



**CAYMAN ISLANDS
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
ELECTRONIC VERSION**

2015/16 SESSION

25 November 2015

*Fifth Sitting of the Fourth Meeting
(Pages 885-916)*

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon Stran Ashton Bodden	Temporary <i>Deputy Governor</i> , 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, 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 Joseph X Hew, MLA	Sixth 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

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr D Ezzard Miller, MLA	Elected Member for North Side
Mr V Arden McLean, JP, MLA	Elected Member for East End

ABSENT

Capt A Eugene Ebanks, JP, MLA	Fourth Elected Member for West Bay
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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
FOURTH MEETING OF THE 2015-16 SESSION
WEDNESDAY
25 NOVEMBER 2015
11:05 AM
Fifth Sitting

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

I will invite the Honourable Premier to grace us with prayers today.

PRAYERS

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: 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, the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers 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.

Proceedings are resumed.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

The Speaker: None.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: There are no apologies for this morning. However, I would like to take the opportunity on behalf of the staff of the Legislative Assembly and myself to convey condolences to the family of the late Sibert, otherwise known as Mr. Bert Watler, who sadly passed away yesterday. Indeed, he served very faithfully and diligently this Legislative Assembly. He was the first Serjeant-at-Arms. He served for duration 12 years. It is a sad day to lose another Caymanian icon. There is opportunity on the Order Paper for other sentiments to be so expressed if that is a desire of any individual Member.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR LANDS – VESTING OF CROWN LAND TO CF GC HOTEL HOLDINGS LTD (THE WESTIN) – BLOCK 11D PARCEL 45/3

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Planning

Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With your permission I wish to lay on the Table of this Honourable House one report on Crown Property that has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Law (2005 Revision). As required by law, I wish to confirm to you the details of this land matter have been published in an extraordinary edition of the *Cayman Islands Gazette*, issue 90 of 2015, dated the

18th November 2015. And the local newspaper, namely, the *Cayman Compass* on the 20th November 2015.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak further to the report?

Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts: Yes, Madam Speaker, just a short statement.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

[Pause]

Hon. D. Kurt Tibbett: Madam Speaker, as required by law, three valuations have been carried out on this subject property. Each valuation report forms part of the overall report and provides a general indication of the value of the property that Government now proposes to vest. Madam Speaker, the report deals with the extension of a lease of Crown land located at West Bay Beach North, Block 11D, Parcel 45/3 to the operators of the property known as the Westin Hotel. The parcel is approximately 7.83 acres of beachfront land along 7 Mile Beach and is part of the Benson Greenall Lease Properties which include a number of Crown properties, such as the Ritz-Carlton site, Villas of the Galleon condominiums, Dragon Bay Regatta Park, and Sunshine Suites.

Honourable Members will be aware that the original 99-year leases which were granted in 1950 have less than half their term left prior to expiring and that many of the leaseholders have already opted to extend their lease terms back to 99 years in order to facilitate continued investment in the properties. This is also the situation with the Westin, Madam Speaker, whereby the new owners approached Government seeking an extension of the lease back to the full 99-year term unexpired. Very protracted negotiations between Government's Chief Valuation Officer and the Westin owners have taken place, with the result that the Chief Valuation Officer recommended to Cabinet that it recommend for her Excellency the Governor to approve an extension of the lease on terms as outlined in the report. Members will note that this vesting will extend the existing lease term to 99 years which will now expire in the year 2114, in return for the consideration of a premium payable to the Government of US\$13,400,000 plus stamp duty and costs.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to lay this report.

The Speaker: I now recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Finance.

STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2016/17

The Speaker: I now recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Finance.

Hon. Marco S. Archer, Minister of Finance and Economic Development: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the Strategic Policy Statement for 2016/17.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister of Finance wish to speak to the Policy Statement?

Hon. Marco S. Archer: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

[Pause]

Hon. Marco S. Archer: Madam Speaker, the Government's 2016/17 Strategic Policy Statement, or the SPS, which has just been tabled, outlines the Government's fiscal plans, policy priorities, and broad strategy outcomes for the next three financial years, which will cover the period of 1st July 2016 to the 31st December 2019, and also guide the development of the detailed 2016/17 Budget. This SPS, Madam Speaker, is unique in that it sets out the Government's financial targets for the next three financial periods: That being 18 months for 2016/17; 12 months for 2018; and 12 months for 2019 and establishes the framework within which the detailed 2016/17 eighteen-month Budget will be prepared.

Madam Speaker, this SPS is the third one produced by this Administration and will be the last SPS before the next General Election scheduled for May 2017.

Prudent fiscal management, Madam Speaker, has and continues to be the central guiding principle of this Government's fiscal management strategy and this SPS lays out a financial management plan which will ensure that the Cayman Islands remains on a stable and fiscally sustainable path which will enable the Government to support the continued economic and social development needs of these Islands, ensuring a bright future for all Caymanians. We have a responsibility to ensure that our precious and limited resources are managed in such a way that we do not deprive future generations of the benefits and opportunities that have been bestowed upon us.

The main elements of the Government's fiscal strategy are:

1. Maintain compliance with the Public Management and Finance Law (or the PMFL), which now includes the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR);

2. promote sustainable economic growth;
3. Reduce the tax burden;
4. Aggressively managing expenditure and capital investments;
5. Active debt management; and
6. Improve cash balances.

Madam Speaker, the economic and financial forecasts set out in the SPS document now before Honourable Members, supports all aspects of the fiscal strategy just mentioned. The Government is forecasting stable economic growth supported by firm, sustainable financial operations of the Government.

Under the terms of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility [FFR], the Government is required to present the SPS to the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office for its review and agreement prior to the SPS being presented to this Honourable House. This SPS is the third time that we have had to follow this process and I am very pleased, Madam Speaker, to report that the Honourable James Duddridge, MP, Minister for Africa, the Overseas Territories and the Caribbean granted unconditional agreement in writing to this 2016/17 SPS.

Madam Speaker, the short timeframe within which we have received such agreement is a real testament to the quality of our forecasts and the increased levels of confidence that the United Kingdom has in our ability to deliver on our promises of financial reform. On behalf of Government, I wish to thank the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for its timely and efficient review of the SPS.

Madam Speaker, concerning the economy, over the past couple of years the Cayman Islands has experienced slow but steady economic recovery. The Government has been working over the past two and a half years to support sustainable economic growth through careful policy interventions such as: reduced import duties; lower business licensing fees; development concessions; extended support to small businesses and other initiatives geared towards achieving greater economic diversification and increased employment opportunities for our people.

