.

Now, Madam President, there is another important area that I also want to raise and Senator Lewis sort of passed by it. It was the 12-year-old decision whereby the child having been... Just let me find that page. Just one minute. Because it was the point before that actually... the bullet before that have my attention.... but that one also... If you just gives me... O' actually, yes, I have it so it.

On page 10 of the Bill. It is Parentage Testing Procedure, clause 9 (2). It says "The Court shall, before issuing a direction pursuant to subsection (1), ensure..." So, that is regarding testing. Right. It says that, "A child to whom the directive relates". Right. So, "The Court shall, before issuing a direction pursuant to subsection (1) ensure that—

- (a) the child to whom the direction relates—
  - (i) if sufficiently mature, has been counselled about the effects of the parentage testing procedure".

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So you see this as a safeguard, I know it's not 16, and it's not 18, but this child. Okay. And they leave it open because item two will speak about the 12-year-old.

But the point I want to raise here, Senator Joseph, I know we only speak once on the Bill, but if sufficiently mature... And so it's sort of having me confused because that to me may be a point that could have been in a definition. But of course, we will say, well, leave it to the Magistrate, they would know how to interpret that, but for me, what does that mean? What does that mean is a question, particularly, in line with item (a) (ii) which specifically says, "If 12 years of age or older, has been given an opportunity to express his or her view on the parentage testing".

What it's essentially saying is that look, if you are 12 years old or older and you want this test or that test, the court gives you that leeway. It didn't say if you're less than 12 years, but it says if you sufficiently mature. And does sufficiently mature should I should I interpret it as being under 12 years? Because one may argue you could be 16 or 17, but you have some level of inhibition and understanding. Which I think though, there were some other clauses that deals with that in terms of someone who guiding you and taking care of you, if you have mental challenges et cetera to deal with those things. I was kind of lost in that introductory statement in that section.

And then the last part I want to comment on relates to the issue of the testing. Testing specifically with, not a test to be done, but the labs... Somehow Senator Joseph speaks of how she explain it, it sounds as if there will be a list of labs, but how its written in the Bill before us it doesn't say that. I said "The Minister shall, approve laboratory and nominated reporter". Clause 12 on page 12 says, "The Minister shall approve a laboratory for the purpose of carrying out a parentage testing procedure under this Act and may nominate a reporter for the approved laboratory".

Then it went on to subsection (3) of that same 12, "The Minister shall publish in the *Gazette* the name of the..." So, to me, that's English language is one... "Approved laboratory and the..." Again, one... "Nominated reporter for the approved laboratory" So I'm wondering if this is a case-by-case matter where the Minister would be calling case number one, so, so, so a test has to be done, and this Minister then gazettes this one lab and this one reporter. I'm trying to figure out, well, is that really efficient?

To me, that will hold up justice and to me, this should have been written differently to indicate that there is a schedule of approved laboratories, and this

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schedule can be updated if it's every one year, every two years, likewise, reporters can also be updated such that the court in its own space can then pick what is available. So, of course, this lab has to be approved and certified within certain parameters.

So I think that to me, I have an issue with it because you shouldn't just be "the". The "the" could end up being the same one over and over and over and it also removes the Minister from the potential of being aligned with some sort of corrupt practice unless you're saying it's the General Hospital all the time that I am only going to Mr. Rahaman lab, André Lewis as the reporter, this thing doesn't look right and it removes the court in the process, technically and basically puts the Minister as the arbitrator. Because we know... How do we control other matters behind in terms of the results and mad manipulation, I'm just saying. I think that there should be a schedule of the labs, certified labs, and this can be reviewed annually, as the case may be. Likewise, these individuals or reporters must be certified appropriately and licensed, et cetera, and add some more quality.

Because this is a very serious issue. I mean your own identity, who you are and how you are connected to whatever. We have made good progress, and when you make good progress, you will try to maintain it and not lose it to some frivolous action. I thank you, Madam President.

**Madam President:** I thank you too, Senator St. Clair senator. Senator Adrian Thomas, you have to floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President, I'll be very brief, but I rise to give support to this very important Bill, Status of Children Bill, 2025. Madam President, I just want to make the point that we cannot over emphasise the importance of the people of this country. It would be remiss of me if I did not tell the nation or if I did not expound on the whole question of putting people first, which is one of our administration's mantras.

Madam President, we have done so much for the people in regards to housing and education. We are planning to do so much in health. Madam President, we have done so much in sports and culture and the creative. But today we believe... While

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some of the actions are tangible, we believe that they are some intangible things that sometimes we overlook and this important issue of taking care of our people and our children, not only taking care of our children, you know, because a lot of us sit here and talk about a child is a child, but what we are doing also instilling responsibility in our parents. And this piece of legislation, Madam President, will definitely abolish the legal distinction between children born inside and outside of marriage.

And we cannot stop identifying with the work of Dr. Francis Alexis, Madam President. We believe that equality at the family level will translate into equality in our society. We also believe, Madam President, that when parents are legally and emotionally accountable, families become more stable. And, Madam President, the social fabric of our society begins with, as I said previously, our family and if we don't pay emphasis and strengthening our family, we will have a society that is dilapidated and deteriorates into what you don't want, and I believe that this piece of legislation will do justice to bringing some level of stability within the family, within our community and within our society.

And so, Madam President, I want to support this Bill, which will definitely remove all levels of discrimination, promote fairness, and strengthen parental bonds. In so doing, Madam President, the legal and moral foundation for a healthier family and stronger and more unified community will be recognised and will be observed. So, Madam President, I stand in full support of this piece of legislation, and I commend it to the House for discussion.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Thomas. Senator David Andrew.

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Madam President, I rise to express thanks to all of my colleagues for their contributions and support of this very important Bill. We note some of the concerns raised. Senator St. Clair, there is still an opportunity that regulations can be put in place to see some of the things that you've mentioned realised, so I don't think it's a lost cause. You've mentioned the opportunity, the appeals mechanism to file, and there was something else you mentioned, but those can be captured through regulation that the Minister does have the opportunity to put in place for the operationalising of this piece of legislation, so all is not lost. We accept

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that.

But, Madam President, at the start of my presentation, I talked about the fact that this Bill seeks to repeal and replace the work that was done, and I gave the background in the early 90s. What I did not do then was to publicly appreciate one of the leading pioneers, but I heard that was done among some of my colleagues, that Dr. Francis Alexis, at the time, who pioneered much of that work, but I referenced the work without referencing the person behind the work; a lot of it. So I want to personally put on record my thanks to him and on behalf of my colleagues here for having laid a strong foundation in the right direction upon which this Bill stands.

And in fact, this Bill strengthens what was already started in its effort to illuminate all forms of discrimination based on the status of a child's parents at the time of the child's birth, the marriage status, strengthening the rights of children and their privacy rights in court hearings, this does that as well, this new Bill it clarifies legal procedures for establishing parentage, and of course, it repeals any outdated bits of legislative language that is discriminatory. Some critically important elements.

We know that it gives allowance for in vitro fertilisation methods that allow for child to be born, it facilitates that, that wasn't in the previous Bill, it allows for acknowledging instruments of registration for paternity that has to be filed in the registry and it allows for a child-centred approach to treating with all of these judicial processes including counselling and private place.

So, Madam President, having presented this Bill and having gotten such robust and substantive contributions from all of my colleagues, I'm comfortable closing this debate and recommending your continued adjudication in this matter. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Status of Children Bill, 2025.

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**Madam President:** Senator David 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 this Bill Part by Part.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

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

**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Madam President, I beg to move that the Chairman'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 move the third reading of the Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

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

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Status of Children Bill, 2025.

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

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**Bills: Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Validation and Indemnification) Bill, 2025**

**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, Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Validation and Indemnification) Bill, 2025.

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

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act to validate and confirm as lawful the addition of statutory bodies to Schedule 1 of the Public Sector Employees Pension Fund Act No.19 of 2024, shortly entitled, Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Validation and Indemnification) Bill, 2025.

