



GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT

SENATE

THURSDAY 26TH OCTOBER, 2023

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Attendance | 3 |
| Prayers..... | 5 |
| Minutes..... | 5 |
| Announcements | 7 |
| Ministerial Statements | 7 |
| Personal Explanations..... | 37 |
| Motions..... | 40 |
| Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023 | 63 |
| Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023 | 99 |
| Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023 | 113 |
| Adjournment..... | 119 |

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Attendance

PRESENT

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas | - Minister of State with responsibility for Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries & Cooperatives |
| Senator the Honourable David Evlyn Andrew | - Minister for Education, Youth, Sports & Culture |
| Senator the Honourable Quinc Britton | - Member of the Senate |
| Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph | - Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs, Labour and Consumer Affairs |
| Senator the Honourable Jonathan La Crette | - Minister for Health, Wellness & Religious Affairs |
| Senator the Honourable Gloria Ann Thomas | - Minister of State with responsibility for Social Development and Gender Affairs |
| Senator the Honourable Neilon Franklyn | - Opposition Member of the Senate |
| Senator the Honourable Mondy André Lewis | - Member of the Senate (Labour Rep.) |
| Senator the Honourable Salim Rahaman | - Member of the Senate (Business Rep.) |
| Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair | - Member of the Senate (Farmers Rep.) |

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Attendance

ABSENT

- | | |
|--|---|
| Senator the Honourable Norland Cox | - Opposition Member of the Senate (Deputy President) <i>(Excuse tendered)</i> |
| Senator the Honourable Katisha Douglas | - Opposition Member of the Senate <i>(Excuse tendered)</i> |

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Prayers
Minutes***

The Sitting of the Senate began at 9:05 a.m.

(Senate Prayer was said)

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

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Madam President: Pray be seated.

(Sound of gavel)

Madam President: The Senate is convened.

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

Item 4 – Confirmation of Minutes.

Madam President: Good morning, colleagues. Great pleasure. I offer the floor to the Leader of Government's Business, Senator Adrian Thomas. You have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Pleasant morning, Madam President, and your staff, my colleagues on the "Other Side", my colleagues here. Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of a Sitting of the Senate, held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday the 29th of August, 2023, be taken as read.

Question put and agreed to.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Minutes

Minutes taken as read.

Madam President: Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Sitting of the Senate, held at the Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's, on Tuesday the 29th of August, 2023, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

Madam President: Honourable 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 Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, held at Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday, 26th of September, 2023, be taken as read.

Madam President: Thank you, Honourable, and I correct myself.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes taken as read.

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

Madam President: Yes, proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Second Session of the Eleventh

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Minutes
Announcements
Ministerial Statements***

Parliament, held at Parliament Building, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's on Tuesday, 26th of September, 2023, be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to.

Minutes confirmed.

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

Madam President: Honourable Members, I have the pleasure or the duty to report an excuse from Honourable Senator Norland Cox, who is the Deputy President of the Senate. Due to personal illnesses, he is unable to attend our Sitting this morning. Thank you.

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

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

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I bid you gracious good morning and to all the staff here at the Parliament Building, colleagues on the “Other Side,” and colleagues here and Grenadian citizens and persons of interest viewing at home and abroad, good morning to you.

I stand to give a brief report on essentially one matter of particular interest, I know, to the Grenadian public and to parents, teachers and the education system in relation to the fire at the St. Andrews Anglican Primary School, with a view to giving you an update, a status update on where things are.

Madam President, before I go much further, though, I'd like to give a background of that school so we can contextualise the statements I'm going to make, and we can

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

appreciate what that school community has been through within the last twelve to fourteen months.

So, last year in 2022, around September and October, the Anglican Primary school moved to its brand new, temporary location at Progress Park. The facilities cost in excess of \$5,000,000 to have built. I remember visiting initially after they moved in, and even some of the ceiling fans that were put in. I indicated to the Project Manager and the ministry's team that we had to double some of those fans because the heat was extremely great in that area.

Notwithstanding that, they moved in and within the year, I want to report that this Anglican school has suffered significant numbers of break-ins and vandalism, almost nine of them within the period. Some are less severe than others. Some like to break into the kitchen to steal food. But the school suffered at least nine break-ins within that period. And within the last term, about four break-ins since September. Madam President, I remember visiting the school when the break-ins intensified. In fact, a couple of those break-ins, two of those break-ins, happened within three days of each other on one occasion.

I remember visiting the school, visiting the staff, speaking with the principal staff and even engaging students and given the Government's commitment to take speedy action to address the situation. The latest of the break-ins happened towards the end of September 2023, and by mid-October, we had security night watchmen. We worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of National Security to see watchmen installed, like security firm, contracted, the installation of lights, cameras and by the 13th we had contracted a contractor to do retrofitting to the administrative block to make it more secure including the installation of burglar bars and to cordon off, well not cordon off, but to section off the administrative block from the rest of the building, so that access to the administrative wing would become a lot more difficult. All of these actions we took in direct response to the increasing speed of break-ins at the Anglican school. That's the same school that, on the night of the 13th of October, a significant section of it went up in flames.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Madam President, Honourable colleagues, this brought horror to my heart as Minister for Education. In fact, the break-ins alone bled my heart, and you could imagine my aberration when I learned on that fateful Friday evening, Friday night, that the Anglican school was on fire, the same school that was subject to so many break-ins and vandalism. I went to the site that night with other colleagues from Education, to offer in-person support to the principal and staff present, many of them were moved almost to tears as you watched, even some of the grade sixes, one grade six, in fact, went down.

And, Madam President, I want to put on record here my profound disappointment, even before we talk about the fire aspect. I want to put on record my profound condemnation of any elements within our citizenry that feel it prudent to vandalise our schools, our nation's assets. These are facilities for our children, these are facilities that are meant to build the future, increase the capacity of our nation's children and safeguard our future. The truth is, we could put night watchmen, we can put cameras. In fact, we did, well before the incident took place. The watchman was on site and was able to call the fire services. But I'm saying no amount of night watchmen will singlehandedly address the mind-set, this negative mind-set that gives rise to those kinds of action. And I stand in strong condemnation of it. These are our assets. This is for our nation's children, and we all have a responsibility to protect those assets and to secure them because they belong to us, for us, and they're paid for by us. Our taxpaying dollars.

Madam President, let me just briefly say what has happened since. So the night of the fire came, the police they're still investigating, so we don't have conclusive evidence as to what took place. We await that. But as I said on the very night we were present, the day after Education Officials and members of the Anglican church board, even the union were present, NADMA was present, so a number of agencies converged and as far as Education is concerned, we met with the management of the school to begin to brainstorm for next steps, immediate next steps.

And so we knew that we had to suspend school, so school has been suspended since then. Fortunately for us, Madam President, we have not lost too many contact days because there were quite a few holidays within that period, there were the midterm

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

holidays, there was a professional day, a teacher professional day, there was the 19th holiday, there was the 25th, so we've been cushioned. The loss has been cushioned, fortunately for us.

From the Sunday teams engaged, the Saturday and the Sunday teams engaged in sightseeing to explore potential options for continuation of education. By Monday, there was a church service conducted along with the Anglican Church, and the team of counsellors from the Ministry of Education, assisted by those from Social Development, was deployed to offer psychosocial support services and counselling, critical incident stress debriefing services to the staff and students at the school. On Tuesday, there was an engagement with Parent Teachers Association representatives, school staff and representatives from the Anglican Board of Management to discuss the way forward and to explore options.

Let me just share with you, Madam President, a little bit of the extent of the damage. So on that fateful day, Madam President, fire destroyed the largest of the three temporary structures housing the St. Andrew's Anglican Primary School at Progress Park. The largest of the three. The 100 by 25 square feet building comprised of nine classrooms, including one grade six class, which served as the learning space for 161 students. So 161 students were displaced from the school's 372 population. This building, which was gutted, was built, we are told by infrastructure and the engineers, at a cost of over EC\$800,000 when it was constructed previously. The building that was not destroyed was the second-largest building. The whole facing of it has been damaged and will need to be repaired. Cameras gone. Lighting gone. All the... And the facing of that building has been damaged significantly and will need to be repaired. There was one building, the smallest of the three buildings, which housed four classrooms and remained untouched or without damage. Madam President, after much consultation with all stakeholders, principal, staff and collaboration with Education Officials and a Cabinet approval, Cabinet approved the relocation of the Anglican School to the Telescope Resource Centre.

Now, let me just talk a little bit about the Telescope Resource Centre. The

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Telescope Resource Centre was a centre that the Caribbean Development Bank had approved as a suitable location for that very school prior to the construction of the temporary facilities at Progress Park. So CDB had approved it as a suitable location, but for whatever reason in the minds of the authorities then, the former administration did not consider it. Probably, there were other ideas had for the facilities. And so we are happy to give consideration to it in this time of crisis when we have very limited options. We are happy to revert to a facility that the CDB has approved, which we have looked at as Ministry Officials, and the engineers from Infrastructure have looked at, and we agree it is suitable. There are nine spaces and a huge space that can be partitioned into an additional four class spaces. And so, Madam President, the plan is to relocate the school.

At present, the school, the multiple-purpose, not multiple-purpose, the Resource Centre at Telescope can house up to 75% of the school's population, with immediate retrofitting and dividing of the areas available, and we'd have to make accommodation for the other 25%. The plan is, Madam President, to have the one building that was not damaged relocated to the compound of the multi-purpose centre, and that we believe will be able to house all the students. The engineers have already looked, they've accessed the site, and they gave us good word that it's feasible, it's possible, and all of these options, I have good news to bear.

One, the reduce... Because of the paramount importance to us, Madam President, is reducing the loss of instructional time. In this matter, there are no easy fixes, but the priority for us in Education is to ensure that we reduce the loss of instructional time. We want to reduce the delay in reengaging the teaching learning process to the shortest possible period. And so we are confident that that option is cost-effective because we understand that this, the retrofitting of the centre, the moving of the Resource Centre, yes, the moving of the building from Progress Park to Telescope on the same facility and the installation of air condition machines, the construction of that building and all of that will take place in a shorter period of time and at the cost of roughly two hundred dollars. Now, if we consider reconstructing on the temporary site, the estimate is approximately EC\$1.5 million. So we are confident that this strategy will see us, in the shortest period

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

of time, get all the students back in class.

Let me go further to say, there is an interim plan which is to have as of Monday 30th, to have the grade sixes resume classes at the Multi-purpose Centre in Grenville. There are two outfitted classrooms available there, and so as a temporary interim measure before we transfer the school, do the retrofitting within the next couple of weeks, and I can't give you an immediate time frame because we have not engaged a contractor officially, because we only got the approval in Cabinet after doing all the analysis this week. So in the interim, grades six will be at the Multipurpose Centre in Grenville, and grades four and five will be housed at the pavilion at the park. Well that was one of the options that came up in consultation with the teachers, but we know that cannot be a long-term solution because the park is a place that is frequently used and there's going to be an increase in sporting activities and when the stadium gets repaired and the Carifta games come in next year, it is not a feasible option to keep in there in any long-term view point. And so, they are going to be housed there. The other students, unfortunately, we will not be able to house them physically at the moment. We hope that whatever facilities we can use to engage them online can continue while we admit that there will be challenges there, but we look towards minimising the time that they are spent at home without contact, and we are going to engage this plan.

Now let me say that other options were considered, Madam President, including reconstructing on the same site, which would be more costly, take more time, and leave us with many persons to face the trauma of going back there. There were people who engaged teachers, and individuals on the school plant when they walked onto the site after they still shook. And some verbally said they can't go back there, they won't want to go back there, and for us at the Ministry of Education, this is sufficient, a psychological concern, to ensure that we don't put our educators back in that same space.

In addition, to the fact that prior to this incident that location, in fact from my visits with the school community, they complained about the heat, they complained that the water was hot, they complained about the susceptibility to flooding, they complained about, of course, the security issues because it's an area that's popularly frequented given

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

the nature of sports and stuff in the area, all of these concerns will be alleviated with the relocation plan.

And so, Madam President, I want to reassure every parent, **(sound of time bell)** every guardian, every educator... Thank you, Madam President. I heard. I just beg for one minute to wrap, with your permission. Right. So I want to assure every parent, every guardian in the school community, the Paradise, the Telescope, the Soubise, the Grenville, the Chapel and all of the catchment area for the school... Even this evening we have a meeting plan to engage the parents because the single most important concern is our children and making sure that in the shortest possible space of time, they reengage the teaching-learning process we'll continue at the Ministry of Education to make the decisions that we believe are in the best interest of our nation's children, however tough however difficult, but in this occasion we assure that it is cost-effective, is likely be efficient and it's going to resolve in the best interest of our nation's children.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: I thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you...

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you.

Madam President: Very much for this update. And I'm not going to congratulate you for the initiatives you took immediately following the fire, and even prior to it, around the vandalism, because that is your duty. So I can thank you as the Minister for Education for fulfilling your duty to that institution. And I want to continue to extend on behalf of this Senate our understanding and our support to the community, the principal, teacher, parents and students of the St. Andrew Anglican Primary School. I did reach out to them myself, as duty again, and they need to hear from us. They are encouraged and

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

committed, but they are shaken by the events. So it's good that you speak of speedy reaction. You and I and others in this room are products of the St. Andrew's educational institutions, and so I'm sure you will do all in your power to make for speedy settling down and return to education, and instruction rather than problem-solving around it. Thank you very much. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President...

Madam President: Greetings, welcome.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, yes, yes, I was a little bit late this morning, and I had to stop off and check an important project, which will give some updates to the nation soon. And good morning to the rest of the Members, colleagues in this Honourable House and of course, all on the outside following this important event. I rise to make some comments and a few questions to the Honourable Member, Andrew, from St. Andrew, connecting to this fire, because it's an area that I pass almost every day, so it means a lot. I have friends who taught there, different students, parents, et cetera, but I want to commend them for the action that is taken. I think that is important because sometimes you wonder from the public end whether or not anything is being done, and I think this report may be late in coming in terms of the amount of details. Of course, I guess some of it has the dare Members say would have wrapped up in the sitting of the Cabinet a few days ago. But this serial vandalism to me, I think that more could have been done earlier, bearing in mind that if it happened to our homes, we would take some more swift action. I was happy to hear that security was put in, but that happened after about six or seven or eight. You know we have a police force which is very equipped and could understand the patterns of behaviour and so on, and I thought that we shouldn't get to that point. It's very sad that we have gotten to this point, but it shows again what our society is made up of.

Arson is the biggest, the largest crime that anyone can commit, even more than

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

drugs and guns. And when you have that taking place, if it was arson, I don't know because we haven't heard a conclusion yet, hopefully not, but the fact that there were break-ins and vandalism means that it is highly possible that that would have happened. And I commended the team that would have taken those actions. I think it's a very good action. Because the issue of flooding has always been a concern for me since this building was even established there, that was my main concern. The issue of traffic, you know, is also a concern.

So my follow-up question for some more clarity, Madam President, is one, in the relocation process, I know for example, there will be added transport in the case of some persons coming down from the Paradise, La Filette side to go into Telescope, how will that be organised? Because that will be an added cost for the parents, of course, sometimes you have to make sacrifices. And, of course, in the interim, have we beefed up security to protect what is left? Because if you look at probabilities, we need to ensure that there is continued security to secure what is left, such that, as the Minister mentioned, which is good, Senator colleague, that we're going to relocate some of this and add to that secure compound in Telescope. I think it'll be good for Telescope now that you have two primary schools and a secondary school. Also, in the interim, it beefs up the whole morale and other opportunities, I think, in that community.

So I really wanted to comment, and it's because it's a matter that is dear to me, even if I didn't go to that school as a primary because I passed there every day, and I know the troubles that the parents and teachers have been going through for the last maybe 15 years, 20 years since the school got burnt. Yes, burnt also again, yes? There was a burning, I think that is why the Anglican school originally had to build that annexe outside of Grenville and then relocate also. There seems to be something, and it tells us maybe more from a Ministry of Education and from a national security standpoint, what do we do as a nation to secure our valuable assets? And maybe I think that is a bigger picture we need to look at. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Senator André Lewis. Did I

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

miss something here? There are some big heads in this room, and I think they stand in the way of the microphone. **(Laughter)** Senator David Andrews' big head for the microphone.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Proceed.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: So, Senator St. Clair, I acknowledge your comments. What can I say, we have still maintained the services of the security firm, so that is still in place. The fact that it became a crime... Well, a scene of investigation, I don't want to say a crime scene, became a matter of National Security, and I remember raising the concern with the Minister for National Security that the area be treated with some degree of security and urgency. I knew the night of the incident, I suspected there were official officers staked out in the vicinity to guard. I don't know what the strategic National Security arrangements are as we speak, but we are confident that we maintain the services of the security firm, and that is as far as we could go within Education, but I suspect National Security will do their bit as well. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. Senator St. Clair, you're satisfied for now? Thank you. Thank you very much. Honourable André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President, and good morning to everyone. My heart and concern go out to the colleagues who have all been impacted, and I dearly say the nation. And it is good to note that the Ministry, through you, spoke of security in your reporting. Because it is quite possible there may be a difference between watchman and security relative to the threat that you've faced in the past, right, but that's something that we, especially when there is an area that becomes what one calls "a targeted area" that can be developed and I am confident that

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

our colleagues in the security forces through your Ministry will address that. So I have identified all the comments that were made.

But I want to make a special request, and I do believe without you saying it, knowing the Ministry and knowing yourself and your background, that it is something that would have already been given thought to, the aspect of counselling, the aspect for our teachers who certainly over the past year were exposed to nine, 10 break-ins, yes. The aspect of not knowing what to expect when you turn up to school is not only the invasion of your privacy, but also the teachers, the students, and the parents of the students. So it will be necessary, and without you saying, I would have expected that to be done to have engagements with the necessary stakeholders to offer the counselling that will be required to give the reassurances that all systems will be put in place to minimise any possible reoccurrences of this sort of activity. But what has already taken place has already taken place, and therefore it can have an impact on the mind-set, the confidence of our teachers and our students.

And you know our teachers are much more than just what you call workers. They are parents. They are counsellors. They are the go-to people. And one can appreciate the sense of some time, despair, they certainly will feel that it doesn't appear to be able to certainly, in the case of St. Andrew's Primary School, protect the children that are within their care, in terms of giving them that comfort.

So we in the Labour Movement join with you and give you our support in whatever way we can. I know the Grenada Union of Teachers, as you said the night of the fire the President was there, so to call upon you to continue with what you are doing and to improve what you have done and to ensure that people know that counselling something that we really do not pay much attention to, something that we really do not pay much attention to and letting them know that you will be prepared to offer what you call private and individual counselling. Because sometimes counselling is offered, but it is offered as a collective, yes. So that's what I want to add and to join in calling for citizens not to get engaged in this sort of activity and to put the necessary systems in place to reduce those as much as possible. Thank you.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Madam President: Thank you very much, Senator. Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Again, Senator Lewis, thank you. Thank you for your messages of, I will say, solidarity. Indeed, we started. When things... when these traumatic experiences happen, it's critical within a short period of time, 72 hours, to have a critical incident intervention, and that's what we provided. Usually, once that is done within that period, it puts the person in a decent enough framework to begin to normally go through that grief, that traumatic process. However, it also gives us the opportunity to identify persons who might have additional overlaying issues that might complicate their response to those situations, whom we would have identified and whom we are available to do further work with.

By the collective agreement between the Grenada Union of Teachers and the Ministry of Education, the Government, our counsellors that served the various schools are available and the thing about counselling, though it is something that the person has to be receptive to and willing to accept. So even if we think it necessary, we still have to ask, "Are you willing? Would you accept it?" And they can even say, "No, they don't like this one, they don't like that one, they will take it privately. But the services are there, they're available, but we've listened to them well, and that's why we're happy to make the move because we've heard the traumatic cry of some of them who say they don't want to go back there.

Madam President, with your permission, I just want to say that the school will be rebuilt. The designs have been approved by the CDB for the reconstruction of the school in the former location, at Grenville. So recently, within the last month, we have gone to the public for tendering for contractors to bid for the construction of that building. So, with all this taking place, the actual school building we are far advanced in the construction process and preparation to start the construction somewhere in 2024. Thank you very much.

Madam President: That's very good news. I hesitated to ask, and I hope the

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

damaged church structure that sort of leans in the space where the school will be rebuilt will also be addressed so that the damaged church building, the Anglican building in Grenville, is not an impediment to the safety of the new school, Senator Andrew. Thank you. Senator Gloria Thomas, you have the floor, Madam and welcome.

Sen. the Hon. Gloria Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to present this Ministerial Statement to this Honourable House. Pleasant good morning to everyone, and pleasant good morning to the viewing audience. Madam President, this update is on some of the achievements of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs. Having responsibility for Social Development and Gender Affairs, my presentation will focus mainly on these two areas.