Over the next three financial years the Economics and Statistics Office is forecasting that our economy will grow steadily in line with forecasts for the world's major economies, or the source markets for our major economic pillars.

Economic growth as measured by the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow steadily by 1.7 per cent during 2016; 1.8 per cent in the year 2017; 2.2 per cent in the year 2018; and 2.5 per cent in the year 2019. These forecasts are underpinned by the assumption that the three key sectors of the Cayman Islands economy: Financial Services; Tourism; and Business services will all continue to evolve and maintain their global competitiveness.

In addition, economic growth will be directly influenced by several large construction projects from both the private and public sectors including: the completion and opening of the new Kimpton Seafire hotel and condominiums; redevelopment and expansion of the terminal at the Owen Roberts International Airport; redevelopment of the former Hyatt Hotel; development of the new St. James Point Hotel and condominiums in Beach Bay, Bodden Town; the development of a new hotel at Camana Bay; upgrades to road infrastructure as part of the revitalisation of George Town and the redevelopment of the George Town cargo and cruise berthing facility.

This diverse mix of projects from both the public and private sectors helps to bolster the economy by diversifying the sources of investment and by creating new opportunities for wealth creation.

The forecast economic growth will create additional jobs which is expected to reduce the unemployment rate to 5.1 per cent in the year 2016; 5 per cent in the year 2017; 4.7 per cent in the year 2018; and further to 4.5 per cent in the year 2019.

With economic growth and increased levels of employment, consumption of goods and services will increase, putting upward pressure on the rate of inflation, as measured by changes in the Consumer Price Index [CPI] which is expected to increase by 1.5 per cent in the year 2016; 1.7 per cent in the year 2017; 2.2 per cent in the year 2018; and 2.4 per cent in the year 2019.

Madam Speaker, controlling inflation is of particular concern and interest to the Government as it impacts the lives of everyone by affecting the cost of doing business and the cost of living. Given our Islands' high dependence on imported goods we are particularly vulnerable to inflation caused by external factors. As a Government, we will continue to exercise the interventions available to us to manage domestic inflation.

We have already lowered the import duty on diesel used by CUC [Caribbean Utilities Company] by \$0.50 per gallon (effective 1 January 2016) and reduced the import duty on consumer goods from 22 per cent down to 20 per cent. Neither have we introduced any new revenue measures to increase the cost of doing business and cost of living.

With respect to financial forecast, Madam Speaker, I will now move on to highlight the financial forecasts which are contained in the SPS document. However, before I do so, I need to spend a few moments to explain how the numbers in the SPS are different than those of previous SPS documents and the current 2015/16 Budget.

Honourable Members will recall that just last month on the 15th of October, the Public Management and Finance Law [PMFL] was amended and is now the Public Management and Finance (Amendment) Law, 2015 which was passed by this House. Those amendments were the first phase of a series of legis-

lative changes aimed at strengthening our financial management framework.

One of the most significant amendments to the PMFL was to change the Government's financial year from the 1st of July to the 30th of June, to the 1st of January through the 31st of December.

In practical terms this amendment means that in order to transition to this new financial year, our next financial period will be for 18-month duration, from 1 July 2016 to the 31 December 2017. As a result, Honourable Members need to bear in mind that the numbers in the financial forecasts for the 2016/17 financial period are not directly comparable to those of other financial years which cover just a 12-month period.

The change to the financial year also impacts the year-end cash balances reported in the financial statements as now they will be reported at 31st of December, which is historically the point when the Government experiences its lowest cash balances of the year.

The amounts reported as revenues are also impacted as there is a seasonality factor whereby a higher proportion of Government's revenue is received and booked in the January to March period and the 2016/17 financial period will cover only one January to March period thereby making revenues appear proportionately lower.

With respect to revenue forecasts, the Government's main revenue streams are directly tied to the level of consumption and rate of economic growth; as the economy grows so do revenues. Consistent with our objectives to keep the tax burden low, and reduce pressures on the cost of living, the Government does not plan to introduce any major new revenue measures during the next three financial years. Instead, we are focusing our efforts on improving the enforcement and rate of collection on the existing suite of revenue measures. We are also forecasting to leave in place the import duty reductions on fuel imported by Caribbean Utilities Company for the generation of electricity. This important policy measure has a direct impact across the economy by reducing the cost of electricity for residential and commercial customers—a basic necessity, Madam Speaker, of modern life—thereby lowering the cost of living for households and also reducing the cost of doing business for businesses which in turn will further help to reduce the cost of living.

Madam Speaker, as the economy grows, the SPS forecasts that the Government's revenues will be approximately \$896.4 million in the 2016/17 period; \$683.5 million in the year 2018; and \$688.1 million in the year 2019.

Turning now to operating expenditure, in tandem with achieving enhanced revenue collection, Madam Speaker, the Government is focused on achieving sustainable reductions to public sector expenditure without sacrificing the effective delivery of

such needed public services. Our fundamental responsibility as a Government is to ensure that every dollar is well spent, and that all available resources are used in a responsible manner to best serve our people. Operating expenses are forecast to be \$851.5 million in the 2016/17 period; \$572.7 million in the year 2018; and \$569 million in year 2019.

When we set about establishing our operating expenditure targets, our goal was to ensure that any growth in expenditure was not more than the expected economic growth rate for the year. However, we have had to adjust our targets to take account of specific one-off items such as the conduct of the 2017 General Election as well as the specific policy priorities of the Government.

For 2016/17 period, the operating expenditure forecast of \$851.5 million represents a modest 2.4 per cent annualized increase over the current 2015/16 Budget and will be used to fund various initiatives including:

1. Enhancements to Public Education Services through the implementation of recommendations emanating from the recent independent review of the Cayman Islands Public Education System and also a series of baseline school inspection reports;
2. Improvements to the regulatory services provided by the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority to the vital financial services industry in order to keep pace with ever-evolving international regulatory requirements and to prepare for the upcoming IMF and FATF assessments in 2017;
3. The May 2017 General Election;
4. Implementation of various public sector reforms under the umbrella of Project Future;
5. The creation of an Office of Public Ombudsman;
6. A review of Civil Service remuneration to address pay stagnation and competitiveness for certain employees but especially teachers and those in the uniform and law enforcement branches;
7. Additional resources for the Needs Assessment Unit [NAU] and the Department of Children and Family Services [DCFS] to improve services to the most vulnerable and at-risk persons in our society; and
8. The implementation of a Conditional Release Programme to better enable prisoners to successfully reintegrate into society as productive citizens following release from incarceration and to lower the rates of recidivism.