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

**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:** Senator Adrian Thomas.

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

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Senator Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, again, we continue to look after our people in its entirety, to look after the welfare of our people even when they are not of any service in regards to a

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working life in our country. Madam President, we have seen many gaps in our society where people, at some point in their life, are no longer relaxed and no longer confident that after their working life they will be retiring into poverty.

Our campaign, Madam President, during the last election was to ensure that after giving yeoman service to your country, and the time comes for retirement, you must still be smiling, as tough as you are at your prime when working. And so, Madam President, in our effort to ensure that it happens throughout our society, the Government has taken on the responsibility to pay all public workers' pensions **(applause)** and to take into consideration those who may not be directly involved in the public service, but through statutory bodies and other organisations. But we have taken it a step further to encourage the private sector to do likewise.

And so, while some of us may enjoy the 1958 pension, we have come to the conclusion that we cannot continue in that direction, and the time has come when the law must evolve, and we must take into consideration a contributory pension scheme for public sector employees.

And so, Madam President, we have come to this Bill, this very important Bill, the Public Sector Pension Fund Act, Madam President, which was enacted by Parliament as an Act No.19 of 2025 to provide for the establishment of a contributory pension scheme for public sector employees and employees of statutory bodies listed in Schedule 1 of the Act.

Madam President, section 73 of the Act empowers the Minister responsible for public administration to amend Schedule 1 by order, subject to affirmative resolution, to add additional statutory bodies to which the provision of the Act would apply.

Madam President, the Minister exercise this power by making an order, S.R.&O No. 30 of 2025, to add additional Statutory Bodies. Madam President, and those bodies we are talking about are:

1. The Grenada Cultural Foundation.

Yes, the Grenada Cultural Foundation exist, and they are workers, they are human beings, and they deserve a pension at the end of their working life;

2. The Grenada National Stadium Authority.

Grenada National Stadium Authority will be around for a very long time, Madam President, and these workers need to be considered too;

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3. Planning and Development Authority; and
4. T. A. Marryshow Community College.

Madam President, these bodies will be added to Schedule 1 of the Act. But notwithstanding this, Madam President, the exercise of the Minister's power... The order did not receive the requisite Parliamentary approval as required under section 3. Therefore, the deductions and payments of contributions of employees from the standard bodies listed above were inadvertently done without full legal statutory authority. So, Madam President, this Bill, this Bill that we are presenting here today, seeks to validate and confirm as lawful the addition of statutory bodies to Schedule 1. And so, Madam President, the Bill we are presenting here contains three clauses and 1 Schedule.

Clause 1 provides for the short title of the Bill and clause 2, Madam President, validates and confirms as lawful the purported addition of the statutory bodies listed in the Schedule to this Act by the Order and all other acts done including the deduction of contributions and the payment of those deductions made as a result of the said Order during the period January 2025 until the commencement of the Bill.

Clause 3, Madam President, indemnifies persons from liability in respect of deductions and payments made pursuant to the Statutory Rules and Order No.30 of 2025.

Madam President, the Public Sector Employees Pension Fund Amendment of Schedule 1, No. 2 Order, 2025. This Order, Madam President, highlights three very important areas:

1. It resets the statutory bodies purportedly added to Schedule 1 by S.R.&O 30 of 2025;
  - a. The Grenada Cultural Foundation;
  - b. the Grenada National Stadium Authority, Planning and Development Authority; and
  - c. T. A. Marryshow Community College.
2. The Order seeks to insert two additional statutory bodies;
  - a. the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority; and
  - b. the National Training Agency.
3. Madam President, the third part of it seeks to repeal S.R.&O 30 of 2025.

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This Government, Madam President, is very strongly committed to ensuring that every citizen, especially public sector workers, secures their financial future through participation in a structured and contributory pension scheme. Madam President, we recognise that pension is a very important instrument in the development of our society. Pension, Madam President, gives us some social protection and income security, and if a pension is not there, Madam President, somebody would have to take on the responsibility, and hence the reason we can relate the previous Bill that was passed to the pension. And if every structure in our society is organised in that manner, I'm sure the social programmes that we have in our Grenadian society today will surely be significantly reduced. Because if the pension is not there, somebody would have to take on the responsibility, and I believe the Government might be called upon to take on the responsibility. And because those structures are not there, we find ourselves spending so much money on housing, health, social development and others.

Madam President, we want to make sure that we reduce old age poverty in this country, and therefore, while we enjoy as public servants and other private sector, we want to ensure that the statutory bodies are well taken care of.

In summary, Madam President, we believe that this Administration is resolute about ensuring that every worker, especially those in the public sector, has a structured pathway to financial security and through the contributory pension framework, we will ensure, and we seek, Madam President, to achieve some level of equity across the public service.

Madam President, this Administration wants to make sure that we have several aspects of sustainability in our fiscal management. Madam President, the level of legality and accountability that we want in our system calls for new laws and amendments in our country and some level of social stability for present and future generations to come.

Having said this, Madam President, I am sure that the Grenadian public will welcome such a Bill. I am sure that the workers who don't have access to a pension and who are living in a state of darkness because they are not sure what will happen will now see this Bill as a light at the end of the tunnel. And so I commend this very important Bill to this very Honourable House for high level discussion and approval

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this very important day. Let us make it a historic day. Thank you. **(Applause)**

**Madam President:** I thank this very high level Senator for his presentation. Thank you, Senator Thomas. I offer the floor to Senator Lewis you have the floor Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. And it is good to see my colleague, who himself was a leading member of The Trade Union Movement, being so energised that he's no longer thinking about going home but calling for high-level discussion. **(Laughter)** Right. Open the floor. Right... I know he always had it in him, you know. **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** Yes. Yes. Yes. I know you always had it in you.

No, but the Leader of Government's Business, in his presentation, mentioned two additional statutory bodies and two names were mentioned that I have not seen here, two statutory bodies, namely, the National Training Agency and the Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority; but hear where I'm going. My concern is as follows.

We all will remember that original Bill, which is now an Act, a law clearly stated that the statutory bodies or so to be added will be those that do not have pension plans or those that do not have collective agreements that have pension plans. And therefore, what I'm about to say, I'm putting up front that I'm accepting that it may be an oversight.

Grenada Solid Waste Management Authority, represented by the Grenada Technical Allied Workers Union, do have a pension plan or past service. We are in the process of finalising everything with GARFIN. but that is beside the point. Yes? As a matter of fact, I guess with her permission, I can indicate that I had a quick word with the Attorney General during lunch period and showed her a letter from the Solid Waste Authority when they wrote to us to get this thing sorted out. So I'm accepting that that will be an oversight, because we all knew from day one, as much as you may want to change those things, you can't change... The commitment was given. Well, nothing else could have been said that wherever you have existing pension plans and or past benefits, because in the Solid Waste it is a pension plan or past service benefit,

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which is one and the same.

So I do accept that it most likely will be an oversight. Because I have become aware that not too long ago, probably this week, in another place, a matter that came to our attention, but not really for our attention in the Senate, all the notices or all the documents. Solid Waste was mentioned there, and now, Senator Thomas, the Leader of Government's Business, although Solid Waste is not mentioned in our document, in his eloquent, all-inclusive presentation, to ensure, as he says, that all workers have some post-employment benefit, mentioned Solid Waste.

So I want this to be registered, and the appropriate action to be taken. Once verified, obviously, you'd have to do what you have to do. We do have a signed, the labour movement, in this case, the Technical and Allied Workers Union, as a representative of the Solid Waste workers, do have that.

This year... Just gave validation and identification... Because salary is privileged property, you need to be covered for making deductions from salary. So I guess it was done without the proper legal coverage, so what we are doing here is to secure proper legal coverage for the relevant bodies where this was done. Yes? So that's just my observation. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator Thomas, do you ever think you would see the day when...