Madam President, I take this opportunity to speak on the Parenting Programme. Our Parenting Programme continues. The education and sensitisation programme through the delivery of prenatal sessions to pregnant parents has been well-received over the past months. To date, 90 pregnant mothers have participated in the programme in the various locations, Carriacou, Mt. Carmel, Woburn, Gouyave, St. David Medical Station and St. George's Medical Station. Currently, officers are in the field delivering another programme cycle.

Madam President, in addition, a national positive parenting community campaign was conducted using diverse media, mobile theatre production, radio series and podcasts. The campaign was a community development initiative that promoted positive gender-responsive parenting messages for parents and guardians on social media, including audio and visual. Madam President, we recognise that popular theatre has been very effective in getting the messages to parents and the public in general, and so we are in the process of going nationwide with popular data to promote awareness, along with our traditional small group sessions, which encourage interaction. **(Applause)**

Early Childhood

The Roving Caregivers, which is a programme that we run through GRENCASE, continues to deliver early stimulation to children in their homes. Madam President, the

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

programme offers stimulation to children ranging from zero to three years to families in the comfort of their homes. In the first half of this year, the programme provided early stimulation to 445 children from 401 households. We know how essential early child stimulation is to brain development and in assisting children in reaching their developmental milestones. So this programme, Madam President, is a vital one for our young children.

Elderly

The National Standard for Residential Care Facility has been developed. Our older persons are now in a place where they will receive better services because the standard covers guidelines and directives for the effective and safe operations of elderly homes. Madam President, the following areas are covered in the standards: general registration, inspection and licensing, health and well-being, the provision of effective services, responsive workforce requirements, the provision of safe services, pandemic response, leadership, governance, accountability and compliance, use of information, monitoring and evaluation. Madam President, you will agree that the proposed standards are indeed comprehensive and set out to ensure that our residential care facilities are effectively managed.

We have also developed a national policy for older persons. The Draft Grenada National Policy for older persons have been completed and will soon be submitted to Cabinet for approval. The key policy areas that are a major focus in the document are health and well-being, food and nutrition security, transportation, housing and physical environment, welfare and social security, economic security, recreation and social inclusion, disaster preparedness, legal protection, research and data sharing, legislative framework, and institutional capacity. One will agree that this policy will certainly assist in improving the quality of life for older citizens.

Geriatric Programme

Madam President. Geriatric Programme. Through the management of GRENCASE, we have in place a Geriatric Programme, and the elderly receive services at their homes, which look after their daily living and their general care. Also, there's a

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Ministerial Statements

small Geriatric Programme that is administered through the Ministry of Social Development, but this is done in selected parishes, and that was based on the needs identified.

Psychosocial Support

During the month of October, we observe Mental Health Awareness Day. A number of initiatives were undertaken to create greater awareness among the populace of the importance of good mental health, as this is becoming an increasing concern in today's society. During this month, a billboard on mental health was erected at the Grenville Bus Terminus as a permanent reminder to everyone traversing that area that mental health matters. The number of persons who are requesting psychosocial services continues to rise. The reality highlights the need for national intervention that promotes positive decision-making, mental health support practices and the need to strengthen our coping mechanisms.

Standard Operating Procedures for Gender-Based Violence

The main objective of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is to facilitate a more coordinated approach to addressing gender-based violence between the health, social, justice and police sectors by providing service delivery guidelines for each of these essential services. Madam President, training was conducted in these related sectors over the last two or three months, and now these key players have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

We've also been involved in family law. We have to check Protection Reform under the spotlight as well, the Maintenance Act for Children, the Status of Children Bill, the Marriage Special License Amendment Regulations, Sexual Offence Reform and the list goes on with the number of legislation and adjustments that we've been making over the last few months in the interest of better governance. We also have the Victim Rights Legislation being addressed, family law, Non-marital Union Reform and... This is the last one on the list of legislation that has been reviewed.

We have SEED. Madam President, the SEED recertification process has been completed. This process was conducted to facilitate the reapplication of the assessment

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

tool to determine eligibility. If the beneficiary household's living condition improved and surpassed the threshold, the household graduated out of the programme. On the other hand, if the living conditions in the house remain the same or regress, then the family is deemed eligible to remain on the programme until their socioeconomic condition improves. This graduation process created the fiscal space for the inclusion of new beneficiaries.

In addition to the recertification, a programme audit is currently being conducted to determine the existing gaps and make recommendations for further programme improvements. This very important process is conducted by the audit department in the Ministry of Finance. The Audit Department is an independent unit that has no direct working relations with the SEED Programme, which therefore facilitates an objective and transparent review process.

The Development of the Grenada Living Condition Index

The SEED Programme, through the technical assistance from the World Bank, has begun the development of a new assessment tool. The Grenada Living Condition Index is being redeveloped to reflect the current socioeconomic landscape, which will result in more accurate household assessments. The GLCI, by design, is a scientific assessment tool that objectively assesses households based on several indicators. This process significantly reduces the need for subjective human judgment and human error. A pilot will be conducted during this quarter of this year to inform full implementation in 2024.

The SEED Benefit Card

In 2024, beneficiaries will receive a card, a benefit card which will enable them to receive benefits via the banking system. Our initial plan was to have this card issued by the end of this year, but the bank was undertaking an acquisition of the First Caribbean Bank, and so requested some more time as their human resource were a bit stretched in dealing with the major undertaking. So at one point in time, they just had to place the beneficiary card on hold to go ahead with other engagements. So that is why the card is not being rolled out this year as promised.

Madam President, we saw the need to improve the current payment mechanism,

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

which leads to long lines and has limited alternative options. This card will enable beneficiaries to receive cash transfers directly to their bank account. The card will also include features for shopping at various points of sale, ATM withdrawals and deposits are also included.

SEED beneficiaries to date;

- 5246 individuals;
- We have 7483 elderly households;
- Deceased persons who had to be removed, 278;
- Students who graduated from school, 540;
- School dropouts, 82;
- Persons migrating, 120;
- Internal migration, 38;
- Institutionalised persons, 3;
- Miscellaneous, 45.

Madam President, the number of persons who exited the programme by constituency are as follows;

- St. Andrew North-West, 139;
- St. Andrew South-East, 109;
- St. Andrew South-West, 77;
- St. Andrew North-West, 91;
- St. Patrick East, 77;
- St. Patrick West, 53;
- St. David, 105;
- St. George North-East, 68;
- St. George South-East, 62;
- St. George South, 67;
- Town of St. George, 32;
- St. John, 95; and
- St. Mark, 63.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Ministerial Statements

Madam President, a total of 607 households were on the SEED Programme from June 23 to July 28, 2023. 499 were new households, while 108 were reinstated households. Money spent on the programme for the first half of this year was EC\$9,281,700.

Our priorities for 2024. Full implementation of SEED new targeting tools, implementation of benefit card, continue the development of SEED empowerment framework, conduct training and public sensitisation on the amendment of the Child Maintenance Act, formulation of a licencing authority for homes for elderly, development of a child care policy an action plan, implementation of the probation policy and procedural manual, implementation of a gender-responsive masculinity programme, implementation of a revised gender equity policy an action plan, establishment and operationalisation of the National Gender Equality Commission, improving our presence in the media as we embark on educating the public about financial management, home management, parenting, retirement planning, healthy lifestyle, setting priorities.

Madam President, our Ministry is one of the most active ministries. We continue to serve a very diverse clientele. We pledge to continue to provide services to meet the needs to the best of our ability, and so we continue to serve. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank the Senator, Ministry of Social Development, and Gender Affairs. Thank you for the update. Some rather interesting statistics on the SEED Programme, and one other observation from my part, that you say your Ministry is in receipt of an increasing number of requests for mental health interventions. I saw the Minister for Health, who is seated next to you, listening intently; he is familiar, I am sure, with these realities. But on my end, I find it quite interesting to hear that. I don't know what occasions it. If there are more mental health incidents, or more mental health awareness, and awareness that help is available. So I think you could tease that more for us and give us more of the good news that might be embedded in it.

It is the month of October, so perhaps that is a factor as well, but thank you for the update. And I don't know if it's my place to say so, but I think these things are published

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Ministerial Statements

in the Gazette, and I think we may be able to go beyond and make sure that they reside more in the public domain. Even the report from Senator Andrew about what the school has been doing. I'm a citizen in the parish, and I'm concerned. What is the solution? And if you go to the Resource Centre in Telescope, what happens to the users of the Resource Centre? Is it all now gone down to the Grenville Resource Centre?

So I think it's a lively discussion that can be held in the public domain, about progress, about options, you know, similarly to, in the vein of what Senator St. Claire was asking about. So to the extent that it is possible, I want to urge the executive to make this information available in the public domain for more knowledge and conversation. And we are very grateful to you here in the Senate for receiving all your updates. Thank you very much. Any other Ministerial Statements? The Minister for Health. Sir, nothing against you, but be succinct. **(Laughter)** Thank you, Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, good morning. Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Senate, good morning. Counsel, legal counsel, Senatorial colleagues and our colleagues on the "Other Side", good morning to you as well.

With the question posed, Madam President, to Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas, while the Ministry of Social Developmental, our sister, our sister ministry, while they have a responsibility to ensure that from a community development and social development perspective, they hold community group meetings and trainings et cetera, and also educate on issues such as mental health, because it forms part of their sectoral mandate, we have the legislative and clinical aspect to deal with at the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs. So, because the Mental Health Legislation falls within the ambit of the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs, we hold stakeholder consultations with civil society and all other stakeholders involved where mental health is concerned. And that would basically be everybody, because mental health is not estranged to a particular grouping of persons. So I hope that brings some degree of clarity to the confusion as to the two ministries undergoing mental health activities. And two heads, Madam President, are always better than one.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Thank you for the opportunity to present this ministerial statement this morning, so that I can update this Honourable House as well as the citizenry of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, relating to what is happening at the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs.

Currently, Madam President, under general health and administration, we have one nurse who is studying in Jamaica; she left sometime in September. We have two more nurses who are leaving or scheduled to leave by the end of October, this year, and they will be pursuing training in critical care, and they will also be pursuing training in Nephrology and also in operating room nursing. Every year after that, three nurses will leave the island to pursue training in various specialist areas. It's part of our training mandate, as a Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs, and also part of the mandate to build the training needs skills gap, to bridge the training needs skills gap as well.

A second cohort of the ministry staff is currently engaged in training as well, with Washington University, in Leadership and Management for the health sector. From the reports, Madam President, the training is going well, and it is our hope that this training translates into behavioural change for the sector. Yes? Training would also form a huge part of our 2024 budget across the entire sector, and more information will be given on this when we come to the next budget cycle reading for 2024.

Hospital and Community Services

Sometime in September, I believe it was around the 13th, we held an official ceremony for the United States Naval Forces Southern Command continuing promise mission. The objective of the mission, Madam President, was to provide free health care to various health facilities island-wide. The visit and the objective were met, and as a result, I believe that all of our health facilities that engaged the mission informed us that the redress that we received clinically, that's the clinical redress that we received as it relates to the doctors and nurses working in the various medical stations.

And also all of their technicians as well, who assisted us in ensuring that we rehabilitated some of our machinery, medical equipment that is, that was down for some

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

particular period of time, they are now open and running. So we were particularly pleased to have them. Additionally, we also ensured that the nursing staff lounge at the Princess Alice Hospital was reconstructed, and we commissioned the same about three or four weeks ago, about a month ago, and that's in the constituency of St. Andrew, that the Honourable Gloria Thomas and MP Delma Thomas have ministerial jurisdictions over.

I believe currently they are now constructing a brand new driveway and parking lot for the Princess Alice Hospital (**applause**), so that persons who patronise the Healthcare facility at that particular location can have adequate space to be able to park their vehicles. We also recommitted, or recommissioned, that is, the neonatal unit at our General Hospital. We are particularly pleased about that. So it's brand new, up and running and also the refurbishment of our private ward. Yes, we have some news about that coming in the next budget reading cycle. I believe that the nation will be extremely proud to hear of.

Wellness and Religious Affairs

As it relates to mental health, we continue the consultations on mental health. In fact, over the past three months, August, September, and into October, we've held numerous consultations with various aspects of civil society, and numerous stakeholders across the public sector, private sector and NGO's sector, all led by PAHO, and also the professional expertise provided by PAHO as well. PAHO has been extremely instrumental in ensuring that Grenada solidifies its mental health legislative agenda and reform, an agenda that is, so that when we do have the legislation in front of us, it can be relevant and on the cutting edge and also speak to the future of mental health from a national perspective.

Additionally, the Grenada diaspora advisory council (GDAC) was formed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a mandate for health. It's one of the first ministries that they are working with, given that health is one of the government's top priority sectors. They have been working very closely with the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs, to ensure that we build out a National Mental Health and Wellness Framework for the country.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Ministerial Statements

So I'm happy to report that at this present time, they have established a 12-week Mental Health Education Volunteer Programme for religious organisations and others. Participants will receive the opportunity to participate in the programme either as a trainer or facilitator on subjects such as suicide prevention, wellness, managing stress and coping with trauma. Interest forms have already been circulated and sent to these organisations so that they can identify the interested persons within their organisations who will be participating in this twelve-week programme.

This, Madam President, forms part of the ministry's strategic plan to raise mental health awareness and to build out a faith-based mental health programme, with more personnel trained in the area of mental health redress.

Religious Affairs

Madam President, we continue to work very closely with faith-based organisations and religious leaders, as we have held two very successful engagements with them in the months of August and September, in the areas of disaster management and preparedness, and also services government provides to religious organisations, such as concessions, marriage officer licences, just to name a few. Yes, so that we can have them be properly informed as it relates to the processes and procedures for same, so that they are in the know, whenever they are applying for concessions, what are the processes for that, and a marriage officer license, what are the new updates in the system that they need to be informed about. Thank you very much, Madam President. This ends my Ministerial Statement.

Madam President: I thank the Honourable **(applause)** Johnathan La Crette, Minister for Health, for your updates. And nowhere am I suggesting that there is confusion, but interest, mutual interest, as you paid attention to her reports. Thank you very much. Senator St. Clair, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I had... I

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Madam President: Again, Senator St. Clair having been conceded. Which one of you will go first? Please decide.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No, I... **(Laughter)** Madam President, now I, I wasn't, I wasn't going to say anything to the succinct presentation, but having asked such...

Madam President: (Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: (Laughter)

Madam President: Observations notwithstanding.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Well, they say sometimes, let sleeping dogs lie, but **(laughter)**.... Now, what I want to say is that, from a general statement, it's good to be getting these types of reports. That is what I was going through my head as I listened to Senator La Crette, that this information needs to be brought out, and we need the public to understand that. Because some of this information that we're hearing there, you're not hearing it on the news, you're not even getting it from GIS, you're not even getting it in WhatsApp, you're not even seeing it on Facebook and if we have to get these things, only when we come here, which we don't really meet every week or every month, then we need to maybe find away, and I don't know...

Madam President, through your office, good office, may have what I call a... maybe a monthly bulletin. So whether or now we sit or we don't sit, this information sort of circulates, and it helps for the sharing, because it also could help to, I don't want to say neutralise, but in a way to keep the parliamentary colleagues, the "Other Side" up to date. So even certain questions and follow-ups we may want to do in our work, it sort of gives us... because these reports, I mean, the ministers and so on don't present that. Those things are not only presented, they have all the details, a one-page, half-page... these

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

are the things that are going on, Senators, especially on the “Other Side”, such that we can be more assured of what’s happening.

I think that could be a way that we can improve the whole issue of governance and transparency with information, rather than just waiting for today. So I think you have sort of maybe seen that in my mind, and you, you’re a lady of vision **(laughter)**. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. You’ve expanded precisely on what I’m also thinking. So we share our St. Andrew’s mind **(laughter)**, Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President, and thanks, Senator La Crette, for the update. I, however, just want to zero in on where Senator Thomas ended and where you started with the observation of the question posed by Madam President. The question of mental health, the common thread, and through you, Madam President, we all know that mental health is a very serious issue. And therefore, the vehicle through which mental health is addressed is extremely important. And through you, I would like to find out what the status is of the mental health workers who have been asking for the issues to be addressed.

Because you see, if we all accept as we do that mental health is important, not only is it important, it is becoming more of a concern. Because from the report, from the Minister for Social Development, which has indicated an increase in mental health issues, whether it’s because of more awareness, whether it is because there’s indeed and in fact an increase in the actual amount of cases, it is something that is serious enough. And we know what we faced over the past two or three months, but I think there are about two or three individuals who have committed suicide. And we have this issue where, when something happens, it gives serious attention, and then it dies down, and we move along.

So it is, this is what has my concern, and therefore, on the question of the mental health workers, I would like to know where the issue is at and at the same time, to make a request, humbly through you, that the Ministry of Health engages the Public Workers

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

Union in discussing matters of that general nature. Because at the end of the day, the workers turned to their leadership for guidance. And if the mental health, if the people who suffers from mental health issues, and the family members of the mental health people, and the extended community, is constantly seeing, playing out in the public, these sort of issues with the people who are expected to provide service to them, it can further lead, in my view, my untrained view to more mental health concerns.

And therefore, we need to place those things in a proper context. Let us forget personalities, let us forget personalities, let us, as a nation and as the entities that are tasked with those immediate responsibilities, turn a new page, let us sit and discuss those matters. So through you, I'm asking for an update as to where this matter is with the mental health workers, so that they can professionally continue to serve the constituents and do it in a relaxed state of mind. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator André Lewis. The distinguished Minister for Health, Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, through you to Senator St. Clair, and this is on the lighter side. I don't know if the Senator is still operating with a black and white television, but **(laughter)**, but we know how Panasonic, we have TLC, we now have Samsung, and they're all touch screen. And once hooked up properly, you will get the local news on every front. Yes, once hooked up properly.

But I believe that everything that I spoke about, that we did for the past three months and are continuing to do, we have it on our social media page, Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs. And also GIS captured all of the events, that is, the consultations that took place over the past two to three months, with mental health and PAHO and the visiting consultants, et cetera. And everything that we do is always captured on our social media page as well as GIS, and or MTV and GBN as well.

As it relates to the mental health workers, I want to state unequivocally, Madam President, I do not think at any particular time, myself, as the policymaker, my three

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Ministerial Statements

Permanent Secretaries, as well as the Hospital Services Administrator, that's Father Mark, at the Mt. Gay Psychiatric Hospital, has ever given our mental health nurses the notion, that we don't care. Unequivocally, at no given time have we ever given them the notion that we don't care! And the union and the Ministry of Health have always had an excellent negotiating and industry relationship. Always! We've never had that kind of industrial action taken, where health is concerned, at least for the past 16, 17 months, that I've been in office.

In fact, coming into office, we've held numerous discussions amongst many... Regarding many issues that workers are facing, regarding health, occupational health and safety, we've come to amicable resolutions. So I was absolutely flummoxed, Madam President, when the first action of the Union was a strike action. Nevertheless, the Union wrote sometime last week informing us that the strike is, has been suspended temporarily and requested a meeting with the Ministry of Health, Wellness and Religious Affairs. That meeting took place last week Friday and everything has been resolved. We have said to our mental health nurses that everything that you're requesting is in the 2024 budget, and they will be properly taken care of, Madam President, thereafter. **(Applause)**

And lastly, Grenada Shifts moves to St. Patrick East and West this afternoon. The Honourable MPs from both Cornwall and Andall will be there, and also the St. George's caretaker/MPs as well. The torch will be passed to them because on November 12th, 2023, the St. George's Shift will take place. And on that day as well, I believe I will have 20 of my Ministerial Colleagues from across the entire Caribbean, from Turks and Caicos, the BVI, the Ministers of Health here on island, partaking also in the Grenada Shifts Events for the final shift for the year 2023. So for those of you who are in the St. Patrick East and West area, this afternoon at 4:30, we are going to be in St. Patrick, and we are going to be engaging in physical exercise for our mental health and well-being. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank you, Minister. Thank you for shifting the country. And it looks like you're shifting the Caribbean as well, bringing ministers down to Grenada. So

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

thank you and well done. Senator Rahaman, Salim Rahaman. You have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Pleasant good morning to you, Madam President, and colleagues, and those listening at home and abroad. I just wanted to ask a clarifying question to Senator La Crette with regard to mental health data, as to whether they have the percentages according to gender. How many? What percentage of men, and what percentage of women? Because some of the things that affect men are a little bit different from what might affect women. Men are traditionally seen as the providers of the home, and if they don't fulfil that role, often they come under additional pressures from family, society, and even within the home. So I just wanted... I thought about that, and I wanted to know if that data exists. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Senator, is that current data as it relates to the persons that we know take care of, at the psychiatric unit or general data regarding the public?

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: General data within the last year, let's say.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Okay. No, Madam President, not at this particular point in time. It's going to form part of the legislation, as it relates to what data system we put in place to capture the persons who have challenges with mental health and wellness. One of the things that we're finding is that, not just Grenadians but Caribbean people, we hide well, and because of the kind of close-knitness of our communities, we really don't want people to know what we're facing or going through. In our local parlance, water has to be more than flour for us to come forward, to say that we need help.