These all totalled approximately \$14.4 million, Madam Speaker. If removed from the figures, the actual growth in expenditure for the 18-month period is less than 1 per cent, or to be precise, Madam Speak-

er, 0.68 per cent, and below the 1.7 per cent forecast GDP growth. In other words, Madam Speaker, the increase in expenditure is targeted at those areas in which we have identified the greatest need and where we hope to have the greatest impact.

The 2016/17 operating expenditure targets set out in this SPS for ministries, portfolios and offices were established after rigorous rounds of consultations over the past several weeks with Cabinet. Agencies are required to strictly adhere to these targets when they prepare their detailed 2016/17 Budgets. Any increases to the expenditure targets will only be considered where exceptional circumstances warrant and the Cabinet has made a policy decision to do so.

We have taken this approach, Madam Speaker, in order to further streamline the budget process and to allow agencies to focus their efforts on preparing themselves to deliver their services within the resources they have been allocated. As a result, we are expecting the substantive 2016/17 Budget process to operate more smoothly.

With respect to compliance with the principles of responsible financial management, Madam Speaker, the current 2015/16 financial year is critical for the Government's compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management since the 30th June 2016 is the deadline for compliance as set out in the PMFL and the FFR.

Today I can happily report that we are well on track to achieve compliance at the 30th June 2016 deadline. This is a major achievement for the Government as this is the first time that the Government has been able to achieve compliance with the revised Principles since the FFR came into effect on 16th November 2012.

The importance of this achievement, Madam Speaker, cannot be overstated. It did not come easily and is the direct result of this Government's focused policy of practicing fiscal prudence and ensuring that we take the time necessary to follow the established business processes; to ensure that we are maximizing value for money and making fiscally sustainable decisions, whilst at the same time, increasing expenditure in those areas where it really matters; and reducing the tax burden on society to help reduce the cost of doing business and the cost of living for everyone, residents and visitors alike.

This meant that we were not able to do everything that we would have liked to do in the time we may have wanted to do so, but it means that we have achieved financial stability; something which, if managed properly, will eventually allow for everything necessary to be done and pay enormous dividends for future generations of Caymanians.

For the next three financial years we are forecasting that the Government will maintain compliance with the main Principles of Responsible Financial Management with a one-off non-compliance in 2019, which I will explain shortly, Madam Speaker.

With respect to operating surplus, the PMFL requires that the Government maintain a positive operating surplus. Over the next three years, the core government is forecast to remain in compliance with this requirement. Operating surplus is forecast to be \$44.9 million in the 2016/17 period, increasing to \$110.7 million in the 2018 year, and \$119 million in the year 2019. Madam Speaker, we will remember that the 2016/17 period is actually 18 months.

The operating surplus is to pay off the principal on our debt balances annually, fund capital expenditure and equity investments in the statutory authority, and Government companies (since we cannot borrow) and to put aside money in our reserves for the upcoming CI\$261.3 million bullet bond which is due in November 2019.

Turning now to our debt service ratio: Robust debt management is a critical component of the Government's fiscal strategy and it is focused on:

1. The repayment of existing debt;
2. Where possible, the refinancing of non-amortising debt into amortising debt instruments; and
3. Effectively zero restricted borrowings for both core government and statutory authorities and Government-owned companies;

The PMFL requires that the entire public sector debt service costs (interest and principal) not be greater than 10 per cent of core government revenues. Forecasts indicate that the debt service ratio will be 9.7 per cent over the 2016/17 period; and 9.6 per cent in the year 2018. In the year 2019, the Government will technically breach compliance with this ratio when it is expected to spike to 48.5 per cent.

However, Madam Speaker, it is important to note that this "non-compliance" is a direct result of the planned full repayment of the 2009 bullet bond of CI\$261.3 million (or US\$312 million) that matures in November 2019. This is a one-off event and the debt service is expected to fall to approximately 8 per cent the following year in 2020.

Madam Speaker, we intend to hold discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in order to ensure that this technical breach is not viewed as an actual breach. In fact, the appropriate assessment should be conducted on the basis of debt servicing expenditure, other than the amount required to retire the CI\$261.3 million bullet bond in November 2019.

With respect to the net debt ratio, the PMFL requires that the Government's net debt not exceed 80 per cent of core government's operating revenues. Net debt is calculated as the total amount of outstanding core government debt plus the risk-weighted debt of statutory authorities and government-owned companies [SAGCs], less the liquid assets of core government. The Government is forecast to be in full

compliance with this requirement over the next three financial years, with the net debt ratio forecast to be 43.3 per cent in the 2016/17 period; 27 per cent in the year 2018; and 10.1 per cent in the year 2019. This trend places Government well below the maximum allowed limit of 80 per cent, and is consistent with the Government's overall strategy of debt reduction.

With respect to cash reserves, the PMFL requires that the Government have liquid cash reserves of not less than 90 days of estimated executive expenses.

This ratio is calculated at the point in the financial year when Government's liquid cash reserves are expected to be at their lowest, typically the 31st of December each year.

Over the forecast period, the Government is forecast to maintain full compliance with the principal as allowable liquid cash reserves. The Government is forecast to maintain full compliance with this principal as allowable liquid cash reserves for the purpose of the ratio calculation are expected to be \$209.7 million—and Madam Speaker, for the purposes of this calculation, allowable liquid cash reserves are primarily the operating bank account balance and the general reserves. So these balances are expected to be \$209.7 million (or 140.2 days) in the 2016/17 period; \$271.9 million (or 177.2 days) in the year 2018; and then \$145.0 million (or 95.1 days) by 31 December 2019, after we have paid off the bullet bond.

With respect to capital investment forecasts, Madam Speaker, the Government's capital investment plans over the next three financial years will be consistent with our established fiscal policy stance over the past two and a half years of not borrowing and instead funding capital investments from cash generated from operating surpluses.

Over the SPS [Strategic Policy Statement] forecast period, planned capital investments are forecast to be \$94.7 million during the 2016/17 period, which is an 18-month period; \$50.9 million in the year 2018; and \$42.9 million in the year 2019. These investments will be directed to support debt servicing obligations of statutory authorities and government-owned companies as well as the development of key pieces of infrastructure items by the core government such as:

1. The continued development of the new John Gray High School.
2. The redevelopment and expansion of the passenger terminal at the Owen Roberts International Airport.
3. Improved waste handling facilities.
4. Revitalisation of central George Town.
5. Upgrades to our road network.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, this SPS presents a financial plan which firmly demonstrates this Government's overarching commitment to prudent financial management.