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Yes, Madam President. I just want to assure you that I'm communicating with the council and we'll rectify that as soon as possible.

**Madam President:** Other contributors? None. Senator Thomas, are you waiting for the information to pass it on to Senator... You're waiting on it.

**(Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas and Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph converse privately)**

**(Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas, conversed with the Legal Drafters)**

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**(Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas, Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph, Senator the Honourable Seville Francis and the Legal Drafters conversed privately)**

**(Leader of Government's Business—Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas and the Legal Drafters returned to their seats.)**

**Madam President:** Senator Adrian Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I have listened to Senator André Lewis, Labour Representative and Madam President, what we have done here is repeal the Order S.R.&O No. 30 of 2025, Madam President, and the Lower House has taken the decision. Now, what you have seen is that the Solid Waste do have a pension plan, we will explore that, but the instruction we got is that we're going to pass a rule just in case, but whether they have one or not, it's up to them to refuse the Government.

**Madam President:** Senator Lewis.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much. This is not... Let's be clear here, Madam President. What we are saying... The Grenada Technical Allied Workers Union has a signed collective agreement with the Solid Waste Authority. There is no option, as far as we are concerned, and as a matter of fact, the original Act... I think my phone is by you, yes. Okay. Yes, thanks.

There is no option. From day one, it was clearly stated, and it can't be any other way, that where a signed collective agreement, where the workers already enjoy a benefit with a trade union, the state can't... I mean, people do things. I mean, President Trump does what he wants. So I'm saying in the context of our democracy, and in the context of our arrangement, I am not feeling comfortable with the response that I've heard from Senator Thomas, not just looking at it, but it seems to imply that they have done so elsewhere, that if the Solid Waste Management want, they can come on board.

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I'm saying... I want to repeat again for the avoidance of doubt, that the Grenada Technical Union... I sent evidence here. It's not AI, unless you don't believe what I've been sending you. It's on a letterhead from the Solid Waste Management writing to us. Yes. So I'm just putting...

I want to be clear that I'm not leaving here, and I am not accepting, and we will not accept that anywhere we have an existing agreement that the state can change this. That's all. If it was done elsewhere, I'm asking for the information to be passed from the Senate here. I am duty bound to do this because Senator Thomas in his presentation in this place, so I can speak about it, mentioned Solid Waste. I'm not just saying this because I read it elsewhere. I'm saying this now. I have the legitimacy to speak about it officially because Senator Thomas, in his presentation, mentioned it.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, basically, really and truly, if you are offered a contributory pension, I think the workers, in any institution, whether in the public service, has an option to say whether they wanted or not because they have to make a contribution and therefore putting the provision in place if the workers want it and if workers want to turn their back on it, fine. I mean, nobody is holding the workers at ransom to do anything of that nature, but the structure is in place. 20 years from now, who knows what the situation will be? We are making provisions to make sure that our workers have a future that they can rely on.

There are many people who are in... Madam President, there are many people who are in many contributory pension plans, and that's their option. The more the merrier. Some people have a full pension from Government and they still... There are a lot of people who took out... They had an agreement with CLICO and BIACO, and in my 20s, I explored the possibility of making a contribution to one of those insurance companies, so by the time I'm 55, I might have been EC\$300 richer. Secure your future.

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

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

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Once it is clearly understood from our end here that you are not seeking... No, allow me to finish, please. Once it is clearly understood that this is not an attempt to replace that which we have, because I know what is happening in other places represented by unions and in particular TAWU, where we have certain significant benefits with this current Administration. I'm aware of what is happening, and therefore we have to be alert, we have to be alert.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, a Point of Order. I think maybe... Our action seems to be as though we are in the Committee stage, so maybe we should continue, and at the Committee stage, we can continue our discussion. I mean, a query was made, and I think I answered it, but we are going back and forth. So I don't know if you want to continue the debate because I've spoken on the matter twice already, and you have spoken twice. I don't think that's fair to the others.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Okay, thanks. I rest my case, but just record what I have said, and we take it in industrially whenever the need arises.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Validation and Indemnification) Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator Adrian Thomas.

**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, Clause by Clause.

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**Question put and agreed to.**

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, the Committee has ended its work, and I beg that... The question is that the Chair's Report be adopted. Senator Thomas.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Madam President:** Senator Thomas.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

**Question put and agreed to.**

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

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Sector Employees (Pension Fund) (Validation and Indemnification) Bill, 2025.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, I beg to introduce the first reading of a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management for Caribbean Small Island Developing States Bill, 2025.

**Clerk:** A Bill which seeks to give the force of law to the Agreement Establishing

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the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management and the Agreement between the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management and the Government of Grenada, shortly entitled, Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management for Caribbean Small Island Developing States Bill, 2025.

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

**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.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order Suspended.**

**Madam President:** Senator Thomas.

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

**Question proposed.**

**Madam President:** Honourable Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, again, our Governments are taking on responsibilities that are going to help our agricultural sector, which is so important to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Madam President, this Bill... Before I dive into the real substance of the Bill, I just want to lay a foundation in terms of really and truly what this PISLM is all about, and it's something

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that we have been talking about in the Caribbean for a very long time. However, it may be news to many Grenadians, many lay people, especially in the farming community.

The PISLM, Madam President, really and truly, what it abbreviates, is the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management, and land management in this part of the world, Madam President, is very serious business, and sometimes we take it for granted. It's a natural phenomenon; we are there, the land is there, and we will go along as nature takes its course. But, Madam President, in this day and age, with climate change, if we don't make a special effort to manage our land resources, we will find it very difficult for man to sustain life on this planet, and therefore, Madam President, the focus will be on sustainable land and soil management in the Caribbean region.

The whole objective, Madam President, is to combat desertification. "Desert" is the base word. We are not accustomed to this term in the Caribbean but, Madam President, if we don't apply good practices, if you don't exchange ideas from people that have knowledge and skills and who have done the research, if you don't share those things, Madam President, what we will have is serious soil degradation, and this is what this whole project is about—avoiding these things from happening.

Therefore, I am so proud that these things have been addressed and we're not taking things for granted because, Madam President, the whole question of soil fertility, the loss of soil fertility, is an expense that many of our societies would not be able to endure if we do not pay particular attention to it. More and more will be attempting to apply artificial fertiliser to our soils.

Madam President, the whole question of poor nutrient balance in the soil could be a serious threat to our agricultural sector. Time and time again, we come to Parliament, and the Agriculture Senator will talk about the importance of food security. We will say yes, vertical and agriculture, greenhouses, hydroponics, we can all do those modernised ways of doing agriculture, but I don't think we have adopted the greenhouses to accommodate the mahogany tree or the nutmeg tree as yet.

Therefore, there are so many resources that are needed for the survival of mankind, where we have to depend on the soil and the ecosystem framework. Madam

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President, we cannot overemphasise the importance of preserving and protecting our ecosystem.

Madam President, what about to present here will give Grenada a golden opportunity to experience world-class labs, soil lab, in particular. Since Ivan in 2024, that very important soil lab we had, which Mirabeau was destroyed by Ivan, and since then, Grenada has not had the opportunity to do a simple soil test if you are growing bananas. If you are growing bananas, we know that bananas need high levels of potassium, but how do we know the soil does not have enough potassium? So, you might be fertilising your banana without fertiliser, expensive fertiliser to make sure that the plants get potassium, and when done, you don't need to do that. But the only way you can be sure that this soil has nutrients is to do a soil test.

Grenada will have a golden opportunity to have a lab. Grenada will have a golden opportunity to have trained personnel and have contact with trained personnel both regionally and internationally. Madam President, we will be able to document our soil.

We will be able to know, and we have started doing that work already in the Ministry of Agriculture. We have already documented the type of soils that are prevalent in Mirabeau, in St. David, in St. Andrew, and in Victoria. Madam President, the establishment of the PISLM will further enhance those very important scenarios.