So when we came into office, and we had the 47% increase in the need for

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

psychosocial, I think I've quoted this statistics numerous times, one of the things that jolted us into the reality, that if we don't batten down and clamp down on this mental health issue now, we're going to have a greater problem on our hands in the next three to four years, because people are still suffering from the effects, the adverse effects of the pandemic. And because we don't talk, we talk about everything else, we mind, we mind all other business, but where **(laughter)**, when it comes to our mental health, we do not pay particular attention to it.

So when we came into office, we had a 47% increase in the need for psychosocial assistance, especially amongst our male population. And that's boys ranging from 16 to 18 years, men in their 30s, men in their 40s, et cetera, especially those men who lost their jobs in the tourism industry. Yes, because those industries took a serious hit as it relates to the pandemic. So from that angle, those are the statistics we have in terms of age range and the male to female ratio that desired socials, social, psychosocial assistance. Sorry, but moving forward, we want to be able to ensure that the data captures, or that the data that is captured is on a national level, so as a result, we must build into the legislation, the collection of data and how that is done. Because from a technical perspective, you have to be very careful with that kind of information, it's confidential.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator La Crette. Data is a very valuable category for the effective conduct of public policy and public governance. So thank you for raising that, Senator Rahaman. Years ago, I, as an academician, focused on Grenada for good analysis and policymaking for Grenada. Our matrix ought to be the composite of the region, and I heard some of it this morning. What happens in this parish, this constituency, must have a regional understanding. We must have a social strata understanding, which takes into account class, age, and must understand our reality according to those categories and of course, gender, is imperative.

And so we cannot hope to report adequately as a country on these sustainable development goals if we don't, in fact, have the data managed and understood to shape our reality accordingly. So I thank the Minister for Health for insisting on an expansion of

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Ministerial Statements

the analytic categories for 2024, and I suspect that, perhaps, it will be the other ministries. Is there a request for the floor? Senator André Lewis, you have requested...

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Yes...

Madam President: ... you have been granted.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: ... thank you. Thank you very much, Madam President. I just have a follow-up question, based on what I thought I heard from the Minister for Health, Senator La Crette. As we continue, I say we collectively, to address the challenging issues of mental health et cetera, we recognise that there's an activity in St. Patrick East and West, yes, but he went further to say that MPs and caretakers will be addressing, I think, some upcoming issues. For our information, I'm aware, I don't need names, I'm aware of 15 MPs, yes, Members of Parliament. So, for my own information, if I can be assisted with the identification of caretakers from our end here. Please, please, thank you.

Madam President: Caretaker. Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I said that Grenada Shifts moves to St. Patrick East and West this afternoon at 4:30 p.m. MP Cornwall and MP Andall will be present. Because wherever we have the Shifts, in whichever parish we would ask the MP, caretaker/Minister. Yes, that is in the office at that particular point in time, to be present. Because we have a symbolic passing of the torch. So wherever, wherever the Shift is taking place, the torch is passed to the next MP/caretaker or Minister that's in government at this particular point in time, so that it symbolises your parish is next.

So that's why all of the St. George's Ministers or MPs/caretaker, because I am the caretaker for St. George North-West for the National Democratic Congress, but also

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Ministerial Statements

Minister for Health. So we will be present to receive, because it comes to St. George's on November 12. Yes, I hope I've provided **(laughter)**... Senator, you are invited.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: (Laughter) Well ...

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: I'm glad...

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: ... now, are you now the President?

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: (Inaudible comment) (Laughter)

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Can I? No, you see through you... See, this is the House of Representatives, this is the Senate, and language is important. And bear with me, my colleague. I am not aware if there is, please let me know. I know you went further to explain. I'm aware that there are 15 MPs, and so to when, to go further to indicate that a party, as we speak governance, is putting in place at this present time, caretakers, and speaking of caretakers, to address governmental issues, Parliamentary issues, my "limited information" and I'm saying limited here in inverted commas, because if this is something that is legitimate, legal or part of our system, then it is only correct that sometimes we all do not know everything, so I will be very much pleased to get at least in the next sitting, the list of the caretakers. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** No, I'm serious, so that one can know the list of the caretakers, as the minister has indicated, it's apparent that in some constituencies, if not all, there are caretakers. And I don't know from which side, because when I speak, I do not speak of the party, yes. So I would like to know the caretakers going forward. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Lewis. Senator La Crette, you have requested...

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Ministerial Statements
Personal Explanations***

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I would like the Hansard to record and omit my previous statement, and to record this new statement.

This afternoon, Grenada Shifts moves to St. Patrick East and West, and the Minister of Government will be present to facilitate the Mental Health and Wellness Activity that will be taking place in St. Patrick East and West, including the Ministers for St. Patrick East and West.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator La Crette, and I instruct the Hansard recorders to comply with the request for amendment. We continue. And in that sense, the only valid request for information, if it remains valid, is the one to circulate Ministerial Statements, I think it was made by Senator St. Clair. That same request for information that we have so far. The Clerk will so note. Thank you. Ministerial Statements continue or are concluded. Are concluded. Thank you.

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

Item 9 – Petitions.

Item 10 – Government Notices.

Item 11 – Unofficial Notices.

Item 12 – Questions.

Item 13 – Personal Explanations.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Yes.

Madam President: Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. By your leave, I stand to say a few words. As always, I begin in the name of God Almighty, the merciful, the creator of everyone and everything. It is with a heavy heart that I bring to your

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Personal Explanations

attention and the Members of this Honourable House, the loss of innocent life on a disturbing scale in the ancient land of Canaan, also known as Palestine and Israel. This October, the world has witnessed and is still witnessing a disregard for human life. Only yesterday, we attended the ceremony to mark the loss of 24 Cuban lives in Grenada in 1983, and only last Thursday, did we attend a memorial service to bring healing to our nation for the events that took place 40 years ago.

Madam President, loss of life today is all too common. So far this month, 8,116 human beings have been killed. In order of numbers, they include over 6,500 Palestinians in Gaza, at least 1,409 people in Israel, 104 Palestinians in the West Bank, 57 people in Lebanon, 28 medical staff in Gaza and 24 journalists. The source of these numbers is from Al Jazeera.

Madam President, with over 2,000 children killed in Gaza, parents are now writing the names of their children on their children's forearms and legs, so that, if and when their children are killed, the parents can identify their children among the dead. The time to stop the killing is now. As human beings, as part of the human fabric, we say enough, enough. What is the value of one human life? Isn't all human life still sacred? Did we not read somewhere that, "Thou shall not kill and thou shall not steal"? Have we forgotten that all Abrahamic faiths believe that we have to account for our deeds one day?

Madam President, looking forward, I asked for the following three things.

1. I ask our government to do all within its power and influence within CARICOM and wherever possible, to keep calling for a stop to the ongoing bloodshed. To do whatever you can at the level of the UN and other areas of diplomacy, to save lives. Madam President, if we can save one life, it is as if we can save the whole of mankind. Hope in peace, as opposed to conflict, in life as opposed to death, is a cornerstone of our humanity. It makes us human.
2. I ask for our people, people of our country, to pay attention to what is going on in your world, to do their research and to strive to be in the know and to be an agent for all that is just. Not because we are a small island and limited in numbers, we can't make a difference. No longer do we sit in distant corners of the world, only

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Personal Explanations

as observers.

3. And finally, with your permission, Madam President, I ask in this House that we stand for a minute of silence, for those who have been killed and for those who are being killed, beginning now.

Madam President: I thank Senator Rahaman. Please stand. A minute of silence begins now, and will be broken by the Clerk.

(Minute of silence observed)

(Inaudible comment by Madam President)

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you. And in closing, I would like to remind us that God Almighty will be the judge of all men, in his time. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Thank you. Intensely. Senator André Lewis, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you, Madam President. I just wish to consciously associate myself with the sentiment, a strong sentiment raised here by my brother, yes. And just for the record, just to place on the record that yesterday also, we gathered at the centre Cemetery to pay commemoration and homage to heroic Grenadians, combatants and soldiers who lost their lives defending the homeland of Grenada during the American invasion. I just wanted to place that on record. Because my brother mentioned, they paid out tributes to the Americans. I just thought it was necessary to record that we did lose brave men and women defending our homeland, from the very said powers that had aided and abetted what is taking place in Palestine. Thank you.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

***Personal Explanations
Motions***

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

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I also stand to endorse the statement made by Senator Salim Rahaman. And it is, I've been following the news and I have been seeing what was happening, and it brings me right back to October 1983, when I, I was, I was on the fort, Fort Rupert then. And I saw what was happening there and it really touched me. So I can imagine what is happening in Palestine, and the whole environment down there, and what they are really feeling like. So I really want to, as our administration is in sympathy with the people also, and we look forward when the peace of God will be observed in that region. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business in the Senate, Senator Thomas. Other statements? Thank you.

Clerk Assistant (Ag.): Item 14 – Motions.

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

Sen. The Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President.

WHEREAS debate on the Gracious Address delivered by the Governor-General on the occasion of the Ceremonial State Opening of the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, on Tuesday the 26th of September, 2023, was deferred to a date to be announced;

BE IT RESOLVED that the said Address be now debated by the Senate.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator.

Question proposed.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Motions

Madam President: Correct myself and pass the floor to Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. The Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you, Madam President. The Address by the Governor-General is always a prelude to the next year's Appropriation. In this case, it will be for the year 2024 and the accompanying annual budget debates. This debate will encompass and look into many of the pronouncements made by the Governor-General.

It is in this context, Madam President, that we are proposing that we accept the Governor-General's Gracious Speech with the understanding that there will be extensive debate on its contents in approximately six weeks.

Therefore, Madam President, in accordance with the Standing Order of the House, 27(a), I now propose an amendment to that Motion, which will read: BE IT RESOLVED that the said address be now accepted.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Lewis.

Sen. The Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. And I'm seeking the blessing of my colleagues on the "Other Side", given the fact that we are not too far away from the budget, and the fact that the GG's Throne Speech were only delivered in September, that we seek to do a deferral, so as to allow, if we need to do further examination, rather than just accept and... which may prevent a further debate on the presentation, if I have it right. That's why I'm seeking a deferral on that basis. I'm not sure if I have it right.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Motions

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Lewis. It is my understanding that the proposal is that we accept the Throne Speech of the Governor-General on the basis that it will be substantively debated in the budget statement. Am I correct? Thank you. So that's the proposal. You're shaking your head and raising your thumb. Very good. So we can proceed. Sorry. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, Madam President. To me, that's the logical thing to really do. Should we end up in a situation where there... It comes down to a vote, well, that's not a Motion that would end up being, and it ends up that the situation could be, not necessarily like now, how it's set up, but could end up being a nay, then that creates a whole jeopardy in the whole system.

And maybe it's something we need to look at moving forward, in terms of having the address of the Throne Speech, more as a resource, annexe, rather than putting it through this contentious issue. Maybe more of a sharing than a Motion, because this could create jeopardy. And it's something I think we should look at, and maybe the Constitution issue, the Standing Order issue that be it resolved that the speech, Throne Speech presented by the Governor-General on the Opening of Parliament, which is the premise for the budget, et cetera, et cetera be used as a resource, a signal as to where the administration is signalling.

And so, whether you accept, we signalling or not, is a different discussion, but the speech in its content is not being jeopardised as to whether it's passed or not passed. I don't think the speech is for that, really. That is my humble view.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Madam President: The Gracious Address of her Excellency, the Governor

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Motions

General, is now accepted. Sorry, thank you. Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Pursuant to Standing Order No. 63:

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 Chair, and two other Senators to be known as the Committee of Selection;

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Chair, President, Members: Honourable Claudette Joseph and Senator Salim Rahaman.

Question proposed.

Madam President: This is under nomination of the Leader of Government's Business, and I put it now to the vote.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Motions

Madam President: Senator Adrian Thomas.

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

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 63 (1b) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chair and two other Members to be known as the Standing Orders Committee, 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 the Members to the said Committee.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. I beg to nominate the President as Chair, Senator the Honourable David Andrew as a Member, and Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair as a Member.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Madam President: The Senate Standing Orders Committee is constituted as read. Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: **WHEREAS** Standing Order No. 63 (1c) of the

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Motions

Senate Standing Orders, provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President, as Chair and two other Members to be known as the House Committee;

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator, who called the vote? Senator Thomas, continue, please.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to nominate the following: President as Chair, Senator the Honourable Gloria Thomas as a Member and Senator the Honourable Norland Cox as the other Member.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Madam President: Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas.

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

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 63 (1d) of the Senate Standing Orders provides for the appointment of a Committee to consist of the President as Chair, and four Members to be known as the Committee of Privileges, which shall be elected as soon as may be after the beginning of each session;

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Motions

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I beg to nominate the following: President as Chair, Senator the Honourable Jonathan La Crette as a Member, Senator the Honourable André Lewis as a Member, Senator the Honourable Katisha Douglas as a Member, and Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas as a Member.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Adrian Thomas.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Clerk Assistant (Ag.): Item 15 – Bills.

Madam President: Senator Claudette Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President, and good morning to everyone in the Chamber and to persons viewing online or wherever else you viewing, whether it's on traditional television or online. Madam President, I beg to introduce the first reading of a Bill shortly entitled the Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Licences Act Cap. 172 to exempt all attorneys-at-law from the requirement to take out a professional licence and pay a yearly licence fee in respect of the provision of legal services shortly entitled Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

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 of its stages.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I beg to move also, Madam President, for the second reading of the Bill. Madam President, this is a fairly straightforward Bill tabled before this Honourable House, and it seeks to amend the Licences Act No. 172 or Chapter 172 of the 2010 Revised Laws of Grenada by exempting attorneys-at-law from the requirement of the Act to take out a professional licence and to pay a yearly licence fee in respect of the legal services.

Madam President, the Bill contains a total of five clauses. Clause 1 seeks to provide for the short title of the Bill, and that is the Licences (Amendment) Bill. Clause 1(2) seeks to provide for the Act to come into force on a date as may be appointed by the Minister in the *Gazette*, and the Minister there means the Minister for Finance or the Minister for Finance.

Clause 2 seeks to amend section 2 of the Principal Act to insert a definition of the term "Minister", which is currently omitted.

Clause 3 seeks to amend section 5 of the Principal Act to exempt all barristers, solicitors and attorneys-at-law from the legal requirement of taking out a professional licence and paying a yearly licence fee in respect of the provision of legal services.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President, for the benefit of this Honourable House and the general public, the Licences Act currently covers all licences issued by the state, save and except a few licences specifically named therein, including liquor licences and licences relating to driving and so on. So those types of licences issued by the state for which there are specific bits of legislation, they are exempted from the Licensing Act and everything else, all other licences from licences related to animals, selling food to attorneys-at-law, professionals, accountants, architects, engineers, and so on. So the Act covers the need to go through the relevant procedure and pay the relevant licence fee to obtain licences from the state. And by section 5 of the Licences Act, attorneys-at-law are required to procure a licence to practice as such except in instances where they are acting in the sale of property on behalf of the clients; that's the only exemption that they enjoy currently under the Licences Act.

But, Madam President, in 2011 the Legal Profession Act was enacted by the Parliament and came into force some two years or so later, with the exception of a few sections and a couple of the sections that were not brought into force relate to the issuance of practicing certificates for attorneys-at-law and the conditions to be applied for attorneys-at-law to have their practicing certificate issued and renewed. And among the conditions that apply for attorneys-at-law to have their practicing certificates issued and renewed are the provision of Professional Indemnity Insurance and application to the General Legal Council through the Registrar of the Supreme Court for the issuance of those licences, once as I said Professional Indemnity Insurance is in place and also the requirement for continuing legal education, so that attorneys-at-law maybe always up to date with the changes and improvement in the very dynamic field of Law.

Those sections were in abidance and were brought into force only in September of this year, so that attorneys-at-law now, under the Legal Profession Act, are required to pay a fee, a licensing fee if you want to call it that, a fee under the Legal Profession Act, so that their practising certificate might be issued. So they pay the fee and they comply with the other requirements, provision of evidence of Professional Indemnity Insurance and evidence of continuing legal education, and there is a system there broken down in

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

credits.

So it means now as it stands, there are two bits of legislations under which attorneys-at-law are required to pay licence fees and it is in that vein, this amendment to the Licences Act is made or proposed so that the requirement to pay the licensing fee on the Licences Act be repealed, so that lawyers will now pay under one legislation. If things remain as they are, of course, the obvious injustice will occur, in that, this group of professionals will be required to pay twice on the two separate bits of legislation. So we just want to bring fairness and equity and to regularise that anomaly that now exists with the coming into force of the sections of the Legal Profession Act that require attorneys-at-law to have their practicing certificate issued and the requisite fee be paid. And I must add that attendance to the amendment to section 5 of the Act to remove the reference to attorneys-at-law, will be an amendment to the first Schedule of the Act to remove barrister, solicitors and attorneys-at-law from the list of trades, professions and callings in respect of which a yearly licence fee is required to be paid. So this is the simple amendment that is being proposed, which I commend to this Honourable House. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: I thank Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph, and the floor is open. Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. I would like to ask Senator Joseph a clarifying question, what she says makes sense to me, that practising legal practitioners, lawyers would have to pay twice under the two different Acts. I see under the Licences (Amendment) Bill, I see that the yearly fee is such a corresponding fee of a EC\$1000 and the Senator spoke about the Legal Profession Act of 2011 that was just implemented in September, that aspect of it in terms of the fee aspect, but the Senator did not mention what is the comparable fee that they are required to pay under that Act, Legal Profession Act. So I'm just wondering because we're speaking about Acts that are 2011 and you know quite a long time ago and a EC\$1000

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

back then is not a EC\$1000 now in terms of value so if it is newly implemented under the Legal Profession Act of 2011. I would like some clarification as to what is the amount as compared to what you're taking away here to what you getting on the next side, I hope I'm clear. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Yes, Madam President, what is provided for in the legal profession practicing certificate... I am pulling it up here, but it's a tiered fee structure. Let's see if I have it here. One second, I am pulling it up on here on my device. Madam President, the fees payable, so this is by S.R.&O No. 31 of 2023, which was gazetted on the 11th of August 2023 and came into force on first September.. Sorry, S.R.&O No. 31 of 2023. So under the Schedule to the S.R.&O yearly practicing certificate fees, if the attorney-at-law has less than five years call at the Bar the fee shall be EC\$250. If five years, but less than 10 years at the Bar EC\$350, if 10 to 15 years at the Bar EC\$500, and 16 years and over EC\$750.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph. Senator Rahaman are you satisfied?

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: With the answer, yes. With the figure another... **(Laughter)** It's another issue. So I mean, I understand the rationale for the grading system. It makes sense, but I really feel that legal profession is a profession that I mean, we have brokers and after paying a fee and we have so many other people that have to pay fees and I honestly find that the amounts a little bit on the low side, given the nature of the practice and the opportunity for success in that particular profession. I find the fees to be low but if that is what has been agreed upon and the Government is putting forward this then I suppose it is fine by them, thank you.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President: Thank you, Senator, of course it's before you if you feel to amend the figures, your colleague Senator Joseph is right across from you as I offer the floor to her.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I just rise to assure this Honourable House that based on what was obtained previously to this amendment in the Legal Profession Act, I assure the Honourable House that the revenue will be far better off, notwithstanding the figures. The revenue will be far better off, thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph. Senator Franklyn, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I was about to rise on a Point of Order to point out to the Honourable House Standing Order 34. I am not sure what has transpired is within the ambit of the Standing Orders of this House. The Honourable Attorney General moved the Bill, presented it, and spoke on it. The Honourable Senator Rahaman engaged in debate, and then the Honourable Senator rose again to respond, with the Honourable Senator Rahaman also responding. This is not within the ambit of the Standing Orders of the House, so I'd like to simply urge us to remember the rules that govern this Honourable House. Thank you very much, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you very much, and a warm, good welcome. Good morning to you, and thank you for the reminder of Standing Order No. 34. I believe, at the conclusion of the interventions, Senator Joseph will summarise that ought to be the procedure, and we stand at your recommendation to proceed as follows. Thank you much. Other contributions, Leader of Government's Business, Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, thank you very much. I rise

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

to support my colleague, the AG, Senator the Honourable Claudette Joseph, on her presentation. I think this is a timely Bill and it's a Bill that should have been attended a very long time ago. I want to assure the "Other Side" that despite the low figures that you observe there this is the intention of this Administration, to make life easy for people and we have dealt with in the Ministry of Health, with licence fees and so on before and it's relatively reasonable that the people were seeking the opportunity to practice, we make life as much as easy as possible. Sometimes we tend to categorise and say, "Well, who has more should pay more". Yes, this is the part of our social system whereby sometimes your people tend to feel obligated to take from the "so-called rich" to give to the poor. But our objective is to make sure that we make life as easy as possible for people from all walks of life, from the small man to what we call the bigger people, but I know, as Senator Joseph indicated, the revenue generated will be much more than what it appears to be. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Thomas.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Franklyn, you have your light on, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Initially, I was not going to make a contribution on the Bill, but I feel compelled to do so at this point in time and it was simply because of a comment just made by the Leader of Government's Business that the Government's intention is to "make life easy for people", and concerns raised by the Honourable Rahaman as it relates to the cost. The actual figure—EC\$750 as the maximum, as opposed to EC\$1,000, and I understand the rationale for removing one and allowing the payment of one. That's fair.

