



**CAYMAN ISLANDS  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT  
ELECTRONIC VERSION**

**2015/16 SESSION**

**27 May 2015**

*Sixth Sitting of the First Meeting*  
Throne Speech and Budget Address  
*(Pages 185-220)*

**Hon Juliana Y O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MLA**  
**Speaker**

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PRESENT WERE:

**SPEAKER**

Hon Juliana Y O'Connor- Connolly, JP, MLA  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

**MINISTERS OF THE CABINET**

Hon Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA	<i>The Premier</i> , Minister of Home Affairs, Health and Culture
Hon Moses I Kirkconnell, JP, MLA	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
Hon D Kurt Tibbetts, OBE, JP, MLA	Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure
Hon Marco S Archer, MLA	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon Osbourne V Bodden, MLA	Minister of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports
Hon G Wayne Panton, MLA	Financial Services, Commerce and Environment
Hon Tara A Rivers, MLA	Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

Hon Franz I Manderson Cert. Hon., JP	Deputy Governor, ex officio Member responsible for the Civil Service
Hon Jacqueline Wilson	Temporary Attorney General, ex officio Member responsible for Legal Affairs

**ELECTED MEMBERS**

**GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS**

Mr Anthony S Eden, OBE, JP, MLA	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , First Elected Member for Bodden Town
Mr Roy McTaggart, MLA	Second Elected Member for George Town
Mr Winston C Connolly, Jr, MLA	Fifth Elected Member for George Town
Mr Alva H Suckoo, MLA	Fourth Elected Member for Bodden Town

**OPPOSITION MEMBERS**

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MLA	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , First Elected Member for West Bay
Mr Bernie A Bush, MLA	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , Third Elected Member for West Bay
Capt A Eugene Ebanks, JP, MLA	Fourth Elected Member for West Bay

**INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Mr D Ezzard Miller, MLA	Elected Member for North Side
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**APOLOGIES**

Hon Samuel Bulgin, QC, JP	Attorney General, ex officio Member responsible for Legal Affairs
Mr Joseph X Hew, MLA	Sixth Elected Member for George Town
Mr V Arden McLean, JP, MLA	Elected Member for East End

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT  
STATE OPENING AND BUDGET  
2015/16 SESSION  
WEDNESDAY  
27 MAY 2015  
10:42 AM  
Sixth Sitting**

*[Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Speaker, presiding]*

**The Speaker:** Good morning. I will invite the Fourth Elected Member for Bodden Town to grace us with prayers today.

### PRAYERS

**Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.,** Fourth Elected Member for Bodden Town: Good morning, let us pray:

*Almighty God, from whom all wisdom and power are derived: We beseech Thee so to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Legislative Assembly now assembled, that all things may be ordered upon the best and surest foundations for the glory of Thy Name and for the safety, honour and welfare of the people of these Islands.*

*Bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II; Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Charles, Prince of Wales; and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands, the Premier, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Members of the Cabinet, Ex-officio Members, and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that we may be enabled faithfully to perform the responsible duties of our high office. All this we ask for Thy great Name's sake.*

Let us say The Lord's Prayer together: *Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

*The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us and give us peace, now and always. Amen.*

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

**The Speaker:** Please stand.

#### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

*[Administered by the Clerk]*

**Hon. Jacqueline Wilson, Acting Attorney General:** I, Jacqueline Wilson, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to law, so help me God.

#### OATH OF DUE EXECUTION

*[Administered by the Clerk]*

**Hon. Jacqueline Wilson, Acting Attorney General:** I, Jacqueline Wilson, do swear that I will well and truly serve Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, and the people of the Cayman Islands in the Office of Ex-Officio Member of the Legislative Assembly, so help me God.

**The Speaker:** On behalf of this honourable House may I invite you to take your seat as the Honourable Acting Attorney General.

Please be seated.

### READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### APOLOGIES

**The Speaker:** I have received apologies from the Member for East End, and the Sixth Elected Member for the district of George Town.

### QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

#### QUESTION NO. 8: EDUCATION SYSTEM, PROPOSED CHANGES IN CAYMAN BRAC

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** I beg to ask question number 8, which reads as follows: Can the Honourable Minister say what are the

proposed changes in the Education System for the schools in Cayman Brac?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers, Minister Education, Employment and Gender Affairs:** Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education is working with the Ministry of District Administration to develop a plan to convert the hurricane shelter site on the Bluff in Cayman Brac, into a new school campus in an effort to improve educational facilities in the Sister Islands.

### SUPPLEMENTARIES

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Can the Minister elaborate a little bit as to where the plan has reached on this matter, and what is going to happen to the present schools?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The plan as put forward is really at the stage of looking at the strategic outline case and just to say that with the government capital projects that this administration is carrying forward, we will be following the due process as outlined in the Public Management and Finance Law and Framework for Fiscal Responsibility. So we are putting forward a strategic outline case which looks at a number of scenarios, one of them being an amalgamation of all primary schools on that site and the other option is to look at an all through school. But this is really in its very nascent stages, Madam Speaker. So, the next stage is to look at doing an outline business case and we will be working with the Ministry of District Administration very closely in order to develop any plans going forward. And that includes looking at plans for current facilities as well.

**The Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister say whether she has anything written that can be examined as to what she just said? I will understand if she says she hasn't gotten that far, I will quite understand that. But if she has a written document that has reached thus far, as far as what she is telling me, I would like to see something. If she hasn't, then I quite understand.

Madam Speaker, I need to understand something. This converting of the hurricane shelter site on the bluff in Cayman Brac, that does not mean the Aston Rutty Centre. Are you talking about the new site? Is the Minister talking about the new site that was be-

ing developed for sports and the hurricane shelter, I guess? I just want to make sure that she is talking about that site and not the Aston Rutty Centre. And when she is saying all primary schools, this would be all the . . . when you say "all" that means everyone.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, the Member is correct in assuming that it is referring to the site where the sports facilities are, the hurricane shelter, currently trying to make best use of those facilities to improve the educational facilities as a whole for Cayman Brac and it does contemplate looking at all primary schools. As I said, the two options that are being considered, but to your point, or to your question, as far as I am aware, I am not sure if we actually have anything that can be disseminated at this stage, but the two options that are being looked into would be looking at primary schools as a first phase, or all schools as an all-through school primary and high school. But those are the considerations the Ministry will be looking at in conjunction with the Ministry of District Administration.

**The Speaker:** I will allow one more supplementary.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, thank you.

So the Minister is saying that it is a possibility that in talking and discussing this matter the high schools could be thrown into the mix for the possibility of them going on that site, a) rather than; or b) together? Which one is she saying if that is what she is saying? Maybe that is not what she is saying, but that's what I am getting.

What are the plans, if any, for the current buildings then if their strategic thinking is carried through?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I indicated in my previous answer, looking at both the best use of the facility and the facilities that are in the works now on the new Brac Bluff site (I will call it) will contemplate either doing all primary schools, or doing an all-through type school. So primary and high schools and how that can be accomplished. But, again, the final determination is yet to be determined based on the outline business case and the process that is now taking place looking at both of those scenarios.

To the question about what is intended for the current use, that also will be contemplated and plans will be put forward as to how to address those actual facilities that would be vacated at the time of any such move to the new site.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I do crave your indulgence to ask one more.

**The Speaker:** This will be the final one.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

Madam Speaker, if not at this stage, Minister, at what stage will there be public discussions with the people on the Brac with regard to any plan to move children into one area, either high or primary levels?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, that is, again, one of the aspects that we will need to work out with the Ministry of District Administration in order to see how to best move this process forward.

**The Speaker:** The Elected Member for North Side.

**QUESTION NO. 9: GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS, NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE GRADUATES THIS YEAR**

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, Elected Member for North Side:** Can the Honourable Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs state how many students on Government scholarships are graduating from University/College this year and what qualifications they will obtain?

**The Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, the total number of students on Government Scholarship slated to graduate this year is 141 broken down into the following degree categories:

Returning Students 2014/15	
Humanities	6
Education & Related Studies	21
Social & Business Studies	59
Professional	6
Engineering, Technology & Science	42
Medicine, Health Related & Veterinary	7
TOTAL	141

**The Speaker:** If there are no supplementaries, we will move on to the next question.

The Elected Member for North Side.

**QUESTION NO. 10: RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS FROM CUBA**

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:** I beg to ask the Honourable Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Af-

fairs the following question: Can the Honourable Minister say what is the Government's policy on recruiting teachers from Cuba?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, the Government has been using the National Recognition Information Centre, known as NARIC, since 2008. NARIC is the UK National Agency that provides the only official source of information on international education and training systems and wide-ranging international qualifications and skills attained from outside the United Kingdom.

UK NARIC is used by the Cayman Islands Department of Education Services to authenticate the qualifications of persons who are shortlisted to fill any posts that have been advertised. Any qualification that is not listed in the database can be vetted by NARIC, particularly if the certification is available. When in doubt, the Department of Education Services can send the information to NARIC and they provide a comparative analysis.

Teachers are considered, shortlisted and offered an interview, and hired from all countries provided they meet the minimum criteria to be recognised as a teacher in our system holding a Bachelor Degree, teaching qualification and minimum two years post qualification teaching experience. As part of that consideration, an individual's qualification is verified through NARIC to ensure that it meets the minimum criteria. This verification compares qualifications from around the world to ensure that they are at the Bachelor's Level and/or recognised as confirming Qualified Teachers Status (QTS). Consequently, if a qualification from a specific institution in Cuba was recognised by NARIC, the Department of Education Services would accept it.

**The Speaker:** If there are no supplementaries, we will move on to the next question.

The Elected Member for North Side.

**QUESTION NO. 11: NATIONAL ROADS AUTHORITY, DART HOTEL TRAFFIC STUDY**

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:** I beg to ask the Honourable Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Can the Honourable Minister state if the National Roads Authority has completed any traffic studies to determine what if any changes to the road network will be necessary to accommodate the additional traffic generated by the operation of the Dart hotel?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Planning.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In line with the honourable

Member for North Side, since he begs to ask I beg to answer with your permission Ma'am.

Madam Speaker, the answer: When the developer of the Kimpton Hotel submitted his application to the Central Planning Authority, the application was circulated to the National Roads Authority (NRA) for their input and comments. In assessing any major development in the Cayman Islands, the NRA only prepares a generic traffic generation assessment of a proposed development. Where a proposed development is anticipated to contribute to significant traffic impacts onto the surrounding road network, the NRA advises the CPA that a traffic study be carried out by the developer of the project subject to terms of reference established by the NRA.

In regard to this specific development project, preliminary traffic impact assessments were quantified in a comprehensive traffic study prepared by the consulting firm Orth-Rodgers & Associates (ORA) when the For Cayman Alliance/NRA agreement was conceived and developed in 2011. ORA's traffic study recommended that the Esterley Tibbetts Highway, in the immediate vicinity of the hotel site, be constructed with three northbound lanes and two southbound lanes.

The development site, when fully developed and occupied, is anticipated to generate just under 2,300 vehicle trips per day with about 154 trips per hour and 177 trips per hour respectively during the morning and afternoon peak conditions. Based on these traffic generation estimates, the surrounding road network is deemed satisfactory to handle this level of traffic volumes as well as the anticipated traffic growth over the next twenty years.

**The Speaker:** If there are no supplementaries, we will move to the next item of business.

## STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

**The Speaker:** I have noted that the Honourable Minister of Education wishes to make two statements this morning.

Honourable Minister of Education.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN ICT AND STEM

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I present to this honourable House the outstanding accomplishments of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and the notable efforts taken to strengthen science, technology, engineering and mathematics, commonly known as STEM provision, in the schools.

The focus and provision of ICT and strengthening of STEM in the schools is a priority for this Government and for me, as Minister of Education. The Government has invested and continues to invest in charting a course where technology is thoroughly embedded and integrated across the curriculum and in our schools. As it relates to Education, the goals of the Government are to establish the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence, and to prepare students to take advantage of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities that exist in order to excel in the local economy and compete in the global economy. To this end, the Government, through the work of the Ministry of Education, is striving to create learning environments where the ICT infrastructure is strong, and where the use of ICT in the classroom is embedded in all parts of the learning process, in order to create confident and engaged learners.

As a result of the targeted investments made during 2014/15 fiscal year, the first, and perhaps most exciting initiative to be rolled out for the 2015/16 academic year is that every primary school classroom will be provided with an Interactive White Board (IWB). Interactive White Boards have been steadily added to government primary and high school classrooms over the past several years. We currently have 192 classrooms with interactive white board technology; however, additional interactive white board technology for schools has been procured earlier this year and will be installed for the 2015/16 school year.

The Ministry tendered for interactive white boards in March 2015, and 117 interactive white boards have been purchased, which will increase coverage to 100 per cent of primary school classrooms. By September 2015 every public/primary school classroom will have access to this technology, and so will 60 per cent of all public high school classrooms; and the Ministry was able to successfully source this technology at significantly lower than expected cost. At a cost of C\$108,576, this initiative came in well under pre-tender estimates of \$170,000.

Interactive White Boards have become more common place in the modern classroom and are in fact, requested more often by educators who wish to produce and utilise engaging content with their students. Through software which allows for the fast creation of interactive activities using templates, IWBs provide the opportunity for teachers to show, and have their students demonstrate, aspects of their learning. The software brings an additional element into the teaching and learning dynamic, by allowing students to create content for use by other students. This is another strategy to demonstrate learning; it is also a good way to teach students to be more than just consumers of information, but to also become creators of content as well.

Specifically, in the core areas of literacy, numeracy and science, educators have developed a plethora of content to be used interactively. Students

have the opportunity, for example, to manually adjust variables and see the impact on a graph or the environment; or engage in logical sequencing for storytelling. Students also have the ability to work collaboratively, as the modern IWBs allow for more than one touch input at a time, which means potentially, two students can be at the board working on different parts of the same problem or activity.

In addition to adding collaboration and interactivity to lessons, the Ministry of Education has purchased software that will allow collaboration between classes and schools using interactive white boards as a videoconferencing tool. Software for use with interactive white boards has also been purchased to allow videoconference connections between schools and internationally.

To provide savings to the Government, the Ministry's ICT Unit has worked with Public Works to install projectors and projector arms in each classroom. The tender was for the interactive white board only to be used with the existing projector and projector arm. In order to further save costs, the tender was for supply only of the interactive white boards as the ICT unit is working with Public Works to install the interactive white boards before or during the summer 2015. Several of the IWBs have already been tested at one of the primary schools earlier this month.

Research has shown that IWBs are most appropriate for interactive teaching at the primary school level, therefore, while we have equipped our high schools with some interactive white boards, the focus is for high school students to have access to laptops and other educational technology.

The second exciting initiative is that upgraded school websites for all schools will be launched in 2015/16 academic year. These public facing websites will take advantage of social media and be integrated with SIMS Learning Gateway (SLG), which is the web-based, online portal for teachers connected to the schools central information management system (SIMS). This upgrade will also create a much needed intranet for the internal sharing of information within schools. During the 2015/16 school year, these web-based online portals will also be made accessible to students and parents. Parents will be able to view their student's profile, view any school announcements, and view relevant statistics like attendance and academic achievement to date (to name a few).

The use of SIMS as a school management system is now embedded in all schools. All schools and teachers are expected to use SIMS to record pertinent information. SIMS provides much more than school database or a system to record attendance and grades. SIMS is now integrated into our school websites using SIMS Learning Gateway and Microsoft Sharepoint. SIMS Learning Gateway will integrate with the school databases and will provide a web-based online teacher portal with student portal and parent portal coming in 2015/16 school year.

SIMS is the most popular school management information system (MIS) in the United Kingdom used in over 22,000 schools. The SIMS solution has been developed by Capita specifically for the education sector and has been refined to meet the changing needs of schools over the last 24 years. SIMS has become the key piece of software for managing schools, especially at the high school level and includes the following features:

- The admission of students and monitoring of enrolment places available in schools.
- The maintenance of student records and easy transfer between schools as children move about our system.
- The ability to search historical student data when queries arise.
- The ability to extract information when requested by policy makers to allow for better informed decision making.
- The recording and analysis of attendance information by schools and education staff.
- The recording and analysis of behavioural information by schools and education staff.
- The recording of special educational needs (SEN) data.
- The recording and analysis of external examination results by schools and education staff.
- The recording and analysis of assessment data and internal test results.
- The creation and maintenance of timetabling and student curriculum data.
- The maintenance of staff timetables.
- The ability to cover absent staff and arrange substitute teachers.
- The ability to use SIMS to contact parents about their children.
- The compliance of the database to international data protection laws.