So, Madam President, the Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management for Caribbean Small Island Developing States was signed by Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, and St. Lucia and the 11th of May, 2024, since then, Madam President, and entered into force on the 2nd day of May, 2024.

Madam President, as I said, the whole objective and primary purpose of this agreement that was established is to promote sustainable land and soil management within the Caribbean. Madam President, when this was established in May 2024, the signing took place between the Government of Grenada and the PISLM on the 11th day of June 2025.

Madam President, on that day, Grenada accepted to be the host of the headquarters of the PISLM. So, Madam President, although we have signed the agreement and we agree to have the headquarters in Grenada, we have to remember

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that Grenada is a dualist state and both agreements must be incorporated, or domesticated in the laws of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Madam President.

And so, the Bill that I'm about to present here today contains six clauses and two schedules. Clause 1, Madam President, seeks to provide the short title of the act and for its retroactive commencement on the 2nd of May 2024. Save for clauses 3 (2), clause 5 (3), clause 5 (4) and clause 6 (c) and Schedule 2 of the Bill, which shall be deemed to have come into force on the 17th day of June 2025.

Madam President, clause 2 provides for the interpretation and provisions that are mentioned in the Bill. Clause 3 provides for the agreements as set out in Schedule 1 to the Act, the Headquarters Agreement as set out in Schedule 2 of the Act, to have the force of law in Grenada.

Madam President, clause 4 speaks to exemptions. Clause 4 exempts the Premiership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management from the application of certain legislative enactments and from the payments of specified duties and charges.

Clause 5 provides for amendments to the PISLM Agreement and revisions or supplementary agreements to the PISLM Headquarters Agreement as agreed to by the parties to be reflected in the respective Schedule to the Act, by Order published in the *Gazette*.

And finally, clause 6, Madam President, empowers the Minister to make regulations to give effect to the provisions of the PISLM Agreement, the PISLM Headquarters Agreement and the Act, on the recommendation of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management.

Madam President, Schedule 1 sets out the text of the PISLM Agreement, and Schedule 2 sets out the text of the PISLM Headquarters Agreement.

Madam President, this is the Bill in a nutshell, and so I commend this Bill to the House for discussion, not so long, but short and sweet. Thank you very much.

**Madam President:** I thank the Senator, former Minister for Agriculture, and I pass the floor at his request to the Representative of Farmers and Fishers in the Senate, Senator St. Clair. You have the floor, Senator.

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**Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair:** Thank you, Madam President. And of course, I stand here to, again, make my contribution on an important Bill that connects directly to the purpose for which I'm here and the people's farmers, fishers for whom I represent and the connecting community as a whole.

The Agreement for Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) and the Small Caribbean States Bill, and essentially as the Leader of Government's Business would have indicated, this Bill essentially is to set up the legal framework for hosting the head office, or the regional office, or sub-regional office for this initiative within the Eastern Caribbean. And as such, as we have done in many cases and will be doing after this Bill, it is essentially creating the framework and the environment for those institutions to be established.

Of course, we know that this would have been operational in some form already. I attended the first, I think, there was a launch a few years ago. I think it was at Radisson. There were different people there, regional and local. So I'm very familiar with the space connected with this.

At the same time, for the people listening for the first time who may want to know what the office has been doing, you know, not for the Caribbean, and Eastern Caribbean, but what it has been doing for Grenada. You know, so when you have these institutions closer in the country, you expect most of the time to have, not only your local persons employed... Not because it's in Grenada, Grenadians will be employed. It's a regional project, but having knowledge...

I know we have a significant number of local persons linked to this, headed by a Grenadian, actually, at the local level, but also, how do we see benefits and more benefits quicker because it's in our space? For far too long, we have seen a lot of these agencies in neighbouring countries. So whilst it's a good thing...

Of course, we know there are certain costs that come with it, and of course, my good Senator Rahaman and I were asking, "Well, who is funding this thing? Where is the money coming from"? And of course, if you read further down about this agency, you'll find CARICOM, Green Climate Fund and many other agencies, donors, as you would be aware, contributing. You know, the United Nations, UNDP, et cetera, to the funding of a lot of the activities connected to that.

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So what we have to do, and what we have to ensure is that the leadership between these institutions provide enough publicity of the project activities that they are involved in, such that all our local farmers, our local community can able to at least see their way at the end of it all because maybe 10 years from now, again, it may be decided for some strange reason to move the office away from here. But we know that when you have those offices here, it helps to build capacity, because a lot of the meetings, conferences may tend to be where the head office is, and as such, it gives a boost for visitors, tourism and other connecting things.

But what we want to see at the end of the day is that we can able to get some reports that translate to real benefits. I know there have been some benefits. I don't have details because there has never been a public report of this yet. And we trust that annual reports of these agencies would make its way to the House, or in some form, such that we can able to scrutinise the value-added, if we want to say that, in this regard.

The issue of land degradation and so on is very important. We see all that happen with a lot of our land, soils, fertility, et cetera, and so this agency, specifically looking at that area—the earth—gives us a chance to protect, particularly, people in Carriacou and Petite Martinique, where you have a lot of the effects and impacts of the animals and the grazing. You know, there is a lot of consideration that needs to be given there in particular. So, I am just saying that as a factor that we don't lose sight of. I know that they have been working there in certain ways. So that's why I am mentioning it in that space.

So with that, we welcome the agency, and we welcome, not whatever benefit, we welcome the real benefits for the issues that we face in our space. And that's my contribution, Madam President.

**Madam President:** I thank you for your contribution, Senator St. Clair, and I believe the debate is concluded. No. There's a request for the floor? Senator Rahaman, you have the floor, Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman:** Thank you, Madam President. So now that

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my two colleagues have just confirmed what this entity will be about, we see that it is good, very good, for Grenada and for the region.

Two questions come to my mind. If you are going to test the soil, and you are going to assist in where you plant what, which makes sense, where it is more suited for this type of crop or that type of crop to boost yields which makes sense, you may also have to be involved in zoning, to say, "This is a wetland area. This is good for the planting of rice, for example. This is a particular area that is high in calcium and it's good for this so good for that". That may have other effects on other forms of development.

If an individual has land that he wants to develop outside of agriculture, I'm wondering what lien, for lack of a better word, this agency will have over that landowner who wishes to develop it in another way, not necessarily with regard to farming. So that's one thing that came to mind.

The other thing that came to mind is that many years ago, investors, and Governments and so forth were mostly concerned with natural materials in the land, such as gold, silver, bauxite and so forth, diamonds, but today we know that there is great demand for lithium, and we hear that there are trade wars over rare earth minerals. What if we were to discover something that we don't know existed in our soils, such as rare earth minerals that they use for precision-guided weaponry and so on in the world, and all of a sudden that becomes very, very valuable? Does this speak to that? What happens then? Does it even mention the possibility of that or contemplate that? That's the second thing that comes to my mind.

While we welcome this initiative and it is very happy to do so, zoning is important for the development of a country, and what's in our land, in our soil that we may not know of could be hidden wealth that our country could benefit from and the people of Grenada can benefit from in the long run, and we don't want to short change them. I thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator Rahaman. I offer the floor to Senator David Andrew.

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**Sen. the Hon. David Andrew:** Right, Madam President, I rise to support this Bill, the Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) for Caribbean Small Island Developing States Bill, 2025.

Grenada, like many of our regional partners, is a small and mass, but we like to say big ocean states and land is a critical asset, it's a critical element that is in fact in short supply, and if we are going to be sustainable about our development, we have to manage the land resource well.

I think our brother, the Senator on the "Other Side", is quite correct in talking about zoning, in talking about ensuring that we use land optimally. If we do not regulate this, and I know we've had discussions before about a land management policy, all of these things fall into play as we consider this piece of legislation, headquartered in Grenada, and that will put some additional pressure on us to get it right, in terms of our own land management policies here.