However, questions are being asked on the outside as to why not implement the same tier approach for other professionals, such as accountants, dentists, doctors, pilots

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

and more architects and others. All of whom fall under the scope of the Licences Act and are required to take out a professional licence to operate. Most of those who have indicated the accountants, the dentist, and the doctors have to pay EC\$1,000 1,000 and the pilots, for example, have to pay EC\$1,500. So questions are being asked as to why not implement a similar approach for these professionals, other professionals, and I've just mentioned these specific ones because of similarity in value or close range in value. Again, I understand the rationale for bringing them under one structure, allowing the attorneys, solicitors and lawyers to pay under one structure, but again, some people are concerned about the value and the variance between these professionals as opposed to other professionals. And I urge the on-roll members to consider, going forward, also these professionals again in the future. So that's my contribution, Madam President.

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

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President, and my good colleague Senator. The message may be clear. We in the Labour Movement need to get more people in the Cabinet so that workers can get more benefits. **(Applause)** It may be that we have a Cabinet with a lot of lawyers, and they look after their own, probably. Through you, Madam President, I am asking my good colleague, Leader of Government's Business, who echoed a comment made by the Attorney General that this move, of course, the Government to get more revenue, help me with the math. If everyone was expected to pay EC\$1,000.00, and then it comes down to let's say an average of EC\$300 300 because it goes from, I think, EC\$200 up to EC\$700, help me as to how that will result in more.

Now if it's a case where you're not enforcing, it therefore means that people are practicing without meeting the legal requirements and so if every time we break the law, just as how we gave within three months of coming into Office, we allow business people who for years have been collecting people NIS, have been withholding Government VAT et cetera, give them a break. And if now we are rewarding Lawyers, this is what is being

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

said. It is being said that in order to collect from the people who have not been paying, we are going to lower it so that more people will pay. Are we indicating that we're encouraging lawlessness from people who are expected to perform better, and we have to be careful with the messages that we send? If there is a position to lower the fee, you lower it and you stand by your decision, but to advance the reasoning that it will allow for a better collection of revenue, I think it's sending the wrong message, certainly, the way I interpreted it. That's the contribution that I wish to make. **(Applause)**

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

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President, for making some contribution on this important Bill before us. Madam President, I am sort of confused, and maybe it's my own confusion in the process because I'm hearing the matter about the increase, the Government making more money, and I'm trying to figure out how we end up there. When the premise for presentation of this Motion as I heard, is one to what I call regularised, I think in the legal word, I think there is some word, some *pin* or some kind of funny name like that to regularise and have everything in one and that stem from the very instructive question by Senator Rahaman, in terms of to get some clarity, of course notwithstanding the situation.

So to me understanding this adjustment is one whereby the Government is proposing that look, we have the legal and professional services, legal for the Lawyers, Barristers et cetera. and of course there is some schedule that exists there and normally they would be paying \$1,000 for this permission or licence if you want to call it that, every year but what I heard is that okay, understandingly so, rather than having it in both places you know, clean it up and move it over into this new schedule. But if we're moving over, I expect us to move over. I know sometimes if you're transporting things, things can fall out, and so you may end up with less than what you started with, and so I think we want to secure this movement so that we don't end up with less than what you started with. Now you may say, "Well, no, no, no, how you get there".

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

So I listened my good friend Senator Lewis, who we had very serious arguments as young boys debating at the age of thirteen and fourteen and so I went back to some deep thoughts and I say but hold on, if I listen the process for paying this licence fee is that I pay the licence fee and I am not too sure if at the time of paying I really need to show the certificate and the indemnity that I am a lawyer. I interpret that I will then get this certificate, saying afterwards...is like I can send you to pay for my license, but I am only going to get this license when I bring all my papers. So unless there is some sort of good wink where maybe what I call bush lawyers who are not properly trained persons going and paying for licence that they have no papers and then by the time they end up there the Government has collected their monies and they have no real papers, no indemnity because they were bush lawyers and so that is the only how I can see we collecting more as Senator Lewis said.

If you have 10,000 lawyers and you are collecting \$1,000 every year, where is the rest coming from? When you would be charging less essentially with this schedule. So the question also arises is... because I try to deal with digital at my best, so I actually went onto the Gov... where all the laws are, but I didn't see the... I didn't see the... because this is very current. I know it might have been in our email, the gazetted S.R.&O, but I tried to pull it there. So I am not too sure if this Schedule of the EC\$75 and EC\$350 and EC\$500 and so on, and this EC\$250 was in the Legal Services Act. I am not too sure if... but I interpret that from Senator Joseph's presentation, this was taken from the schedule, and I guess that would have been negotiated with the Members.

So the question is, is that a new negotiation that arrived at this, less than five years ago \$250, between \$10 and \$500 \$350, et cetera, or was that something that was there five, six, seven years ago, and we just realised we need to implement it. Because I find it ironic to be saying that you will be collecting EC\$1,000, and this has been the case since 2014, if you look at the S.R.&O pertaining to that particular schedule of licence. Why would we want to reduce this when everything else is going up? I think there is an error somewhere, Madam President, in this process.

I understand the issue about the different... you're young and coming up and

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

different stages in the profession, but I have also heard something else, and maybe I heard wrong in terms of persons involved in the Real Estate sort of component of the legal profession are exempted from this fee, so I see it as persons who deal with real case matters. And then you go to a lawyer in those aspects, and you have to pay the Government tax, I think it's about 2.5% for preparing a lease or doing a deed and all of those things.

I am saying this is the salary... this is now the real salary that the lawyer collects his/her money, and I am trying to figure out even all of these fees, as my dear friend Senator Franklyn spoke about when you look at the fees of the accountants, brewers, and real estate persons have to pay. And it is not about collecting more money, we sit in a place, all of us, where there is something called justice and justice is a very tricky thing, it always asks yourself when you do it for Tom, how do you tell Mary and Jane you cannot do it. **(Applause)** That is when you start seeing where justice is. I am not dealing with equity; that is two different topics. So from one, I think it is kind of morally wrong to be making these adjustments downwards, and we should transfer, line hook and sinker the EC\$1,000, which some may even say is not enough. And if you want to take EC\$1,000 as the base, and then 10 and 15 years might be a certain amount, et cetera.

There is another way also of doing this. You may also want to look at it, because I am not too sure what the premise is for real estate persons and so on. If you look at the annual turnover, because these are businesses that are supposed to be registered, paying taxes, doing normal business. They might want to look at that as another proxy. I am not too sure what is the standard in other countries pertaining to that because tomorrow we have the accountants, tomorrow we have the land surveyors who is paying EC\$1,000 right now as to the schedule come and say, I just started two years ago, do we come back here and reduce and we find at the end of the day they are reducing everything and then turn around and say we are collecting more money?

I wasn't good at Math in school, but I think that premise, Madam President, need to be reconsidered. Maybe the Bar Association, et cetera, would have lobbied in some agreement previously, but I think from a moral standpoint and from a justice standpoint,

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

if this question wasn't asked by Senator Rahaman and the answer wasn't forthcoming before I speak, I would have said yes, let's go, but I am sort of doubtful at this point. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair. Other contributors to the debate? Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I rise, not seeing any other microphone lighting up, so as to reply. Madam President, let me try to reply and clarify the matters raised by all of the other colleagues of this Honourable House.

In 2011, the Legal Profession Act was brought into force, and that was against the background of the recognised need in the public sphere for regulation of this profession. So generally, the Act seeks to regulate the legal profession, that's one. Under the Legal Profession Act, the General Legal Council is established, and that council comprises a cross-section of people, including, as chairman, a retired judge of the High Court; in this instance, the current Chairman is Justice Roslyn Wilkinson. The Bar Association is represented under the General Legal Council.

In fact, the inner Bar is represented... inner bar meaning the, not seeing any other microphone lighting up, King's Council very, very senior and elevated members of the Bar and that is in the person currently of the Director of Public Prosecution; Mr. Christopher Nelson QC, the Attorney General is also on the Council and the Public is represented on the Council, one person coming from the general public currently Mr. Michael Archibald is that person and there is also a person representing the religious community. We have a retired banker, Mr. Daniel Roberts. So there is a wide cross-section of persons making up the council, and the charge of that council is to oversee the regulation of the Bar, particularly in relation to matters of discipline and professional conduct or misconduct, as the case may be.

Under section 26 of the Act, the council has the authority to issue practising certificates to attorneys-at-law once those attorneys-at-law meet certain requirements,

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

and that's where the scrutiny comes in. So that attorney-at-law must prove that he or she is an attorney-at-law on the role duly admitted to practice, has professional indemnity insurance which is something that never occurred in the past and in fact in the Eastern Caribbean where all of the other territories have since enacted the Legal Profession Act to regulate their legal profession, Grenada is the only one with the requirement for professional indemnity insurance. Also, Grenada is the only one with the requirement for lawyers to engage in continuous legal education in order to be issued a practising certificate. And I dare say, the engagement requirements are extremely expensive. I would add that they are very expensive. And the Act in section 59 empowers the council to make regulations for the carrying out of its functions, and that includes making regulations setting out the fees that attorneys-at-law must pay in order to be issued with a practising certificate.

Under the Licences Act, no such regulatory regime exists. Under the Licences Act, attorneys-at-law are named as among several other professions, as I indicated before and trades, not only professions but trades, and so, and there is no enforcement. There is no sanction for anyone who, well, I shouldn't use a loose term such as sanction, but as currently obtained in practice, there is no enforced mechanism, there is no mechanism enforced that allows or makes sure that these licensing fees mandated under the Licences Act, that's perhaps something that can be addressed at the government level. But there is no real enforcement of that legislation really taking place, and I mean that's the truth.

On the contrary with this amendment you will not be able to practice if you don't have your practicing certificate so it is guaranteed that under this regime, the fees will be paid up because without payment of the fee, the certificate will not be issued and without issuance of the certificate the attorney-at-law will not be able to practice and that's the backdrop against which I say that in reality the revenue will be better off. I am just stating facts, and as I indicated, the council in its deliberations took a number of things into account: one, the unbelievable expense ranging all up to EC\$100,000 per year for professional indemnity insurance; we live in a small society, a small economy and

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

sometimes what you see is not necessarily what the reality is. I remember one old lawyer said to me, "The legal profession is one where the members often starve in dignity", so when you see it, it is not necessary that it is up there. The council was guided by the fact of the expense to meet the requirements of the issuance of the practising certificate, insurance and the continuing legal education. 29 or so Members of the Bar only last week attended a conference that will qualify as continuing education, which required them to travel to the United States and to pay their own way for so doing for a few days; some could not attend.

Also, in the profession, there was also a tiered system of payment of dues to the Bar Association; there is an existing tiered system of payment which generally mirrors what was applied in the Legal Profession Act. So these would be additional, so in a sense, it mirrors what lawyers pay to the professional body, the Bar Association. So these fees would actually be in addition to that. So the general philosophy and rationale for the amendment to the Licences Act is that the profession should not be asked to pay twice for a licence, and I hope I have explained the background and rationale for the tiered figure and that you are satisfied that you got it.

So, Madam President, I commend the Bill to the Honourable House, and I must pause here to say thank you, young Franklyn, for keeping us in check. Sometimes we have such a good relationship here, and we feel we could chat with each other across, but we are to be kept in check (**applause**), and I would generally do that. Thank you for helping me. (**Laughter**). Thank you.

Madam President: Everything must go through the President, but I am happy not to have to adjudicate the warmth and camaraderie that crosses the aisle. Thank you, Senator Joseph, for your summation. All contributions to the debate concluded.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Clerk.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

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

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumes.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that there be a third reading of the Bill. Madam President, just one thing I would like to add in relation to Clause 5 of the Bill, repeal of the licensing order of 2014. This, I see my learned friend on the "Other Side" looking at me, and I am a bit puzzled, so I think I should explain...

(The Clerk and Madam President converse privately)

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President: Thank you, Madam. Just wait a minute. Thank you.

Question proposed.

(The Clerk and Madam President converse privately)

Madam President: Now you can rise to make your...

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Just a comment... that there were two identical S.R.&Os of 2014 passed, one signed by the incorrect Minister. The Minister under the Licences Act is the Minister for Finance. One was signed by the Minister for Infrastructure, which was back in 2014. So basically it's just tidying up, so the correct one will remain on the books. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you for the clarification, Senator Joseph. Senator St. Clair.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Actually, I was going to speak when you called the third one anyway because now I get... So the identical one and one going to stay on the books, and I am trying to figure out... I know it is not a back and forth, but what I interpret is that at the end of the day, should this whole Motion be passed, there will be none on the books except what would be then updated in the legal and professional. They don't need to do that anymore because an S.R.&O 31 was already done with the schedule for the EC\$750, EC\$500, EC\$350 and EC\$250, which will be the new licensing they would have to pay.

Their shouldn't be... because if you look at Clause 5 speak about which seeks to repeal the licencing order 2014 No. 20 of 2014 so this basically zeroes it off and so what I was going to stand to say not withstanding also Senator Joseph also spoke which she has a right to do at this point that we be mindful of these things what it will cause and I

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023

will cause a bigger question to look at what is happening maybe in the medical profession. Because they also need to be upgrading their selves as far as I know with the medical council, and when I look, I think their fees are... I think the dentist is \$5,000, if I am not mistaken. So I think that sort of signals to us to have a review of all of these things, and I know it will take a while, but it is something that we may need to look at as a broader picture, taking them category by category.

That is what I wanted to say, so that this doesn't just end at this point. Because not all of these persons are listed as groups or organisations that might have all these different legal counsel and all these different councils to which they belong. I think the Surveyors may have one, the medical services may have one, so I say this as a broad statement moving forward as we try to clean up. I do appreciate what is happening, but it's just the justice that has me concerned.

Madam President: Thank you, advocate for justice. Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I thought I was clear.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Yes, you're clear, it is just that I am looking for room for improvement.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: In relation to the SRO 20 of 2014, this is the best improvement we can offer at this time.

(Inaudible comment by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, there isn't much more that I can add to what I have already offered to this Honourable House.

Madam President: Thank you, so we have completed the debate.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Licences (Amendment) Bill, 2023
Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Madam President: Senator Adrian Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I beg to introduce for first reading, a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled Public Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

(Clerk converses with Legal Drafters and Leader of Government's Business, Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas)

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Public Finance Management Act No.17 of 2015, shortly entitled Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, just excuse us for one minute as I consult with the Leader of Government's Business.

(Leader of Government's Business, Senator the Honourable Adrian Thomas and Senator the Honourable Gayton Jonathan La Crette converse privately)

Madam President: Senator La Crette, you have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I beg to introduce for its first reading a Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to repeal and replace the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015 to strengthen the rules-based fiscal policy framework, shortly entitled the Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Madam President: Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: 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 of its stages at this Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

Madam President: Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I beg to move that the second reading of the Bill be taken. Madam President, this Bill seeks to repeal and replace the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015, which was enacted in 2015 and entered into force on 1st January 2016 and was amended in 2016, 2017 and 2019. Honourable Members, please allow me the permission to give you some background re this Bill.

The Bill is the product, Madam President, of multiple and extensive consultations and reviews of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2015. The first such review was conducted by the Ministry of Finance internally in 2018 with a view to:

1. Proposing amendments to clarify ambiguities, introduce specificity, and ensure consistency with other legislation and policies.
2. Injecting more realism into the Act to better support the day-to-day fiscal operations of the country.

The findings of this review, Madam President, Members of this Honourable House, were discussed with the Fiscal Responsibility Oversight Committee, thereafter named FROC. The FROC acknowledged various shortcomings and proposed a repeal and replacement of the 2015 Act, the FROC's 2018 Report. The 2018 review, Madam President, was also followed by a technical assistance mission of the International

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Monetary Fund, thereafter, the IMF, in May of 2019. The IMF findings, Madam President, supported the recommendations of the Ministry of Finance for legislative reform and comprised additional recommendations for reforming measures to strengthen the fiscal framework. Madam President, however, at that particular time, no decision was taken by the present Government of the day to implement the legislative reform. The amendments dated 2016, 2017, and 2019 did not address the matters identified.

Moreover, Madam President, Honourable colleagues, in 2020 to 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary for the Ministry of Finance to re-examine the provisions of the 2015 Act to determine the most prudent fiscal response within the legislative confines, which posed challenges at that particular point in time. Accordingly, another IMF assessment was conducted as part of the IMF's annual economic surveillance mission for Grenada in 2022, which reiterated the need to simplify the fiscal framework, clarify ambiguities, introduce specificity and ensure consistency with other fiscal legislations.

Madam President, following the IMF's assessment, the Ministry of Finance requested another technical assistance mission to review the 2015 Act in the context of the post-COVID-19 era. The 2023 IMF assistance mission occurred in April 2023.

Madam President: I thank Senator La Crette for introducing the proposed legislation, and the floor remains open now for further debate. Seeing no request for the floor... Senator St. Clair, we are speaking on the Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill. Is that correct? It's the resilience.

(The Clerk and Madam President converse privately)

Madam President: Fiscal Resilience...

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

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Madam President: Thank you, gentlemen. We really are debating the Fiscal Resilience Bill, correct?

(The Clerk and Madam President converse privately)

Madam President: Thank you, Senator La Crette. You switched onto this very important Fiscal Resilience Bill. It's before you. Please proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Yes, Madam President, we started with the Public Finance Management Act first, but legal counsel did advise us that this Bill be read first because the Finance Management Bill precedes the Fiscal Resilience. As a result, we went back to the Fiscal Resilience. I just wanted to highlight one or two of the clauses that are due for amendment under this Bill. The Bill seeks to...

Madam President: Sorry to interrupt you, just want to be clear that all Members know now which Bill we are debating... Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023.

Madam President: Senator Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Yes, thanks, I am clear now, but just as a matter of observation, if this change or decided on the "Other Side", I think the proper thing to do is to bring it to the attention of the President so you can so direct us because what I have identified is the other Bill, yes. Just an observation.

Madam President: Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: And we are in the second reading now.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Madam President: Excuse me.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: We are in the second reading.

Madam President: We are in the second reading of the Fiscal Resilience Bill, and we have currently set aside the Public Finance Management Bill. We will return to that. Thank you. Proceed, Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Thank you, Madam President. Part 1 provides for the preliminary provisions and contains clauses 1 to 5. Clause 1 provides for the short title. Clause 2 provides for the interpretation action, including definitions for terms. Clause 3 provides for the scope and application. Clause 4 provides for the relationship between provisions and the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 and the Public Debt Management Act, 2015. Clause 5 provides for the objectives.

Part 2 provides for the establishment of a fiscal responsibility framework, including fiscal rules and targets, and contains clauses 6 to 9. Clause 6 provides for some measures that the Government must employ to facilitate its compliance with the fiscal rules. Clause 7 provides for fiscal rules relating to wages and the primary balance to effect the management and minimisation of public debt obligations. Clause 8 provides for targets to ensure progressive minimisation of public debt obligations and improve the Government's capacity to satisfy its debt obligations. Clause 9 provides for the suspension clause to empower the Minister to suspend fiscal rules and targets in specified circumstances and for the subsequent institution of measures to restore compliance with the fiscal rules and targets.

May I continue, Madam President, or we get the gist?

Madam President: Please continue.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Thank you. Part 3 provides for the

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

facilitative and supervisory functions of the Minister, the Statistical Office and the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee and contains clauses 10 to 19. Clause 10 provides for the duties and powers of the Minister for implementation and reporting. Whereas clause 11 provides for the Statistical Office established under the Statistics Act to maintain and generate data that informs the appropriate measures to be taken to effect compliance. Moreover, clause 12 provides for the continuation, composition and duties of the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee in accordance with the Schedule. Clause 13 provides for the monitoring mechanism of Statutory Bodies and State-owned Enterprises, in light of the definition of public debt, and to ensure prudence in Fiscal Risk Management in the public sector.