The Ministry's ICT team has also implemented some much needed infrastructure improvements to the networks. They have upgraded the campus Wi-Fi to be appropriate for educational environments at East End Primary School, Edna M. Moyle Primary School, Sir John A. Cumber Primary School, Lighthouse School and the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC) in the 2014/15 school year.

During the Summer months, wireless network upgrades for George Town Primary School, Red Bay Primary School, Savannah Primary School, Prospect Primary School, Bodden Town Primary School, Creek and Spot Bay Infant and Junior School sites, West End Primary School, John Gray High School, Layman Scott High School, Department of Education Services and the Teachers Centre Cayman Brac are scheduled and will be ready for the 2015/16 school year.

This significant upgrade improves the strength, reliability and security of the education wire-

less network, and also provides a guest wireless network that can be accessed by guests of the school, while maintaining the integrity of the network security. Network equipment upgrades are planned for all schools during summer 2015, which will improve the stability of the education network, and increase the reliability and speed of the network.

In terms of the technical upgrades, the ICT team will be upgrading network equipment in all schools, and will be completing cabling and fibre upgrades, and providing some new servers.

Another notable initiative for the 2015/16 year is the Destiny online library system by Follett, which will facilitate the consolidation of all school library systems with one web-based library portal for all schools. This national online library system will be integrated with existing school libraries and will improve access to e-books and digital resources in schools. In addition to this online system, the ICT team has begun implementing laptops in the libraries in some of our schools for access to digital resources and e-books.

Increased bandwidth for accessing online resources by students and teachers will be implemented in all schools during the 2015/16 fiscal year. With various service providers now running fibre across the Cayman Islands, the Ministry's ICT Unit is now in a position to provide more bandwidth in each school with new fibre connections. The Unit is now working to provide a separate Internet connection in each school, instead of a shared internet connection.

I am happy to provide an update with respect to the first ever 1:1 initiative for government schools which was launched in 2014. Thanks to a generous private sector donation of 106 iPads, every student at Lighthouse School has access to an iPad and appropriate educational apps. The Ministry's ICT staff has been instrumental in installation, maintenance and management of all software to ensure that our special needs students attending the Lighthouse School have access to appropriate resources.

I would also like to acknowledge another private donation of 10 laptops and tablets to the Edna M. Moyle Primary School by a resident of the area. These laptops will be primarily used to set up an assisted reading and writing programme for some of our special education needs students at Edna M. Moyle Primary School who would be better able to access the curriculum with this support. These machines will also be used for e-reading and book club activities for the students at school, as well as for research throughout all classrooms.

In addition, the laptops will be used as pilot devices for deploying Windows 8 and Office 365 at the Edna M. Moyle Primary School before rolling the systems out to the other schools. These tablets will also be compatible with the new online library solution mentioned earlier.

Additional and upgraded videoconference equipment has been purchased, which will allow for

improved videoconference capabilities between Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. This will increase collaboration between educators on both Islands and will reduce the necessity for inter-island travel, thus reducing the costs associated with such travel.

Education must prepare children for the jobs of the future. The US Department of Commerce released a study in 2011 which reported over the past 10 years that the growth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs was three times greater than that of non-STEM jobs, and STEM jobs are expected to grow at a faster rate than other jobs in the coming decade. Likewise, according to the study, STEM workers are less likely to experience joblessness, command higher wages (earning 26 per cent more than their non-STEM counterparts as estimated in this report). STEM degree holders are also expected to earn higher earnings regardless of whether or not they work in STEM or non-STEM occupations.

The Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers of leading US companies whose aim is to promote sound public policy and a thriving US economy, recently conducted a survey of member companies to determine where the biggest gaps are in skills. The survey found that 97 per cent member CEOs see the skills shortage as a problem, and that job vacancies in science, technology, engineering and math fields often attract far fewer applicants. According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 16 per cent of American high school seniors are proficient in mathematics and interested in a STEM career—at a time when STEM jobs are growing three times faster than non-STEM jobs.

The Cayman Islands Ministry of Education is focusing on ways to strengthen the STEM teachings and provisions in our schools and at UCCI. In an effort to address the local STEM skills shortage, the Department of Education Services is also implementing a new ICT-related initiative in the classroom itself. LEGO Education WeDo and LEGO Mindstorms Education EV3 robotics kits were purchased for government primary and high schools respectively. The kits combine the creativity of LEGO to construct and build, while adding the dimension of problem solving, logic and programming to the various projects students undertake.

Both kits have a variety of projects based on the Lego Education 4C philosophy of "Connect, Construct, Continue and Contemplate." The projects initially allow students to CONNECT with a familiar concept, whether it is a problem where there is a need to generate air from a fan, or a sensor that prevents a car from crashing. Students are then required to CONSTRUCT the project using the LEGO bricks and the various motors and sensors. The CONTINUE phase occurs through an extension project, possibly controlling the fan by a sensor, or allowing the car to

turn at a particular angle when it reaches an obstruction instead of stopping.

Finally, students are encouraged to CONTEMPLATE what they did and think of the implications, not only for real-life applications, but hypothesise on the outcomes if various variables are adjusted and then test those hypotheses.

The intended outcome for government schools is to incorporate the robotics kits into the delivery of instruction in math, science, literacy and ICT, through the various projects, and also start students thinking about the logic and problem solving involved in programming the robots. Schools have received kits already and will have enough to serve up to 16 students in a class at any given time. Individual schools are planning for the use of the kits and are considering both classroom use and after-school clubs.

The push for increased STEM awareness and skills development extends to post-secondary educational endeavours as well. In March 2015, the Ministry of Education sponsored and UCCI delivered the third staging of the STEM Carib Conference: "The Next Big Thing" gathering local and international STEM experts to the Cayman Islands to discuss a plethora of topics that served to expand the knowledge base of local children and adults alike.

In addition, with the support of corporate sponsorship, the year-long STEM Ambassadors Club hosted at UCCI was piloted during the 2014/15 academic year with monthly meetings catering to over 50 students in the high school and tertiary levels. Students were engaged in various activities and seminars with topics ranging from fractals to alternative energy.

Madam Speaker, this Government recognises the need to continue to invest in our students and our education system as a whole in an attempt to create a centre of educational excellence, and to prepare students to take advantage of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities that exist in order to excel in the local economy and compete in the global economy.

Since taking office it has been a priority of mine, as Minister of Education, to improve the ICT provision and STEM related programmes in our schools. I am delighted to deliver this report on behalf of the Government showing that numerous considerable advances have been achieved this year in this regard, in order to support the learning processes of our students and to help them to achieve their full potential. Thank you, Madam Speaker

**The Speaker:** You may proceed with your other statement.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION UPGRADE**

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, the work undertaken by the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Unit of the Ministry of Education since this

Government took office in May 2013 has been led both by the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Education 2012/17 and by new policy directives and directions of this Coalition Government which have been provided to the Ministry in order to address priority areas identified as being in need of particular focus and urgent attention.

Madam Speaker, this Government's *modus operandi* has been to ensure that what is working to continue to support and improve upon, but where there are gaps in the system, to identify those gaps and look to address them as well. And that has certainly been the philosophy as it relates to the Ministry of Education and the work undertaken.

Two priority areas of this Government which directly impacts and has helped to guide the work of the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit are: (1) the need to increase our international competitiveness as a jurisdiction and to raise standards in education generally, and in early childhood education in particular; and (2) the need to focus on persons with special education needs or disabilities. These are two of the six priority areas that I will elaborate on later in my debate which this Government has given as a policy steer for the area of education.

With respect to increasing international competitiveness and raising standards, over the last two years since taking office, the ECCE has been able to deliver on a number of key initiatives.

Publishing and distribution of the Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum Framework (CIEYCF): This Framework was presented to and approved by the Education Council in April 2014 as the national curriculum for early years. The Framework is a guiding document to assist ECCE practitioners when planning developmentally appropriate activities and programmes for children aged 0 to 5 years old. The Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum Framework is a document which will help the practitioners cater to the needs of each child, and help them develop into life-long learners who can be productive, contributing members of not just our society, but of the global community.

A copy of this framework will be presented to the LA in due course; however, it can be accessed free of charge by the public online at [www.education.gov.ky](http://www.education.gov.ky).

Adopting and implementing the Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education Centres which were approved by the Education Council in August 2013, was another milestone that happened during this Government's administration. These guidelines were developed by Ministry in consultation with early childhood stakeholders, and are designed to standardise practice for early years' children and to raise standards in early years' education provision. The Ministry has now completed the first full year cycle of registration and re-registration of ECCE Centres using the approved Guidelines, and already the Ministry is

starting to see a culture shift and good practice taking root in our ECCE Centres.

Another priority area which the Ministry, the Department of Education Services and the Schools are tasked with is the development of holistic strategies and programmes to address the needs of persons with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities ("SEN/D"). In addition, Cabinet has recently passed and adopted the Cayman Islands Disabilities Policy, which highlights the need to ensure that our children with special needs and/or disabilities are able to access educational and social opportunities as they grow. This has certainly been one of the priority areas that I campaigned on, Madam Speaker, and continue, with the support of the Government, to ensure that we try to make inroads in providing for our special education needs and students with disabilities.

To this end, the Ministry has taken a proactive approach in anticipation of the Disabilities Policy being adopted. Since August 2014, the ECCE Unit in the Ministry has benefitted from a secondment of an Early Childhood Officer with specific focus and training in special education needs. The officer has developed policies, procedures alongside other ECCE Officers in the Ministry.

During the 2014/15 fiscal year the ECCE Unit has been leading a series of training sessions for early childhood practitioners to raise awareness of challenges children with special education needs and/or disabilities may have and ways in which they can support them to be more successful. The training series included special sessions for the owners and principals/lead teachers in early childhood centres which helped them identify challenges children may have, guidance on how to discuss their concerns with parents, and procedures that should take place within the early childhood centre if a child is identified to need extra support. The ECCE Unit has also facilitated training for reception teachers, private schools and Department of Children and Family Services on issues related to special needs.

Another important initiative being spearheaded by the Ministry of Education with the support of the Cabinet Office is the development of a new service model for the Early Intervention Programme. Providing adapted environments and specialist provision for children with special education needs as early as possible almost always proves to be the most effective as it relates to outcomes later in life. This is a cross-ministerial approach to address the needs of our youngest children with SEN/D, as the needs of these children are often complex, requiring assistance relating to healthcare, education, family support, et cetera, and often require access to multiple service providers across ministries and departments.

This Government is fully supportive of pursuing a holistic approach to addressing the issues relating to providing the best possible care and support for some of our most vulnerable children.

Cabinet has just recently issued a mandate to the Ministries of Education, Health, Community Affairs and Planning, to come together to develop a multi-agency/multi-ministry approach to address the issues related to the Early Intervention Programme service delivery model which serves the needs of our youngest pre-compulsory aged special needs students. The staff of the various ministries and departments will now need to look at and develop an effective inter-ministerial/inter-departmental model of Early Intervention service delivery with the aim to begin implementing some aspects of the new model, to the extent possible, as early as September 2015, with further implementation aimed for September 2016.

Here is a concrete example that this Government is committed to identifying the issues facing some of our youngest learners and to addressing the issues in a strategic way. This approach may require a culture shift in the way some ministries and departments operate. However, the Government recognises that it is important to break down the silos that exist, moving beyond the individualised domain of each Ministry outputs, and instead, taking a whole government approach to addressing complex, multifaceted issues facing our children.

The Civil Service will have an opportunity to rise to the challenge, and the Government is looking forward to receiving the holistic proposal from the relevant Ministries in this regard.

Finally, from a policy perspective, another critical gap in provision of service that has been addressed recently by the Ministry of Education, relates to the availability of financial assistance for those families who qualify. Starting September 2015, the eligibility age to access Early Childhood Assistance Programme (ECAP) funding, will be lowered from three years six months to three years old, so as to provide for continuous service and access to our young children to receive quality early childhood education.

This was necessary, to lower the age eligibility criteria because the current eligibility criteria of the Needs Assessment Unit of the Department of Children and Family Services to access early childhood funding is for children up to the age of three years old. And previously the Ministry of Education's ECAP funding eligibility started at three years, six months, which essentially left a five month gap (possibility longer depending on the time of the year that the child was born) in provision which negatively impacted some children and families.

Therefore, starting in September 2015, if a Caymanian child is three years old before September 1, families are able to apply for ECAP funding, and if eligible to receive such funding, the funding will be paid directly to the Early Childhood Centres to provide pre-primary education to those children who would then be eligible to access the government's reception programme at age four by the following September.

This change in policy will make attendance at ECCE Centres more accessible for children with less disruption in their attendance, and it also provides a consistent and reliable source of funding for early childhood care and education centres that provide the service as the funding is sent directly to the centres with respect to all children receiving such funding. This is also a way to ensure that the funding is spent on the intended purpose.

That is a brief overview of the policy priorities which have guided the work of the ECCE over the past two years, and I will continue to act, and this Government will continue to act as an anchor for the work of the Unit in the coming years as outlined in these policy priorities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### RAISING OF A MATTER OF PRIVILEGE OF THE HOUSE

[Standing Order 28]

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 28.

**The Speaker:** Please state the Standing Order.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:**

It is Standing Order 28 which addresses a matter that affects the privilege of this hon. House. And, Madam Speaker, I want to say that I am not asking for it to be dealt with at this time because we are into the Budget and I would like to see that process completed. I am bringing it to the Chair's attention and later I can raise the matter. I want to say what I think affects the privilege of the House very briefly and then ask the indulgence of the Chair to address it at a later date after the Members have completed the very important task we have of addressing the Budget and Throne Speech.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, if I can just have a moment to wrap Standing Order 28 around my mind.

[Short pause]

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, as I peruse Standing Order 28, insofar, the procedure has been followed as to you bringing it to the Presiding Officer's attention and stating the matter of intended proposals you wish to raise. Ordinarily, what would happen is that the Presiding Officer would ask you to briefly state the grounds which you believe you have introduced *novus actus interveniens* insofar as to

when that could happen, and that you have asked for it to happen afterwards.

Standing Order 28(5), however, says: "**Matter of privilege shall be raised in the manner provided in Standing Order 14**" (which deals with the matter that business is set out on the Day's Order Paper) "**but if, during a sitting of the House, a matter suddenly arises which appears to involve the privileges of the House, the proceedings may be interrupted, unless a division is in progress,**" (which is not happening right now) "**in order that the matter may be raised and disposed of.**"

Based on that reading, what you have requested can only be done if there is a suspension of [SO] 28(5), which would allow you to deal with it later in the day as opposed to right now. That is my understanding of it, but I will seek to suspend for five minutes to consult with the principal legal adviser to the Parliament and reconvene after.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:**

Madam Speaker, I don't want to take up any abundance of time at this point in time. So, if you continue, and on your usual break you do that, if you can, under the [Standing] Orders, then I will be satisfied with that.

**The Speaker:** The difficulty, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, is that if my understanding of reading this is correct, out of the abundance of caution, I want to take legal advice on it as I am not the legal adviser to the Parliament. If I have read it correctly, this would be the only time to do it unless there is a motion to suspend allowing your request to be made to deal with it later. And I just want to be abundantly clear that that is the position. So, I ask Members to stay in their seats and I invite the principal legal adviser to meet me in my Chambers to further consolidate my opinion. Thank you for your indulgence.

**Proceedings suspended at 11.39 am**

**Proceedings resumed at 11.58 am**

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Proceedings are resumed.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Chair rules as follows, and I can say it is in accordance with what I intimated earlier.

Standing Order 14 sets out the arrangement of the business and 14(1)(j) sets out exactly when matters relating to privilege may be raised, which is correctly done at the stage we are now at.