But we cannot afford to continue to have all of estate lands for agriculture production, the arable lands just cut up, and once you put any feeder roads and farm roads for infrastructure for agriculture production, we have those lands just used up for residential purposes, and then agricultural production continues to plummet, and then we wonder why we cannot feed ourselves, and we wonder why inflation pressures continue to push upwards. You know. So all of these factors come into play when we consider anything concerning land use and land management.

So with that said, it will make the onus very strong on us to ensure that the areas that are best suited for housing, we allocate for housing and the areas that are marked for agricultural production remain that. And so, in addition to the potential of possible discovery of minerals, rare minerals, or any other resource within our land, all of those things I'm sure will be tailored to.

So, having said this, I give my full support to the establishment of this partnership, knowing full well that it will guide, regulate and help to streamline how we use this, in short supply, but very important resource that we have in Grenada and other small island states like ours. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Senator. Senator Thomas, you're requesting

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the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me express my gratitude for the contributions coming from my colleagues in this very Honourable House. Just a quick comment, Madam President. As I said in my preamble, I think it's a very golden opportunity because we are dealing with an international organisation with a lot of experts, which, really and truly, sometimes we believe we have, and we don't have.

As I said, we don't take the management of soil and our lands as seriously, and it's because we don't think you have the knowledge and skills to do so. I think this is a golden opportunity for us to expose ourselves to the international community, and it is so important in this time of climate change and all that goes with it, so I believe it's a win-win situation for Grenada as a whole. The whole question of the degradation of land is so important these days that if we don't pay particular attention to managing it properly, we can end up with a barren land.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management for Caribbean Small Island Developing States Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator Thomas.

**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, Clause by Clause.

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**Question put and agreed to.**

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

**Madam President:** Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and it was passed with discussion and no amendment. Senator Thomas

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Chairman's Report adopted.**

**Madam President:** Senator.

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian 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.**

**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Agreement Establishing the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management for Caribbean Small Island Developing States Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Senator Claudette Joseph, you have requested the floor. You have it, madam.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce for its first reading a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, the

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**Clerk:** A Bill which gives domestic legal effect to the ECCIRA Agreement by conferring force of law upon the Agreement, shortly entitled, Eastern Caribbean Citizenship by Investment Regulatory Authority Agreement Bill, 2025.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President.

**Madam President:** 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 time.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Relevant Standing Order suspended.**

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

**Question proposed.**

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President, since in the early 2000s thereabout, several of the Caribbean islands, including some in the OECS, have adopted policies and laws that provide for, and embrace various permutations of Citizenship by Investment Programmes. We know, Madam President, there was a first attempt between 1996, thereabout, and 2001 of a programme in Grenada, then called the Economic Citizenship Programme. That programme was not very well legislated or regulated, and those of us who know the history, we ran into some difficulty with the Economic Citizenship Programme, some unsavoury and questionable characters ended up with Grenadian passports, and that was the reason

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cited by the Canadians, when we lost the privilege we had of being able to travel to Canada without the need for a visa. That's history because at the time, the Canadians cited that they had repeatedly asked our then Government for review and improvement of the programme, but that was not forthcoming.

Madam President, by 2013, Citizenship by Investment had become more commonplace around the world, and let me say that large countries such as Canada itself, the United States, the United Kingdom, and several European countries all have versions of Citizenship by Investment. So it is a model used and adopted around the world by large and small countries alike.

Madam President, in 2013, we passed, in Grenada, a Citizenship by Investment Act and that Act significantly improved on the previous version. In fact, the true history of that Act is that it was being worked on by an NDC-led administration, so to speak, all the preparations and so were being done, so that when that administration demitted office in February of 2013, the work was sufficiently advanced so that the legislation was passed in or around August, or so, 2013. So, I made that point to say that, Madam President, both of the major political organisations in Grenada embraced the idea of the Citizenship by Investment Programme.

And why is that idea embraced, Madam President? This model has proven to be economically viable in countries where it is well run. And, Madam President, at present, revenues from the CBI Programme account for about 12% of our GDP. And, in fact, Madam President, in terms of revenues since in or about 2021, 2022, the projected revenues derived, the actual, sorry, the actual revenues derived from the CBI Programme outstripped the projected revenues.

Receipts from the programme go towards much-needed national development, infrastructure, nation-building, culture, and budgetary support. Just off the top of my head, Madam President, I can think of the Mt. Kumar road that was done with CBI revenues; the St. John's Flood Mitigation Project, the wall at River Road that has significantly helped, which is being undertaken with CBI revenues.

We see our own CBI Unit has rebranded as the IMA, and they now sponsor events, sports, and culture. They have sponsored a steel band, the Rainbow City All Stars. That was a steel band that struggled for a long time in terms of performance at Panorama, which is a big test for steel bands. We see what a little sponsorship could

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do, because in this year's Panorama, they came second. **(Applause)** They defeated the then reigning champion, the New Dimension, and of course, the great Angel Harps, the war band. So, with a little help from the IMA Rainbow City All Stars, they have arrived. They are in the big leagues now. **(Laughter)**

So, Madam President,

**Madam President:** They are from my parish, so I am accepting all the kudos.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** I see Senator Andrew smiling...

**Madam President:** Senator Andrew and I.

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** ... and so is Senator St. Clair. **(Laughter)** So, Madam President, the CBI Programme, since 2013, has been serving us reasonably well.

Apart from the revenue derived, we see commercial enterprises and initiatives coming out of the CBI programme. We have the Six Senses, we have Beach House, we have a number of other projects that are CBI-approved, and those that have come on stream have improved our hotel stock, they have created employment for many of our nationals, and they have generally helped to market Grenada further afield and in non-traditional markets.

So the benefits that we derive from the CBI programme are multifaceted, and we can no longer rely so heavily on the traditional sources of income in these small island states, we have to continuously be creative, and think of new areas of generating revenue so that we can advance our people, so that our people can prosper, so that our people can live similar qualities of life as enjoyed in what we call the first world countries, and as leaders, that is our constant struggle. This is what we constantly aim to do. Take decisions, implement policies and laws that will redound to the improvement of the lives of our people, the quality of life, and the standard of living and also to reduce the cost of living.

And so, Madam President, in the OECS region, we already have some very successful institutions. We have proven, as a sub-region, that we can stand up, stand

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out, and stand tall globally. We have, as shining examples, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, which has helped us to maintain a stable currency and stable economies since the 1970s, when it was established. We also have the ECCAA, the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority, and they helped to ensure that small airlines that travel or transport our people around the sub-region and beyond, maintaining a high safety record, and they have been able to do so. Madam President, we have our court, which is recognised globally as a model regional court that covers several jurisdictions, our Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and of course, we have the OECS Commission itself.

So, as a sub-region, we know how to come together to pull our resources together and to set up institutions that help to manage our collective economies and jurisdictions in an efficient and responsible way for the benefit of all our people.

So, Madam President, in May of this year, the heads of the five jurisdictions in the OECS that have Citizenship by Investment Programmes executed a basic MoU agreement, by which they agreed in principle to set up a regulatory and legal framework that will harmonise and modernise the administration and regulation of all the CBI units in the Eastern Caribbean. And the countries with CBI programmes, we have Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Dominica and Grenada, so we have five.

And following that initial MoU in May, in September, between 18th September and 23rd September, because all the heads signed the agreement on different days. It was in September when the agreement was finally signed off on 23rd September by all the heads of the five territories or states that I have mentioned, and that agreement establishes the Eastern Caribbean Citizenship by Investment Regulatory Authority (ECCIRA).

The agreement seeks to implement measures and establish a coherent penalty and administrative framework to support regulating the citizenship by investment programmes, and the markets in which they operate, for all five territories. And what we will see coming out of this agreement, ultimately, our legislation, the CBI Acts themselves, are already fairly similar, but as we refine and improve, we will find our legislation eventually being pretty much harmonised.