Part 4 provides for miscellaneous matters, including confidentiality in the exercise of the responsibilities, Madam President, and powers of the Minister, and contains Clauses 14 to 17. Clause 14, Madam President, Honourable Members, provides for confidentiality and information generated in furtherance of compliance with the provisions, including sanctions for public officers who disclose such information without authorisation. Clause 15 empowers the Minister to make regulations to give effect to the provisions. Clause 16 provides for the repeal of the Fiscal Responsibility Act No. 29 of 2015, and clause 17 provides for the transitional provisions in light of the repeal under clause 16.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator La Crette. The floor is open for debate. Senator Salim Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President, and thank you to my colleague Senator La Crette. A few comments on this Fiscal Resilience Bill with regard to clause 7, wage rule. Considering that a previous wage ceiling of 9% of GDP was recommended by the IMF, and considering that it was upheld for many years, considering that the financial implications of COVID-19 and the finances of business and Government alike have changed and considering the new recommendations of the IMF, and considering the value change of money and inflation rate pressures over the last few

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

years. It is understandable that Government would seek to move the percentage point up to allow room for growth in wages of existing public servants and new areas of governance needed to operate a tighter ship or a more efficient public service.

The private sector is aware of this and supports it in principle. What has not been sufficiently clear or explained is why 13%, why four percentage points or not more or less? The why. What we want to caution against which we have seen before, and which is one of the reasons why the limit was set in the first place, is a bloating of the public service which can add to the financial obligations and pressures of Government which if not carefully managed can negatively affect the financial performance and the ability to pay down the debt in a prudent manner. So just a little caution. I am sure they're doing their math; they have good people in the Ministry of Finance, I know.

That said, I want to make a recommendation to them that performance-based evaluations are necessary tools used by the private sector to determine efficiency and competence, among other areas, to measure performance and general value for money among employees and departments. Efficiency is the word. Such evaluations should be budgeted for once per year and used in the wage negotiations going forward. Ensuring that as Government gives more, it ensures that it has greater efficiency; value for money.

Moving forward to clause 8, page 10, section 8 (1). I see that we know that the Government has committed under the Act to bring the public debt down to 60% of nominal GDP by 2035. That is a good thing. I also note that for many businesses, 60% debt is simply not sustainable, so coming from the private sector... I know public sector debt management is a little different; they are allowed to take on more debt, and they can handle more debt and the financing, many times, is concessionary. I want to reemphasise the importance, and the Prime Minister mentioned it, of ensuring that the Government seek debt, that is, new debt that must be as low as possible... concessionary financing because the debt figure that we have is quite high, and ideally I would like to see our national debt under 50%, I think I said so before. In many businesses, we can't exceed 40%. It's dangerous to exceed that 40% mark. Regular businesses. So, to seek better terms to negotiate more favourable rates on existing debt. I also notice on subsection 3

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

that they intend to reduce debt as a percentage by 1.5 points per annum to 2035. If they can increase that to 2% that would be 22 points, so that's a challenge for them.

Finally, my last two points are that perhaps, you know, we have the EC dollar, and so the strength of the EC dollar is not only dependent on our fiscal performance, our fiscal responsibilities, but also the others within the territories of the OECS. And so perhaps the OECS should have a department or an office to seek out and to be responsible to write for project funding for the region. I don't know that that exists. Everybody is doing their own thing, but it's just an idea in order to ensure the maintenance of a strong EC dollar, a combined debt management strategy for the OECS states. So writing in a timely manner for these opportunities, grants and other things that may come up from time to time, looking at it strategically from the region of the OECS to make sure that we get the very best of what is on offer.

And locally to strengthen the GDB, our local bank, so that they may invest in segments of the economy, the small businesses that can't really go to the bank or the credit union to get a loan easily, because they are high risk. I noticed that in past years, I must commend the GDB for doing a very good job in terms of the collection and lending to small businesses that are considered high risk when compared to other institutions within the region. Government's GDB is doing quite a good job. So, to strengthen the GDB by even looking at profits from stable statutory bodies. Statutory bodies are like children to the Government, and they do well here. Some children do better than others, but Government has an oversight that they can perhaps take when it is needed and utilise that in GDB programmes to assist small and vulnerable businesses.

So these are my comments regarding the Fiscal Resilience Bill. I think it is good and I hope that the Government can manage their wage bill so that it doesn't put additional pressures to reduce the debt as they intend to reduce it. I thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Senator representing Business for his reading comments and, of course, recommendations to the Government, especially regarding the wage debt matrix interaction. Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Other contributions?

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Senator St. Clair, representative for Farmers in the Senate.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. My contribution towards this Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023, in essence, as presented, is repealing the previous Fiscal Responsibility Act. And, of course, my research would have shown that there have been several calls for reviewing this, as presented by Senator La Crette.

In fact, there were some minor amendments that took place in about one or two years after it was initially passed and adopted. My reading is that locally at the ministry, the technical team would have observed as with anything else as you start working on something, you start realising that there is modification updates and I think COVID-19 would have bring home the reality of urgencies plus that of the IMF who is monitoring us very closely would have collectively agreed along with the FROC that some changes were needed. The question of the name, because name is always a very important thing for some people, it doesn't matter, but the word "resilience" is a serious transformative word in the context of what this Bill intends to do, as presented by Senator La Crette.

Resilience is not only about the happening, but is in the aftermath of the shock, what happens after that event? How do you stand up and continue to function, so as the elder folks would say, we need to save for the rainy days. Yes, that's what you're saying, how do you cut and contrive such that if something happens, you have something to fall back on, and that is the context of understanding resilience, and it's the context of when you look at the IMF Report, the last one in 2023, actually, June, the report was dated. It speaks about how you handle after shock. In fact, it was interesting that in my reading, it speaks about even the previous administration being able to survive through that hard economic time, the rise in oil prices, and the rise in food prices were because of the savings and other tools that were able to be pulled out of the Act then.

However, the issue was that whilst we were able to survive during that shock, what happens after? Is there blood that you can get from donors to keep you going? So this resilience part, I see it as taking another step in the whole fiscal discipline of the country, and so this is the context that I am seeing it, in line with what the World Bank is seeing.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

And I say this to say that, so I listen to my good friend, Senator Rahaman, speak about the wage matter and farmers agreeing with this proposed EC\$60, and we speak about other rises in the wage Bill and moving from the 9% as the cap in terms of allocation to salaries and wages to 13%. In essence, it is building a capacity for resilience in some form or format, whether you need more persons, whether you need an increase in different salary pay-outs, so those adjustments would have been calculated and properly organised. So I am not really worried about that.

The issues about providing more oversight on the statutory bodies, state-owned bodies, because, of course, debt incurred by those institutions is basically government debt, technically, because they are children. And so the contributory factors, I think, are already built in, in certain ways, it's very good. In terms of what percentage for the debt and all of those things, I see this as a matter that needs to be in constant review based on the dynamics, and there should be models that exist such that if oil prices rise, if the Consumer Price Index goes one way, how do we make those adjustments inside of there? And so I don't see us, for example, having to say, "Come back to have a discussion on whether it should be 10% or 5%". So even if you read through the document, I would take it that the 13% is there, but there is room for making those manoeuvres. And the question is, where am I going with all of this?

I am going there with all of this because I am concerned about the resilience, as the IMF is concerned about. And so my rate, Madam President, that the IMF is saying to us that there is something that they refer to sometime in 2020, referred to as a Disaster Resilience Strategy, 2020. It is a big document of one hundred and something pages, which underpins this recommendation and support for this change that they are speaking to. And what it is saying to us, it's not just about this Bill, this Bill here is minor, it's the components of this resilience strategy, which is a big document between the IMF and Grenada that you can keep going, such that you could stand up to the pressures.

And this is my concern, and it is a concern because it has bearing on how the budget is handled to ensure that those activities... Because there is a recommended matrix, there is a matrix actually as to things to be done to be able to support this matter.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

And so, for example, they speak about issues about supporting what you call the Catastrophic Risk Insurance, the course, the one for fishermen and fisher folks. I know that within Coca and Nutmeg, we are discussing the issue of Crop Insurance. So the issue of how the Government budget supports these activities would determine how hard in the aftermath of a shock you will be able to get back up and running without interfering with the finances of the country in a significant way.

But more so, Madam President, it speaks about the issue of climate change. It speaks about the issue of the need to move towards renewable energy and geothermal energy. It speaks about issues of coastal erosion. It speaks about the issue of the linkage of Agriculture and Tourism and how we can ensure that we have more airlifts that can benefit Agriculture, such that we can be more resilient. It speaks about, Madam President, which I wouldn't go into much because my fellow Senator in Labour may touch that, the issue of the Wage Bill, the issue about reforms with NIS, and the issue with pension. Because all of those things add up to Government expenditure, and all the simple words that we are saying, debt, those are debts, those are debts.

It also speaks of a level of transparency with the CBI Programme in terms of how much money really is available that the Government can use for different investments, not as a grant, I think it was fixed in the last 2023 Budget, not as a grant, but they are, I think it's non-cash or non-tax income or something like that. The transparency of the National Transformation Fund. Those are the things that sort of trigger my interest in this here as a good document because those things that I mentioned and more need to be done well, otherwise the resilience will not be what we're looking for, and that to me is the message I think we need to understand. And also the policy from the Government end from our public servants within the ministries, knowing that when you're doing your budget and you're budgeting and you're planning, we cannot afford to be leaving out key things. We cannot minimise, say, well, just put EC\$200,000 for that man. But when we put \$200,000 when really we should put an EC\$500,000 to build that, maybe climate-smart resilience, so that the farmers could have access to more irrigation, and maybe we could reduce praedial larceny, which is a shock too, in terms of after your investment, all of

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

those things. How do you stop that? How do you reduce that? How do you help, maybe with agro-processing, so that you know that person would be able to have value-added products, and they might be able to store them better? All of these things are what build resilience and reduce the impact.

So I am saying this that whilst we may go through and feel this is okay, that Disaster Risk Strategy that is within the IMF and of course Grenada, I think we need to look at that very seriously and how it will support. And I think as a nation there should be some sort of level of public education in that context because all the citizens, all the businesses, institutions need to understand the role they play in reducing that impact. Because the more we could do for ourselves, it reduces the stress on Government and Government systems. And this is the message I want to communicate in this short contribution towards this.

There has generally been a favourable discussion by all that there needs to be some modification. The transparency part, the accountability part, and the resilience part are my main interests because of how you stand up after. And so with these, Madam President, few words, I make my contribution, and I would speak maybe on other matters as they may arise later on this matter. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Senator for Farmers and Fishers and for your contribution on the centrality of resilience for sustainability. Other contributions to the debate? Distinguished Senator for Workers, André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. And thanks to the Senator for the presentation of the amendment to the Bill. Labour has always indicated its support for guidelines in terms of managing public resources. This is on record. However, we do have certain concerns that we have had in the past, and we continue to have that we have not seen addressed.

One of the immediate concerns that I see here, and I guess when the Government side responds, they may be able to clarify it, is that the new amendment may be included.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Let me rephrase this. Under the definition of the Wage Bill in the existing Act, pension and NIS contributions are excluded from what is considered the Wage Bill, and we'll see the importance of the link for this. In the proposed amendment, pension in this amendment now specifically includes NIS contribution, but it has not specifically addressed the issue of pension, so I do not know if it continues to exclude pension or if it is now including pension as part of the Wage Bill.

And the reason for this is that Labour has consistently said that to restrict, by law, what can be negotiated for salary increases and other benefits cannot be considered free collective bargaining negotiations. When you conduct free bargaining negotiations it therefore means that it is expected that the parties will present their information and through the process of negotiations give and take one will be able, as we have demonstrated in the past before this came into play in 2014, 2015, this came into play during the Structural Adjustment Programme of the past administration and I hope this current administration is taking that into account. Because many things that came into play during the Structure Adjustment Programme seemed to have just been continued forever.

This section 7 can be the trigger, has been the trigger and can be the further trigger for industrial unrest. Because if, for instance, as the past administration has admitted and this current Administration has admitted during the process of negotiations, that workers deserve to be paid more, but they are restricted by the Act. Listen to me. They are restricted by the Act, what do you leave of us to do? We have negotiated with countless private sectors, we have negotiated with the Governments in the past, and we have been able to reach an agreement without a law standing over our heads that prevents a free collective bargaining agreement.

As a matter of fact, Labour is known to have taken many one-off payments in the past that have not been added to the salaries of our members. Through you, Madam President, and my colleague here as a former leader in the movement, senior person knows that.

So the question would arise, why is it necessary to put into law a restriction even

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

before negotiation commences as to what one can get? This current Government is on record through the Government negotiating team for admitting that they could have paid more salary increases, especially in year two. Sad to say it. It is only the Technical and Allied Workers Union that has pursued this matter to the level of the Minister because workers have been short-changed.

Workers have been short-changed because the Government negotiating team has admitted and has accepted that, for whatever reason, they did not want to pay more than the 4% in year one, and we all said, okay, we can, its a negotiation, but they can pay more than 4% in year two and year three, year three is 5%. But, and I'm saying this here, it is only the Technical and Allied Workers Union that has taken up the Government on this offer that they have withdrawn. That's why we are before the Minister, yes, and it is a disservice to workers. And the state making it clear here you have an employer saying that look, yes, we can afford to pay more even within the ambit of the existing law of the 9% of GDP, even within that restriction, they could have afforded to pay more but using whatever influence, an employer does that but one do not expect want one will say a "decent administration" "transformative administration" to change its mind from giving workers more, accepting that they deserve more because you may be able to get some people for various reasons, yes, to fight against the very interest of your employees.

We need to bear in mind that the 1% and I'm saying 1% because there's a clear indication of where both parties' minds were at for year two. Workers must bear in mind. And my colleagues on the "Other Side" here, I'm asking you to bear in mind, because you will not always be most likely in Government. I mean, because the election is called every five years, you can lose, you can win, or you may decide on a career change.

But these are ordinary working-class Grenadians who 20 years from now, a net present value of 1% now in 20 years' time, what will that mean? One, for pension, so that when our workers retire they will go home with a better pension, and two, for the quality of life. And we have always said that we believe it is unfair, and it is in keeping with the ILO, the International Labour Organisation Standard of what free collective bargaining is. Because if you start from day one that you pass a law because you have the majority in

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Parliament so whether you have 15 seats or whether or not you have eight verses seven we understand how we stand on the side of the administration that we support when we come to this House. An even if colleagues genuinely know that workers deserve more, but there's this law that inhibits you even before you start, it is unfair and a disservice to the working people within the public service.

So the Labour Movement is calling not for 13%, yes 13% is an increase, but we are calling for the removal of any restriction on the negotiating process. But more than that, because we are not sure where pension will be calculated, if pension is calculated as part of the Wage Bill, on one hand, on one hand you may be saying that you are increasing the amount that can be spent on wages, but if you are now including pension, if you're including pension it therefore means less would be attributed to do what you call your basic wage. And I am going on the premise because certainly in the existing Act, under the definition of a Wage Bill, pension is excluded. And because it is not clearly stated here if it is included, it therefore means that you will now be faced with having less amount under law, not affordability, because the issue, many times, is not affordability, it is a question of the distribution. And because you now have a law governing what you can distribute to the workers, they can be negative, and they will be negatively impacted. So we continue to call for this so as to lessen and reduce the possibility of industrial unrest whenever we come to collective bargaining.

We agree that statutory bodies, any business, all businesses, need to be properly managed, and it is good to have oversight. And that is why we are at a loss as to why, over one year after the relevant process was followed, and why after the relevant Minister and ministry got the signature of the workers' representative who should be representing Gravel and Concrete on the Board of Directors, up to now they have failed to have their workers' representative perform. We have heard all kinds of issues as to what is taking place within Gravel and Concrete, and we wonder, we wonder reluctantly, whether or not there are things that they are trying to hide from workers and the nation. It cannot make sense.

Since October, November last year, after the workers nominated the worker

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

representative on the Board of Directors of the Gravel and Concrete, and after that was communicated to the relevant ministry and after the ministry sent the relevant correspondence to the worker representative, who attached his signature as accepting the appointment, the workers are yet to have the representative perform. And despite everything that we have done, except going public, we have probably failed; we have failed by not taking to the streets. But we want to ensure that we do everything because this is a new administration, yes. We want to make sure that we do everything because there are times when that trigger is squeezed, you can't control what comes out and where it goes. We are at a loss.

So we agree, we agree that the statutory bodies, because we are speaking Government here and Government as a whole, need to be properly managed, need to have oversight. And we call for that because the better these departments are managed and run, the better we ought to perform, and therefore the possibility of having more so that the workers can get a better return, in terms of benefit, is best for the workers and ourselves. So we support that, there is absolutely no doubt about that.

But then explain to us why, up to now, despite all the interventions that we have made at all levels, including the highest level, this matter is not yet resolved. The workers are tethering, and there are other issues there. The workers are tethering. The workers' representative on the Board of Gravel and Concrete, who has been making headlines and headlines and headlines, has not been allowed to perform. So in supporting this here, we're saying you must not only walk the walk but you have to walk the walk.

So we give our support. Yes, as we have indicated, and I just wish to repeat this because one of the constant refrains of the Labour Movement 2014 or 2015 to now have been the issue of that restriction in terms of law. The Government has a right, as all owners and employers have a right, to guide your negotiating team as to how far you should go. But we think that it is wrong and unfair to pass it into law. Because what you may find, I'm just putting this here because it is contained here and now it now moved to 13% right, but as I said there may be other things that are included that were not included before which may mean that they might be less for the workers to get that this can lead,

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

this can lead and will lead at some stage to industrial issues.

So we are using this opportunity to call on the Administration as you continue the aspect of transformation to look back in history and to determine whether or not in the absence of this rule that came into play during the Structural Adjustment Programme whether or not the public sector unions have not been demonstrating our level of responsibility by being able to conclude negotiations, even many times without taking any salary increases.

If you were to review the salary increases within the public service, you would recognise that over the past 15 or so years, give or take, there are as many as probably six or seven years within that timeframe during which there were no salary increases. I shouldn't say over the past 15 years, because certainly from 2016 or 17, thereabout, until the present, there have always been increases. But before that, certainly after about 2014, the 10 or 15-year period before, there are many one-offs, and one-offs do not go on your salary. And it therefore means that even if you get a lump-sum payment it does not go on your salary given the impact of inflation you are actually working for less.

So this is just the overall comments that I wish to make and call on our colleagues on the "other side" as you continue to work and making everything as much as possible better that you pay concrete attention to this matter and allow the free process of collective bargaining to take place. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you for your customary defence of workers' interests, Senator Lewis, and I give the floor to Senator David Andrew.

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I rise to lend my support to the Bill as presented by Honourable La Crette. This Fiscal Resilience Bill, in my mind, responds very aptly to a number of recommendations coming from international agencies, the World Bank, the IMF, and even our own experts within the Ministry of Finance.

Careful review of the previous Fiscal Responsibility Act would reveal that there

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

were several constraining factors, several things that left areas of ambiguity that brought question into the validity, the reliability are some of the very things that we felt came out of it. So the attempt to define clearly some of the specific areas will eliminate the ambiguities and allow for greater specificity. So some of the terms being defined there was ambiguity in how they were interpreted and so when you hear a figure quoted, when you hear debt without a clear understanding that it probably included all those statutory bodies and all these other things probably the figure that was reported wasn't a real reflection of the economic state of affair. And so that section that deals with redefining and creating the specificity for many of those terms is supposed to make this document a lot more reliable and so it's commended.

Then even the issue of public debt and statutory bodies we know clearly that there have been statutory bodies like the Marketing and National Importing Board that Government had to spend millions of dollars to absorb the debt obligations for and from my understanding they were not calculated inside the original debt calculation. But this Resilience Bill addresses these concerns by the way they redefine the terms and it's highly commended for that.

Section 7 and the wage rule its adjustment from nine to 13%... I mean Senator Lewis, the Labour Senator, talked about the pension and whether or not it's included but not only the pension is something of concern, but the fact that we have negotiated wage increases for the next couple of years and we are currently undertaking the minimum wage review to become implemented in 2024 with approval. Now, all of this money and spending-related documents and positions require us to have all the more fiscal management, fiscal prudence and fiscal responsibility in managing. And so while I could agree with the spirit of the Honourable Senator's statements it might be premature, probably even reckless to just move from nine percent constraint to total open floodgate.

Because in the middle of all of that, Madam President, we have not talked much about the productivity discourse which is a critical element to sustain any of these things that we're talking about. The increase salaries that we propose, the increase minimum wage and the negotiated salaries four, four, five that we talk about and the freedom to

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

negotiate widely that must be premised on the discourse of increased productivity because that's the only how the genuine resilience and strength of the economy can be guaranteed. **(Applause)**

But I think it augurs well, it creates an atmosphere for a predictable industrial climate because the fact that even before the end of the budget year there needs to be engagement with bargaining agents to complete the bargaining agent that's in that section as well at least a year before it becomes effective. And when all of those things are there it creates the atmosphere for a very predictable industrial climate and that augurs well for economic stability and continued growth in the country.

I want to quickly add too that even the suspension clauses, section 9, it allows for a more nimble and responsive adjustment to shocks. Obviously, as small, in fact, as big an ocean, small island states, we are subject to lots of shocks, sometimes external variables that we have very little control over and when examining the suspension clauses, they indicate a more nimble ability to respond, which will, in fact, increase our ability to bounce back. And this is why the name of this Act is Resilience, the Fiscal Resilience Bill, and so that too makes it highly commendable.