Standing Order 28, however, sets out the procedure for how a matter of privilege may be raised. Therefore the option as I see it is twofold. The matter can be raised now and the full process continued. However, if that is not the desire, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, and your desire remains that you want to

deal with it later, then, any Member would move a suspension of Standing Order 14 for it to be dealt with later into the proceedings. If it is moved by a Member of the backbench, it would then require a seconder. If it is moved by a Member of the Government, it would not require a seconder. Those are the findings of the Chair.

I recognise the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, my mind is at the same position as when I rose earlier to bring it to the attention of the Chair. Madam Speaker, I never bother with such things as these sorts of Facebook and social media stuff. I have no time for it, but this photo matter is inexcusable. It is a deliberate attack on my character which has been carried out by Members of the opposite party with involvement of other people. And, as I said, I do not want to take up any more time from the House. I would rather if the House complete important business and I state my position now that I will move the motion later at that time to deal with it.

**The Speaker:** Leader of the Opposition, the next step would then be for a motion to be moved for the suspension of Standing Order 14, bearing in mind that if that motion fails, then we would revert to the status quo once you have raised the matter that we would have to deal with it at this stage. I just want Members to be clear with the procedure as I comprehend it.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Are you saying that we must do that at this point or at the point that I intend to raise it?

**The Speaker:** According to Standing Order 14, this is the appropriate time to raise it into the proceedings. If you want to do it later, as you have requested, then that would necessitate the suspension of Standing Order 14 to allow you to raise it at a later time. So, you have two options: you can raise it now as you have just done with intention, and, of course, you have several more steps to follow if you proceed to raise it now. If you do not want to raise it now, the only how the Chair could allow it not to be raised now is if a motion is brought and seconded if it is by a non-government bench member, or, if it is by the Government, no seconder is required and a vote is taken. If the motion passes in the affirmative, it can then be put on for a later time as to whatever the time is that the motion stipulates. If the motion fails and you still intend to discuss it, it would have to be discussed now.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Is that an explicit motion in writing that would be required? Or do I formulate the motion and we move from there?

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 28(4) it says: “**Any Member may then move a motion relating to that matter of privilege, which shall take precedence over other business.**” Based from the sequence as to how it is stipulated into the Standing Order, the motion can be moved on the Floor of the House. A Member can raise it by moving the motion.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** I am still not clear. If I raise it now, what happens then? As I said, I don't want to do anything to impede the business that is at hand. I prefer to let it go until after the Budget debate and at some point I will raise it.

**The Speaker:** I will try to be as clear as I possibly can in what I am saying. I am saying that in order for you to raise it at a time other than what is stipulated in Standing Order 14, it has to be done through a motion that is moved here and passed in the affirmative. I have no discretion as the Chair to allow it to go down. Neither does the Premier or any other single Member. Through a majority voting ‘yes’ in favour of the motion for it to go, you can do that, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

If a motion emanates from either yourself or any other Member and it is in the negative and you still intend to pursue the matter of privilege, you would have to proceed at this time. So, there are only those two options

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** There is no motion now.

**The Speaker:** There is no motion now so you can. The only reason why this extended discussion is ensuing is because of the request to deal with it later. If that request was not there, we would have been proceeding in accordance with Standing Order 28 where I would have asked you to state the purpose on the grounds to deal with it.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Okay. Madam Speaker, I think I get the drift of where you are going. I am not going to raise it at this time because I believe we should allow Members to continue the important debate. And I hope that the House will give as much indulgence to me as that, so that I can raise it at a further date. This might be me now but it could be anybody at any point and I do not condone it, no matter who it is. So, I am not going to raise the motion at this point. I will raise the motion at another time. And if the House rejects the motion at that time, well they reject it. Hopefully, they will allow me to state my position at that time. I might not ask for anything to be done, I may ask for it to be included into the record. As I said, I am not going to, because I be-

lieve we need to get completed with the Budget debate. That is how I feel.

**The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** One minute sir.

I will recognise you in a moment, Hon. Premier—please.

I just want to make sure that all Members understand what the Chair has said. The matter for the intent to be raised under privilege has been made in its preliminary stages. Notice has been given to the Presiding Officer, the Speaker. The Standing Orders in their current form, allows whichever Member who is raising it to deal with it here and now. If, for whatever reason, the Member raising the matter on privilege or alleged privilege does not wish to deal with it in accordance with Standing Order 14, that, can only be accomplished if a motion emanates from the Floor of this House, specifically asking for it to be dealt with at a later time, today or in the future. If that does not happen, then, it is tantamount to the intention to raise it, being negated, and/or withdrawn because it does have a prerequisite to raising it under 28(1) when it says, “**A Member who wishes to raise a matter which he believes affects the privileges of the House shall**” (it is mandatory) “**do so at the first available sitting of the House.**” That has been done today because the record will reflect that apologies were given for the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on the day in between the matter occurring as he was ill. So, this would be the first available sitting that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has to raise it.

I want to make sure that I have sufficiently elucidated on that matter in order that no Member will feel that their rights have been thwarted in any form or fashion. I am just stating what the Standing Orders say because, as far as this Chair is concerned, it is the first time it has arisen. I want to make sure that we do not set a precedent that is outside the local standard or the jurisdiction of the Chair. If Members are still not clear, I am more than happy to try explaining it, but I have done the best that I can to explain what the Standing Orders are.

I recognise the Honourable Premier at this time.

**The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, I would have stayed completely out of this, except for the grave allegations made by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition in which he has charged that the taking of this photograph and presumably its dissemination was an attack on him by Members of, I think he said the opposing party or the governing party. Anyhow, he meant this side. Those are grave allegations, Madam Speaker, and I presume we will have evidence of this fact.

Madam Speaker, the Standing Order in question, (SO 28), which allows Members to raise matters in which they believe affect the privileges of this House, is set out in terms which are intended to convey the fact that these matters are to be dealt with expeditiously, and that is why it says the Member should raise it at the earliest sitting of the House. It is not, Madam Speaker, I believe, good enough to make an allegation such as what the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has made and then sit and say that he does not want to deal with it now, and that he wants to deal with it when the proceedings are over. If there is a matter which affects the privileges of this House of which he wants to deal with, then, Madam Speaker, I believe the proper process is for him to do so and let the House and everybody else hear the basis for what he has alleged and not to just raise it and sit and say that he will deal with it when he is good and ready.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** No, Madam Speaker, that is not what I am saying.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I am ready to deal with it. All I am saying is that I would rather we continue debate of the House, get that over with so that that is cleared. While this is important to me, it is important to get the country's budget out of the way, and that is what I was saying.

Now, Madam Speaker, if the House wants to deal with it I can deal with it. And when the Premier talks about a grave accusation, I did say the taking of the photo was a deliberate attack on my character and the publication of it. I did not have to get into all of the words that I can use; I can do that in the motion. But it is the publication, and, of course, it had to be the taking of it here because to reply to the Premier, the publisher of it, it is on his Facebook. And the persons who sent it to the Compass, both of them were not here. So, it had to be taken by somebody inside of this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of the Opposition, in order to move this process forward there are two options before the House. The matter of which you have given intention to raise can be done at this time of which the Chair will entertain subject to you stating the purposes you wish to raise and the grounds. Failing that, the only other option is, to move the suspension of Standing Order 14. Can I have an indication from you Sir, of which of those you wish to exercise?

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I repeat, I thought the House wanted to move along. I did not hear any Nays or see any expressions that Members would not agree to it, that

they would prefer us to move along with the budget and I take it at a different time. If Members think that I should do so now, well I can do so.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** You are the only one. You are only one Member.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, in order for the Chair to have a direct steer as to the will of the House, it is through a motion. So, unless the motion is moved and a vote [taken], I have no way of knowing what the Members want to do. I see body language but as far as the Chair is concerned I am blind to that. I have to get a motion and a vote on it.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** So, if I speak to this now, are you saying I still have to move a motion or do I speak directly to it now?

**The Speaker:** Basically, so far you have given me your intention. You have stated the matter which you proposed to raise and the next thing is that I would call upon you Sir, and you would briefly state the grounds on which you believe the matter you have raised affects the privilege of the House. At that stage the ball is thrown back into my court and I then have to exercise discretion as to whether or not the matter you have raised affects the privilege of the House.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, as I said, this matter—

**The Speaker:** Can I just have your indulgence one more minute?

Madam Clerk, out of the abundance of caution, can you please ensure that the Hansard typist, although she is ill, that arrangements are in place to record it because I am sure Members of the House, including the mover, may wish to see the Hansard in an expeditious fashion.

Thank you for your indulgence, Leader of the Opposition. Please proceed.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I have already said that I think the taking of the photo and the publication of it is a deliberate attack on my character as a Member of this hon. House. I believe it interferes with a Member of this House since it interferes with me. Certainly, it must be against the Standing Orders because the Speaker allows photos at any point to be taken. So, Madam Speaker, those are the points that I raise. I feel that it is a direct attack to bring ridicule on me, and I will get into the debate. I am only stating the grounds now as that is what you need. So, those are the grounds. Now do I continue with the debate?

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 28(3) sets out the next step in the procedure, which reads: “**The Presiding Officer shall then state whether, in his opinion, the matter may or may not affect the privileges of the House.**”

So at a very minimum, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I need you to convince the Chair what the privilege is. And then at that time I will make a decision whether I do it here or whether I need to—

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Go further with it.

**The Speaker:** —go further in the consideration as to what constitutes privilege.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I have been elected eight times. When this House is prorogued in 2017, God willing, I would have served for over 32 years. In that time I have seen dirty politics, but nothing of the kind that has grown and has perpetuated in recent times. It's not politics that simply comes from this House, as some people would like the whole world to believe. A lot and a vast amount of it, is perpetuated from the outside.

If I was easily discouraged, Madam Speaker, I would walk away and give into the haters, the jealous, the vicious and those who are just plainly political opportunists. There are a lot of them around today. I have to say that this attempt has brought more ridicule on me, and that was what it was meant to do. I will not stand down under that kind of political machination.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I never bother with these Facebook things and all the things that are being said. Some people send them to me, and that's how . . . I don't even see . . . I know I have a Facebook but I don't even get into it. Somebody else looks at it for me. So, I don't have that kind of time. I don't have those kinds of resources. And, as I said, Madam Speaker, I have served this House and my people diligently, regardless of how some Members may feel or any member of the public, the majority of my constituents feel that I do.

The exposé of what I believe is a doctored photo trivializes this Legislature. And when they think it will help to erode my public and private standing, it only holds this Assembly up to being criticised. That is horrible enough because it is all done at the expense of those of us who are diligent.

I want to read that editorial into the record, Madam Speaker, and I think the House might have it.

**The Speaker:** So ordered. May I have a copy?

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** I don't have it. I intended to get it from the House, but I didn't recognise that we were going into this process at this time. But I want to read it.

**The Speaker:** Serjeant, can you see whether you can obtain a copy of the *Compass* and let the Chair—

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Yesterday's *Compass*, that is.

**The Speaker:** —and other Members have a copy of it?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah, right.

You know, Premier, you shouldn't talk because the only one who writes the editorial for the *Compass* is your now Press Secretary.

Madam Speaker, the Serjeant is going to get it. I want to stop and give a minute so that I can proceed with that aspect of it.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** No, I have my route to go. We should have waited until afterwards.

**The Speaker:** We will wait for the Serjeant to come in so that the Chair and other interested Members can have in their possession a copy of the evidential document.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, this is what the *Compass* says about it, and this is what I say implicates all of us and makes all of us look bad, and we should be mindful that people in this Island are about that; they are about making us look as bad as possible.

**The Speaker:** What is the date of the paper?

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Yesterday's paper, Tuesday, [May 26, 2015](#).

The *Compass*, which is, I think, an accurate editorial, says, "A snapshot of unacceptable behavior on the House floor" and I quote:

**"If it had happened in a classroom, it likely would have been treated as bullying— in fact, cyber bullying. It had all the ingredients: It was meant to be hurtful, it was done anonymously, and it was distributed and ultimately posted on social media.**

**"We refer to the photo which was taken on the floor of the Legislative Assembly last week. It showed Leader of the Opposition McKeeva Bush purportedly asleep at his post in a most unflattering pose.**

**"The photograph then appeared on the Facebook page of Chris Wight, a highly visible and highly vocal PPM supporter. It was subsequently sent to the *Cayman Compass* by Premier Alden McLaughlin's press secretary, Tammie Chisholm.**

**"The image drew the ire of House Speaker Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, who said the taking of such photographs is in contravention of Legislative Assembly rules. (The *Cayman Compass* published a short article, but not the photo, on the incident because Ms. O'Connor-Connolly addressed the issue publicly on the House floor.)**

**"The angle of the photograph taken of Mr. Bush clearly indicates it was taken from the floor of the Legislative Assembly and, more specifically, from the area of the government bench.**

**"We do not know who took the photo, but we have submitted the digital file to two independent experts for analysis in the United States. They have already extracted meaningful information from deeply embedded metadata in the image that may link the photo to the device—and ultimately to the individual who took it.**

**"On Friday, we queried Premier McLaughlin twice, asking directly if he himself had taken the picture or, if not, whether he could enlighten us as to who did. He chose not to address those questions.**

**"Whoever took the photograph then passed it on personally (or through an intermediary) to Mr. Wight, who, in turn, made it available globally via his Facebook account.**

**"The intent of all this, we believe, was clear, incontrovertible—and ultimately successful. It was to embarrass Mr. Bush, to expose him to ridicule and disparagement both in Cayman and beyond. It was amateur, gutter politics, not reflective of the kind of behavior we should expect from the 'hallowed halls of our honorable house.'**

**"Which brings us to the following observation: *Compass* reporters spend so much time in the Legislative Assembly that government legitimately could be charging us rent. The behavior we observe—but too often in the past have not reported—is often appalling.**

**"We have witnessed a number of the lawmakers sleeping in the Legislative Assembly chamber during proceedings. (For the record, Mr. Bush denies he was asleep in the photograph now on Facebook. He is opening his own probe into the origin of the photograph and whether it was digitally altered.) Members often occupy their time reading newspapers, texting on their smartphones or chatting amicably among themselves, paying scant attention to the floor debate.**

**"More importantly, even though their attendance in the Legislative Assembly during meetings is one of their primary functions as elected representatives, all too often the members are ei-**

ther not in the chamber during debates or absent all together.

**“For those lawmakers who engage in such behavior, shame on them. For those of us at the *Compass* who have not reported this behavior more vigilantly, shame on us.”** End of quote.

That’s the *Cayman Compass* of Tuesday, May 26, yesterday.

Madam Speaker, let us look at the facts of the matter. I came to the House and was here in my seat for the start at least five minutes before the House convened on—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, can you just proceed to complete the procedure and lay it on the [Table], the document?

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Well, Madam Speaker, I beg to lay that editorial on the Table of this honourable House.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** It is the editorial that I am asking to be laid, not the entire paper.

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The original copy is being laid on the Table, Madam Speaker.

As I said, Madam Speaker, I came to the House on the 20<sup>th</sup> (that was Wednesday) and was here in my seat for the start, at least a few minutes before the House convened. Prayers were led, papers were laid. The Premier then rose to pay tribute after which I rose, as allowed by the Speaker to pay tribute to Dr. Edlin, Mr. Tommy Hurlston, Mr. Goddett, Mr. James (Sonny Boy) Bodden, and Mr. Perry George, and to all who had family, expressed condolences to all family who had loved ones pass away, including the East End Member.

After that, I went straight to my Budget and Throne Speech debate, as I was called upon to do so. I had no moment, no minute, and no time to doze in this Assembly. There was no pause. The Speaker took a break and re-convened. At that minute, I think it was just about 12 o’clock and I thought it was the lunch break. Anyway, Madam Speaker, the Speaker took the break and then reconvened. I was just a bit late on re-entering the Chamber and whilst Members were inside, I drew attention that there was not a quorum and I was given time to get to my seat by the Speaker to continue my debate. There was no time for me to sit down to take a break, nor a minute to doze.

I continued my debate and ended at about ten minutes to one o’clock, p.m., I believe. The Speaker took the lunch break. Madam Speaker, I did not come back to the Chamber when the House was reconvened after the lunch break as I left the precincts to attend to matters in preparation for my public meeting that night of Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> in Prospect. I did not come back that day at all. I therefore had no chance to doze in the precincts of this Chamber or in this Chamber on that day, and I do not know of any time that I ever fell asleep in this honourable House.