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As a matter of fact, earlier in the year, in late 2024, as a precursor to this agreement, the heads signed another agreement in which they all agreed to standardise the rates at which persons acquiring citizenship under the programme pay. We had disparities in some jurisdictions. Some had different rates, and it was more of a competition. In their wisdom and in their reason, it would be best in this vast ocean out there. When going to market jurisdictions, it is best to do it as a block, to do it as a unit, to do it together. As opposed to Grenada going out there competing with St. Kitts, and St. Kitts competing with Antigua and Dominica competing with St. Lucia. So our heads agreed that we will standardise. So that was the first step they took in 2024 to standardise the rates that each of our jurisdictions charges for citizenship, for the acquisition of citizenship under this programme.

The next thing is marketing, the framework coming out of this agreement, as it starts working, it will naturally flow, so that the jurisdictions will seek to eventually market the programme and product as a unit.

So, Madam President, this really shows how, as a sub-region, we are maturing. We are maturing, and with that maturity will come advantages and benefits for our people. So, Madam President, as the Leader of Government's Business mentioned while the debate was taking place in relation to the previous Bill, being a dualist state and this being a multi-national agreement, we are required to read and pass this agreement into our domestic law, for it to have the full force and effect of law.

All of the OECS countries that are partnership to this agreement, we are the last to come to Parliament with this Bill. The other four have already passed identical Bills in all of their parliaments. Identical. This Bill was worked on by all of the Attorneys General and Parliamentary Councils of the five states with CBI programmes, ably spearheaded, driven, led by and coordinated by the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, our own Timothy Antoine. So I will be very happy to send him a WhatsApp after we are done here because he keeps asking. So, we are bringing up the rear in passing this legislation, which we hope all of this Honourable House will support today.

So, Madam President, the Bill seeking to enact into law the agreement signed by the five heads with CBI programmes in the OECS contains five parts and 32 clauses.

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Part I, Madam President, deals with preliminaries and covers clauses 1 to 3 of the Bill, which deal with the short title and commencement. Of course, the commencement will not be automatic when the Bill passes, but rather, on a day appointed by the minister, and that is important, Madam President, especially for Grenada, because we are going to be the host of the authority.

If the public notices all of the regional organisations, especially in the OECS, have different organisations headquartered in different territories. So we have ECCAA in Antigua, you've the court well according to the OECS Treaty, the court should be headquartered in Grenada, but our history caused it to be moved during the period of the Revolution to St. Lucia. And for some reason, I must ask Dr. Alexis why, for some reason, when we returned to the OECS Court, the headquarters were not returned to Grenada.

So, St. Lucia is hosting the headquarters, which, according to the Treaty, should be in Grenada, and St. Lucia is also hosting the commission. So every island hosts something, and recognising that Grenada isn't hosting any of the regional... St. Kitts is hosting the Central Bank. So, the agreement among the heads was that Grenada should host this regulatory authority because it would be on the stature of ECCAA, the Commission, and the Bank, et cetera.

So, the commencement will not be automatic, but instead, on a date appointed by the Minister to give the Minister time to take the necessary steps to implement the Bill and the operational and technical requirements, to set up the office, especially the headquarters here. So, this is what clause 1 deals with.

Of course, clause 2, as always, contains the interpretation, the definition and interpretation clause and in this Bill, the Minister will refer to the Minister responsible for Citizenship by Investment.

Clause 3 speaks to the purpose of the Bill, which is, in the main, to give effect to the agreement that I just spoke about, establishing the authority. And they will be responsible, that is, the authority will be responsible for the general oversight and regulation of all persons operating in the CBI space. So, from agents, local agents and marketing agents, due diligence providers, investors, projects, and every applicant and everyone operating in the space, will be subject to the jurisdiction, so to speak, of the regulatory authority. So think of it as the GRAFIN, or... What's the name of it?

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Insurance regulators or the FIU. Right? So they are the GRAFIN for CBI, put it that way. Sorry. **(Laughter) (Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Senator Lewis, you're giving trouble.

Also, in the agreement, it is provided for offences and penalties to be imposed for contravention of the Bill or the regulations, or the provisions of the agreement. Clause 3 of the Bill also provides for the authorities' enforcement powers to enhance public confidence and the integrity of the Citizenship by Investment Programme. That is what we want to do. We want to make sure that the programme in the OECS has longevity, such as a programme in the US or Canada or the UK. It becomes a staple in our economy. Clause 3 also provides for transitional provisions of the effective exercise of the functions and powers of the authority in accordance with the agreement.

Then, enforcement of the agreement, clauses 4 to 6, deals with the provision relating to enforcement and Madam President, clause 4 of the agreement provides that the agreement shall have the force of law in Grenada, and enter into force in accordance with Article 95 of the said agreement, which provides for each of the contracting parties to domesticate the agreement.

Clause 5 of the Bill provides that in the event of any inconsistency between the provisions of this Act and the operation of any other law, such as our local CBI law, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

We will have to come back, Madam President. In preparing, we realised we will need to make some adjustments to our local CBI law so that it is in alignment with this Bill and the agreement it enacts. These provisions domesticate the agreement to ensure it prevails in the case of a conflict with other laws.

Clause 6 of the Bill provides for the financial provision to give effect to the Bill, Madam President. Under the agreement, the states that are party to it will contribute to its financing, and the contributions from each state will be a charge on the Consolidated Fund. So, it's another agency to which you will have to make contributions, but the contributions, of course, will be minuscule compared to the benefits, financial and other, that will derive from a strengthened and improved programme.

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Part III, which comprises clauses 7 to 22, creates, among other things, criminal offences and administrative fines for misconduct, including false information, et cetera, because we have to ensure that we are prepared to deal with bad actors. In this space, you will always find bad actors. No matter how much due diligence you do, I have seen the extent of the due diligence that is done in relation to applicants under the programme. It's really thorough and extensive. There are layers. Even so, occasionally, you will have a bad actor slipping through, and sometimes the bad actors are not only the applicants. The bad actors are sometimes the agents licenced under the programme, like the local agents, the marketing agents and the investors. So, they can come in all shapes and forms. So it was imperative that we made provision in the agreement, creating criminal offences and administrative fines to deal with the bad actors we may find in the CBI space.

Non-cooperation instruction of investigations that deal with clause 8, because under the agreement, again, the regulatory authority will have the power to commence inquiries and investigations into any player in the CBI space that they think an investigation is warranted in relation to. So when that happens, if there's a non-cooperation obstruction of the investigation, clause 8 of the Bill will impose a penalty for such non-cooperation.

Then clause 9 deals with issues of conflict of interest, where if, for example, under the agreement, it is provided that persons may not serve as directors on the board if they have a conflict of interest. In other respects, conflicts of interest may arise. So clause 9 treats that.

Non-compliance directions that are in clause 10, other offences and penalties, including breach of confidentiality and data protection breaches.

There's a general penalty clause that is clause 12, and liability for rules for agents and developers.

Clause 13, Madam President, deals with corporate bodies because in the space you have individuals and you have corporate entities, and a corporate entity under our law can commit a criminal offence. Clause 13 provides for where the offender is a corporate entity.

And clause 14 deals with administrative fines, how they are imposed. So, sometimes the infraction may be a criminal offence depending on its gravity of it, or

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result in an administrative fine. That is provided for in the legislation in terms of how the authority may impose process and recover administrative fines. And the authority, according to the agreement, can recover an administrative fine in the same way as a civil debt is recovered in court.

Clause 22 clarifies the primacy of the of authorities enforcement decisions. So, this authority has the power to give a very high stature, so that it will constitute a serious offence to flout or not comply with any directive or to breach any aspect of the agreement. So that will rank in priority, Madam President.

Part IV deals with miscellaneous clauses 23 to 24, which speak to the regulations that enable the Minister to bring into force additional regulations, and clause 23 provides a mechanism to update the Schedules in the Act and to implement amendments. So, in preparing this agreement, we tried to think of everything that will come about in its operation.