The forecasts indicate that the economy and Government's finances are on solid footing. Economically speaking, the country is forecast to experience stable economic growth, with contained inflation and decreasing unemployment. The Government's finances are firmly on a sustainable track with stable operating surpluses, increasing cash balances and reducing debt balances in order to maintain compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management as set out in the Public Management and Finance Law.

This Administration has delivered on its commitment to improve the finances of the Cayman Islands and increased job prospects through stable economic growth; a tremendous achievement that will benefit this country for many years to come. Further and importantly, we see the FCO's agreement to this SPS and those in the past, as an independent attestation of the Government's fiscal achievements. This SPS provides a guide that, if followed, will ensure continued prosperity for our people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: None.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Community Affairs.

CRITERIA CHANGES TO SEAMAN'S EX-GRATIA BENEFIT

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden, Minister of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I wish to make a Statement to this Honourable House and the public about a decision made in Cabinet yesterday as it relates to changes in the criteria for the Seaman's Ex-Gratia Benefit, or better known as simply Ex-Gratia Benefit.

There is no doubt about the worth and value of the contributions made by our seamen to the development of these Islands. During the course of our history, our men who went to sea became known for their skills as sailors and captains for a number of vessels which sailed worldwide.

As a matter of background, Madam Speaker, in September 2000, the then-Government introduced an Ex-Gratia Benefit for qualifying Caymanian seamen and their surviving spouses in recognition of their

contribution to the Cayman Islands. Qualified seamen or their surviving spouses are currently paid a monthly benefit of CI\$550. Madam Speaker, as you are aware, since 2009 my Ministry has been responsible for the oversight and administration of the Ex-Gratia Benefit and has experienced challenges in trying to ensure that the criteria to determine eligibility was streamlined and appropriate control mechanisms are in place to reduce discrepancies. As a result, my Ministry commenced an internal review with the assistance of the Office of Internal Audit to identify weaknesses in the systems and make appropriate recommendations to improve the Ministry's administrative procedures in relation to the Ex-Gratia Benefit. Subsequent to this audit, the Ministry revised the criteria in order to reflect the recommendations of the internal audit. I am happy to report that the revised criteria was approved at yesterday's Cabinet meeting and will take effect immediately. The revised criteria, Madam Speaker:

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is confident that the newly revised criteria will streamline the process while ensuring that the intended outcome of the original policy is preserved; that is, to provide financial relief to seamen and ex-servicemen who, upon becoming seniors, had no fixed income and no dependable means of a livelihood.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise my fellow legislative Members and the public of the revisions to the criteria. These are as follows:

1. Total monthly household income of \$2,000 is changed to total personal income not exceeding \$3,000 per month, inclusive of any Government assistance. This new amount will also apply to business owners who will continue to be assessed by the Needs Assessment Unit as deemed necessary.
2. Affidavits of time spent at sea are signed off by the Cayman Islands Seafarer's Association or the Cayman Brac Veterans and Seaman Society.
3. The definition of "resident" is a person who maintains residency in the Cayman Islands for a period of not less than eight months per year.
4. In situations where the recipient/spouse is overseas for medical purposes and has submitted the requested certified documentation and is a permanent and full-time resident of the Cayman Islands, that the Ministry is able to take these exceptions into considerations and continue to provide the benefit.
5. Surviving spouse upon applying will be processed immediately (subject to availability of funds).
6. If a surviving spouse remarries, the Ex-Gratia Benefit will cease immediately.
7. To change the definition of seaman to a sailor or officer that first went to sea before the 1st January 1985 and who received pay or gratui-

ty for assisting in the international transport of a ship, boat or vessel, cargo, and/or passenger from one port to another.

8. To review the criteria for Seamen Ex-Gratia Benefits every three years.
9. To grandfather in the existing recipients of the Seamen Ex-Gratia Benefit as of 30 June 2015 to exempt them from the criteria. If the original application is found to be fraudulent, they will be removed immediately.
10. To transfer all administrative and oversight functions of the Seamen's Ex-Gratia Benefit to the newly established Needs Assessment Unit effective 1 July 2016 pending approval of the 2016/17 Budget.

In closing, Madam Speaker, these changes will ensure that the process is more streamlined, thereby greater efficiencies in approval and disbursement of the benefit will be realized. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:
Madam Speaker, I should like to exercise Standing Order 30(2).

The Speaker: You may proceed with brief questions, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

SHORT QUESTIONS

[Standing Order 30(2)]

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

Madam Speaker, can the Minister say how he determined a figure of \$3,000 per month or the amount of \$3,000?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Boddin: Madam Speaker, that figure was determined on the NAU baseline figure that is used to bring it in at a consistent level with what we currently do for people who need assistance.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:
I wonder if the Minister could elaborate on that a little bit more, Madam Speaker, specifically, or repeat it. I must say that I did not quite get the drift of what he was saying.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Okay, Madam Speaker. The way that the NAU operates is that anyone who is making an excess of \$3,000 per month will not receive a benefit unless it is under real extenuating circumstances. So, in this case, to bring in line the Seamen's Ex-Gratia Benefit, with that same criteria, is what I am saying. Okay? So, if you are making an excess of \$3,000 [per month] personal income, you won't receive the benefit.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition and followed by the Member for North Side.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition: Madam—

The Speaker: Sorry. Sorry, sir; followed by the Member for East End and then the Member for North Side.

[Crosstalk]

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

Madam Speaker, can the Minister say whether any change has been made in regard to Caymanian ex-seamen who are perhaps living overseas or receiving the benefit overseas even though they might not be living overseas permanently?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, the criteria, as outlined, states that you have to be resident in the country and that is for a minimum of eight months per annum. So I think that—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Yes.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition: Eight months.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Eight months.

The Speaker: Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End: Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, the fact that we have not been able to enforce the criteria before, can the Minister say how he intends doing it now?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, currently the Seamen's Grant is administered through the Ministry. We have a small team, notably my personal assistant, along with her assistant, and the chief officer who basically review and deal with this and register people and remove people. But this is the reason why, to properly get this done with the manpower that is needed, we are moving this to the NAU come July next year under the new budget, so it can be properly administered and monitored and the criteria reviewed every three years. As I said, right now people who get this benefit, some are registered with the Seafarer's Association and some are not. Those who the Association has not signed off on, i.e., registered with them, those will be particularly scrutinised to ensure that they are legit and that they are receiving the benefit as necessary.