If Members think that McKeeva is sleeping, they are making a big mistake. That’s why my eyes were doctored in that photo, Madam Speaker, because they know my eyes were open. I might rest. Sometimes I close my eyes, but I am not asleep.

That photo was carried on the Facebook of a member of the PPM executive and his actions, I think, bring the PPM ExCo into question. Do they confirm to this type of bully practices? More so was the Premier’s press secretary, no less. What was she doing with it?

But, Mr. Wight was not in attendance here on that day. Neither was Mrs. Chisholm, the Premier’s press secretary, who, Madam Speaker, is a seasoned journalist and a former editor of the *Caymanian Compass*. So, that photo was put out in malice and meant to damage, smear, and hold me as the Leader of the Opposition up to ridicule, to malign, to degrade, and for me to be looked at in a bad light in a don’t-care-attitude manner. It continues, Madam Speaker, the smearing campaign that has gone on in these Islands by some of them. This is just part of it.

Madam Speaker, as far as I am concerned, he that diggeth a pit shall fall in it. These are the kinds of attacks or acts that cause political warfare amongst parties. And, if I were of the same mentality, Madam Speaker, and as bad as they want people to believe I am, then I would be retaliating. But I am not what they have been trying to stick on me. No.

But that kind of skulduggery does nothing to enhance this House or, indeed, our young and fledgling party system that so many want to see done away with. I don’t care who does it, or which side it is done to, I know that it is not right. I do not condone it. I know I don’t get involved. And I have at no time encouraged it, nor would I seek to condone it in any shape or form. There is too much that goes out on social media that is not true, that is inflated, that is made to ridicule people wrongly, things that are said without people trying to find out, *Well, why did that happen? Or, How did that happen?* No! They prefer to get out there and say all manner of things and people outside don’t care about Members of this honourable House. Sorry to say, far too many of them do not. They don’t! And then there are those who want to see this House carry on in a judicious and proper manner.

So, I would not condone that. I don’t get on Facebook. I don’t get in there. I try not to even talk to

when the lady from CNS who is persistent, writing you and challenging you and telling you she is going to write it anyway and all sorts of things, so give you a chance to say something. No, I pay them no mind, Madam Speaker, because at the end of the day it is my actions that caused me to be elected here. What I do all year round, all four years, Madam Speaker. I don't wait until election to try to get elected. I treat people—all people—as best as I can and do as much as I can for them. And I believe other Members do the same.

There are Members that I would swear for in this honourable House, and some on that side, Madam Speaker, that I know do their job in trying to represent people.

So, Madam Speaker, what I can say about Mrs. Chisholm is that my press secretary would never have been used to do such an act. Nor do I believe that he would be so inclined. He is a decent law abiding man who observes all of the rules that we are governed by, while he was my press secretary, even when he came to this honourable House.

Now, they tried in every conceivable way to make me look as bad as possible. I believe that this publication of this doctored photo, Madam Speaker, is a serious contempt reflecting on me, but also on all Members and so, Madam Speaker, upon this honourable House itself. Such an attack on any Member is calculated to diminish the respect due to the House and myself or any Member and lessen our authority in the community. This affects the House and the deranged minds that did it and cohorted with all of them that were involved know quite well that it is out of malice towards this Member that it was done.

Look at the photo, Madam Speaker, if you have one. I have a blown up one, Madam Speaker. I am going to lay that on the Table of this honourable House. But it is the same as you have and I will give you one.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** One for the Speaker and one for anybody who wants to frame it.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I do not drink water from a glass. When you look at that photo—not the one that we have, look at the one that I understand the House got, which is a copy of the video, and see if there is not a bottle of water on that video, the video from GIS from the whole day's proceedings. See if on that video, Madam Speaker, whether the bottle of water is there. No, it is not when you look at the photo that was publicised, Madam Speaker. What we see is a glass turned upside down and one that is half full of water, a smaller glass. I don't drink water in here, Madam Speaker.

I don't know how that glass got there, and how a second glass got there, half full of water, and

there was no bottle of water when the real picture shows the bottle which Members in this House know is on my table and all of the Members' tables.

Then there . . . look at my shirt collar. I know what the shirt is. When I lean my head on the side, Madam Speaker, I have no room to play because I have put on a little bit of weight. They might have said that in 2008 when I had my surgery; that my neck would have been all over the place in the collar, but not now. There is no room for it. But look at it. Look at it. The neck is different. My shirt collar is very tight, so no space for any gap between my collar and my neck no matter which side I twist it, right or left.

In order to make my eyes appear to be closed, they . . . as far as I can see they doctored the photo and in so doing caught the lenses from my glasses—look at it, Madam Speaker—to the extent that the right leg, the same glasses I have on, the right leg and the right nose rest is left in place, but the right and left lenses are totally removed.

The right side of my face—look at it, look at it—the jawline is so distorted. Whoever did the doctoring did a poor . . . if they were a health doctor, I would be dead.

So, Madam Speaker, this is not fun. I am not here in wanting to have to raise this matter. In fact, I would have rather let it go. Madam Speaker, and say that those persons . . . I have never paid them boys, because that's what they are, I have never paid them any mind. Perhaps that is why they so viciously pursue me, because I don't try to take them on. Let them have their fun. Let them do what they want to do. I treat them as the children they are. That's what I treat them as. I pay them no mind.

So, I would not have paid them any mind. They have said so many things about me; it's like water on a duck's back. Pay them no mind. The only one I pay any mind to is if the Premier says something.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** And he is not going to have time for that.

So, Madam Speaker, all I say to this House is I understand there were other photos of other people. I never saw those. I don't cotton to that. I don't delve in here. I don't believe in it. I don't think it should be happening in this House at any time. No!

So, Madam Speaker, it's left up to this House. But I believe that we should take a stand. We should take a stand because it not only affects us, you know, Madam Speaker. Those of us who have adult children, it affects them—even to those that have children 8, 10, 12 years old going to school. It affects them. Grandchildren . . . I have grandchildren, 14, 12, and 9. And that kind of thing needs to stop. We should never condone it no matter what is said about it we shouldn't condone it. If you want to make fun of each other, that's good. Caymanians can do that good and not

feel anything bad about it. We can make fun of ourselves at times; I certainly can, of myself and laugh about it.

No. We cannot allow this House to be brought into continuous disrepute with editorials in the *Compass* and other places and going all over the world and you go to meetings and people say, *Boy, you had a good nap!* I say, *Yeah, I wish I had.*

Madam Speaker, it's left up to the House.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Premier.

**The Premier, Hon. Aiden McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few things with respect to this matter.

Madam Speaker, listening to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Premier, it is my intention to now take the luncheon break and I do that in accordance with Standing Order 28 as the next step, seeing that the motion has not yet been moved by the Leader of the Opposition, there is no room for debate. So I will take the luncheon break and reconvene at 3 o'clock because I now have to move into the next phase to decide whether or not there is a matter of privilege and whether it has been satisfied under [Standing Order] 28(3).

If I move that it may influence the privilege of the House, then we will go to the next stage where a motion is moved and everybody can debate and have their say in the sequence that Members wish. If I rule that it has not affected, that terminates the matter.

The motion basically, then, in accordance with [Standing Order] 28(4), is a motion relating to the matter of privilege, once I have ruled, and shall take precedence over the business. At that stage we will be debating that there has been a breach of privilege and move on to the other stages. So it would just be a specific motion on privilege.

We will take the luncheon break now. And because of the matter at hand I would ask Members' indulgence for us to reconvene at 3 pm.

**Proceedings suspended at 12:42 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 3:40 pm**

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.  
Proceedings are resumed.

#### **SPEAKER'S RULING**

[SO 28—*Matter of Privilege*]

**The Speaker:** I took the opportunity during the luncheon period to duly consider all material facts, all rules and regulations, and I consulted with the appropriate legal advice. I now set out my ruling.

Standing Order 28(1) sets out the procedure in which a Member can raise a matter which he believes affects the privileges of this House, and must do so at the first available sitting. I am satisfied that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition raised the matter at the first available sitting.

Standing Order 14 sets out the placement of an issue raised on the Business Paper, and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition raised the matter in accordance with Standing Order 14.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition raised the matter which he believes affects the privilege of this honourable Assembly. Further, he also proceeded to state the matter which he proposed to raise. Thirdly, he briefly stated the grounds on which he believes the matter he raised affects the privileges of this honourable House. Where then does this matter now lie?

By virtue of Standing Order 28(3) the Speaker shall then state whether in her opinion the matter may or may not affect the privileges of this honourable House. In order to exercise the Speaker's statutory discretion, I first turn my attention to the connotation of the word "privilege". According to Butterworth's *Parliamentary Dictionary*, I quote: "A privilege in the legal sense of the term is an exemption from some duty, burden, attendance or liability to which others are subject." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

In parliamentary terms, the term "privilege" is also applied to powers other than legislative which are possessed by this honourable House, for example, the duty throughout the House to regulate itself and the exclusive right to grant supplies and originate measures of taxation.

The privileges which attach to Members of the House and individuals are as follows: freedom of speech, freedom from arrest, an exemption from serving on juries, attending as witnesses (and, for clarity and abundance of caution, freedom from arrest does not extend to arrest or imprisonment for indictable offences, criminal contempt of court or refusal to give surety of the peace).

One of the privileges of this House is to regulate its own proceedings, and in addition to our Standing Orders, in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice* 24<sup>th</sup> Edition, there exist "Speakers' Rules" which are not limited to, but include the preservation and the dignity and decorum of the Assembly, which is paramount.

The purpose of raising privilege in the House is to maintain the respect and credibility due which is required by the House in respect of the various privileges to uphold its powers and to enforce the enjoyment of privileges of its respective honourable Members. A genuine question of privilege is a very serious matter, not to be reckoned with lightly. The decision as to the existence of a *prima facie* question of privilege belongs exclusively to the Speaker who may take the matter under advisement, which I so did.

It is important for all to understand the role of the Speaker and what is contained therein, and that the issue placed before me today is not one of finding of fact. It is simply whether, on the first impression, the issue raised before this House warrants priority consideration over all other matters and all other business of the day that is before this honourable House.

Standing Order 28(4) states in summary that subject to Standing Order 28(3), a motion relating to that matter of privilege shall take precedence over other business.

I have had to consider the extent, if any, of the matter complained of, an infringement upon any Member's ability to perform his or her parliamentary duty and/or functions, or if it appears to be contempt against the dignity of this Parliament.

It is the ruling of the Chair based on reading page 219 of Erskine May, which states that allegations of misconduct are a matter of conduct or standards and not privilege. Therefore, I rule that there is no *prima facie* case of privilege made to the chair.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has articulated quite well that the picture in question could not be an original photograph as he did not sleep in the Legislative Assembly, and that he did not drink water as was depicted by the half-full glass on the table; that the collar of his shirt did not fit snugly, as is the case, around his neck; that part of his glasses had been cropped in the photograph; and that the depiction of his jaw is not like his. Simply put, in his view, it is not an original photograph.

The Chair can say that at no time during the proceeding of the House on the material day in question (being the 20<sup>th</sup> day of May), did the Leader of the Opposition appear to be asleep in his chair in this Chamber. However, the Chair would once again remind all Members and visitors to this honourable House that all electronic recording devices, photography or television, are strictly forbidden without the expressed permission of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, as contained in the Speaker's Rules which are posted in the lobby at the front.

I am entitled to make these rules by virtue of the Legislative Assembly Immunities, Powers and Privileges Act (1999 Revision). Absolutely no exception will be tolerated by this Chair. I have asked the Clerk and the Serjeant-at-Arms to ensure that adequate security and coverage be put in place to ensure the protection of all Members in this honourable House, visitors, staff and other occupants, and to be on high alert for any breaches of rules and or protocols. This is an honourable House, and I therefore expect all honourable Members to be guided accordingly.

I would further impress on all party leaders to ensure that, as far as practical, their party members understand and respect the rules of this honourable House.

I would also wish to convey to all members of staff, be it Government or Opposition, who enjoy the privilege of attending this honourable Chamber, that they are within the precincts of the Legislative Assembly, and to strictly adhere to the rules of this House in order to maintain the dignity and decorum of this honourable House.

If, indeed, the claims can be proven that the Speaker's Rules and other rules of this honourable House have been breached, the Chair will not hesitate to deal appropriately with those concerned.

The matter, in conclusion, in my view, is one of misconduct and does not *prima facie* amount to privilege. Herein lies my ruling.

I call on Madam Clerk to move on to the next item of business.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BILL

### SECOND READING

#### APPROPRIATION (JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2016) BILL, 2015

#### DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers, Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would first like to thank Her Excellency the Governor, the Premier and the Minister of Finance for delivering the Throne Speech, the Policy Statement and the Budget Address respectively. Each address captures the hard work and the success of the entire Government on being able to deliver on, and in some cases exceed, the targets we set at the beginning of our term in May 2013.

Madam Speaker, the successes of this Government to date, could not have happened without the individual and accumulative contributions of each Minister and the vital support and contributions of each of the councillors and backbench Members of the Government working with Cabinet in order to help us achieve our goals. Our success to date, as a Government, is due to the fact that we are a coalition Government made up of strong, intelligent people, Independent Members and PPM Members alike,

committed to restoring confidence, stability and fiscal responsibility. In other words, this is a coalition Government that works.

Each Member of the Government, the PPM Members and the Independent Members alike, play a vital role in pushing for the issues that we individually, as well as collectively, see as important to the country. The fact that we have a number of Independent Members of the Government, of which I am one, working alongside PPM Member colleagues, allows for greater dialogue, greater debate and a more robust policy and actions taken. Madam Speaker, you have heard that from a number of Members who spoke before me.

Madam Speaker, have you ever learned anything from someone who only agrees with you? No, Madam Speaker. There is much debate and much discussion that happens in our Government caucus. However, we have demonstrated that in spite of the vigorous debate that we have on most occasions, we are a coalition Government that is not afraid to act. The accomplishments of the past two years are a testament to that fact.

We are a Government that has a vision, developed through thoughtful and careful analysis. And we are committed to doing what is necessary in order to restore confidence, to restore stability, and to restore fiscal responsibility of Government and the governance of these Islands in order to promote economic growth and to ensure that Caymanians as a whole benefit. Madam Speaker, in other words, we have a vision and we are prepared to act, because vision without action is a daydream, and action without vision is a nightmare.

Madam Speaker, the accomplishments of the Government to date could not have happened without the hard work and dedication of the civil servants. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank those hardworking civil servants, especially those in my Ministry, departments and schools, that go above and beyond to ensure that the policies of the Government are carried out.

Madam Speaker, I would like to briefly give you an overview of my contribution to date, and I would very much appreciate you interjecting as you see fit to let me know the timing as I move along.

I would like to start talking about some of the accomplishments in the work of the relevant departments and the Ministry in 2014/15 and then move to some of the planned work that is to take place in the 2015/16 Budget Year. I would also like to turn to some West Bay specific district issues and also to wind up by speaking about a few of the national issues that are of particular concern to me.

Madam Speaker, turning to the subject of education, simply put, we believe the children are our future. We must teach them well, and let them lead the way. The overarching goals of this Government that guide the policies adopted and the programmes developed by the Ministry are as follows: 1) to estab-

lish the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence; 2) to prepare students to take advantage of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to excel in the local economy and to compete in the global economy.

Madam Speaker, these two fundamental goals for education, are adopted from the Independent Member's National Priorities Plan, 2013. The work of the education team in the Ministry and in the Department of Education Services was driven by the need to address six policy priorities established by this Government within a few short months of taking office, namely (and in no particular order, Madam Speaker):

- 1) Address concerns related to international competitiveness and raising standards.
- 2) To look at the needs to provide for special education needs and persons with disabilities.
- 3) To deal with issues of conflict resolution and crime reduction.
- 4) Focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- 5) Focus on information communication and technology (ICT) and STEM related issues.
- 6) To look at strengthening and promoting public/private partnerships in education and training.

Madam Speaker, over the past two years the work of the Ministry has been anchored in and geared towards addressing these six priority areas for education and for looking to identify and address the gaps that exist as it relates to the provision for public education in general.