Clauses 25 to 32, which are in Part V of the Bill, preserve existing approvals on a provisional basis, confirm the authorities' powers during transition and require consequential amendments, including a sunset clause if all the participating states terminate the programme. So the agreement will come to an end if the states, for some reason, terminate the programme. Under the agreement, the existing entities, local agents, marketing agents, due diligence operators, approved projects, and everyone have a period for submitting to the authority, registering with the authority and coming into compliance with all of the requirements of the authority.

Madam President, the Bill also contains three Schedules. The first one sets out the Articles of the Eastern Caribbean Citizenship by Investment Regulatory Agreement, which is the agreement that I have been speaking of. This one... Yes.

Schedule 2, Madam President, sets out the offences in respect of which liability to conviction may be discharged by payment of an administrative fine. So, sometimes there will be an opportunity to pay a fine when convicted of an offence.

Schedule 3 sets out the notice of opportunity to discharge liability. So, persons infringing will have an opportunity to purge the infringement by making payments of an administrative fine.

Madam President, I would just like to highlight just a few sections in the agreement before I wrap up. Madam President, the early parts of the agreement...

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Let me get the actually section... sets up a council comprising of ministers of all participating states. Each minister may appoint a person who will be like their alternate... Yes. "Alternate" is the word... and also, a board of directors is provided for so. Article 13 is what sets up the Council of Ministers, and that will comprise all of the Ministers responsible for the Citizenship by Investment Programme.

A board of directors is set up by Article 14, which comprises nine directors... That's what I meant to say... Nine directors are provided for in Article 14 of the agreement, and the directors will be as follows: one director nominated by each participating state, one director nominated by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, one director nominated by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and one director nominated by CARICOM IMPACS. CARICOM IMPACS is the Implementing Agency for Crime... Let me get the exact. I always forget. CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security. Right? Then the JRCC, which is a Joint Regional Communications Centre and then one director nominated by the other person appointed by the board, and the directors will hold office in the first instance for a term a three-year term.

So, Madam President, it's very high-level, and the agreement goes on in the ensuing clauses to mention what will disqualify a person from being a director, revocation, termination, all of these matters. As I said, it is a really well-thought-out and detailed agreement. It also provides for the establishment of a reserve fund to cover the operational expenses I mentioned slightly before, and the fund will be funded by contributions from the participating states.

So, Madam President, I would end here and commit this Bill to this Honourable House, so that ultimately we have a better, well-regulated CBI space in the OECS and an environment that will provide for the longevity of the programme and continued benefits to our people. So, Madam President, I commend the Bill to this Honourable House. **(Applause)** Thank you.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

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**Clerk:** A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Eastern Caribbean Citizenship Investment by Regulatory Authority Bill, 2025.

**Madam President:** Thank you, Clerk. Senator Claudette Joseph.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President, I'm not sure if I can talk now, but I meant to say, Part by Part.

**Madam President:** Thank you. I meant to correct that Part by Part, and it's not Clause by Clause. I was just advised, thank you. Consideration.

**Senate in Committee.**

**Senate resumed.**

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

**Madam President:** Senator.

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**Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph:** Madam President. I beg to move for 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, Eastern Caribbean Citizenship Investment by Regulatory Authority Agreement Bill, 2025.

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

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

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Under Public Business, I wish to... It wouldn't take long. I mean, I'd prefer I had more time, but I have some matters here that I would highlight, not go into it, and ask for it to be distributed. And it has to do with the United States' request for Grenada to host the military radar, which is a matter of public concern. I just want to pass around the Grenada Trades Union Council statement on this matter—

- The statement on the Preservation of the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace;
- Respect for the Sovereignty of Caribbean States from the Caribbean Congress of Labour;
- the Grenada Trades Union Council wants Grenada to Remain a Safe and Peaceful Island;
- The Grenada Coalition for the Zone of Peace;
- Statement of the Coalition as a Zone of Peace; and
- A Petition to Keep Grenada Neutral, Safe, Free from Foreign Radar of Military Equipment and Free from Non-Grenadian Deportees.

So if this can be passed around for me, please? **(Inaudible comment by Senators)** I guess I can speak.

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**Madam President:** Senator Lewis, while I thank you for your promise to be brief, I beg you to be clear.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** To be?

**Madam President:** To be clear.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Clear? I will be

**Madam President:** You're a bit muffled, and it's...

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Sorry. Do I need to take off my jacket to be clearer? **(Laughter)** No, Okay.

**Madam President:** Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** Madam President, we are aware that, and the Government has confirmed, a request has been made of Grenada to facilitate the installation of a military radar on the Maurice Bishop International Airport. And we are also aware that a request has been made for Grenada to accept non-foreign or non-Grenadian deportees.

Madam President, as a means of historical context and recognition, today will be a very historical moment for us in the Senate, and I will explain what I mean by that. It is well accepted that the declaration of having the Caribbean area to be deemed and remain a zone of peace was piloted in part by Grenada in 1979 with cooperate Maurice Bishop in the OAS. But what is also interesting is sitting at our head today, our Madam President of the Senate, my information is that our Madam President, who was then the Grenada, is the representative or ambassador to the OAS, was the lead presenter or one of the lead presenters of that motion to the OAS, which was formed in favour of all the members of the OAS, including the United States representatives.

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That is the information I have, and I know Madam President, if I'm not correct on this, I know you will correct me. That's the information that I have. Why is this important? It is important that since 1979, the OAS, including the United States of America and the other countries that make up the OAS, including Trinidad and Tobago, has accepted to ensure that the Caribbean region remains a zone of peace. And therefore, it is in this context and building upon this block and building upon this body of information that we must contextualise the request of the United States of America to the Government of Grenada to install military radar at our International Airport. In the context of a build-up of US military hardware in the Caribbean region at a time when there is clear evidence of a great possibility of a conflict with our sister Caribbean island, Venezuela.

And we in the Labour Movement have identified and encouraged Grenada to continue to be to a friend of everyone, to be friends of the United States, to be friends of Venezuela, to be friends of Trinidad. And, therefore, all other countries, we ought not to facilitate any activity that can be used for or lead to military conflict in the region.

We must bear in mind that we have had our fair share in Grenada in 1983, when 42 years ago Grenada experienced first-hand the invasion on our soil, and we know the impact that it has had on our people. As a matter of fact, our interaction at the workplaces and in the communities has shown us that just the thought of many Grenadians, and I will say the vast majority of Grenadians. I've hardly come across anyone who has said yes, we should, there are concerns because it is not... People have recognised the complexities of the issue. Not the answer that should be given by a government because we are concerned and clear that the answer should be no. Yes.

The thought of us being at the centre of any military operations is bringing psychological pressure, similar to what those who experienced Hurricane Ivan in 2004, every time they hear the possibility of some bad weather. I'm not even going to a hurricane, bad weather, and the breeze starts to blow, and winds start to howl, and it appears as though the galvanise starts to tremble, people are shimmering, it is the same sort of feedback that we are getting.

So that is, apart from the fact that we must not get involved in conflict, and we should keep the area as a zone of peace. But it also has to do with what it means for

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our people, and therefore, the Grenada Trade Union Council, by the statement I have there, is calling for Grenada to remain a safe and peaceful island. And just briefly, I'll do one paragraph each because it is important.

*“Following a meeting of the Grenada Trade Union Council (GTUC) on Monday, 13th October 2025, the Council preferred that the country's best interest would be served by not acceding to any request to allow the installation of any military radar on the island. At our meeting, we discussed the serious national challenges facing Grenada in relation to the United States request to install military radar at Maurice Bishop International Airport, located at Port Saline.*

*The GTUC cherishes the good and friendly relations that Grenada and its people enjoy with all our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean and wishes for the Caribbean to remain a zone of peace. The Council is committed to collaborating with all individuals, organisations, and the Government to ensure that Grenada does everything possible to remain a safe and peaceful island.*

*GTUC calls upon the government to seriously engage the population in meaningful consultation to arrive at a national response”.*

**Madam President:** Senator, I'm trying to follow... Thank you. I'm trying to follow the rules here. I couldn't find the Standing Order speaking to it, but if I recall correctly, the Clerk can advise me. We did not receive a notice for this presentation on your part. I allowed it because I thought I would be brief, but if you are preparing to read four statements without notice to the Senate, I think that's a bit of an overreach.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I agree, I will not do it as I've indicated, just because it is the GTUC's own that I've done that. I've indicated that because I'm speaking on behalf of the GTUC, I have done that, but as I said, I'll just briefly mention the Caribbean Congress of Labour. I indicated this. Certainly, it was not my intention to read everything, so I accept that without an argument.