The Speaker: Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, [point] 9 in the criteria says we are grandfathering in everybody. That is the reason I ask this question because there are so many that, based on this, are not entitled to it. And there are many, but not as much, who are eligible and are not getting, and the reason is because the Government didn't have the finances to do it. How are we going to grandfather them in and identify fraudulent initial applications?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, this is why I have tasked the Ministry staff with reviewing those who are not approved by the [Seafarer's] Association. Reviewing them in particular, because I think once the Association signs off, then, we are happy that these people are legitimate seamen. The folk who are not registered will then be carefully scrutinised and if found to have been receiving under false documentation or misrepresentation, they will be removed; simple as that. And going forward, the new registrants will come under the new criteria and we should not have some of the issues that we have had in the past. It is an ongoing piece of work, Madam Speaker. It is not perfect, but we are working toward getting it a lot better than it has been.

The Speaker: Member for East End, and after this question, the Member for North Side.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, I would like for the Minister, if he would, to explain [point] 1 under the criteria, a little more in detail; that is, the personal income of \$3,000. Is that personal to the seaman? Now, can he explain the second part of that? "This

new amount will also apply to business owners who will continue to be assessed by the Needs Assessment Unit as deemed necessary.”

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker—

The Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, the Member has asked in relation to the \$3,000 per month, it is quite evident that there are folk who will be receiving in excess of that who are probably now receiving benefit as well.

The Needs Assessment Unit will evaluate those situations and will determine exactly who will receive the benefit from who does not. The \$3,000 is the cut-off point, and that is quite clear. It is personal income; personal to the seaman. And anything in excess of that, then it will have to be reviewed and a decision made.

The Speaker: Member for North Side.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, Elected Member for North Side: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Through you, Madam Speaker, to the Minister: Can the Minister confirm that I am reading these new criteria correctly in that there is no longer a requirement to have gone to sea for three years and have three discharges? The only requirement now is that you went to sea prior to 1985. What happened to the Caymanians who still are going to sea and who started going to sea after 1985?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: The Member, Madam Speaker, is correct in his analysis. The cut-off point is 1st of January 1985. So, those who went to sea after that were not covered and they won't be covered under these new criteria.

The Speaker: Member for North Side.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: No, I said two types. In other words, somebody might start to go to sea tomorrow, but I know people in my family who are still going to sea.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, Elected Member for North Side: Can the Minister, through you, Madam Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Through you, Madam Speaker, can the Minister explain if there is no criteria, why is it necessary to have two? There are no criteria for going for the period other than you went before 1985. If you made one trip from here to Cayman Brac (right?) which was a day and a half, you can get it once it was before 1985?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: But what affidavit are they going to sign off? There is no criterion for time.

And, can you explain what would then be a fraudulent application?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, [point] 7 states: “assisting in the *international* transport of a ship”; that is the key word. That is not from here to Cayman Brac, I don't think.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I will allow one last question from the Member for East End and thereafter we will move to the next item of business.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I don't know what to do with the Premier. He knows that I am the only one in here that did international sailing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: The Member for Bodden Town and myself.

He is saying that he wished I was still out there. He couldn't go because he would vomit every time he saw the water.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, it is good for a little levity.

The Speaker: Member, please get to your question.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, I take note of point 7, “**to change the definition of seaman to a sailor or officer that first went to sea before the 1st January 1985 and**” (I was retired by then) “**who received pay or gratuity for assisting in the interna-**

ational transport of a ship, boat or vessel”—I don't know what boat means there, but—“cargo, and/or passenger from one port to another.”

Madam Speaker, do we have Caymanians who travelled on passenger ships prior to 1985? Madam Speaker, what this is saying is exclusively “passenger.” That is what this is saying.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Caymanians. I need—

The Speaker: You are looking at me. I am proud to say that we had one woman from Cayman Brac who did it before 1985.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

The Speaker: There is an interpretation law which—

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker—

The Speaker: —you can decipher for yourself.—

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker—

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: —to the best of my knowledge we had passenger ships that transported people between here and Jamaica. There were seamen who manned those ships, so I think they would include those.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition: Tampa too.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Well . . . anyway—

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, please continue.

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, what I would like to say while I am standing is that the Member from North Side in his analysis about the time period is something that we could possibly look at going forward. So, I will take that under consideration that we don't have a time period in for time spent at sea. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Member for North Side.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Through you, Madam Speaker, I don't understand the rationale for [point] 5. “**Surviving spouse upon applying will be processed immediately (subject to availability of funds).**”

If the seaman himself was getting the pension, why does funds become inapplicable because

as I understand it, the surviving spouse only gets 50 per cent, so the money should be there? So, there shouldn't be a question of whether funds are available.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: But she has to apply after the person is dead, you know.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden: Madam Speaker, the clause states that the surviving spouse *upon applying*, the spouse has to apply after the husband has passed on. There could be reasons why funds are not available. So it says *subject to availability of funds*. Most cases, I don't see it being an issue.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: I recognise the First Elected Member for the District of Bodden Town.

CAYMAN COMPASS EDITORIAL—20 NOVEMBER 2015

Hon. Anthony S. Eden, Deputy Speaker, First Elected Member for Bodden Town: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you giving me permission under Standing Order 31 to make a personal explanation and to bring a bit of relief to what seems to be a bit of tension; I trust I don't cause anymore.

Madam Speaker, this personal explanation is in reference by the editor of the *Cayman Compass* to our Constitution which is quoted from conveniently, and the lambasting that I got.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Madam Speaker, it was quite interesting yesterday when I was in the Common Room that I picked up this article under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It talks about Cayman Islands implemented initiatives and about a history of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly [and] the Cayman Islands constitutional status as a UK Overseas Territory. And, Madam Speaker, I was so proud that, actually, when I looked at this, one of the articles in there was prepared by you, talking about our new Constitution. With your permission, Madam Speaker, I would briefly read part of your words that were in here.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Indicating on the Constitution: “While we did not get everything requested, in the final analysis we

obtained a document that generally captures the country desired vision for democracy for the 21st century while preserving the Caymanian values as outlined in the forward of the draft Constitution.” [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Madam Speaker, you go on to say—I am so proud of you, Ma’am—“What characterises our constitutional status as an Overseas Territory and underscores our relationship with the UK Government is that we now have a preamble that proudly upholds our Christian heritage, abiding aspirations and values.” [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

I won’t need to table this, Madam Speaker, as it is a public document. For those who don’t quite understand, and most of us here know about the CPA, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which is worldwide of the Commonwealth of all Nations. And anyone who doubts what our Constitution says, Madam Speaker, it [has] gone all over the Commonwealth. And, I am sure, other places in the world has taken note.