Turning to the issue of international competitiveness and raising standards: Madam Speaker, upon taking office as Minister of Education in 2013, the staff of the Ministry was tasked to analyse the best practice in education and work towards ensuring that the Cayman Islands education system is meeting those standards with the aim of establishing the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence.

That was really the main impetus of why this Government commissioned the first ever baseline schools inspection of all government schools, including the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre and the Lighthouse School, and an education governance review to take place over the 2014/15 academic year. The objectives of that were twofold: 1) was to provide me, as Minister, and the Government as a whole, an independent view and assessment of the education system and each of the respective schools. Also, it was an attempt to restore confidence in the education system in order to validate the good practice carried out where that is found, but also to highlight areas of weaknesses, and where significant improvement may need to take place in order for us to reach the goal of providing a world-class education system.

The inspectors were given the task to take an objective view of what exists, to present their findings

and to make evidence-based recommendations to address whatever issues they found, be it good or bad. I understand that the reports are well underway and should be completed and delivered to the Ministry by the end of this financial year.

However, Madam Speaker, the Ministry and the Government did not sit on their laurels to wait on the findings of these reports before taking action. Concurrent with the ongoing baseline inspections, the Ministry has carried out a tremendous amount of work to address a number of pressing issues, some of which you have already been informed of through my various contributions in this honourable House. But, Madam Speaker, I am happy to report that there have been a number of new initiatives undertaken in the 2014/15 academic year which addresses the need to raise standards in the local education system and, thereby, increase our international competitiveness.

Many of these new initiatives launched, address more than one priority area which I outlined, because it was important for the Government to find synergies between the various policies and activities undertaken, and that is certainly the philosophy in the work undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs. So, taking each phase of education in turn, I will discuss some of the new synergistic initiatives carried out this year.

Madam Speaker, you heard this morning in my statement regarding Early Childhood Care and Education Services, that there were a number of new initiatives and accomplishments in that unit. I will not take the time here now to reiterate those. I will move to the initiative as it relates to Primary and Secondary Schools Initiatives.

In 2014, a formal high school graduation criteria, was adopted for all public high schools. The criteria to be met in order to graduate, now includes academic achievement along with attendance and behaviour targets. During the 2014/15 academic year, a formal professional development policy was also adopted. The quality of teaching is the most critical factor impacting student performance. Research will bear this out time and time again. So, the professional development policy was formally adopted making it a requirement for professional development activities to take place and that teachers, actually do and engage in professional development activities on an ongoing basis.

The policy aims to support the development of a skilled workforce within the education service. It is there to define the expectations and provisions for continued professional development within the education service for principals, teachers and classroom support staff alike. It is there to increase teachers' participation in continuing professional learning and development to improve teachers' access to high quality continuing professional development programmes, and to provide appropriate recognition to principals, teachers and classroom support staff undertaking and

continuing professional learning and developmental activities, and to also encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own learning and professional development, while supporting a culture of continuous learning and development.

We cannot expect our students to strive to be lifelong learners if our teachers are not. So, Madam Speaker, that was really the impetus for why it was necessary as a country to actually formally adopt a professional development policy geared at ensuring that our teachers are as prepared as they should be and need to be, in order to deal with the challenges, the issues and also the exciting opportunities that teaching poses today.

Madam Speaker, not only was the new policy adopted in this past academic year, the professional development programmes have actually been developed and rolled out and, in particular, there was a programme geared at school leadership that was rolled out in the 2014/15 academic year.

Madam Speaker, raising standards in the leadership and management at the school level is absolutely critical for raising standards across the board. Therefore, it was important for us to develop a programme specifically geared to helping the management of each school to be able to better manage and enable effective practices in the schools. Therefore, the International Leadership Certificate was developed and offered in conjunction with the Ontario Principal Council. This was rolled out in this academic year and all of our principals and deputy principals, I am happy to report, are already well on their way to getting certification under this programme.

Madam Speaker, it is also important to note that this programme was actually developed using local context and experience. So the Cayman Islands own the intellectual property. Thus, the programme can be rolled out on a continuous basis as and when new or emerging school leadership arises. This is an important thing to highlight, Madam Speaker, because it ensures that there are now proper succession planning tools in place in the education system to ensure that young, vibrant and hungry educators that want to move up the ranks are actually given the appropriate tools in order to help them be better in new rolls they may aspire to, including taking on more senior management positions in the schools themselves.

Madam Speaker, there was also targeted professional development offered to support the development of newly qualified Caymanian teachers as well. The continuation of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) programme happened this year again, whereby the Newly Qualified Teachers programme provides support for new Caymanian teachers in the first two years of their teaching. During this past fiscal year, 10 newly qualified teachers benefitted from the support that was given through this programme.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my statement with respect to ICT and STEM, much work is

being done and has been done in this past academic year to strengthen math instruction and learning outcomes. There was a programme introduced called "Mathematics Unit" and these units incorporate best practices in mathematics and provide structure for guidance for teacher planning. Year 5 and 6 units are being developed and trialed in 2014/15 for implementation in the 2015/16 academic year. Similarly, there was an introduction of mathematics in context. That is a scheme developed to increase children's understanding of informal mathematics and helped to link this to the learning of more formal mathematics. Training started in May 2014 with implementation for Year 7 in September 2014. So it took place this year and the evaluation of the programme will take place in June and July 2015.

Again, these are a few additional programmes that the Ministry of Education is using to focus on strengthening STEM teaching and provisions in our schools.

Madam Speaker, similar to strengthening mathematics, there are a number of programmes geared at strengthening literacy instruction and learning outcomes as well.

This academic year saw the introduction of standard based writing guidance for key stage 1. That is, Years 1 through 3. This effective writing instruction is a professional learning tool that was developed and launched this academic year to support teachers' planning and practice in key stage 1, a critical stage of literacy development. The guide aims to provide practical approaches and resources that supplement the learning objective and pedagogy rooted in the 2008 Cayman Islands National Curriculum. And key stage 2, which deals with Years 3 through 6 Guidance, is being developed as we speak and will be completed by the end of this academic year, or financial year 2014/15, to be rolled out in the coming academic year 2015/16.

Similar to the writing guidance, there was a development of effective reading instruction, a reading guidance tool, geared towards key stage 1. Again, this is a professional development tool aimed at providing support to teachers with respect to teaching instruction as it relates to reading. The Guide provides practical approaches and resources and, again, is rooted in the 2008 National Curriculum and the guidance is expected to be rolled out and launched in September of this year.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to highlight and focus on the fact that literacy is such an important tool, such an important foundation for our students in helping to determine their future success, there has been the development of a strategic plan specifically geared to literacy. This plan has been developed based on the 13 parameters, a literacy leadership tool kit, which is a proven comprehensive and easy to use tool kit for staff development and literacy improve-

ment. The strategic plan for literacy will be completed prior to the end of the 2014/15 fiscal year.

Finally, Madam Speaker, with respect to the primary and secondary efforts at raising standards, there was a review of CIFEC [Cayman Islands Further Education Centre] which was completed. It was an internal review in June 2014. It focused on current provision at CIFEC in the context of student needs and interests, societal needs and capacity and market competitors. Madam Speaker, I am happy to report that implementation of the recommendations from this review is currently underway by the Ministry and Department of Education Services and, of course, CIFEC as well.

Madam Speaker, turning to post-secondary education and the efforts to raise standards, I would like to turn to some of the initiatives and accomplishments by the University College of the Cayman Islands, which is the national tertiary institution for the Cayman Islands. But before I do that, Madam Speaker, I would like to publicly give my condolences to the UCCI community, to the Board of Governors, the faculty, the staff, the students, to the President alike, on behalf of this Government, regarding the sudden passing of Dean Perry George, who we know was a beloved member of the UCCI faculty and whom, I am sure, will be sorely missed by his former colleagues and students. I also note that there is a memorial service taking place as we speak. Unfortunately, I am not able to be there in person to give my condolences in that regard.

Madam Speaker, the Government continues to support UCCI. In fact, the Government has increased the financial support to UCCI since taking office in May 2013. The Government is committed to working with UCCI to help it to reach its strategic goals in carrying out the national vision for tertiary education set by the Government through the Ministry of Education.

Madam Speaker, in keeping with the national vision for tertiary education developed shortly after taking office and shared with the UCCI Board of Governors in the latter part of 2013, the University College of the Cayman Islands has initiated efforts to seek accreditation as both an institution and the programmes offered by UCCI. To this end, I have been informed that UCCI has just received its institutional accreditation through the Accreditation Service for International Schools, Colleges and Universities (ASIC). Therefore, I would like to congratulate the Board of Governors, the President, the faculty and staff, in achieving this important first step in raising standards and seeking to increase international competitiveness. And, Madam Speaker, I look forward to hearing more about the efforts and the success of UCCI in working to achieve accreditation of its programmes of study as the next phase in its accreditation journey.

Madam Speaker, again, in keeping with the national vision for tertiary education set by the Government, UCCI is currently reviewing the outcome of a piloted pre-college programme with a view of launching a formal pre-college programme in the fall of 2015. The programme is being designed to facilitate a pathway to education for persons who do not currently meet admission standards of UCCI or who require additional support in obtaining foundational skills necessary to matriculate into higher and lifelong education. This is an important programme which the Government believes is absolutely necessary, because if we are talking about increasing our people's access to education, we must make sure that we have these bridge foundation programmes available for those who may not have actually achieved the requisite educational attainment prior to leaving secondary school. We cannot continue to keep that door closed for persons who want to go on to higher education and this foundation programme is an important step in order to ensure that that happens. So that is really a goal of the Government to see that UCCI continues to move towards implementing that and we will support UCCI's efforts in that regard and look forward to the launch of the programme in fall 2015.

Madam Speaker, regarding the priority of special education needs and disabilities, as I mentioned before, this Government, and in particular as Minister of Education, we place high priority on the needs of our children with special education needs and disabilities. There were a number of key initiatives undertaken by the Ministry during the last academic year and I would like to highlight a few of those noteworthy education initiatives.

There was a National Education Conference held for the first time in three years in February 2015. The keynote speaker was a world renowned educator, Dr. Avis Glaze. Educators took part in professional development workshops led by local experts to improve their skills and to become better equipped to develop inclusive learning environments and experiences for all of our students.

Madam Speaker, I spoke earlier about the iPad initiative at Lighthouse School, the first of its kind in this country. So I will not go into detail on that right now. Similarly, I spoke about the early intervention programme, the holistic approach that this Government intends to take. Therefore, I will not speak to length, but these are two programmes geared towards dealing with our special education needs students.

Madam Speaker, the revision of the Special Education Needs Codes of Practice, was long overdue. The original code of practice was approved by the Education Council several years ago. This year there was a review of the code of practice which helps to outline the regulations for public schools in the Cayman Islands in relation to the provision for special education needs. It also provides a basis for identifying special education needs and for determining the

expectations for schools in making appropriate accommodation for such students. The revised code of practice is due to be completed by the end of this academic year as well.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the new Education Law, which Councillor Connolly spoke to briefly in his contribution, will also make specific legislative provision for students with special education needs, recognising the uniqueness and the provisions needed to address the needs of this student population. To that end, there has been a special education needs and disabilities strategy group which has been formed within the Ministry and various departments that fall under the Ministry, again, in a proactive approach by the Ministry looking to the implementation of the Cayman Islands Disabilities Policy which was adopted by the Government and by Cabinet this year.

Madam Speaker, this is another area where there will need to be not just inter- and intra-ministerial work, but cross-ministerial collaboration in order to achieve the goals as the needs for persons with disabilities range from needing healthcare to housing, to employment, to financial support, et cetera. So, this is an area where this Government will need to continue to ensure that we work as one. And I have to say, Madam Speaker, thus far the Government understands the need to bring that type of holistic approach to addressing the issues facing our people.

Madam Speaker, priority number 3 was putting programmes in place to try to address conflict resolution training and crime prevention or reduction. I believe that a national goal for the country should be to develop and implement a comprehensive crime reduction policy which addresses criminality at every stage of the process and focuses on strategies of crime prevention, restorative justice, offender rehabilitation and community reintegration. And I will speak more to that when we talk about national issues, but specifically as it relates to what the Ministry of Education is doing in order to try to address the current concerns related to crime prevention and reduction. There has been a development of what is known as the Cayman Islands Safe Management and Risk Reduction Training, or C-SMART for short.

This is a guidance which has been developed dealing with the use of physical intervention in schools. The Ministry established a working group to develop a set of techniques in line with the local needs and international best practice. There was a training package developed and a number of components include understanding the cycle of behaviour, de-escalation skills, risk assessment procedures and the like. Training was piloted during the 2014/15 fiscal year and is due to be fully implemented in the 2015/16 year. Again, it is important to note that provision related to safe handling of children will be reflected in the Education Bill that will be out for discussion early next month.

Madam Speaker, another innovative and synergistic programme launched and developed by this Government was that of the pastoral support programme. It is both an education and employment initiative which was developed very shortly after taking office in the summer of 2013. The programme was designed to address both the educational needs, as well as the employment needs of our people. Initially the programme was piloted in the latter part of 2013/14 academic year. And in response to the success of the pilot, the programme was extended and was rolled out again during the 2014/15 academic year.

What it does, Madam Speaker, is to provide personnel on school sites, additional personnel, who can interface with the students positively to help reduce and de-escalate events that may happen before it occurs. Pastoral support workers help as guides to students in need of additional support during the school day, with the aim of ensuring that they engage with learning and access educational opportunities. They are particularly visible during the arrival, lunch, and at the end of the day to help manage (so to speak) the traffic that happens during that time. Madam Speaker, this is an employment initiative because it enables suitably qualified Caymanians to gain work.

Madam Speaker, a policy decision taken with respect to this particular programme was that only Caymanians who are registered with the National Workforce Development Agency were eligible to apply. And the successful candidates that were identified underwent training relevant to their role as pastoral support workers. It also provided skills training and re-tooling, which is an opportunity for those unemployed Caymanians to gain employment and additional skills as well.

Madam Speaker, there was a review and restructuring of the existing primary and secondary school inclusion specialist teachers. Again, in the latter part, or in the early part, I would say, of the 2014/15 academic year, after taking office, the Ministry called for an internal review of the governance of management of behaviour in the schools. As a result of that, there was a reorganisation of the primary and secondary school inclusion specialist that was needed. These specialists are expected to facilitate and deliver appropriate intervention for students with identified learning, social, emotional and behaviour issues.

**The Speaker:** Minister, you have one hour and 28 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Such interventions are supposed to support individual teachers and to support schools in ensuring that the teaching and learning opportunities offered within the main stream education system, provide all of our students with the opportunity to reach their maximum potential.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry also supports the extended after school programme which was initially established in response to the concerns that many potentially vulnerable children were left unsupervised after school. The programme provides a range of activities from homework assistance to drama for over 1,000 children in the public school system between 3:00 to 5:30 in the afternoon.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to address an obvious area of . . . I would not go so far as to say "concern," but, an area of concern with respect to wanting to improve on what was there, was in the 2014/15 academic year, a quality assurance aspect was built into the programme. Given the number of students serviced; given the amount of money that the Government [provides in] support, we wanted to make sure that the actual services provided in the after school programme were addressing the needs that we were expecting to be addressed. So, a quality assurance aspect was developed in partnership with the YMCA. As you know, Madam Speaker, the YMCA has a breadth and depth of experience with respect to running programmes geared toward young people. So, that added a level of oversight which was needed at this stage, given the popularity of the programme.

Moving to priority 4, with respect to TVET, the expansion of course offerings at CIFEC to include construction as well as sports and leisure was introduced during the 2014/15 academic year. There was also new accounts course accredited at level 2 through the ACCA.

Madam Speaker, this Government is not only committed to talking about TVET, this Government is committed to doing something about actually achieving it in our schools and post-secondary as well. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the Ministry was tasked to develop a draft TVET strategy and action plan as to how we are going to address the issues as they relate to technical and vocational educational opportunities within our public school, extending beyond the compulsory age as well. So, the Ministry is in the process of recruiting a technical and vocational education and training coordinator, a post that was budgeted for by this Government, showing the determination to actually have a proper, robust TVET programme in our society.

Similarly, the Government has called for, and the Ministry will be establishing, a National Training Council in the 2015/16 fiscal year to really act as that necessary link with the industry in this regard to make sure that the programmes that are developed can actually be carried out with respect to developing internships and apprenticeships. I will talk a bit more about that later on.