**Madam President:** Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** I'm always guided by you.

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**Madam President:** Wrap up.

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** The Caribbean Congress of Labour also issued a statement calling for the preservation of the Caribbean to remain as a zone of peace, and the CCL stands in solidarity with the people of Grenada and the Caribbean community. The Coalition for a Zone of Peace has issued similar sentiments, and I am leaving a hard copy.

**Madam President:** This is a Grenadian coalition of the zone of peace?

**Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis:** The Grenada coalition is made up of the Grenada Trade Union Council. We have colleagues such as Dr. Wendy Grenade, Dr. Wendy Crawford-Daniel, Arley Gill, Siddiqi Sylvester, Pastor Sanford Simon, and Dr. Terren Marisho, and we have collaborated with concerned citizens of Grenada, led by brother Michael 'Senator' Mitchell, commonly known as "Shaka", a cultural icon, and his other colleagues. So we have been doing this, and therefore, the petition that I'm leaving, which we have been asking people to sign physically, because there are online petitions. I've just left it with every Senator here so we can see what can be done.

I want to end by also indicating I'm not dealing with the statement here now, but in terms of public interest, not the statement's impact. And I am sure that my fellow Senator, Senator Roderick St. Clair, must be or ought to be concerned about the impact of what must be the impact of the illegal bombing of "suspected drug operators in our Caribbean region", albeit it said, international waters, but it is our Caribbean region and the fear that has been established among our Grenadian fisherfolk. The fear of venturing out to sea, the fear created by the....to their families and the psychological impact that it is having on our community. And as a workers' organisation... Because these fisherfolk will be employing people, and when you fish, they are able to come out and sell the fish, and people will be getting employment. The fear that is being created, we ought to condemn it; we ought to condemn it.

Therefore, in the interest of the Caribbean region being a zone of peace and in the interest of or even the narrow interest of Grenada, we lend our voice and urge the

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Government to continue not to allow the military radar and to continue with CARICOM and to call for a cessation of the bombings. Recommit ourselves to the fight against drugs because drugs are a scourge, and we should make no apologies about that. But there are laws to be followed, there are laws to be followed.

And we also call for the Government of Grenada not to accept any non-Grenadian deportees. And of concern to us, of concern to us, is information that we have had that has not been disputed that Grenada may have or has given consideration to accepting or requesting or accepting what you call non-Grenadian deportees, but they have to be skilled.

In other words, that must be an act of illegality. We will be turning Grenada into a prison to host deportees who belong to their country, and we ought not to. Yes, we are small, we are small, but we are big because the issue of speaking out for what is right must not be determined by size. The issue...

And I am confident that the people of the world, our brothers and sisters in the United States, will appreciate that what we are speaking about is not being against America, it is not being against Venezuela, it is not being against Trinidad, but it is about speaking for what is right. We are friends of all, and we should continue to be friends of all, but friends do have different points of view, and friends do respect the rights of each other, regardless of how big or small you are.

So even if I am small and I have something that you want that you ask for, and I politely tell you no, because if I aggressively tell you no, and you want to take it, you might be able to take it, we expect you, regardless of how large you are, to say, "Look, I disagree with you, but I respect your rights to say no, and we'll continue to be friends".

So in these few words, Madam President, I... **(Laughter)** No, it is few. No, it is few given the gravity of this matter requires a longer and more in depth of this matter requires a longer and more in-depth discussion. It really does, so it is a few. And I want to thank you, Madam President, for the role that you played, that Grenada is today remembered by our OAS brothers, our CARICOM brothers and sisters. For piloting in the OAS in October or November of 1981... '79, sorry. Why am I doing a disservice to us?

It was so short that it speaks about from March '79 to October, so bear with me. March, April, May, June, July, August, September, and October. It took us seven

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months into the revolutionary period, and mainly seven months into doing something that had not been done for the first time in the history of the English-speaking Caribbean, and to get the Americans and others in the OECS to accept the piloting of our resolution to keep the Caribbean area as a zone of peace, our President played a leading role.

Thank you very much, Madam President, and we look forward to Grenada saying no to both requests, the military installation, and non-Grenadian deportees. I thank you very much, Madam President, and I call upon the Grenadian people to give support to the Government to say no. Thank you.

**Madam President:** I thank you, Senator Lewis. On this zone of peace resolution that you speak, I'm happy to share a copy of the resolution with the Senate. And I invite you, if you think it's necessary, to put it on the agenda for another time, and then I won't have to cut you short. I thank you, sir. Any other Public Business?

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

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

**Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas:** Madam President, before I adjourn this meeting, it will be remiss of me if I don't speak on behalf of Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas. She was not able to be present here today; she is out of state on government business. I'm just sorry that I didn't make that excuse earlier in the evening. And so, Madam President, I beg to move the Motion to adjourn this Honourable House *sine die*.

**Madam President:** Thank you. Before we take the vote, I want to make some closing remarks very briefly. First of all, I want to thank all those associated with the hosting of today's meeting. I want to begin by thanking all the people associated with the five reports that we received. The compilation of these things is significant in the

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volume of time and thought, and accuracy required, and though some of the reports are a bit late since we are in 2025, we deeply appreciate the effort that is taken to go back to prepare them, whether it is in the GDB or the Child Protection Authority or other reports that I am not recalling.

I want to thank all the Senators who hold state positions and give ministerial statements here today. They really do fill this room with optimism of actions on behalf of the people of Grenada, and we can only welcome that by large, they are very positive actions, whether it's youth, culture, sports, or education. The eBooks, for example, are a great technological advancement for our primary school. Thank you, Minister for Education.

I would like to advise you that, as Grenada is a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the regional branch of it. We have an Association of Presiding Officers, Speakers and Presidents in the Caribbean, and it's a very active group. On your behalf, I have seen fit to extend a letter of solidarity to four members, at least two members of the group, Jamaica and Turks and Caicos, and two non-members, but who are Caribbean sisters and brothers, Cuba and Haiti, to send those letters of solidarity following the passage of that dreadful category five hurricane. I am not absolutely certain if the statement has left our shores, so it will come to you tomorrow prior to its departure.

As Parliamentarians, I know that the Government has acted, I'm sure trade unions have acted, business and rotary and other groups, but as Parliamentarians, be assured that we also extended solidarity and we took the opportunity to advise the Parliament of those countries what Grenada was doing and is doing with the bank account and the collection of items, and so on. So we are very proud that our country has, in many cases, returned the favour that was given to us when we had these hurricane-induced crises.

I want to urge the "Government Team" here in the Senate to pay attention to respond to all the queries that were raised in the debate today. Some questions need further information on what was said. I just want to put that back on the agenda so that we are thorough in our deliberations.

And in closing, to thank the public and all those who have paid attention today, someone wrote and said, "Great meeting, but stop the blinking lights". **(Laughter)**

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Yes... Above... And I thought that probably captured the sentiment of the Senators. We in the staffing and servicing of the Senate will try to improve conditions, lights, air conditions, sound, documents and the like. I want to undertake that obligation for an improvement before we meet and to bid you a great duration of your time until we meet again.

This brings the end of my statements. I can't see or hear you. Senator, can I take the vote?

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Sitting of the Senate adjourned sine die at 8:09 p.m.**

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