Madam Speaker, as you indicated, the Preamble was influenced by the vast majority of Caymanian residents and led by my good friend, a blessed memory, Pastor Al Ebanks and Pastor Shian O’Connor. And I must now take the opportunity, as seeing my friend here and my colleague and my Leader seems to be getting licks too, now from this . . . whoever the person is who writes this editorial (I need not say). I must congratulate our Premier and I remember who was instrumental in seeing that this Preamble was part of our Constitution. Thank you, sir, again, on behalf of the people of these Cayman Islands to ensure that this was put in the front part of our Constitution.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, for those who don’t, and haven’t heard what’s in our Constitution, and I am not using it conveniently; I am just highlighting what I just talked about. Under the Constitution of the Cayman Islands, this is the preamble: **“The people of the Cayman Islands, recalling the events that have shaped their history and made them what they are, and acknowledging their distinct history, culture and Christian heritage and its enduring influence and contribution in shaping the spiritual, moral and social values that have guided their development and brought peace, prosperity and stability to those islands, through the vision, forbearance, and leadership of their people, who are loyal to Her Majesty the Queen; Affirm their intention to be—**

- **A God-fearing country based on traditional Christian values, tolerant of other religions and beliefs. . . .**
- **A country in which religion finds its expression in moral living and social justice. . . .**
- **A community protective of traditional Caymanian heritage and the family unit.”**

Madam Speaker, continuing under the Cayman Islands Constitution Order, 2009, No. 1379, which is in section 14(1) of the Constitution and our Bill of Rights, simply says, Madam Speaker: **“14(1) Government shall respect the right of every unmarried man and woman of marriageable age (as determined by law) freely to marry a person of the opposite sex and found a family.”** Some of these things, Madam Speaker, certainly cannot happen by forming a family unless it’s through adoption.

And in section 14(3), under [the subheading] Marriage, **“Nothing in any law or done under its authority shall be held to contravene subsection (1). . . .”** (and, for those of you who may forget what subsection (1) is, it is, **“ . . . freely to marry a person of the opposite sex”**) **“ . . . to the extent that the law makes provision that is reasonably justifiable in a”**—court of law.

Madam Speaker, I have used this article before, and the definition of “marriage”, in the Marriage Law (2010 Revision), means “the union between a man and a woman as husband and wife.” End of story.

Now, Madam Speaker, I now get to a couple of responses to the person. Madam Speaker, as stated by Edmund Burke, and I quote: **“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”** And, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that I know of 17 men and one wonderful lady that make up this Parliament—we’re not going to let that happen under our watch.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: And two women—I apologise.

Madam Speaker, my ancestral great grandfather, the late William Eden, for those who don’t know who I am, he was one of the original settlers and the owner of Pedro Castle. I say this so that the people will know my ties to these beautiful Cayman Islands. This month marks 23 years since I have been given the privilege of being a representative of the people of Bodden Town. Madam Speaker, I grew up in these Islands and now in my eighth decade, most if not all, know me and they are aware that I stand on principles that are founded in the Christian faith which is deeply entrenched in Cayman culture—so deep that we made sure it was in our Constitution preamble.

Madam Speaker, when the people of Bodden Town elected me over a quarter of a century ago they understood my deep faith in the one Almighty God. I in turn believe they expected me to uphold the very principles that they too adhere to, and that they were taught by their ancestors from the Holy Bible. During my tenure as a representative, I have never had the need to defend myself and my faith by making personal statements in this honourable House until now, and ironically I have had to make two in recent times.

Madam Speaker, I would like to turn your attention to certain comments made by the editor of the *Cayman Compass*, appearing in the editorial of the 20th November 2015 in response to the personal statement that I recently made regarding certain comments made by the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission [HRC] (who I see now is lambasting our Premier), Mr. Smith, and the newly terminated lecturer of the Truman Bodden Law School, Mr. Raznovich.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the editor chose to compare my statements to the Bill of Rights and conclude that as a representative I do not have the right to hold my own opinion. What in the world do we have a Bill of Rights for, Madam Speaker?

[Laughter]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Mary Magdalene.

To quote him: **“But once he assumes the mantle of office and speaks on the House floor as a member of parliament, he has an absolute obligation to uphold, support and enforce the Constitution which the people of the Cayman Islands voted to put into place.”** That is exactly what myself and all of my colleagues are doing, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the editor continues, **“Mr. Eden believes he answers to a higher authority. . .”** Oh, yes, I do! **“. . . and he bases his positions on ‘Holy Bible evidence.’ As an individual, he has that freedom. However, as an elected official—empowered by the Constitution and receiving his salary from the public treasury—Mr. Eden’s highest authority is the secular law of the land.”** The man joking!

Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts: You better believe he is joking.

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Madam Speaker—No! No! No! My highest authority—and I know you will share this belief with me—is the eternal God of the universe, only Him! Only Him do I obey. Do these people not hear the prayer and to whom we pray every morning when this Legislative Assembly is in session, up until the morning, Madam Speaker?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: So sad. When these jokers come in here, Johnny-come-latelies, and try to tell us what to do in our own country.

Madam Speaker, while there may be some truth in some of what the editor wrote, he has missed one fundamental. As a human being, I too have the indefeasible right to freely express my opinion, and you know I’ve done that on all of my lifetime, and I will continue with the help of God, be it here in this hon-

ourable House or elsewhere, and the fact that I am a representative should not derogate that right. It should not be expected that I, or any other Member, has to shed our beliefs when we walk through the doors of this honourable Legislative Assembly. And, yes, Madam Speaker, I am guided by a higher authority, a phenomenon that people like him and his followers do not quite understand, for whatever reason. They must be in la-la land.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: For that I do not apologise. To that end, I will not apologise for my stand on homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and atheism, and the four, five letter—the LGBT, or whatever it is. They have their right to do it, Madam Speaker, and it has always been in Cayman Islands. I don’t see anyone being persecuted. If they get married overseas in some other country, go back there and live.

[Laughter]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Madam Speaker, the editor has invited me to resign from that office if my personal beliefs do not allow me to reconcile my religious obligations with my official obligations—poor man.

Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the editor and those who support his position, let me make it abundantly clear, I was elected by the people of Bodden Town for six consecutive terms and I speak on behalf of the country in general, and the people of Bodden Town in particular. Madam Speaker, I have also been assured by Members of the Cayman Ministers’ Association and their churches, and the conference of the Seventh Day Adventist, of their full support.

I will not resign from my position as a representative at the urging of the editor. Of all people, the man who a few months ago was beating us half to death and saying we were corrupt.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Wake up leaders!
Wake up!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: Madam Speaker, only the people, or the God that I serve, can direct me to resign.