Madam Speaker, priority 5 deals with ICT. As I said, I dealt with that already.

Priority 6 deals with the issue of public/private partnerships in education and training. This was a key campaign platform of a number of us in Government,

including myself. And it is also a key strategy for success to achieve the goal of preparing students to take advantage of the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in order to excel in the local economy and to compete in the global economy. To do that, we need to develop stronger partnerships with the private sector to provide the additional resources, as necessary, to assist in the delivery of the curriculum, and otherwise, where such gaps exist.

Madam Speaker, you would have heard both the Premier and my colleague Minister of Financial Services speak about the recently launched public/private partnership with Cayman Finance. This was a partnership between the Government, specifically the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Financial Services and Cayman Finance, which was aimed at teaching our students about the financial services industry. It introduces students to career opportunities in the financial services industry that they may not even be aware of. It also creates an invaluable networking opportunity for our public school students.

Madam Speaker, it promotes sustainable development of the financial services industry, ensuring that competent local talent is identified early, is developed and is available. And, Madam Speaker, 50 Year 12 students in the government dual enrollment programme; that is, 50 Year 12 students doing A Levels, or UCCL, as a part of their Year 12 curriculum, are participating in this programme. In fact, Madam Speaker, I have been informed that it is actually 51 students who are participating in the full programme, that is who will be participating in the 12 week long work shop and one-to-one mentorships, culminating with a one-month paid summer internship. But, Madam Speaker, the success of the pilot was such that over 60 students put their names forward and applied. What Cayman Finance has done is ensure that every child that put themselves forward to be a part of the programme can actually benefit from the workshops they offer. So every child is able to participate in the programme to some degree. But it is the 51 students who will be doing the full programme.

To address a concern that was raised by the Member for East End regarding the programme, I want to say to him and to every Member in this House, and to the other naysayers who may be saying, *Well, it's only 50 students!* The fact is that it is 51 students who are graduating from high school who now have guaranteed summer jobs and who did not have that opportunity prior to the launching of this programme.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Financial Services for his support and also to thank the CEO of Cayman Finance, Mr. Jude Scott, for galvanizing the financial services industry to participate in this invaluable programme.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of other public/private partnerships that the Ministry of Education has, and I would just like to speak to them very

briefly as I discussed these in detail already. These include partnerships with LIFE Limited, dealing with a number of literacy intervention programmes in partnership and in collaboration with the Government. I want to say that the Ministry is working very closely with LIFE to see how greater partnerships in education can be forged in the coming years. And again, I want to publicly thank the members of LIFE. I look forward to the continued working relationship in this regard.

The Ministry also has a good working relationship with the Cayman Islands Society of Professional Accountants [CISPA]. There is a partnership in place whereby the CISPA supports a number of numeracy intervention and numeracy skill development programmes that are targeting students in need.

#### **Moment of interruption—4:30 pm**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Education. We have reached the hour of interruption.

I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 10(2)**

**Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) to enable the House to continue proceedings beyond the hour of interruption

**The Speaker:** The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended to enable the House to continue proceedings beyond the hour of interruption, with an anticipated end of 6:00 pm (or thereabout).

All those in favour please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it.

**Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.**

**The Speaker:** Please continue Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Finally, Madam Speaker, there is a very important partnership that the Ministry has with an organisation known as Hedge Funds Care. That is an organisation that funds, in particular, initiatives dealing with child abuse prevention and programmes geared to eradicating child abuse in our community. Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would prefer to speak to that at a later point.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of important education initiatives for the 2015/16 year. I will

touch on these very briefly; firstly, the revised Education Law.

Madam Speaker, any foundation for educational excellence must have a solid legislative underpinning to support such a system. Madam Speaker, I am happy to say that public consultation on the draft Education Bill will begin this June. As the Fifth Elected Member for George Town, and Councillor for the Ministry of Education, discussed in his contribution, the key aspects of the proposed new law. I will not expound further on that law, but I want to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Councillor Connolly for supporting me as Minister, and the Ministry, especially as it relates to education, but certainly not limited to education, Madam Speaker. He has worked tirelessly to help move employment and gender initiatives of the Government along as well.

Councillor Connolly has been a tremendous asset to me, as Minister, and to this Government on a whole. I am extremely grateful to have benefitted from having worked with him alongside me in the Ministry over the last two years.

Madam Speaker, I also want to quickly address a concern that was raised by my colleague the First Elected Member for Bodden Town regarding religious education in schools. Our Constitution recognises our Christian heritage. Therefore, our public school system must recognise our Christian heritage.

**Hon. Anthony S. Eden:** Hear, hear.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Religious education is a required subject in the National Curriculum in public schools, Madam Speaker. As long as I am in this position as Minister of Education, I give the commitment that that will continue to be the case.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, in keeping with the Independent Member's national priorities plan and the concerns of this Government as a whole, there will be an Office of Education Quality Assurance established. It will be established in order to carry out ongoing vigorous, objective and independent inspections of government schools, private schools and early childhood care and education centres.

The office will also be responsible for reporting on the quality and effectiveness of provision and practices in schools of early childhood care and education centres, and will provide information and advice to me, as Minister of Education, on matters related to policy and support required in order to raise standards of achievement. Again, Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the office will be supported by and enshrined in the proposed Education Law.

Madam Speaker, work on the new John Gray High School project was recommenced in 2014/15 and will utilise a phased approach to complete the

project. The Ministry has established steering committee and is utilising the services of the Public Works Department Project Management Office to carry out the preliminary documentation processes required under the FFR and phase 2 of the project, i.e., the multipurpose hall. Phase 2 is expected to be completed in 2016.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important at this stage to state emphatically to this House, and to those listening, that proper procurement and other required processes will be expected to be followed, pursuant to the PMFL and the FFR as it relates to the continuation of this project. Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about what has happened in the past regarding school projects, both about practices adopted under the previous UDP administration and prior to that. But, Madam Speaker, as the new Minister of Education, I am here to tell you and Members of this honourable House that there will be no political interference from me, as Minister, in relation to the required procurement processes to be carried out.

As Minister I will push to see that the project proceeds as quickly as possible. However, I will not do so at the expense of proper procedure, proper protocols, or proper procurement practices to be carried out by the established steering committee as overseen by the Project Management Office. That is their job, Madam Speaker, and as Minister I expect them to do their job to the highest professional standards.

Madam Speaker, as I spoke to briefly in my response to a few questions, the Ministry will be working jointly with the Ministry of District Administration, Tourism and Transport to develop and carry out a plan for developing an appropriate school on the bluff in Cayman Brac to better utilise existing facilities and to enhance the school facilities in the Sister Islands.

Madam Speaker, in 2015/16 a Guidance document will be developed that supports the implementation of the phases of the Special Education Needs Codes of Practice, which is currently being revised. And with respect to the graduation requirement that was adopted in 2014, work will continue to consider including aspects of mandatory community service as a part of the graduation criteria. It is important to say, that the content and the accreditation of this particular aspect of the programme, the community service aspect, has yet to be established. But, the hope and expectation is for the team and the Ministry and the Department of Education Services to think about how we can help to create socially conscious and concerned citizens. How can we help to enhance the values based education and curriculum and help to evolve a spirit of volunteerism amongst our students?

In summary, Madam Speaker, the goal for education is to establish the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence and to prepare our students to take advantage of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to excel in the local economy and compete in the global economy. That is what has

been and that is what will continue to be the philosophy that guides the work of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education and the schools.

Turning to employment: As reflected in all Ministers' contribution thus far, including the Premier, the Minister of Home Affairs; the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Tourism; the Minister of Community Affairs; and the Minister of Financial Services and, I dare say the Minister of Planning, who will come after me, all have noted that the issue of employment cuts across every Ministry and the Government as a whole. Each Ministry has an obligation and a role to play to address the issues related to employment, and each Ministry is working towards carrying out its respective obligation to address the issue of unemployment in the country.

The National Workforce Development Agency [NWDA] is one of several Government departments dedicated to helping the people of the Cayman Islands. And in this instance, their mandate is to be a valued partner and facilitator in the training, development and employment of Caymanians. Therefore, the primary remit, the primary mandate of the National Workforce Development Agency is workforce development. It is not a job placement or recruitment agency.

Madam Speaker, as a result of the confusion that still exists, it is worth repeating that last statement. The National Workforce Development Agency is not a job placement or recruitment agency. It is a valuable resource in which Caymanians can utilise to assist in the training and development and accessing employment initiatives such as the National Job Link [Portal], the National Training Programme, the National Internship Programme and the National Apprenticeship Programme, all organised and run out of the National Workforce Development Agency.

The National Workforce Development Agency is comprised of four units: the Employment Services Unit; the Training and Development Unit; the Scholarship Secretariat; and the Labour Market Information Systems. As it relates to some key accomplishments of the NWDA for the 2014/15 fiscal year, it is important to note that a major component to promoting economic growth that benefits the people of these Islands, our Caymanian people, is focusing on the development of the people themselves. So, Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying a quote: **“The man”** (or woman) **“who removes a mountain begins by carrying away [small] stones.”**

With respect to the systems utilised by the NWDA, the department has come a long way in the past two years. They have moved from a completely manual highly inefficient processing system, to an automated system of registering both job seekers and employment opportunities, the National Job Link Portal, which was launched in June 2014.

In an effort to better serve the needs of the diverse job-seeking pool, in the 2014/15 financial

year, the NWDA implemented a new registration system which defines categories of service for each, and restricted access to some, depending on the person's immigration status. It should be noted, however, that Caymanians have the right to register as whichever category is deemed most appropriate, given their circumstances, and Caymanians have the right to gain access to as much, or as little assistance or support from the NWDA as they feel they need.

Also, for the first time ever, there is an automatic streamlined online link connecting the two key employment departments, the Immigration Department and the NWDA, in order to create real-time access to the Immigration Department and its boards in relation to what job-seekers are registered and available to work. And it provides an efficient way for employers to communicate efforts taken to hire a Caymanian prior to the Immigration Department or boards making decisions relating to work permit applications. This system was launched initially during our first year in office in February 2014.

If the NWDA Immigration database interface, if utilised as it is designed to be by job-seekers and employers, it provides information needed to ensure that the Immigration Department and its boards, assuming that the Immigration Department and the boards are using the portal as a reference, will make them aware of every registered job-seeker interested and available for jobs as advertised through the NWDA and what the outcome of that recruitment process was.

Work continued during the 2014/15 financial year to assess and further refine the current system to increase the level of automation to create opportunities for greater efficiencies and to improve customer service, delivery for internal, as well as external stakeholders, including job-seekers, employers, Immigration Department and other government departments. All of this was done with the intention of creating a clearing house for job listings in the country. This was a key campaign priority and commitment of mine and, as I said, many others on the Government bench. I am grateful that this has now become an e-Government priority initiative and work is underway to procure technical assistance required to create the appropriate system. This work is expected to continue into the 2015/16 financial year, leading the way for the creation of such a national clearing house of all employment opportunities at any given time in the country.

People cannot apply for jobs if they do not know the jobs exist. Madam Speaker, the purpose of this clearing house would be to give jobseekers access to which jobs are in the market at any given time.

Madam Speaker, I have outlined the extensive work, the diligence that the National Workforce Development Agency has done to get us to this point. It is now time that all of the relevant departments, and in particular the Immigration Department, boards and

Ministry of Home Affairs, continue to work towards enhancing this system that is already in the works to make it into the clearing house to make it into the transparent work permit application process that we know we need as a country. And it is now a priority of the e-Government initiative, and I am looking forward to their continued vigilance and diligence in ensuring that the goals are achieved.

Madam Speaker, the National Workforce Development Agency has also launched and coordinates a National Internship Programmes. This was launched last summer where we had a financial services industry company who actually took on an intern from UC-CI, one of our local accounting students. There was also an internship programme through UCCI that was working with our own Ministry of ICT team, and I am happy to report that the team in the end hired one of the interns to work for the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the Scholarship Secretariat in the NWDA is also working very closely with the Portfolio of the Civil Service in relation to facilitating the 2015 summer work placements for Government scholarship recipients.

The Ministry is also working with Health City Cayman Islands [HCCI] to facilitate the 24 internship placements of college students through Health City's summer internship programme, as mentioned by the Premier in his Policy Statement. The Ministry, through the auspices of the Ministry of Education is also working with HCCI to grow its internship for high school students. This was an initiative that was launched last year and to date, 175 students have participated in the programme. The Ministry and Department of Education Services work very closely with HCCI to ensure that the programme actually became a success and got off the ground. I am happy to say that HCCI has committed to significantly increasing the numbers of students for the 2015/16 academic year and the Ministry of Education, as well as the Government, will continue to support this internship programme for our students.

Moving to the National Apprenticeship Programme, which is coordinated through the auspices of the NWDA. The Government, and in particular the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, continue to support the Superior Auto Training Programme, which is funded by the Government and delivered by Superior Auto Limited. This programme is geared at Caymanians between the ages of 18 to 25, and is delivered over a 14 month period. It is accredited through the Jamaican German Auto Schools, JAGAS HEART Trust NTA.

Madam Speaker, the programme provides opportunities for participants to qualify as advanced apprentices at Level 2, or mechanics helpers at Level 1 at the NCTVET [National Council of Technical Vocational Educational Training], and includes a one-year internship with the industry following course completion. I am happy to say that this cohort that started in

January of this year is the largest cohort to date to continue to have the number of students. Every student that started, barring one, who ended his time with the programme under tragic circumstances, is still with the programme. We have 10 students who are still participating.

Madam Speaker, at this stage I want to also acknowledge the heartbreak that members of the programme and also members of the family of Mr. David Ebanks who was not able to continue with the programme due to tragic circumstances, and I want to give condolences to the family of David Ebanks, his loved ones, his friends, and to his fellow students at the Superior Auto Training programme. David was full of promise, Madam Speaker. He was full of hope. And he had made a conscious decision to turn his life around. I am sure that his presence is missed, but will serve as a source of inspiration for his fellow students and for other apprentices as well.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry and the National Workforce Development Agency are continuing to work towards developing new TVET apprenticeship opportunities in the trades industry as we speak. I will be speaking more to that and giving an update as and when I am able to do so when we are going to roll out the programme. But, based on the track record thus far, the country should feel some level of comfort that if I am telling you things are in the works, they *are* in the works and will be forthcoming in a very timely fashion.

The Training and Development and Employment Services Units of the NWDA continue to support the Passport2Success Programme which has prepared over 355 young Caymanians to enter the workforce. We just saw the recent graduation of Cohort 16, which was a cohort geared towards single mothers. To date, the single mother cohorts tend to be one of the most successful cohorts, meaning, that after 12 months post-graduation, the percentage of those participants that are in full-time employment range between 64 to 68 per cent. As a result, five of the recent graduates who have graduated from cohort 16 have already found employment, and a number are pursuing further education and study.

Madam Speaker, the Employment Support Services Unit of the NWDA and the Training Unit and Development Unit offer services not just locally in central George Town, but they actually go out to the districts on a monthly basis during the community outreach to West Bay, Bodden Town, East End, North Side and the Sister Islands. Again, Madam Speaker, this was a programme that started as a result of a policy adopted by this Government administration in 2014 which looked to respond to the needs of the community in the community.

Madam Speaker, the Training and Development arm and the Employment Services arm of the NWDA also work with inmates of Her Majesty's Prison Services on the release on temporary licence pro-

gramme. They are being actively assisted by members of the NWDA as they transition into the community.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, you have one hour remaining, and I propose to take 10 minutes break at this time.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker.

**Proceedings suspended at 4:52 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 5:11 pm**

## **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

### **BILL**

### **SECOND READING**

#### **APPROPRIATION (JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2016) BILL, 2015**

#### **DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT**

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

**The Speaker:** Please be seated. Proceedings are resumed.

Continuing with her debate is the Honourable Minister responsible for Education.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When we left off, I was talking about some of the services that the Employment Services arm of the NWDA provides, and I just wanted to mention briefly in conclusion to that particular unit, they also work with registrants who have criminal records, who are actively being assisted to find employment opportunities. Again, Madam Speaker, this is the Government's effort, an attempt to address incidences of high recidivism in this regard by helping these persons find meaningful employment.