The last thing I want to speak about is the Fiscal... That section 12 that speaks to the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee, same FROC, I think, from my review, it gives stronger responsibility within the process of managing public finances, even to the extent of presenting reports to the Houses of Parliament.

And I think, Madam President, this augurs well for the transparent and accountable conduct of the country's business. And so with these few observations in support of my colleague, presenter, Honourable La Crette, I commend support for this Bill to this Honourable House. Thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Andrew. Critical clarifications made, appreciated. We pass the floor to Senator Franklyn, Neilon Franklyn. You have the floor, sir.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, before I begin officially my contribution to this debate, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate those students who will be graduating from TAMCC today, an awesome job done by them and their parents who stood by them.

Madam President, every time I stand in this Honourable or sit in this Honourable House and I listen to the proposed Bills and amendments and Motions brought forward by the Government I become more and more disappointed in myself for thinking that at some point they will understand that you don't just bring things to the House and not provide proper justification, proper explanation, and give a clear understanding as to why we are at this point, why we intend to make these changes and how we came up with these changes. In saying this, Madam President, I understand that any progressive society, any society that we live in, you expect changes to be made, changes to policy, changes to legislation, general changes.

We have before us the Fiscal Resilience Bill, not necessarily an amendment to part of the predecessor, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, but a repealing of the legislation. And one would think after hearing the Honourable La Crette explain the clauses, not necessarily explain, but read the clauses of the Bill, and went further to indicate that the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the FRL, as it is commonly known, the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation, had challenges, challenges, challenges, challenges, challenges, so we are here to repeal it. The perception is that the legislation was no good, so we have to get rid of it. We have to create something new. We have to bring something new to this Honourable House because we live in transformative times, transformation.

Madam President, I heard in the "Other Place" one Honourable Member mentioned that when he reads the Bill, he feels young. I said, "Ah, I need to read this Bill as well, I might feel younger." **(Laughter)** Madam President, I'll tell you how I feel just now. **(Laughter)** through you, Madam President. Madam President, before I read the Bill in my humble young mind, I thought it would be something new, something authentic, a rebirthing of authenticity. Madam President, to my surprise, out with the old, in with the new, something better.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

But, Madam President, if the previous legislation, the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation, the predecessor to the Fiscal Resilience Bill that is being proposed to this House, had significant challenges, basically ineffective, you can't use it. We have to get something new. This same Government, Madam President, while the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation was in place under the previous administration, the previous administration governed Grenada during one of its most difficult periods, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that legislation was in place. Prior to that period, the legislation was in place, and after that period, the legislation remained in place. Madam President, this Government boasted of meeting a “pregnant treasury.” This same Government, which was able to facilitate the payment of pensions without having to raise a single dollar. This same Government, upon gaining state control in St. George's, gave itself an EC\$2000 increase without even the slightest idea as to how the money was there or was generated. The same Government that, upon taking office, created a new ministry and paid exorbitant amounts of salaries to people there. Madam President...

Madam President: Request for a Point of Order. Senator Thomas.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Well, I just want to, as a Point of Order, Madam President. I'm not aware that the present Administration gave themselves an EC\$2000 increase in salary. I think it is false information, and he needs to clarify that or retract it.

Madam President: Senator Franklyn.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I need to clarify where it's basically ascertained that it is false information. There was constant and continuous debate about this issue previously.

Madam President: Senator Thomas.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I think I was very clear. I'm seeking clarification because I am not aware, as Leader of Government's Business, that the present Administration paid themselves an EC\$2000 increase in salary. If this cannot be substantiated, then I will ask that the statement be withdrawn.

Madam President: Thank you. Senator Franklyn.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Frankly: Thank you very much, Madam President, for the interest of time and the debate, whatever it is that you decide I do at this point. If I have to retract, I will retract. But the facts remain the facts. Madam President, I continue.

Madam President: No, there is a request for a ruling.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Sorry.

Madam President: Thank you. There is a request for a ruling, and I understand it to say that, based on the following premise, that if there is no specific citation, then the statement has to be withdrawn.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Precisely the reason why I said, Madam President, if you rule so to see it fit, then I can see it.

Madam President: I so rule. So the statement is withdrawn. I think you have to withdraw it.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: I withdraw the statement, Madam President.

Madam President: I thank the Senator. Would you please continue?

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Madam President, I continue. The same Government, which a few months after taking office, asked for over 194.7 million dollars in Supplementary Appropriation. The same Government that embarked on liberal spending and a travel spree. The Government, this Government, this NDC Administration is insinuating that the FRL is no good, so they have to create something new. Madam President, I coined the term “plagiarism” and not “transformation,” the phrase plagiarism and not transformation and I’ll explain why.

Clause 2 specifically of the Fiscal Resilience Bill covers the definition and interpretation of key terms of the Bill when compared to its predecessor, the Fiscal Responsibility Act. Specifically, as its predecessor, it can be seen that not many changes were made to the actual interpretations other than the introduction of eight new interpretations and the removal of 13 and cosmetic dressings thereabout.

Madam President, similarly, clauses 3, 4, 5 and 6 save and except for the introduction of subsection (2) of clause 3, which introduces a commencement date for the Bill, a good thing I could say. Madam President, clause 7, specifically clause 7 and clause 8, which I will get to in a moment. A very interesting change in this particular clause, very interesting change in this particular clause. Here we see that, whereas section 7 subsection (6) of the Fiscal Responsibility Act had set out that the Minister shall take appropriate measures to ensure that the ratio of expenditure on the Wage Bill shall not exceed 9% of GDP. Here we see in clause 7 (1) the establishment of a new ratio of expenditure on the Wage Bill to 13%.

Upon reading this, Madam President, a number of questions came to mind, questions that have yet to hear a sufficient, proper answer from Members opposite. Questions that I think are necessary to receive an answer before I myself give any support to the Bill. Is the Government experiencing any financial issues? Is the country experiencing some kind of financial constraint? How, the most importantly, how was this 13% determined? Why 13%, as opposed to 10%, 11%, 12% or even 14% or 15%? Why 13% was considered the optimum rate at which Government can cap its Wage Bill to nominal GDP as part of its current expenditure? Is this increase from 9% to 13% a

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

significant sign of significant increases in salaries of public officers?

And I ask that specific question, Madam President, because it was said that a functional review of the service needs to be conducted. Has the review concluded? What is the figure that the Government has determined in terms of their expenditure going forward to cover the Wage Bill as relates to the regularisation of current officers, the hiring of new officers, in comparison with the salary increases that public officers would need? No justification, no explanation whatsoever.

And while on this note, Madam President, there is a perception after having conversations with many public officers that while this regularisation process, well the review rather for regularisation is ongoing, there is a, I don't want to use a term fear, but there is a concern that there might be a slimming of the service. I am not saying that that is going to happen, but their officers who are concerned, public officers who are concerned, that it might be on the horizon. Again, I'm not casting any aspersions on the Government, I'm asking a question. So if this concern is true and we may see a slimming of the service, why then ask for an increase in the wage-to-GDP ratio from 9% to 13%?

Madam President, the term resilience need to be more than just a term talked here and there and all over the place, and I think it was the Honourable André Lewis and Senator St. Clair that made a similar point. Grenada was, in fact, acknowledged for its resilience, for its prudent fiscal management under the past administration. Madam President, one of the more concerning issues I have when I listen to this Government, is that while it spends, it does not implement some sustainable measures to generate revenue. We see that for the budget this year, there were a number of tax increases and no serious measures to deal with the cost-of-living issue currently plaguing the people of this country. Even now, at this point, Madam President, when this is truly considered in the context of the 13%.

Madam President: Sorry, excuse me. Point of Order. Request for the floor on a Point of Order, Senator Andrew.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Sen. the Hon. David Andrew: Thank you, Madam President. I rise on a Point of Order because I think the Honourable Member is again sharing false information with the House and misleading the House. I'd be happy if the Honourable Member could identify which taxes were increased because I'm not aware that there have been any tax increases. And further, there is a slew of cost-of-living reduction and mitigation measures that this administration put forward in the last budget, and for which the IMF and the World Bank commended the Government for in their last review. **(Applause)** And so I want to put this on record.

Madam President: Thank you. Clarification on tax increases requested.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Madam President, I gladly oblige. The increase of VAT from 15% to 20% on sugary drinks and the imposition of VAT on sugar. Madam President, if I have said something false, then I gladly accept whatever sanctions that be imposed on me. But this is a fact.

Madam President: That's increases on the VAT?

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Madam President, also within the IMF Report, one of the measures identified was implemented last year, the freight cap... So I am speaking within the context now, currently, what new measures have been put in place? But, Madam President, let them go on.

Madam President: Excuse me? The clarification is sought on tax increases. You gave it on the VAT. There's been no rebuttal. We proceed.

Sen. the Hon. Neilon Franklyn: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I move to clause 8 of the Bill. Where we see a reduction, rather, in the primary balance rule. Madam President, in the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the primary

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

balance rule indicated a 3.5%. This legislation is requesting, not necessarily requesting, it is going to be legislated that it will be 1.5%. What does this mean? How did the 1.5% come about? How is it derived? No explanation as it relates to that.

So I'm left to wonder when I look at this, Madam President, the first thing that came to mind was amortisation. If you are in this context, lowering your primary balance rule from 3.5 to 1.5% means that you intend to pay less on your debt, you intend to reduce the amount that you're paying on your debt going forward. And then we see also, in that same clause, that the debt target has been moved from 55% to 60% by 2035. Again, I'm thinking amortisation. You reduce your payment on your debt and you allow for more time, an extended period rather in which you will have to pay debt.

But, Madam President, when this happens Government has to consider the fact that, one, you need to, as I said before, be able to sufficiently and sustainably generate revenues to meet your debt commitments. Two, if you experience a situation where you no longer have the capacity to meet your debt commitments, you would then tap into revenues from your expenses, your payment, rather, from the capital side of the budget, which means also that you would reduce your public sector investments and public sector initiatives. And we see, we have seen that historically whenever Government is in a tight spot for finances, social services, and other capital expenditures are chopped.

Madam President, I am yet to hear a proper justification for why we, as a House, all of us in this Honourable House, should support this Bill. Vague explanations. And again, when we criticise the previous administration for a lack of proper fiscal management and prudent management, we see here the legislation itself allowed a lot of things to happen, a pregnant treasury to be realised. How are we so certain that this will continue, Madam President? In my view, there's no guarantee that the changes made, the changes proposed will allow for quote-unquote "prudent fiscal management" and, Madam President, this is why I find it difficult in the absence of proper justification, in the absence of proper reasoning and explanation to throw my full support or support generally behind this Bill. I cannot, Madam President, and I thank you.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

Madam President: And I thank you, Senator Franklyn, for your contribution to the debate on the proposed Bill. Does that bring us to the... Senator brings us, I believe, to the end of the debate, which is why Senator Claudette Joseph, who has requested the floor, will now be given the floor, Madam.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to lend my full and unreserved support to this Fiscal Resilience Bill. Madam President, the Act that is being repealed, the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation, has a particular history. Through you, Madam President, perhaps the young Senator on the "Other Side" may not be aware of this. In 2014, Madam President, we were forced to embark on a structural adjustment programme styled for political purposes as home-grown structural adjustment, copying the title from the one and only genuine home-grown structural adjustment programme we've ever had, and that was managed by none other than George Ignatius Brizan of blessed memory under a prior administration many years ago, and it was very successful. This structural adjustment programme that we embarked upon in 2014 was mandated by the IMF, forced by our creditors who we went begging all over the place to for haircuts if we recall that and brought on as a direct consequence of 13 years of recklessness and mismanagement under the leadership of the immediate past administration and exacerbated by the global financial crisis that impacted Grenada commencing in 2008. These are the facts.

So in those circumstances, the country was forced to embark not just on a structural adjustment programme, but it might be, Madam President, that the international and regional powers that be did not trust the administration of the day sufficiently enough because of their history of recklessness so as to allow that administration without legislative constraints and confinement to embark on the structural adjustment programme. And it is against that background that we had the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the Public Finance Management Act and all of those Acts of Parliament that were passed in that period, so as to ensure that those in charge did not slip back into their old, reckless, mismanaging, misbehaving ways. **(Applause)**

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

So that's how we came by the Fiscal Responsibility Act. And within the confines of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, we did recover. The people of Grenada were told that the structural adjustment programme was to last three years. It started in 2014. In 2022, when we assumed office, even though the country had financially recovered. And as they like to say, the treasury was pregnant. All of the structural adjustment measures remained in force. The public workers were not getting their negotiated increases. They had to march in the sun and the rain for it, and the treasury was pregnant, and the structural adjustment period was over. I know because I marched that day, we got good wet. I marched with them on one of the demonstrations.

The pensions were not paid, and the treasury was pregnant. And we were told that it would be in the region of \$400 million, 463. I'm being corrected, 463 million to pay the pension, and the economy would be bankrupted, and the sky would fall. Even if we all know that we were operating under the confines of the Fiscal Responsibility Legislation. And as it turned out, it only cost \$75 million to pay the pension. And I could go on and on, Madam President.

So we are truly out of the adjustment period, and we will not, as a new administration, perpetuate the wickedness that was perpetuated on the people by continuing to keep all of the conditions of the Structural Adjustment Programme. So we are into a new phase, we are into a new phase where we must put measures in place to ensure that we are able to sustain the gains and benefits of the programme, and that we are able to absorb shocks. And that's one of the reasons why the Act is refined. There's a lot of refinement to the extent that we practically have a new bit of legislation on our hands.

As the Honourable Minister for Health indicated, the recommendations from the experts came since 2018. Since 2018, 2017, excuse me. 2017, 2018 and 2021, that's what we heard him say. These recommendations were made, that a review of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, should be made, so that the people, so that the people can enjoy the benefits and gains of the Structural Adjustment Programme, and the fruits of the sacrifices that they made. And again, in typical wicked persona, it wasn't done. That's when he

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

said 17, 18, and 21. It wasn't done.

So, Madam President, speaking of shocks, while the previous legislation only provided for the suspension of the rules, in cases of a natural, public health, natural or public health disaster or a state of emergency, the suspension provision in this proposed legislation, at Section 9, refines this. And this is where resilience comes in. It allows us to respond to shock, or economic shocks, resulting not just for natural, public health or state of emergency, but from global, economic recession declared by the IMF, disaster declared by an authorised national, regional or international agency, or by our own disaster management agency under the Disaster Management Act, a public health endemic declared by an authorised national, regional or international agency, or any event, whether national, regional or international, resulting in the declaration of a state of emergency.

So we have refined this aspect of the legislation to make us more resilient and robust. I refer to, Madam President, to clause six (6) e, let me find it here. Clause 6 (e), that allows for the Minister to take appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the Act, including taking appropriate measures to ensure that in respect of all projects submitted for inclusion in the capital expenditure programme of the central government, documented public investment procedures are prepared, to include climate change mitigation and adaptation, and are made available for submission and approval.

This is new, and we all know that as a Small Island Developing State, susceptible to the ravages of climate change, whatever we do and whenever we legislate in this, in these modern times, and whenever we speak of resilience, we must do so with the impact of climate change. We must do so, taking into consideration how susceptible we are to the effects of climate change.

Madam President, the Honourable, my colleague Honourable Minister for Education, in referring to clause 7 of the proposed legislation, made reference to the measures that we are taking, as government, to treat with our workers fairly. And so, I want to just take a moment, to speak to the definition of wages in the legislation. Well, wage rule, wage bill, sorry, in the legislation. And it speaks to the wage bill for the state

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

being the total sum of payments made in respect of employees of the central government, including personal emoluments, wages, allowances and social contributions. Now, previously, NIS contributions, which in this definition here will be equivalent to social contributions, were previously omitted, specifically excluded. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Yes, specifically excluded in the definition. And so were pensions, specifically excluded.

And what we had as a result was an inaccurate description, and when calculated, when the Wage Bill was itself calculated, we had an inaccurate wage bill, because NIS contributions were specifically excluded. Now they are included, and I would say through you, Madam President, to the Honourable Senator representing workers, I think as you know already, we on the same side, we on the same side, we are on the side of all our people, that includes workers, that includes employers, but I think the workers of this country know that, and based on our track record so far, they know that we will not act against their interest. **(Applause)**

In fact, yes, they know that, and they don't need the Unions to tell them that. They could see it. The fact is, pension payments as they currently exist cannot be defined as wages. They're not wages, can't be added to the wage bill, because pensioners are not employees, and it's as simple as that. The pension scheme that we have now cannot be included in the wage bill, because pensioners are not employees. We are in the process of undergoing pension reform, as we all know, a reform committee is in place and doing its work.

And if, at the end of their review, the recommendation is for some form of contributory pension scheme, then under social contributions, pensions might be added to the Wage Bill. Government has to contribute, and workers have to contribute to the scheme. So just like the NIS contributions, under social contributions, then pension might be added. So we are not trying to pull no fast one. We are not trying to do what we should not do or omit to do what we should do. In all things, we put the people first, especially our employees. **(Applause)**

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

And so, section 7, which speaks the wage rule, requires, mandates the Minister to take appropriate steps to ensure that the annual Wage Bill of Central Government does not exceed 13%. So now we have some wiggle room to pay the minimum wage that will come into effect in January. We have some wiggle room to pay the increases that we are committed to, over the next three years, to all public sector workers, and we have greater wiggle room, Madam President, through you, we have greater wiggle room. To the representative of the workers, next round you're negotiating, you were at 9%, last time. You're up to 13% now. So it allows in the collective bargaining process for greater wiggle room for negotiations.

But we must, in governing and managing the economy, be fiscally prudent, be sensible... the employer, the employees, rather, are but one segment of the economy. We have an entire economy to manage. And we heard from the Social Development Minister this morning, some of the expenditure and in fact, the increased expenditure incurred in relation to some of the Social Safety Net Programmes. So our responsibility is to take care of all our people, and that includes ensuring we maintain an environment susceptible to robust economic activity, because we are not the only employer. We have the private sector, which is a major stakeholder, so we have to ensure that we preside over an economy that allows for healthy and robust economic activity, including in the private sector.

Madam President, just one last section in this Bill that I would like to flag, that I think really demonstrates the resilience aspect of this proposed law, and why we are moving from responsibility to resilience. We are transcending, we are transforming. That section, Madam President, deals with the statutory bodies, and the fact that the statutory bodies are now going to be monitored and scrutinised more closely by the provisions of this Act. And the fact that the debts of the statutory bodies, the state-owned enterprises, will be included in our national debt, so that you have a true picture when the national debt is disclosed. I know we went for about five years, about five budget speeches read, and the national debt wasn't disclosed. And we keep asking, what's the national debt? **(Laughter)** And we were not told. It was a big secret for quite a while.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

But we are about transparency. This Resilience Bill makes for greater transparency, not only in relation to central government, Madam President, but also in relation to statutory bodies, parastatals, and state-owned enterprises. And that is why their debts will be included in the national debt. The hope is that with this provision, we will not have a repeat of an MNIB. We will not have to come into government and be surprised by the financial standing of some of the statutory bodies, with a pregnant treasury.

So, Madam President, I therefore commend this Bill to this Honourable House, as we seek to move our country forward, and as we see the govern with transparency and greater accountability, so that we can stand, we can stand public scrutiny without fear, or without having anything to hide, or without having to discover anything. People have to discover anything after we are gone. Anything, including missing files...

Madam President: Thank you, Senator...

Sen. The Hon. Claudette Joseph: ... big sector of our economy, missing files. That won't happen under our watch. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President: Sorry. Thank you, madam. **(Applause)** Thank you, Senator Joseph. Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. The Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. I stand to lend support to this very important Bill that we are about to pass here today. I want to commend that outstanding presentation by the AG. Madam President, the only reason why we are here and presenting this Bill is because we care about people.

We have come to the conclusion that in 2014, conditions may have been different, society changes and if we're going to continue to live under the old laws, and we don't aspire to change them. In other words, Madam President, I love that slogan. You don't make people follow, you don't design and shape people to follow, you make laws for

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

people and when the behaviour of people start to come across differently, you have as, as legislators, we have to come, we have to address the issue and change our law to accommodate our people.

So, Madam President, the situation before with COVID-19, the war in the Ukraine, climate change, and now we have another war in Gaza. Those situations, obviously, Madam President, would have given rise to a call for this law to be reviewed. And, not only do we as a people, but this Administration recognises that.

Madam President, the IMF, the World Bank, other stakeholders, and experts. They have been calling for that. And I may say, Madam President, that there is no merit in claiming to have good financial management. And as the AG pointed out, the pension is not paid, regularisation would have been something that would not have been, we'd have still been dreaming about. It is implemented today, as I speak. We cannot talk about a pregnant treasury when people are suffering, when unemployment is something that has to be addressed. So I want to, Madam President, advise my good colleagues, my good friends, open your eyes to the transformation and the progress that this administration is making. **(Applause)** Open your eyes, Madam President, because it's very glaring.