Madam Speaker, as a good Christian lady said to me, *You are not a jellyfish*. She went back and shared with me, that in the days of Miss Annie (just as an aside, Madam Speaker, not in the personal statement) that someone was talking with Miss Annie (and we know Miss Annie of blessed memory) and she indicated to them that she was not a jellyfish—and we

Caymanians know what a jellyfish is; something without backbone. Not too many of us in Cayman are like that.

Madam Speaker, in closing, may I express my deep concerns with the tone of the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission in his response to the Premier, dated November 16th, and published along with the Premier's letter on November the 23rd.

An Hon. Member: By him.

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: By him.

I say to my people to pay closer attention to the direction your country—these Cayman Islands—are heading. It is alien to our way of life and is being influenced by those who are of a different persuasion than we have been accustomed to for hundreds of years, and specifically, over 500 years.

Madam Speaker, some excerpts from an old time song. *I know you try to block my progress a lot of the time, Well the mean things you said don't make me feel bad, Because I can't miss a friend that I never had, I've got Jesus and that's enough, . . . Well you may scorn me, turn your back on me, God's got his arms wrapped all around me—6 foot 3 and 220 pounds.*

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: *I've got Jesus and that's enough—*

An Hon. Member: You've got us too!

Hon. Anthony S. Eden: And my colleagues! Full support!

So if you push me down he'll pick me up, And he'll stick by me when the goin' gets tough.

Madam Speaker, I must repeat my opening line, as stated by Edmund Burke, and I quote, **“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”**

Madam Speaker, I will close with these few words sent to me by one of my best friends, *God never sends you into a situation alone. God goes before you. He stands beside you. He walks behind you. Whatever situation you have right now, be confident that God is with you.*

Madam Speaker, I have experienced a lot of this. How well do I know, as I know of His miracles He has bestowed on my family and I. God bless our beloved Cayman Islands. And stand up Caymanians! Don't let these people try to take away it away from us!

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Community Affairs.

MR. SIBERT WATLER, FORMER SERJEANT-AT-ARMS

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden, Minister of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On behalf of the Members of Bodden Town, the Honourable Anthony Eden, Honourable Wayne Panton and Councillor Suckoo, and myself and our families, we would like to publicly express condolences to the family of Mr. Bert (as we affectionately called him) Watler, who passed away this week.

Mr. Bert was a distinguished member of our community. He served in these hallowed halls as you alluded to earlier. He served well. While remembered, I think Island wide, for his efforts with the contribution to the UK during the Falkland crises, the raising of some \$500,000 which was sent to the UK. But apart from that he was a good person, a good family man. He raised a good family, he and Ms. Veleen, in the Bodden Town district, and are people who are very near and dear to us, and his entire family. So, I just wanted, on behalf of us, to say that we will miss him. We treasured his time here. He had a long sojourn, 90-plus years, and there are Members here now, and Members here before that are all related to that large family. We will treasure his memory and may his soul rest in peace.

Thank you.

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

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier and then the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell, Deputy Premier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Government to join voice with my colleague, Minister Bodden, from Bodden Town, who has just spoken on the passing of Sibert Rudolph Watler whom the Caymanian community knew as Mr. Bert.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Bert was the first full-time Serjeant-at-Arms of this House from 1974 to 1986. Mr. Bert was also recognised in this country for receiving the Cayman Islands Certificate and Badge of Honour. This, Madam Speaker, as we all remember was when he led the charge to raise money at the time of the Falkland war and send the money to the UK. He was awarded by the Queen when she made a visit here, with the badge.

I have also been asked, Madam Speaker, by the Honourable Minister Tibbetts, to pass condolences from his wife Shirley Ann, who is his niece.

I would like to say that I speak for every Member of this House when we pass condolences on to his family from this country for the valuable service and the love and affection, and we pass this on and we remember them with thoughts and prayers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition and then the Honourable Deputy Governor following.

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

I was just updating my Facebook on the matter.

Madam Speaker, I first came in contact with Mr. Bert, fondly known to most of us who served with him here in the House, as the Serjeant that he was and when he was a candidate in the general election sometimes in the early '70s and in Bodden Town. After that, Madam Speaker, I was connected and came to know him well through the initiative referred to by the Deputy Premier which was an initiative which he was chosen to lead which he gave the title of "Mother needs your help." He chose his committee and I was chosen as the coordinator for West Bay.

I remember it well, because at that time still living were several veterans, some who had served in the Great War, in West Bay, one of them being a grand uncle of mine who, in fact, was a prisoner of war and I think West Bay had two living at the time, but two such prisoners of war or ex-prisoners of war who were still living at the time plus other veterans.

We raised a lot of money. We had church service, we had dances and we raised money to give to the UK. Bert-Bert, as we fondly called him, attended those functions and assisted us, and assisted me and encouraged me to, in fact, help in other areas which were not as strong as Bodden Town was and West Bay was in raising the funds. But the Government topped it up. I believe it was a million dollars that were totally given to the UK at the time.

It was, as I said earlier, Madam Speaker (and I am encouraged to repeat it), that that "Mother needs your help" fund was the initiative to raise funds to help the UK to give the UK in its war with Argentina in the Falklands, formerly known, or accurately known as the Falklands War. And that was a war effort.

So, Madam Speaker, I had that opportunity in seeing Mr. Bert at work. He was a very convincing person. He was a big, tall man, so he could easily impose on other people. And, of course, Bert-Bert was a man that had strong convictions.

When I was elected in 1984, he was some 2 years, some 10 years in the post at the time. I do recall the good advice, the care and attention. We went through some tense times back then. The late Jim

Bodden and the late Haig Bodden were Opposition leaders at the time. And we had some tense times. I recall the day that the late Mr. Jim, our National Hero, took the Mace and ran outside with it. Mr. Bert was the Serjeant-at-Arms and Mr. Jim would not . . . he had spoken on the debate. He was debating and the Governor called on him to take some words out. And he told him not on his dying bed would he do so. He said *I am going to name you.*

Mr. Jim said, *You can go ahead and name me. My name is James Manoaah Bodden. Name me.*

And, Bert-Bert was ordered to take him out. I will never forget Bert-Bert, right up on . . . might have been down on this side (because I was up on that end), and Bert-Bert went to Mr. Jim and tapped him on the shoulder and said, *Jim, you want to go?*

Jim said, *I don't want to go; I ain't going.*

Well, the House was shut down!

But at that time the House shut down, Jim took the Mace outside and the Serjeant's duty was to protect the Mace, of course. So Bert-Bert had his hands full that day.