Madam Speaker, moving to the Scholarship Services Unit of the NWDA: There currently over 1,200 students on Government scholarships. Approximately 800 of those are local scholars and approximately 450 overseas scholars.

Madam Speaker, I just want to acknowledge the very hard work of a very small team which is comprised of the Scholarship Secretariat, led by the manager of the unit, Ms. Deirdre Carmola, and her three additional, which includes one secondee who works in that. They work tirelessly to support these 1,200-plus students receiving Government assistance to pursue postsecondary studies.

Madam Speaker, as a result of reengineering the process upon taking office in 2013, we quickly looked at how can we find efficiencies and how can we make the system work better. One of the things that we did was introduce an earlier registration process and deadlines for application. This, Madam Speaker, I have to say has led to greater efficiencies in the process thus far and has led to expected earlier notification and approvals for successful applicants for this year's application pool. So, that will hopefully put the minds of a number of parents and students alike at ease, that hopefully the number of last minute notifications will be lessened as a result of these attempts to improve the efficiencies in that regard.

Madam Speaker, there was also a very exciting initiative that was launched this year in partnership with the Cayman Islands Yellow Pages. The Scholarship Secretariat created a Caymans Scholarship Directory, which was published in March of this year, and it includes all public and private sector scholarships available in the Cayman Islands, so as to facilitate the opportunities available to our young people so they will know which scholarship opportunities exist, both in the public and private sector in one convenient location. And, Madam Speaker, the Secretariat has distributed over 3,000 copies to local schools, including public and private schools. I want to acknowledge the generous sponsorship by local companies in actually publishing these directories.

Madam Speaker, the Secretariat has worked with the Computer Services Department to build the Scholarships Online Programme interface, which will replace and enhance customer service, automation, and the application process for scholarships going forward. And it is expected that this new interface will be rolled out in time for the new crop of scholarship applicants starting in November of this year.

Madam Speaker, the Secretariat also worked to introduce an NWDA student registration portal, whereby all students on Government scholarships will now be required to register with the NWDA in an attempt to better facilitate internships and tracking of career progression in general, of these students who are benefiting from Government assistance. This is one of the areas of concern, Madam Speaker. As a country, what are we doing to address the needs or to assist our returning graduates in obtaining employment? So by making it a requirement for students who receive Government assistance to actually proactively get into the system and be able to access the opportunities that are available to them as a result of being registered with the NWDA, it will hopefully facilitate better and seamless job seeking and internship acquiring opportunities once they have completed their period of studies.

Madam Speaker, this year the Scholarship Criteria Review Subcommittee of the Education Council also completed the task of reviewing and making recommendations regarding revising the

scholarship criteria to be adopted and utilised by the Education Council. Currently, those recommendations are being presented to the wider Council for consideration and determinations are being made for acceptance and adoption of those recommendations, and the intention would be for those recommendations that are adopted to utilise a phased implementation approach to that.

Madam Speaker, we also heard about the Hospitality Training School from the Minister of Tourism and the collaboration that exists currently between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Education. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of all players involved in getting that off the ground and making that a success. I also want to say that I look forward to the hospitality industry absorbing each and every one of the graduates of that programme at the end of the programme this year.

Madam Speaker, speaking about employment initiatives for the 2015/16 year, as I said, the Ministry of Employment will look to create a National Training Council which will act as advisors and will help to participate and support the development coordination and management of technical and vocational education training in the Cayman Islands. The Council will consist of representatives from key TVET industries and will be supported by the Ministry and the NWDA and in particular the TVET post that I spoke to earlier in my contributions. Again, one of the mandates of the Council is to develop a mechanism in order to register private sector businesses who deliver training and development programmes to ensure that minimum standards are met.

Madam Speaker, the Government is committed to funding persons looking to pursue technical and vocational education and training, but we are also mindful of the need to ensure that there are minimum standards being offered by these programmes that will be accepted by the industries themselves. So that is why we are taking the approach to get the industries involved in developing what these minimum standards are, because the ultimate goal of these training programmes is and should be gainful employment at the end, or during the process. We notice that there are number of programmes that are disconnected with what the industries are calling for, so by bringing industry to that table, this is how the Government will successfully move toward implementing a TVET strategy that deals with the needs of our people, which is to lead to employment opportunities or entrepreneurial opportunities if that is what it comes down to.

Madam Speaker, the expansion of the TVET and apprenticeship opportunities will continue through public/private partnerships. As I said, on the heels of the very successful launch of the Education and Work Experience Initiative with Cayman Finance, which targeted the financial services industry, the Ministry of Employment is already in talks with other key industry representatives in the construction and building man-

agement industries with the aim of launching additional apprenticeship programmes in the coming 2015/16 fiscal year. So, watch this space, Madam Speaker. The Employment Services arm, as I said, is working in conjunction with Immigration Department to create a national clearinghouse of employment opportunities, whereby providing central location for all private sector jobs in the Cayman Islands to be listed. However, Madam Speaker, as I indicated before, the success of this programme is dependent now on the staff of the two ministries, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Employment, working together to achieve the collective goal of the Government. Madam Speaker, as this is now an e-Government priority, the project should benefit from the coordination and the support of the director of e-Government and the Cabinet Office in this regard. Councillor Suckoo, as Councillor for e-Government, I am beseeching that he continues to stay vigilant to ensure that the policy goals and directives of the Government as set out, are, in fact, being carried out in this regard.

Madam Speaker, the launch of the new Scholarships Online Programme in November 2015 will, as I said, take a phased approach with respect to the recommendations of the Education Council, but also the actual platform will be in place which will greatly enhance or even further enhance the automation and efficiency of the process.

The Yellow Pages is also working with the Scholarship Secretariat to create a student recognition directory, whereby returning graduates will be featured highlighting their degrees obtained and other information of interest to employers. Again, this is a concrete, tangible initiative which is geared at dealing with the needs of helping our returning graduates to access employment by actually creating a tool which features their accomplishments as such.

Madam Speaker, at this stage it is important for me to address that contrary to certain claims made in this House and in other forums, funding for scholarships has not been cut. I repeat: Funding for scholarships has not been cut. What has been cut, Madam Speaker, are the political favouritism and the inequality as it relates to the grant of scholarships.

Madam Speaker, it is unfair for some students to receive up to three times as much under the previous Nation Building Scholarship Programme, up to, in some cases, \$75,000 per year, as compared to other students who are recipients of the established Education Council Scholarships who can only receive, at present, up to \$20,000 or \$25,000 per year, depending on their category of study. While, Madam Speaker, the Young Nation Builders Scholarship Programme recipients have different, and in some cases lower, GPA requirements than those students who are on the Education Council Scholarship Programme. The scholarship programme of any government should not be about creating loopholes or a culture of entitlement, but instead, it should be engendering and in-

spiring a culture of achievement, a culture of accomplishment, and a culture of pursuing excellence.

Madam Speaker, this has been recognised and some of the new criteria adopted by the Education Council will in fact be introduced whereby students that demonstrate competence, students that demonstrate achievement in both tertiary as well as technical and vocational education and training, or TVET pursuits, will be given the opportunity to receive greater sums of scholarship funds if it is alignment with the priority occupations as well.

So, Madam Speaker, we must create a system that inspires our people to want to achieve more, to want to push themselves beyond their comfort zones, because growth and innovation requires such. We cannot advance as a country if our people are not incentivised to do so, if our people are not given opportunities to do so, and that is exactly the kind of environment the pursuit of lifelong learning, growth, personal development and excellence, which this coalition Government is seeking to create by the kinds of policies which we are developing and adopting. Madam Speaker, fairness, equity, and reward for hard work, is key.

Madam Speaker, speaking very briefly to the National Training Programme of the Passport2Success: As I indicated, the Government will continue and is committed to continuing to fund that programme, but what we have done in a proactive move is to respond to the concerns of the young people that the programme targets in many instances. We have increased the age of eligibility from 21, as a standard, to 22. We have also made it possible for persons between the ages of 23 to 25 to be considered for the programme on a case-by-case basis, if they are recommended to so by the NWDA. Madam Speaker, we know given the statistics that there are great concerns amongst our young people and employment and so as a result of the popularity of the programme, but also as a result of the need to address as many persons in this particular space as possible, we were very proactive and creative in trying to find solutions that we could action immediately to address these needs. This is one way that we did that, which was to actually change the eligibility criteria in this regard.

As I said before, Madam Speaker, it is important, and I will say again, that although it is an important part of the work that the NWDA does, work undertaken by the NWDA is more than just about finding people jobs. Although, Madam Speaker, that is, as I said, happening as well, because if we look at the statistics, overall unemployment is down from 6.3 per cent in 2013 to 4.7 per cent in 2014. Looking specifically at Caymanians, Madam Speaker, unemployment has dropped as well from a high of 10.5 per cent in 2012 to 9.4 per cent in 2013, and a further drop to 7.9 per cent in 2014. So, Madam Speaker, under this

Government, Caymanians are, in fact, getting jobs and finding work.

Madam Speaker, jobs are here and gone tomorrow. There is no more evidence of this than what is happening in today's world where many jobs in the Cayman Islands are provided by global, multinational companies whose business decisions for expansion, leading to increased job opportunities, or contraction leading to redundancies and lay-offs, are made far beyond these shores. We operate in a global economy, Madam Speaker, and so the impacts of that global economy, for better or worse, will impact our local experiences. So, Madam Speaker, we must prepare our people for the prospect of multiple careers in their lifetime. We must prepare our people to be adaptable to the changing technology-driven economy, and by helping them to develop and enhance their skill sets to capitalise on the new opportunities and to be able grow and adapt to the changing employment conditions.

Madam Speaker, we must also ensure that those who are willing, able, and capable of taking advantage of the job opportunities that do exist are given the ability to do so. The primary employment mechanism of this country, the Immigration Law, which outlines who can be gainfully employed in this country and the work permit regime administered by the Immigration Department and its boards, must work, and the law must be applied and enforced by the Immigration Department and its boards to benefit the people of the Cayman Islands, but also the economy of the Cayman Islands as a whole.

Madam Speaker, it is encouraging to hear of the greater collaboration taking place between the various departments, working to address the issues of unemployment amongst locals. We heard this in a number of the presentations by my fellow colleagues on the Government bench. Departments such as the Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Counselling Services, Department of Commerce and Investment, the NWDA, and the Immigration Department, to name a few. It is absolutely essential that this collaboration continues in order for the country to make even greater strides in helping to ensure that those who can work do work.

Madam Speaker, moving on to an issue that the Premier announced in his Policy Statement—the issue of minimum wage: Madam Speaker, I want to begin my discussion on this topic by stating a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, which states, **“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”** Madam Speaker, that is exactly what has been done by this Government.

A year ago in my 2014/15 Budget Debate I informed this honourable House about the plan being embarked on to determine an appropriate national minimum wage regime for the Cayman Islands. A plan, Madam Speaker, that started in earnest in January of 2014, just seven months after taking office as

Minister responsible, when I visited the United Kingdom Low Pay Commission during an official trip to London to deal with both education and employment related matters. Madam Speaker, whereas the Member for East End and the Member for North Side would like to take the credit as spurring the Government on to address this issue, the work on developing an appropriate national minimum wage regime actually began before the Private Member's Motion was brought by the Members from the East.

However, what the Private Member's Motion did do was allow me to outline in great detail what the Government's plan of action was to address the issue and to determine an appropriate minimum wage to adopt a plan, Madam Speaker, that has been executed and followed just as I had outlined it to be on a number of occasions in this honourable House since February 2014.

Madam Speaker, this coalition Government promised and we have delivered. And on a personal note, Madam Speaker, the country should take comfort in the fact that as Minister and as a representative of the people of West Bay, I do not make promises that I cannot keep, and I keep my promises. That is the kind of trust you want to have in your elected representatives, Madam Speaker, and that is the kind of trust you want to have in your Government. I go as far as saying, that that is the kind of trust that you should have in this coalition Government.

Madam Speaker, the Government took office with a plan, Independents and PPM party members alike, we quickly got down to business to flesh out the details of the plan which was shaped by both the Independent Members' National Priorities Plan and the PPM Manifesto, and moved swiftly towards execution. That is why, Madam Speaker, we can each stand here as Members of this Government and outline the many accomplishments of this Government of which we all played a vital role to achieve. And, Madam Speaker, in carrying out the plan, the law was followed with respect to section 21 of the Labour Law and a Minimum Wage Advisory Committee was convened in June 2014, and, as they say, the rest is history.

Madam Speaker, even though I tabled the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee report in April of this year, and painstakingly went through and gave a thorough overview of the key aspects of the report, it is important to remind the public that the \$6.00 per hour minimum wage to be adopted as the minimum wage is not a living wage. It is a minimum wage which no one in this country will be allowed to be paid. The two concepts, Madam Speaker, are different and distinct.

Adopting a minimum wage, Madam Speaker, means that we as a country will make it illegal for anyone to get paid below the statutorily mandated minimum threshold of \$6.00 per hour, which we now know is above the poverty vulnerability threshold. It certainly

isn't a ceiling, Madam Speaker, of what employers should pay and what employees should negotiate to work for—it is not a ceiling, but it is a floor, one which, based on the economic analysis conducted by the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee, should have a significant impact on lifting those lowest paid workers in our society out of dire poverty while having a minimal effect on inflation and the cost of living and a minimal effect as it relates to job losses for Caymanians. Madam Speaker, introducing a minimum wage at any higher rate than \$6.00 an hour would have a significant negative effect on both the cost of living due to the increased prices for goods and services, and job losses due to higher numbers of job losses as expected as a result.

Madam Speaker, just as this Government and myself as Minister were prepared to take the political licks for accepting the Private Member's Motion in February, calling for a \$5.00 per hour minimum wage, choosing instead to take a measured, evidenced-based approach to determining the appropriate rate. The Government is continuing to take a measured, rational approach to the figure to be adopted. And, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, the Government may still take licks in some quarters by some people who feel that the minimum wage should be higher than \$6.00 per hour. But, Madam Speaker, when listening to those same persons, it is clear that they do not fully understand the ramifications of mandating a higher minimum wage, which would actually increase the cost to businesses, it would increase potential job losses, and it will erode their overall purchasing power due to an increase in prices, thereby, Madam Speaker, defeating the entire purpose of introducing a minimum wage in the first place.

So, Madam Speaker, setting a minimum wage requires a reasoned and pragmatic balance, just like choosing your elected representatives. The accomplishments of this coalition Government, Madam Speaker, thus far, with only two years in office, is a testament that the people made the right choice in taking a balanced approach to voting for Independent Members and party members of the Government alike.

Madam Speaker, this day has been 30 years in the making. Previous Governments, previous Ministers of Labour, previous politicians, current politicians, [and] aspiring politicians have only talked about it, have only made campaign promises about it, time and time again. But for the past 15 years, at least, those same said politicians and government administrations failed to take meaningful actions beyond the campaign promises and passing motions in this honourable House to bring about a national minimum wage. Even though those provisions were well enshrined in the law and existed for over half a century, Madam Speaker, it was clear, and it is clear as the current Minister of Employment, there was no political will on the part of those previous Government administrations

to see beyond the campaign promises after Election Day.

However, Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to be the first Minister responsible for initiating and seeing the minimum wage process through on behalf of this Government. The result has been a very thorough and detailed report of the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee. Again, I want to thank the work of the Committee, very capable, dedicated core Ministry team as well, who acted as a Secretariat to the Committee, who supported the work of the Committee throughout the process, including drafting the final report.

Madam Speaker, the Government has accepted the recommendations of the Committee and has decided to implement the minimum wage regime based on recommendations to commence in the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2016. The report has highlighted areas of legislative changes, many of those to the Labour Law. I am happy to report, Madam Speaker, that many of those changes are already in train and a number of them will be in train in time for the Labour Bill to be brought to the House when we ask this honourable House to adopt a new Labour Law as well.

But, Madam Speaker, the successful implementation of a minimum wage regime will require work to be done by multiple ministries and multiple departments, as outlined in the report. And I look forward to the continued cooperation of the Government and the respective ministers and ministries to see the process through in a timely fashion.