We will continue as an Administration to press hard, in aligning the legislation of our society, to accommodate the transformational agenda that will transform our society and our people. That is the direction we are heading, Madam President. So when my good friend Senator Franklyn was, I like, I love the feelings, you know, when you feel that you have one on top of your colleagues, you know. I'm not saying your opponent, because we're good friends.

But, Madam President, it's important to note that, in the 2023 budget, zero-VAT on selected food and items. Very important. A 100% concession, CET and VAT for selected production equipment to support the creative economy. Reduction in VAT rate on mobile and broadband data from 20% to 15%. From 20%. Reduction in the VAT on electricity consumption from 15% to 7.5% for all consumers. Zero-VAT on electricity consumption up to 99 kWh for residential consumers. Reduce on the petrol tax by \$2 from \$5.50 to \$3.50 per gallon.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

And what we didn't say, what didn't come out of the presentation, that the 20% increase in alcohol and cigarettes is an investment in the people of this country. **(Applause)** And we're going to see it in the next 10 or 20 years. **(Applause)** We are concerned about the people's health, so when you say that the government increases taxes, as if we created any burden on the people, we're going to relieve the people of the burden of cigarettes, sweets and sugar in our society. **(Applause)**. And that is what we wanted, that is the direction we are going. Diabetes is hurting our people, and when you release the pressure on them, they will feel good, Senator.

We must get that straight. And that is what, that is the direction we are going. I thought, Madam President, it was important that this point be made, and I want to make the final point that we have no intention, this Administration has no intention of slimming the public service. If anybody has any doubt in their mind, talk to the IMANI people, talk to the traffic warden, talk to the people who are in the service temporarily, talk to the people who came in just for a short period, and they are still there. Our intention is to better than life of our citizens. And I lend full support to the presentation of this Bill. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business for all VAT and related and other tax and general clarifications. And I offer the floor to Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, seeing that we have exhausted the debate and conversation on this Bill, I just want to say that my understanding of macroeconomics as an international business student is that macroeconomics gives you a very broad or panoramic view, as it relates the whole, and the economy behaves. Therefore, macroeconomics examines inflation, GDP, unemployment patterns or behaviour, et cetera. With all these moving parts that a government must be able to manage, fiscal policy and legislation become paramount in the management of all these moving parts, from a macroeconomic perspective.

I want to thank all the Honourable colleagues in this House for the debates for and

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

against, especially from Senator Rahaman and the council that he gave, as it relates to the government managing and putting mechanisms in place, to be able to really manage and evaluate its fiscal operations moving forward. I believe that both Senators St. Claire and Lewis' concerns were addressed by the Honourable David Andrew as well as the Honourable Attorney General. And as it relates to Senator Franklyn, Madam President, I cannot rebut accusations, especially those that are unfounded, with no qualitative or quantitative evidence. So I leave that hanging in mid-air.

As I surmise, Madam President, as a small island developing state, we have always had a particular vulnerability to external shocks, including natural disasters. Aside from our economic openness as a small island developing state, and our narrow range of exports and dependency on strategic imports, we have also faced adverse conditions during recent years. As such, a fall in demand for primary commodities, as well as services, including tourism.

Madam President, furthermore, the challenges of increased globalisation have been testing our capacity, to withstand the risk imposed by the vulnerable nature of our economy. With that being said, Madam President, we now have a golden opportunity to ensure that at this Kairos moment, we nurture economic resilience through sound macroeconomic management. Therefore, fiscal policy and fiscal legislation become critical in ensuring macroeconomic stability. It is in this regard, Madam President, we commend this Bill. **(Applause)**

Madam President: I thank Senator La Crette. And we, having concluded the rather stimulating discussion and debate, move now to the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: I hope I have been following clearly.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Fiscal Resilience Bill, 2023

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.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

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

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I beg that the Chair's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chair's Report adopted.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, I beg to move the third reading of the Bill.

Question proposed.

Madam President: No debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Madam President: Thank you, Senators. We have now concluded and passed this Bill. The Chair proposes that we have a recess for lunch, given that it is almost 2:30 p.m., and when we resume, there are only two more Bills to consider: the Public Finance

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Management Bill and the Public Debt Management Bill and whatever else remains on our Order Paper. We are recessed.

Senate adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Senate resumed at 3:11 p.m.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Good afternoon, I hope everybody had a good lunch. I had a very good one. Madam President, I beg that we suspend the Standing Orders to accommodate the second and third reading to introduce the Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Madam President: Thank you.

(The Clerk and Madam President converse privately)

Madam President: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, we had the first reading of the Public Debt Management Bill this morning. So we continue with that Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Relevant Standing Order suspended.

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

Question proposed.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: No, no, no, no. I didn't hear the presentation.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President: Please speak, Leader of Government's Business. You have the floor, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I hereby present this very important Bill to the Senate on the basis that our Government, our Administration, wants to offer Grenadians the best management practice, the best management system that we can offer to our people in order to make life easier for them. This Bill, Madam President, seeks to amend the Public Finance Management Act, No. 17 of 2015, which was the principal Act, and in order to make sure that we achieve our objectives, there are three areas that we are looking forward to:

1. To reform matters related to the Medium-term Fiscal Framework;
2. Consolidate various reports into the Medium Term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report; and
3. Reposition and expand the obligation to prepare Post-Election Reports.

Madam President, this Bill contains eleven clauses. And clause 1 provides for the short title of the Bill, and clause 2 seeks to amend section 2 of the principal Act to revise the definition of "public-private partnership".

Madam President, in section 2, we want to delete the definition of public-private partnership, and substitute the new definition, which carries the meaning of "a long-term contract between a private party and

- (a) central government; and
- (b) a statutory body or state-owned enterprise".

The purpose of this is to provide and manage public assets and associated services, which shall be on the terms and conditions as approved by Cabinet. Additionally, Madam President, this particular section seeks to insert the following definitions of seven areas: Contingent Liabilities, Explicit Contingent Liabilities, Fiscal Resilience Act, Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee, Medium Term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report, Medium Term Fiscal Framework, and Public Debt.

Madam President, each one of these areas carry a definition. And if I may go

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

through Contingent Liability to give a synopsis. Basically, it means a financial obligation which arises from the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events.

Explicit Contingent Liability means a legal obligation for Central Government to make payments only if particular events are called.

Fiscal Resilience Act means the Fiscal Resilience Act, 2023 and the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee means the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee preserved, continued and renamed under section 12 (1) of the Fiscal Resilience Act.

The Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report means the Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Strategy Report prepared in accordance with section 12 (a). The definition for Medium Fiscal Framework means the Medium Term Fiscal Framework prepared in accordance with section 12, and Public Debt includes all direct liabilities of Central Government, Statutory Bodies and State Owned Enterprises, including advances, arrears, compensation et cetera, et cetera.

Madam President, in clause 3 (4) (b) of the principal Act, is amended by deleting... As a matter of fact, section 3, clause 3, 4 and 5, Madam President, here we are making the adjustment in terms of the term used by deleting, in most cases, the word budget and inserting "Medium-term Fiscal Framework".

In clause 6, Madam President, the principal Act is amended by repealing parts of section 12 and substituting therefore the following new sections. We have quite a number of sections under section 12, subsections. While sections 1 and 2 will remain as is, from the principal Act, Madam President, it's important that we look at section 3 (3) which reads: "Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the medium-term fiscal framework shall contain the Government's fiscal policy objectives over the medium term, a statement showing the progress made towards compliance with the fiscal rules and targets", and we have outlined this section, Madam President, and a number of areas that will be looked at:

- (a) real GDP growth;
- (b) inflation;

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- (c) Central Government Revenue and public expenditure;
- (d) the overall fiscal balance;
- (e) the primary balance; and
- (f) the stock of public debt.

Madam President, in section 12 (4), notwithstanding subsection 3 (f), the medium-term fiscal framework shall present and report separately, I repeat, report separately on:

- (a) the public debt attributable to Central Government; and
- (b) the public attributable to statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises, and the corresponding annual ceilings.

Subsection (5) of 12, prior to the finalisation of the medium-term fiscal framework and no later than six months before the commencement of the new fiscal year, the Minister shall cause a draft of the medium-term fiscal framework to be submitted to the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee for review.

Subsection (6) of section 12, within two weeks of receipt of the draft of the medium-term fiscal framework submitted in accordance with subsection (5), the Fiscal Resilience Oversight Committee shall prepare and submit to the Permanent Secretary a written assessment of the draft.

And the final subsection, Madam President, where the adjustment will be made, section 12 (7), no later than five months before the commencement of the new fiscal year, the Minister shall submit the medium-term fiscal framework to Cabinet for approval. Madam President, all these written reports are geared at showing some kind of transparency and accountability, and by strengthening this very important Bill, we are hoping that it will bring some comfort to the people.

Clause 7, Madam President, is amended by inserting after section 12, the following new section, which we referred to as 12 (a). “The Minister shall cause to be prepared a medium-term economic and fiscal strategy report to be:

- (a) laid before the House of Representatives for approval along with the presentation of the annual budgets; and

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

(b) published on the official website of the Government no later than two weeks after being laid in accordance with paragraph (a)".

Again, Madam President, compliance. Compliance, transparency, accountability. Subsection (2) of 12 (a). "The medium-term economic and fiscal structure report under subsection (1) shall contain:

- (a) an updated medium-term fiscal framework;
- (b) a review of the consolidated financial performance of state-owned enterprises and statutory bodies; and
- (c) a compliance statement showing the manner in which the annual budget and medium-term fiscal framework comply with the fiscal rules and targets under the Fiscal Resilience Act.

Madam President, under subsection (d), there are six areas. The Fiscal Risk Statement that reflects:

1. The sensitivity of economic and fiscal forecasts to changes to changes in the economic outlook and economic shocks;
2. The exposure of the Government to contingent liabilities, including guarantees and obligations arising from judicial proceedings in progress;
3. The fiscal risk arising from the financial sector, statutory bodies, state-owned enterprises, and public-private enterprises and any other institutions;
4. Any commitment unaccounted for in the economic and fiscal forecasts;
5. Any other circumstance that may have a material effect on economic and fiscal forecasts and is unaccounted for in the economic and fiscal forecast; and
6. The decisions and measures of Cabinet, or the Minister, to manage fiscal risk.

Madam President, clause 8, in the principal Act is amended by repealing section 16 and substituted therefore the following new section:

"Budget preparation cycle

The budget preparation cycles shall consist of the following two phases:

- (a) The preparation of a medium-term fiscal framework in account, in accordance with

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

the rules and targets under Fiscal Resilience Act". The next subsection remain as is in the principal Act.

Clause 9 amendments of section 25 of the principal Act. Section 25 (1) (b) of the principal Act is amended by deleting the words "medium-term fiscal and budget framework" after the words "implications form and the", substituting therefore the words "medium-term fiscal framework".

Clause 10. In that clause, Madam President, a new section, section 25 (a) to the principal Act, and this deals with the Post-election report. And it states, Madam President, "At the sitting immediately following the first sitting of the new Parliament following the general election, the Minister shall prepare and submit to Parliament a post-elections report setting out the following:

- (a) Update macroeconomic forecasts and assumptions from the medium-term economic and fiscal strategy;
- (b) Update fiscal information including:
 - (i) Government revenue
 - (ii) Government expenditure
 - (iii) Primary balance; and
 - (iv) The outstanding stock of public debt
- (c) An update of the fiscal risk position compared to fiscal strategy reports and the annual budget; and
- (d) Progress expected to be made towards compliance.

Madam President, the final clause. Clause 11 is an amendment of the Schedule to the principal Act. Madam President, when we looked at all the 11 clauses and the amendments that we are making here. We believe that the whole question of managing public finance will be well taken care of, I think, and the economy will be in a much better position, where people can benefit significantly. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank the Leader of Government's Business in the Senate, Senator Adrian Thomas. And the floor is open for debate on the proposed Bill, proposed

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Act.

As you seek the floor, I just want to make a quick announcement that this morning, it was announced that there will be Grenada Shifts taking place in the parish of St. Patrick today, starting at 4:30 p.m. This announcement is to advise you that this has been cancelled due to meteorological reports of inclement weather. There will be no activity under the Grenada Shifts in St. Patrick this afternoon. You will be informed of the new date.

Thank you very much, and I open the floor. Senator Adrian, André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: I was wondering if you'd just permit me a light moment. I hope I didn't contribute by getting the removal of the caretakers **(laughter)** from the meeting.

Madam President: (Laughter) You did remove something. I'm not going to indicate what. **(Laughter)** Thank you. Senator St. Clair, is that your light? No. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: I don't know, I thought one of my colleagues...

Madam President: Order of seniority, please.

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: No, no, no, no. No, I thought they might have, you know... I know Rahaman likes opening the bowling from the side. So... Maybe... What I said... Maybe... They want to speak? Not much to speak on this, Madam President. I have my notes pertaining to this.

As we realise the... It's basically a suite of Bills that complement each other, and of course, it's important that the "Government Side" would have done the appropriate things and do the necessary backstopping, in so doing. And so, this, of course, would have been well in place to address some of the matters.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

This document is a very important document because, as special as the changes were made to the Resilience Bill, it sort of creates a better environment for monitoring, evaluation and responsibility. The major point I had on this matter pertains to, and I will say that the Leader Government's Business have done very well in presenting the different areas, and rationalisation to think that was good.

But I think it's section 10, the issue with the election, that is where I... and the budget cycle and the election, that sort of area had me sort of puzzled in doing my review last night. It's a good idea, in the transition of governments, to have that update. I think, though, I would have been concerned about the word "the" and maybe at the committee level, we may be able to look at that. And I will tell you, in section 10, that speaks to the post-election report, that bullet 25 (a) says at the sitting immediately following the first sitting of the new Parliament.

So I take it, basically the second sitting, the general, of the general election, and I wasn't too sure if it should be "the general election" or if it is a general election. So that would bring some little clarity, I thought there... and then it, it then goes to some other questions, because I note those timelines and it is good to have those timelines, and ... For example, there's one that speaks about two weeks after, you'll find the, this Medium-term Report and so on. I just want us to be mindful of that, you know, put timelines that are too tight for significant things as is. I know the, the IMF and the World Banks, they would want to know if Government change, they want to know what did the last Government do because they didn't finish what was happening and they want to get an update and so whilst we want to do it very quick, be mindful of these issues because we may just get hurry scurry work that that is not to date and then we will say we will fix it later on, so that is one passing comment.

The other comment that I've noticed, particularly, in light of all these other timelines. The Sitting after the first Sitting has no timeline because, really and truly, we don't have a fixed schedule with which the Parliament meets. The Parliament meets when you get a notice basically, I mean we don't know if it's on the third Thursday of every month or there's no schedule definitive and bearing that in mind, if you look, for example,

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

in this current session, we met I think sometime, I think it was early September end of August and then it took us maybe about another two months or so to meet.

And so whilst we may want urgency the Parliament itself may not meet so I'm not too sure to what extent the Government may need to review this limiting factor and maybe put some time because otherwise the country could run around and that to me is a major factor because whilst you waiting, you just call Parliament when you want because the other side don't really have a say in calling, so I think the Government, noting all of these things, of course to be realistic, for example, we may want to say either way but even if you seeing the sitting after the first sitting but not more than three months or not more than two months must expire, so it provides a sort of guideline with which we can feel safe in terms of nothing "bunging away".

So that to me was my main concern, and then closely connected to that, I also had to deal with the Budget. I wasn't able to do sufficient research on that aspect, meaning that a Budget basically is a Bill essentially passed in one year, and it's essentially the country, I mean, it's a continuum. So, for example, a budget is January, but you may have, say, an election, say in February or in March, what happens to this Budget that was just passed six months ago, particularly if you have a different Government or sometimes the same Government decide to have change certain agenda based on certain matters not about that administration. How do we treat that? Do you sit back and say, "Well, the Budget was there, you know, so we have to keep it, that's the law, because it was a law, it's also a law". That is how the spending is supposed to be structured, but then when the FROC and when all of these reviews take place, you realise, look, we need to manage and recalibrate certain things based on where we want to go. How do we treat with that?

To me going a supplemental doesn't change the matter so maybe they have to be some consideration within a budgeting legislation to speak to something that, because the fact that we introduced this fact that when a Government change, that is what inspiring this year, then how do you treat with budgets when a Government change, notwithstanding maybe the basic recurrent expenditures but some of the capital factors that what I will call discretionary, meaning that if they didn't happen sometimes they never

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

happened at all even if the Budget cycle went along because the dangers that is ahead when this new administration really look at it and say boy no these guys was not on the right track, the way they was running the Country, so we need to recalibrate and I think that this is a matter that need to be addressed to give me some comfort, the fact that we introduced this new thing about after election which is a good point but let us try and complete it. We may not able to do it today, but I asked that we get some understanding of that matter, so that is my contribution to this Bill, Madam President.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator St. Clair, for your suggestions about managing the management. Thank you. Any request on the floor? Senator Rahaman.

Sen. the Hon. Salim Rahaman: Thank you, Madam President. I just want to seek clarity on where it says 'Minister'. I didn't see... Normally, it says who the Minister is, but I would assume that the Minister would be the Minister for Finance because it is a Finance Bill, right?

So this is the first time I believe that with seeing these kinds of reports being sought to put into law, that when right after a general election, we need to get the outstanding stock of public debt. I think that's a wonderful thing. I just wanted to mention that. I also like to commend them on the fact that they are including debt from statutory bodies as part of the public debt figure. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Rahaman. Senator La Crette.

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Madam President, as a sovereign state, in order for us to be able to achieve aggregate discipline as well as operational efficiency, I rise to lend my support to the Bill as presented by the Leader of Government's Business in the Senate.

Madam President: Thank you for your compliance with what I called for this

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

morning when I said succinctly—now you give me succinct **(laughter)**. Thank you, Senator. Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Thank you very much, Madam President, and I think "This Side" must be commended for bringing a very important Bill to the House, where we can get the cooperation of my good colleagues.

I can see Senator Franklyn is smiling. I am always happy when I make him smile. I thank you for your cooperation. I want to thank all the Members for their cooperation regarding this particular Bill, Madam President, but I think it is important to point out here that our society has to get to that level of maturity because I guess everybody is concerned about those reports and the timeline. But let me say something, Madam President.

At some point in time, we have to get there, as a people, because it is a Government in office. It will be responsible for that Government while sitting in office, approaching an election to start putting these reports together. I had the privilege when we got into office to read the reports from the permanent secretaries who were there, even though they were not, they expected a reshuffle, and those reports were prepared so the new PS who was coming and even the Minister could have an idea where the ministry was and if you could get it at that level. We have to start creating a culture in our society where, as the Government is approaching the end of its term, the result of the election shouldn't matter because it can go anywhere.

So this is the direction I believe our society is heading, and therefore, it should not be too much of a concern regarding whether those things will be in place or not, or whether we'll be able to have sufficient time to get them in place. It's a matter of us developing the discipline as a society to make sure that it happens, and I think once that could occur, we'll be headed in the right direction. So I want to thank everybody for their presentation and comments. I think it's all well for Grenada. Thank you.

Madam President: Thank you, Senator. And will you address the inquiry in

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Clause 10, subsection 25(a), following “a general election” or following “the general election”? Would you like to leave that to the final editing after the Bill has been acted on?

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, I guess you're referring to Senator Rahaman's question about the Minister?

Madam President: No, it's St. Clair.

(Inaudible comment by Senators)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Bear with me. 25 what?

(Inaudible comments by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Sorry

(Inaudible comments by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Discussion committee...

(Inaudible comments by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Update macroeconomic focus and assumptions?
Not that?

(Inaudible comments by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Post-election reports? Yes, 25(a).

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

(Inaudible comments by Senator the Honourable Roderick St. Clair)

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: “At the Sitting immediately following the first sitting of the new Parliament following the general election, the Minister shall prepare and submit to Parliament a post-elections report setting out...” **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** I really don't understand the question.

(Inaudible comment by Madam President)

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: I know...

(Inaudible comment by Madam President)

Madam President: Can you hear me? Sorry. Thank you. Let us discuss. Let me enforce the procedural approach. I want to call a question for the second reading, and then we'll discuss that having done so.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

Madam President: Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to report that the Bill was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate, Clause by Clause, and it was passed.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business. **(Inaudible comment by Senators) (Laughter)** Senator Claudette Joseph, Attorney General of Grenada, you have the floor, madam.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. Madam

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

President, I beg to introduce the first reading of a Bill for an Act shortly entitled, Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Clerk: A Bill which seeks to amend the Public Debt Management Act No. 28 of 2015 to revise the definition of public debt, shortly entitled, Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that the relevant Standing Orders 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 Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President. I beg now to move that the second reading of the Bill be taken at this time. Madam President, this Bill seeks to do two simple things: to amend the Public Debt Management Act, No. 28 of 2015, hereafter, I would refer to that as the principal Act, to revise the definition of “public debt” with application to the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 and the Public Responsibility Act, 2015.

The Bill, Madam President, has three clauses. The short title that's clause 1, the second clause, Madam President, is to amend section 2 of the principal Act, by repealing the definitions of “contingent liabilities”, “public debt” and “public-private partnership”, contained therein.

Similar to the Public Finance Management Act that we just passed, the contingent liabilities definition there is changed, and it now means financial obligations which arise by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events, not wholly

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

within the control of Central Government and includes debt guarantees, demand or price guarantees and termination of clauses. Other default provisions that could imply a transfer of liabilities from Central Government, including financial obligations arising as a result of or in connection with a public-private partnership, but exclude letters of comfort.

So, Madam President, contingent liabilities now include those possibilities that may arise out of public-private partnerships to create a liability for Central Government as we debated in the Fiscal Resilience Bill.

Public debt, now, by this definition, will include not just the direct liabilities of the Central Government, but the liabilities of statutory bodies and state-owned enterprises, and it gives a non-exhaustive list there of what may comprise a public debt. Advances, arrears, compensation claims, finance leases, Government securities, loans, overdrafts, promissory notes et cetera. So we see that the public debt is now all-encompassing and really should give a more accurate picture of the state of public finances.

And the third definition there is to define public-private partnership, which now includes a long-term contract between a private party and Central Government or a statutory body or state-owned enterprises. Previously, it was confined to Central Government and parastatals were allowed to enter into arrangements with private entities without any liability transferring to Government or without involvement of Central Government, and then in subsection (b), a definition of “borrowing” and “explicit contingent liabilities”.

The other amendment is to section 12 of the principal Act. Particularly, section 12 1(a) and the amendment is to delete the words “public sector” after “stock of” and substitute the words “Central Government”. So “public sector” is replaced with “Central Government”.

And those are the amendments to the Public Debt Management Act, Madam President. As all Members of this Honourable House will see, they are entirely complementary of the Fiscal Resilience Bill that we considered earlier. Thank you, Madam President.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President: Thank you very much. Request for the floor. In lull, perhaps Senator, might I ask you a clarifying question, very brief?

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Certainly, Madam President. With pleasure.

Madam President: Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Hope it's not too hard. **(Laughter)**

Madam President: Didn't hear what you said. Under section 2, the amendment section 2 of the principal Act, you have three definitions. The first one, contingent liabilities, for my own clarification, are these referring to the new entities to be covered, rather than new contingent liabilities? I wasn't clear.

My understanding is that we are in this legislation aiming to include the statutory bodies, so is it in contingent liabilities that arise from them entering under this legislation, or is it some new concept or some new categories? Could you clarify for me, please? Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Well, the definition there is the definition as it applies to this particular bit of legislation. **(Inaudible comment by a Senator)** Sorry. Yes, it's specific to the legislation.

Madam President: Yes, and does it mean then that it is contingent liabilities in general to the legislation?

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Yes, and covers the parastatals that are now embraced by the Fiscal Resilience Bill, the Public Finance Management Act and the Public Debt Management Act.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Madam President: So it is not necessarily occasioned by the inclusion of these new entities, but it is occasioned by the need to define or to include?

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Well, it is both because now that parastatals are going to be considered the liabilities of parastatals are going to be considered as part of the national debt, those are, in that sense, contingent to the debt of the Central Government. I'm not sure if I'm confusing you, or I might be.

Madam President: Yes. Now, I wanted to know if it is really occasioned by the entry of these parastatals or if contingent liabilities is something that we want to include as a general principle in the legislation.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Well, it is. It is to be included as a general principle, but I don't think they are exclusive of each other. I do not think they are exclusive of each other, Madam President. I don't think it's because of the entry of the parastatals alone in the legislation that we need contingent liabilities redefined. It's that, but it's also the whole spirit and intent of the Fiscal Responsibility legislation now.

Madam President: Clearer now. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you.

Madam President: Senator André Lewis.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: I just found it interesting, just taken up on the question that you asked and certainly just reading the definition, seems to imply, based on what the Attorney General said. From my reading here, it says, "Means financial obligations which arise by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events. And that, by even a dictionary definition of contingent liability, that's what

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

it means.

So I am taking it in the broader context in which you had sort of posed the question that it is a provision for some unknown, but it will be unknown based on a decision that you make within a certain level of certainty. I mean, different things can happen, so that's how I take it, and not just limited to. So, in my view, and I'm not sitting on the Government side, can't say what I've informed, that thought, it is appears to me that whether or not we were bringing in the state-owned enterprises and the statutory bodies under the public debt provisions that definition may still have found its way there, that's just my take on the matter.

Madam President: Whatever I cannot hear is illegal. Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, if I may, I don't think Senator Franklyn will stop me this time. **(Laughter)** I think he is saying the same thing. It would have been included nonetheless, but even more so, as we have the state-owned enterprises considered now, because really, it is an unknown.

Madam President: Thank you. Other contributions? Hearing none.

Question proposed.

Madam President: Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I beg to move that the Senate resolves itself into a Committee... Not yet?

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Bills: Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

Madam President: Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, I now 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.

Senate in Committee.

Senate resumed.

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

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Thank you, Madam President, noting that the Bill was passed without amendment. I now beg that the Chairman's Report be adopted.

Question put and agreed to.

Chairman's Report adopted.

Madam President: The question now is that the Bill be read a third time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Adjournment

Clerk: A Bill for an Act, shortly entitled, Public Debt Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

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

Madam President: Leader of Government's Business.

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Madam President, before I move the Motion...

Madam President: Before you pass the Motion?

Sen. the Hon. Adrian Thomas: Before I call for the Adjournment, let me for the sake of the records emphasise the word "fiscal" rather than "physical" in case I was interpreted to sound like that. "Fiscal". Madam President, I beg to move the Motion that the Senate be adjourned *sine die*.

Madam President: Senator Joseph.

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Madam President, before we finally adjourn, I would just like to take this opportunity to...

Madam President: May you second the Motion before you debate the...? Must be seconded before discussion. Do you mind seconding?

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: I am so guided and I second the Motion.

Madam President: Thank you.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: I thought we spoke on the adjournment before. Just to take this opportunity to congratulate the students who are graduating from TAMCC today, many of us had to be at the graduation, but were retained here. Minister for Education, that's why he had to take off to attend the graduation, and at the same time, I extend congratulations to the students of Grey's Typing School. They also had a graduation today. **(Applause)** And hearty congratulations to the NEXA New Dimension Steel Orchestra, who celebrated 35 years as a steel band **(applause)** in Grenada at a lovely ceremony two nights ago. **(Applause)** Congratulations to them and continue to do the good things in the community in the Town of St. George, and let the spirit of "Peck" live on. Thank you, Madam President. **(Applause)**

Madam President: Thank you, Senator Joseph, thank you. And perhaps you should ask that winning steel band to come and give a free performance in the Parliament as a way to celebrate itself. **(Laughter)**

Sen. the Hon. Claudette Joseph: Being a "Warf girl", we will have to do a combination of Harps and Dimensions. **(Laughter)**

Madam President: And we endorse all of your congratulations to the graduating students of TAMCC, I believe, and from around the country as our country rises with the growth of the educated or the formerly schooled class of young people. May they continue to lift themselves and their families and the country.

This, as you know, dear Honourable distinguished Senators, is our first sitting since the start of the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament, and we've gotten through it. We recalled the Throne Speech with its title "Forward into 50: Reflecting on our Past, Solidifying our Future", so we have a good theme to guide us in this Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament.

We are in the month of October, which is a very powerful month in the Grenadian national, regional, and international calendar. We have, for example, World Food Day to

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

start from afar, which is celebrated on the 16th, and I want to congratulate again the Ministry of Agriculture for hosting yet another wonderful World Food Day (**applause**) this year. Education, information, appetisers, music and a host of agriculture-related, you know, all culture comes from agriculture. The first source of culture was agriculture, when we were able to survive, plant and grow, harvest and share and so on and survive, and so thanks very much. World Food Day continues to give us good guidance as we seek food security.

We also had at the international level the celebration of United Nations Day on the 24th. The flag raising ceremony here and Grenada's recommitment to the fundamental principles of the United Nations, 78 years old, this organisation is in need of major reform. We have in the Caribbean here embarked on Caribbean African solidarity and strengthened relations, and in the 78 years of the United Nations, I think for about half of that, Africa has been petitioning to get into the security council because many of the wars of the world and the needs of the world are played out in Africa. Their leaders ought to be at the innermost decision-making table, and I am sure the Caribbean renewal of United Nations Day would have included a reflection and continuing to support not just peace in Haiti and removal of sanctions for Venezuela and so on, but the ambitions of Africa for playing its role and making its contribution to world peace and human development.

We already heard from our colleague and brother Salim Rahaman that we lament and regret and call for an end to the bloodshed, human wastage that is happening in Gaza and in Southern Israel, particularly in Gaza, because the scale there and the duration is ghastly. And we in Grenada feel it because we are a part of humanity. Children in particular suffer.

I think we all embrace that each child is our child. It is said that in Grenada, each woman, whether she gives birth to children or not, raises 2.7 children because we raise children we didn't give birth to. We raise children that are not ours, and the pain and the joy of children come to us, not just the women, if I might add, but to us, mother and father, grandparents, nen-nen, paren, tanty and so on. So we stand in solidarity, and I am sure I speak on behalf of this Senate by saying we hope that we will have a cessation of gunfire.

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

We support the call of the Secretary General of the United Nations for adherence to Humanitarian and human rights law, and we ask you to do whatever you can, your prayers, and our outreach for the sisters and brothers.

October in the Caribbean is Cancer Awareness month, and so it has been in Grenada. We extend all our solidarity to all persons living with cancer, dying from cancer or treating cancer. May you be strengthened, and may we find the way to navigate and crush that illness.

Joyously, October is the month of children, and it's really a great pleasure to see children in St. David and in other parts of the country celebrating their childhood. We celebrate with you, children, and we can do what we can. So, October is a very powerful month, no less because we have the 19th and the 25th just passed, and we thank the Government for declaring October 19 a national holiday. **(Applause)** And thank all those who spoke, gave us new information and renewed the call for unity for finding the bodies of our lost comrades and that our country can heal. So it's a powerful month.

We have maybe four or five days to go and a lot to remember, but we have the passage of the legislation here that focuses on resilience, on building resilience by attention to a methodology, a methodology of fiscal increase, fiscal responsibility. It's just a strategy to build up credibility, accountability, et cetera, but from the point of view of gaining greater resilience through our budgeting, our economy more broadly, our macroeconomics more broadly, but resilience of the country, so that we can, in the words of one of the Senators, consolidate the benefits of the past. Benefits of the Structural Adjustment Programme of the past, yes, we can consolidate those and strengthen the capacity for responding to shocks because they're coming from the environment, the global economy and so on.

I want to congratulate you, Senators, you've done well. We're very proud of the Senate **(applause)**, very proud of the Senate. Yes for passing important legislation but the way in which you do it, you're a class act you're not afraid to disagree and you're not afraid to share support and you're really a group of impressive leaders for the country and I hope our young people will learn how to disagree, how to conduct research how to

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Adjournment

debate a Bill, how to seek clarity, how to really conduct yourself as we go into the Second Session of the Eleventh Parliament with a fire for the achievements of our National Sustainable Development Programme 2035 and other honourable goals. Congratulations, thank you and the journey ahead for this year depends on your stay ability. Thank you. And I offer the floor to Senator Lewis. You've got your light on, sir.

Sen. the Hon. Mondy André Lewis: Thank you very much, Madam President. There are just two matters that I wish to raise on behalf of my colleagues in the Public Workers Union and, in particular, comrade President Grimes. We wish to bring to the attention of the nation and to make a special appeal to the Government, just in case it may have slipped their minds, that following the signing of the agreement with the Public Workers Union on 28th of June 2023 to pay the 4% to the contract workers, this has not yet been done. So, as today is the 26th, tomorrow is the 27th, and the 28th on Saturday will make it exactly four months, yes? And that signing was given a lot of press coverage, right? I think the Prime Minister may have attended that signing, and I think it is only fair and proper that these workers receive the payment that was signed and agreed to.

I am also asked to raise that the authorities have not been clear on regularisation as it relates to the outstanding years in question being factored into for pensionable purposes. At this juncture, the Union is of the view that this matter should be stated very clearly.

And last but not least, the outstanding matters in Carriacou. We know that sometime in 2022, there was the dismissal of what we call the Cariciacou Five, and this matter is still pending at the Ministry of Labour and has not been heard. I am just repeating what has been said here. So I am using this opportunity to draw it through you, Madam President, so that these matters can be addressed.

And finally, I was very heartened to hear from the "Government Side" so ably put by the Attorney General and the Leader of Government's Business that is the Structural Adjustment Programme, which, technically speaking, although it was called a homegrown programme, was not really homegrown, and we agree with that. We said so; let me make

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

that point. We are also aware that based on the history of administrations in the past that the international institutions were very wary of going into those sort of arrangement without the support of the wider society because many times those opportunities were squandered and as put by the Attorney General and thank you for this that there are a number of measures that ought to have been in place only for three years, 14, 15 and 16 and there have not been removed.

We therefore now call upon this current Administration to remove the reintroduction of Income Tax on salaries from EC\$36,000 to EC\$50,000, EC\$60,000. Because before the Structural Adjustment Programme, the only income tax was on EC\$60,000 and above and therefore to walk the walk and to move away from the misleading position of the past administration which said that those things would be there for three years, you have an opportunity now in the upcoming Budget to demonstrate to the population that the sacrifices that the working class in particular have made because we are the salaried workers in whose pockets the state and the employers will take what is due before anybody else get.

As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Finance have always indicated that the professionals, deep professionals, I'm not just saying just lawyers and doctors, but the professionals have not been upfront in contributing their fair share of Income Tax. Some of them have the most amount of material stuff that you can see, yet still, they declare less than EC\$5,000 a month, yes. And therefore, I'm using this opportunity to call upon the Government to remove the Income Tax in keeping with what was said by the Attorney General that the three years have passed and the past administration did not go back to the Pre-Structural Adjustment Programme. So we look forward to that being removed. And therefore, we can have more disposable income in our pockets. Thank you.

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Lewis. And I'm sure the Government representatives have heard your calls for clarification and action. I pass the floor to Senator St. Clair. You have the microphone, sir.

***Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's***

Adjournment

Sen. the Hon. Roderick St. Clair: Thank you, Madam President. I stand to speak on a few matters within the allotment of time. Of course, the World Food Day activity in the Agriculture sector, a major event, I taught my good friend, the Leader of the Government's Business, would have spoken... I came in late, so maybe he did on this to complement the... not just the Farmers, but of course, myself and Senator had a long discourse at that session without exposing our private business.

On a serious note, the level of display particularly by the agro-processing component of this country, you could see there is good improvement and once you are adding value it means that the farmers also from the primary production has opportunities for mobilising raw material and so on and so it's something, it was good and of course we look forward to more of those opportunities because they do provide income to everybody involved in that system. So whilst we have World Food Day, we could have our own different discourse, I am sure, that can take place, particularly by the Ministry of Agriculture. So that is good.

The other point, Madam President. The issue of the heat, I know Farmers are complaining with the heat although today we saw rain coming in a few days now but of course whatever crops they would have had would have had some challenges and that we know we have to... as we say ban we jaw, band we belly coming into December you know everybody want to have their little vegetables on the table.

This traditionally has been a very tough time for vegetable production this period, it's normally hot and so on, sometimes no rain. So we trust the farmers would able to hang in there, I know, for example, there's one farmer who been calling me and reaching out to me regarding even GDP they went there to get some support about three months now, and all he needed is less than EC\$10,000 to get some inputs to just fertilise and bring him to fruition. I have to follow up with GDP for him, but he keeps calling. They said Management change, this change and I find it so funny a simple process as that particularly... its not to say he is trying to establish, he has crop on the ground, he needs to make sure that it is fed so we are calling out for that intervention from that statutory body because maybe not only him, he might be calling me but there might be many others

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

who just need that 5,000, 6,000 fertiliser input to make it readily available otherwise he can lose most of his crops and then we end up with food security challenges down the road. So, of course, this is one point.

The last point I want to make is the issues pertaining to the cannabis, and where are we. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend some dialogue with the Rastafarian Community. They have formed themselves into a cooperative, which is good. Of course, they are young as an organisation trying to come together and their whole idea basically is to share information about the herb, how it can be used and improve the knowledge of their membership such that when the time comes for that day, they can be able to not only benefit for themselves but for their communities, their families et cetera. In the way that things are managed. Of course, I have pledged to, as I have before working along with them in various ways, various representations and they really want to see this Cannabis Commission really get moving. There is supposed to be a report that we should expect anytime from now to know where we are. They have some thoughts also, as it may be from time to time, whatever representation they would need, definitely I'm at their service in that regard.

With public disclosure, of course, my dear friend Senator Neilon, he also joined me on that mission yesterday with them because they provide invitation as with anybody else, and so, you go listen and share with them and try to explain because it was an opportunity. In fact, I think this was the most important point to show them how the Parliament and your Parliamentarians can assist them in achieving their goal because there are ways in approaching that stuff. We also would have let them know that coming to the Parliament, being here and understanding the process, connecting with different people is also a very important thing because just sitting by yourself alone and hoping that things would happen. It is not that persons maybe don't want to support and help, but the lack of knowledge, the lack of information, and so to be able to reason with the eyes as they would be present.

So I wanted to raise that, and they are an important stakeholder in the mix of all this transformation that we are speaking about, because this is... as one of them said to

*Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's*

Adjournment

me, “This is a \$40 million industry that we keep losing on”, and that is just products of trade not even the value added products we’re talking about. And they don’t care too much about smoking and getting high. It’s not about that. It is about how we add value and how we get that value to remain with our people, and not as in the colonial times, where we were working for “massa” and all the resources were going away. So whatever we have to do as a nation, we have to do that.

Notwithstanding, of course, social issues, which they have also engaged because this was another concern, I say, but you know the moral issues, society issues, but they have also been out speaking to the religious community, different leaders, so they are doing some work outside there already, in addition to whatever the commission was doing. So we calling for the Commission to stay where we are. And so, by the next sitting, we should have some questions to know the status of where we are, so, at least, they can better plan their business and their future.

As they are saying, Madam President, as I close, research should be done in product development already in the Produce Chemist Lab, for example, they have five, six different... So whenever this day comes, we shouldn’t have to just start, you know. In fact, one of the guys he was doing certain products in Canada already. A local person, Grenadian. They are ready rather than some person from outside coming in and take all the resources, that is their scare. So I just wanted to share this moment to us.

I want to wish everyone a good weekend coming up and, of course, we look forward until we see again. I want to wish all the farmers, the agriculture community to hold strong, we know the budget is coming up soon and in whatever way you can still keep contributing through your MPs, through your different persons, keep pushing your buttons as I continue too. Such that we can have a bright and prosperous 2024.

(Applause)

Madam President: I thank you, Senator Roderick St. Clair. I offer the floor to Senator Jonathan La Crette.

Sitting of the Senate
held on Thursday 26th October, 2023
at the Parliament Chamber, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's

Adjournment

Sen. the Hon. Gayton Jonathan La Crette: Yes, Madam President, I would be very brief, thank you very much. These are indeed interesting times, Madam President, and I never thought that I would live to see a bald-headed man represent Rastafarians in the Senate. **(Applause/Laughter)** Nevertheless, we love our Rastafarian family, and we want them to be part of the dialogue as it relates to the decriminalisation of marijuana.

Madam President, the official flyer is out for the 50th Independence Launch of Grenada's 50th Independence, and that will take place on October 31, 2023. The start time will be 4:00 p.m. and the location of the venue, the Carenage St. George. Grenadians can expect to witness the official unveiling of the independence theme, logo, song and special remarks by the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Dickon Mitchell. Grenadians can also expect to experience traditional culinary delights, creative artistry and captivating cultural performances by local artists. Thank you.

Madam President: On the 12th and 13th of October, a training seminar on Parliamentary Procedure and Protocol and Gender was held. We want to thank all of you who came and lament the absence of those of you who were not able to attend, to encourage those of you who could use what we learned, and to not be shy and ask for more seminars of this sort.

I want to publicly thank the Clerk and all others involved in hosting the seminar, particularly Miss Palmer, who worked very hard on it and others. And to thank the Spotlight Initiative for partnering with our institutional growth and development, legislation will come out of it. Thank you all.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting of the Senate adjourned sine die at 2:03 p.m.

PREPARED BY

HANSARD REPORTERS

Ms. Shanta Joseph

Ms. Akeda David

Ms. Leasha Francis

Ms. Jasmine Redhead

EDITORS

Mr. Andrew Augustine (Clerk)

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