Madam Speaker, to address the concern of the Member for East End regarding the level of pushback he anticipates will come from the lobbyists (as he termed them in his Budget debate), Madam Speaker, we recognise that this is a real possibility. However, it is heartening to note that the Chamber of Commerce in a participation on CITN, as the largest representative body of businesses in the country, they have already given their public support for the introduction of a \$6.00 per hour national minimum wage. And, Madam Speaker, this is recognition of the fact, I believe, by businesses themselves that it is no longer acceptable for businesses to compete primarily on the importation of cheap labour. It is no longer acceptable, Madam Speaker, to pay people substandard wages, forcing them to live in substandard conditions.

So, Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for East End for his words of caution, but I am hopeful that as with the minimum wage, when the Labour Bill is put out for public consultation, we also will have a reasoned and rational response to the fact that, like the absence of national minimum wage, the country's labour legislation is inadequate in many instances to address the pressing concerns of a modern economy and labour force issues that exist today, and that there is a need to revise the almost 30-year old piece of legislation, which has only been tinkered with in the subsequent revisions since it was enacted in 1987.

I look forward to the support of the Government and this entire House in our collective fortitude to see the process and the passage of the enactment of the law as well.

**The Speaker:** Minister, you have 30 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, since taking office and from the very first Budget we were responsible for, the Government has made a concerted effort to increase the resources of the Department of Labour and Pensions. There have been six new posts that have been budgeted for and filled since the 2013/14 Budget. In addition, Madam Speaker, there are three additional posts which are in the final stages of recruitment as we speak, which would increase the staff complement by nine.

Madam Speaker, the increase in the staff complement of the Department of Labour and Pensions was desperately needed as both the Labour and Pensions divisions were grossly understaffed for the work required of that department, and had been neglected by previous administrations. However, as the remit of the department continues to expand to include additional responsibilities, such as the need to monitor and enforce the law as it relates to the implementation of minimum wage and facilitating a culture of compliance with respect to pension obligations (which is now enshrined in the Trade and Business Licensing Law), resources will be needed for the Department of Labour and Pensions and provisions will need to be made accordingly.

Madam Speaker, as a Government we hear the cries as it relates to labour and pensions enforcements. And as a Government, we have responded. We have tried to find ways to leverage the synergies between departments where possible, like, for example, enshrining the pensions and health insurance compliance requirements as a part of the new trade and business licensing process, putting a positive obligation on the businesses themselves to demonstrate compliance in order to get a trade and business licence. We have also increased the resources to boost the regulatory and enforcement arms of the department, as I just outlined. And, Madam Speaker, the third and important arm of that is that we are strengthening the legislative framework for both labour and pensions and the draft Bills for discussions will be forthcoming in the summer of this year.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Labour and Pensions during this year has conducted a number of training programmes as it relates to the Pensions Law, Labour Law, and Occupational Safety and Health. And, actually, just recently, Madam Speaker, I participated in the award ceremony for training sessions that were offered to 12 new Cayman Islands Fire Service recruits, whereby all 12 successfully

completed the two-day training session. This was the first of its kind, Madam Speaker, whereby the Department of Labour and Pensions worked with the Fire Service in order to ensure that their new recruits are sufficiently trained in occupational safety and health concerns.

The Occupational Safety and Health Department also conducted a number of inspections and investigations and expanded their regulatory capacity as it relates to the construction industry in particular. The department also launched a new FAQs pamphlet which creates greater awareness and consistency in public awareness as it relates to labour and pensions laws.

So, Madam Speaker, for 2015/16 there are a number of exciting initiatives which the Department of Labour and Pensions are undertaking. But one to note at this time, includes the fact that they are working with the Truman Bodden Law School, and students from the Truman Bodden Law School will be engaging in an exercise over the summer to recategorise the rulings of the Labour Tribunal and Labour Appeals Tribunal to enhance efficiencies in determining precedents based on past rulings of the tribunals.

Madam Speaker, moving to the area of Gender Affairs: One of the areas of concern to this Government, and me as Minister, wearing both the hat of Minister of Education and the hat of Minister of Gender Affairs, was to consider gender-specific issues as it faces our children in our schools. And so, during the National Education Conference that I spoke about that happened in February of this year, educators were provided with workshops for the first time to build their capacity and understanding, and using basic concepts and tools as it relates to gender and gender analyses and the issues facing our young men and women in the schools.

Madam Speaker, we have also seen the gender-specific issues, as highlighted in the PAHO [Pan American Health Organization] and WHO [World Health Organization] report on Adolescence Health and Sexuality Survey. And, the Ministry believes that if the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is extended to the Cayman Islands, one requirement of the convention is that both sexes have access to information and health services which will help to mitigate some of the concerns highlighted in the report. And so, Madam Speaker, the Government will continue to work with the Gender Equality Office in the United Kingdom to try to move this process along.

Madam Speaker, one of the initiatives that the Ministry will embark on in 2015/16 is an attempt to document the Women's Universal Suffrage Movement in the Cayman Islands. The Ministry will look to capture the milestones of the Women's Movement in the country, because we have *history*. Now it is time to tell *her* story. Hearing from people like Mrs. Georgette Ebanks, one of the original survivors of a group of

women, the George Town petitioners, and others who called for the right to vote in the 1940s and 1950s, we need a way to preserve our voice in history, or her story to come.

Madam Speaker, with respect to policy review and legislative reform, I would like to formally advise the Members of the this House that as Minister of Gender Affairs, and with the remit of looking at making sure gender issues stay on the forefront of this Government administration, I have officially asked Cabinet members to ensure that any and all laws falling within each Members' purview be amended to reflect gender neutral or gender inclusive language, as amendments to legislation are being made, or new legislation is being proposed.

Again, Madam Speaker, over the years legislative drafters have adopted a convention and have taken what I term to be "a lazy man's approach" (pardon the pun) and drafted "he" to include "she" in the interpretation. But, Madam Speaker, words are powerful. One philosopher puts it: "**The limits of my language [are] the limits of my world.**" Another puts it as saying, "**If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.**" So, Madam Speaker, I want to publically thank the Premier for his support in this regard and I look forward to the cooperation of all Cabinet members when making relevant legislative revisions and proposals.

Madam Speaker, in the interest of time, I would like to speak briefly to some of the district-specific issues, and I crave your indulgence to be able to address some of the other Ministry issues in a different forum. In 2014/15, I maintained a practice that I adopted from the very beginning in trying to address the needs of my constituents in West Bay by having and hosting weekly constituency clinics on Wednesday afternoons. Madam Speaker, obviously, when I am in the House or when I am traveling on official or other business, then, I can't hold those clinics, but I can attest to you and Members of this House, that but for those times, you can find me in the West Bay Centennial Towers on a Wednesday afternoon dealing with my constituents, as and when they come to see me. And so, Madam Speaker, I say that to say for anybody that isn't aware of that system in place, please do contact my West Bay office, and they will try to arrange whatever meetings as necessary and we will try to accommodate you as quickly as possible.

Madam Speaker, I also, as a representative of the district of West Bay, was very instrumental in working with a community group that organised a number of community-based activities, which they called "Music under the Stars" events. We hosted three events last year and it was a great opportunity for community empowerment themselves. These were projects that were run by members of the community. They came together, they fellowshiped, it was an opportunity to highlight local West Bay talent, talent such as the Majestics Band [PHONETIC], and Ms.

Dareen Scott's Children Dance Troupe [PHONETIC], which always was a crowd pleaser. And, Madam Speaker, I look forward to continuing to support the efforts, and my office supporting the efforts of any community group in the district of West Bay who wants to bring forward these positive, wholesome activities for the community to enjoy.

Madam Speaker, my West Bay MLA office also facilitated three financial planning workshops conducted by Mr. Ralph Lewis at the office. I want to say here, that the uptake was excellent. We had over 20 persons in each of these sessions. The fact is we will continue to offer the additional sessions in the coming year at the availability of Mr. Lewis in this regard. So my constituents who I have contact information for will be notified officially by e-mail in that regard.

Madam Speaker, with respect to initiatives for 2015/16 and projects of concern for the district of West Bay, there is a real concern with respect to cemetery space. Since taking office, I have been in conversations with the Ministry and the Minister of Planning in this regard. I am given assurances by the Minister of Planning that their Ministry is working very diligently in trying to secure a suitable site and land for additional space for cemetery in the district of West Bay.

I am also in conversation and discussion with the Ministry of Tourism and the Minister of Tourism and the Councillor for Tourism, as it relates to attempting to create a West Bay Heritage Craft Market that is suitable and convenient for the route of tourist that go to visit other West Bay district tourism attractions. And so, Madam Speaker, the Government is looking into this and I want to thank the relevant ministries as well, for moving this project along and hopefully we will be able to actually get something in concrete form in short order.

Madam Speaker, I have also been talking with the Minister of Sports regarding bathrooms at the Town Hall playfield, or the Sir John A. Cumber Primary field. Again, Minister Bodden has given a commitment to look into the issue and to see what can be done in order to address the concern during this administration.

Madam Speaker, speaking very briefly now to the government-wide initiatives that, as I said, are of particular concern to me, and there are a number of them, and I will confine my topics to the ones that are absolutely of critical importance to me and things that I campaigned on and the things that I stand for and that I support this Government in moving forward.

Madam Speaker, Government finances and restoring a culture of fiscal responsibility and prudent financial management was one of the key platforms of my candidacy and is one of the key platforms of me being a Member of this coalition Government. Madam Speaker, this Government has actually established a Sinking Fund. We have set up a Fund which was de-

signed to pay down the debt as it comes due. And, Madam Speaker, we have a current balance of \$18 million in that Fund. Madam Speaker, we also vowed to implement a revised and comprehensive procurement process that provides transparency, accountability, and ensures value for money for the Government. So that, Madam Speaker, is very much in line with the things that I feel are absolutely critical for us to continue to thrive as a jurisdiction.

I spoke about crime and public safety and what we are doing in the Ministry of Education to address this. But I am also looking forward to seeing the Rehabilitation of Offenders [Bill] come before this honourable House and come before Cabinet in due order.

Now, Madam Speaker, I just want to go back (with your indulgence) to talk about something that I forgot to mention when I was talking about the West Bay issues, and that is to do with the roadworks that are currently taking place in the district of West Bay. Madam Speaker, there are a number of significant roadworks that are either scheduled to take place or are taking place as we speak. And one of the key roadworks actually in train is looking at the situation on the Birch Tree Hill Road. Madam Speaker, we know that that road has been in need of repair for time immemorial. This is something that the Government has recognised. I have spoken to a number of my constituents on this, and a number of them have raised this issue, and I am happy to say that the Government has responded in kind and is ensuring that we are addressing the needs in the district of West Bay as it relates to the critical roadways, Birch Tree Hill Road being one of them. But there are a number of other access roads which are being dealt with.

Of course, Madam Speaker, there is the issue as I was talking to with respect to crime and public safety. Madam Speaker, we know in many instances that the district of West Bay is not the only district that suffers from issues as it relates to crime, but for some reason we are one of the most popular districts that tends to be highlighted when these issues occur. And so, Madam Speaker, as I indicated to you, crime and public safety is absolutely an important and vital goal of mine as a Member of this Government. Madam Speaker, I believe that the Government needs to develop and implement a comprehensive crime reduction policy, working across all of the relevant ministries which addresses and focuses on the various stages of crime prevention, restorative justice, offender rehabilitation, and community reintegration.

Madam Speaker, one of the programmes that I didn't mention which I will now mention, that as Minister of Education I continue to support, and as a Ministry, and as a Government we support, and that is working in the schools with the Youth ACT Trust [Youth Anti-Crime Trust] working as partners to develop anti-crime strategy in our schools as well. And so, Madam Speaker, as I said, from across the Govern-

ment this is an area that we cannot lose sight of because if we don't deal with the issues of crime, if we don't deal with the needs of our people in this community, there will be dire consequences across the country. Crime of the nature that is affecting my constituency is not confined to my constituency, Madam Speaker, and we cannot see this as a constituency issue alone. Crime affects us all, and this Government needs to take a serious holistic approach.

As Minister of Education I give you my commitment that I will do all that I can with the resources that I have at my disposal with respect to the work and effort and initiatives of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, to do our part to address this issue of crime in that regard.

Madam Speaker, another issue that is very important to me that I would like to make sure that we do not conclude my remarks without indicating the passion that I have for dealing with the mental health issues of this community. Madam Speaker, I have been speaking about this issue from the time I took this position as a Member of Government and I will continue to speak on this issue until it is my time to be where I am supposed to be. And I hope, Madam Speaker, that through all the efforts that this Government is taking with respect to mental health . . . and I want to commend the Government right off the bat for taking the view that we are taking with looking at ensuring that we have proper and adequate long-term mental health facility to deal with the issues and the needs of our adult population.

I want to commend the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health for seeing this process through, and I want to commend the work of the Mental Health Commission. The Government knows that they have my support in this regard, but I also, Madam Speaker, want to continue the plea that I have been saying since taking this position, and that is to ensure that we provide for the needs of our children and our adolescence when it comes to proper and adequate mental health facilities, but also programmes and ability to get the kinds of counselling and services. And Madam Speaker, as the reports that have been recently published will show, as compared to the adults, there may not be as great a need for a long-term care facility for our children, but if we do not address the needs of our children, if we do not address the needs of our adolescence with respect to providing programmes and providing access, we won't be able to build enough facilities to hold the adults who will then take those places.

So, Madam Speaker, just like education, we have to, as a Government, continue to invest in making sure that our children are not neglected. We see and we have concrete reports that show the incidence of depression and the lack of mental health provisions for our children and our adolescence. We see it in our schools. We see it in our communities. We see it in our homes. I will continue to beat this drum and I will

continue to plead with the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health and the Cabinet and the Government as a whole—*do not continue to neglect the needs of our children in this regard. We will pay for it 3 times, 10 times, infinitely times over, because, as they say, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure* (or however the expression goes).

**The Speaker:** You have 10 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** So, Madam Speaker, again, I say, the Government has my support in making sure that we look at the needs of our children from a holistic perspective. We need to take a multiagency approach.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I want to quote the words of a person by the name of Joshua J. Marine: **“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”**

Madam Speaker, over the past two years there has been a number of challenges for this Government to overcome. And, Madam Speaker, we have done just that. No doubt, there will still continue to be challenges that lie ahead that will require measured but decisive action on the part of this coalition Government as well in order to overcome those challenges. But, Madam Speaker, the country should take comfort, and the country should be heartened in knowing that based on our proven determination thus far to take action to deal with the many tough issues facing the country, which many administrations have either skirted around or ignored or did not deal with head on, that this Government will not shy away from tackling the tough issues that others in the past have only talked about.

Madam Speaker, on a personal note, there have been, and I suspect there will continue to be, challenges ahead, as Minister, and as an Independent Member of the Government representing the district of West Bay because, in borrowing an expression by one of my colleagues in this House, *This is an unprecedented piece of real estate that I occupy*. But, Madam Speaker, with all that has been accomplished in just two years, the Government and the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, as a whole, we have demonstrated that a successful woman or man is one that can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that other people throw at him or her. Madam Speaker, we have laid a firm foundation with many of the bricks that have been thrown our way. We continue to work as a team. We continue to work as a Government. Irrespective of where we came from, we are here now, we are committed to demonstrate to this country that if you elect the right people who are committed to do the right thing for this country and our people, you will get the right results that will lead to the prosperity that we so strive for.

So, Madam Speaker, this Government has a plan. This Government, both Independents and PPM

Members alike, are committed to working to achieve that plan. Madam Speaker, we are committed to do what is necessary to restore the confidence, to restore the stability, and to restore the fiscal responsibility in the governance of these islands. And, Madam Speaker, we are committed to working to ensure that all Caymanians benefit as a result.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** You still have five minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Well. . .

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Premier.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, it has been a long and challenging day in more respects than I care to number. So, I am glad that we are at the end of the day. I think, Madam Speaker, we have four Members left to speak, including the winding up, so I am hopeful that we will get through the Debate on the Budget, Throne Speech and Policy Statement by the end of tomorrow and that we might be able to move into Finance Committee on Friday morning.

And so with those few sort of anticipatory words, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10:00 am tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The question is that the honourable House be adjourned until 10:00 am tomorrow.

All those in favour please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it.

**At 6:12 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Thursday, 28 May 2015.**