Another day, Madam Speaker, Bert-Bert used to have his long coat hung over the chair. We did not have much room in the Assembly. In fact, there was just one little room called the Common Room, and the chair was outside and Mr. Bert had a little table there, no office or anything as the Serjeant. The one Mr. Corvell [PHONETIC] Anglin came in and took Bert-Bert's coat, put it on and started to run down the street. Mr. Bert was behind him saying, *Bring my coat back; bring my coat back.*

So, while we have had some tense times, there were times of levity here.

Bert-Bert retired in, I think, 1987, and then the late Mr. Radley Gourzong came and he was not appointed, he was acting for about six months, I would think, and then Mr. Cline Glidden, Sr. was appointed in, I think, 1987, as the Serjeant-at-Arms.

Before all that, Madam Speaker, here in our House, we did not have the post of Serjeant-at-Arms. The late, Police Inspector, or Superintendent, I think, Mr. Vernon Ebanks, used to act before Bert-Bert was appointed to the post. The post was created, something Ms. Sybil worked hard to get recognised, because not even to that they wanted to give us, but we got it. She worked hard and got that back in '74 right after the promulgation of the new '72 Constitution.

So, I rise to extend condolences to his family on behalf of the Opposition. And other Members on this side may choose to speak, but I do so anyway on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, Bert-Bert was, as I said, could be a very convincing person. In his private time he was in real estate. And I happen to know that he helped several people in that regard as well. But, Madam Speaker, he has gone on, I think at age 90-odd, 96, 95, around there. But I know he was a good family man. He talked a lot about his children at that

time. I had occasion to talk a lot to him in that time period that I was elected and he was still here as our first Serjeant-at-Arms. So today, I want to extend my own personal condolences to the family.

Our aged Caymanians are moving on fast. I don't know how many we could find at that age, 96, 97. My mother is 91. I have an aunt that is 101 and still alive. And then we have Aunt Julia, but not many, I would suspect at that age bracket. These people did leave their mark on our community.

He served here and did his job well.

The Speaker: Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Just quickly, on behalf of all of us in the civil service, I would like to express condolences to the family of Mr. Watler.

It was a great pleasure for me to hear the Members here speak fondly of him and all of his dedication and hard work that he carried out here in this important role in our Parliament. Our records show that he was Serjeant-at-Arms for over 12 years. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition confirmed that just now.

Madam Speaker, I never had the occasion to work with Mr. Watler, but I do recall coming to the Parliament with my mother and seeing Mr. Watler and I asked her if he was the Speaker. And she said, *No, he is the Serjeant-at-Arms*. But he was such an imposing individual, as the Leader of the Opposition said. I really believed he was the Speaker, as a very young civil servant. So he really commanded that type of respect. He set the standard, and it is because of civil servants like him that we have the respect that we do now for our Serjeants and those who come after them.

So, Madam Speaker, on behalf of all of us in the civil service, we want to extend our condolences to the family of Mr. Watler, and we ask God to bless them and to comfort them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None

We will now suspend for the luncheon break and reconvene at 2:45 pm, at which time the Honourable Premier will rise to deal with the Government Motion 10 of 2015/16.

Proceedings suspended at 12:45 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:51 pm

The Speaker: Please be seated. Proceedings are resumed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS MOTIONS

GOVERNMENT MOTION NO. 10/2015-2016—THE STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE 2016/17 FINANCIAL YEAR

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move Government Motion No. 10/ 2015-16 Session of the Legislative Assembly, entitled The Strategic Policy Statement for the 2016/17 Financial Year.

The Motion reads as follows:

WHEREAS Section 23(1) of the Public Management and Finance Law (2013 Revision) states that a “strategic policy statement for the next financial year shall be presented to the Legislative Assembly by a member of the Cabinet appointed by the Cabinet to do so on their behalf not later than the 1st December in each year for approval within two months, and if the Legislative Assembly has not within that period resolved to approve, amend or reject the statement it shall be deemed to be approved”;

AND WHEREAS The Public Management and Finance (Amendment) Law, 2015 defines the eighteen month period commencing 1st July 2016 and ending on 31st December 2017 as a financial year namely, the 2016/17 financial year;

AND WHEREAS the Government has now prepared and presented its Strategic Policy Statement for the 2016/17 financial year;

BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly approves the policy priorities, aggregate financial targets and financial allocations set out in the 2016/17 Strategic Policy Statement as the indicative parameters on which the 2016/17 Budget is to be formulated.

The Speaker: The Motion has been duly moved and is open for debate.

Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak further to the Motion?

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, the Strategic Policy Statement [SPS] just referred to in the Motion was delivered on behalf of the Government by the Minister of Finance this morning. Madam Speaker, it is once again my duty and pleasure, to move this Motion and to speak to it and to seek to have this honourable House approve that statement as the Government's

Strategic Policy for the year 2016/17, the year of the next election.

Madam Speaker, notably as the Minister of Finance has already indicated, the period covered by this Strategic Policy Statement is 18 months. To reflect the changes made in the recent amendment to the Public Management and Finance Law to move the Government's financial year from 1st July to the 30th of June, in the following year to the calendar year, that is, commencing on the 1st of January and ending on the 31st of December, it is necessary for this transition to occur for the first eighteen months to be considered as one financial year. Thereafter, Madam Speaker, we will move to multi-year budgets.

So, Madam Speaker, the period for which this strategic policy statement applies will extend beyond the term of this office to conclude on 31st of December 2017. And so, Madam Speaker, if there were to be a change in Government in the general elections of 2017, the new administration would have a full seven months in which to prepare and deliver their budget reflecting their policies. We would therefore avoid the situation which has obtained in all elections since 2005 where a Government was sworn into office in May and were required under the law to produce a budget to start on 1st of July, which has always proven impossible and thus Government has had to seek the approval of Finance Committee and the House to essentially operate without a budget until, usually, September of that year in order to have the necessary time to prepare.

Madam Speaker, with that bit of explanation I wish to thank the Minister of Finance for delivering the Strategic Policy Statement. As I said, the last one of this Administration before the next general election is scheduled for May 2017 and which contains good news with respect to Government finances and the economic prospects of the country.

Madam Speaker, it was a short two and a half years ago that both the Minister of Finance and I stood before this Honourable House to speak separately to this administration's first Strategic Policy Statement for the Financial Years from 2014/15 through 2016/17. Nothing has happened since that time to cause us to deviate from our promise of a stable future through hard work and perseverance, as we termed it. If anything, Madam Speaker, we have been buoyed by the success of our policies to work even harder to sustain the stability that we promised and that the earnest labour of our team has made possible.

As I said recently at the Chamber of Commerce's legislative luncheon, if you stop to consider how different a place, indeed, how much better a place Cayman is today, then you would begin to appreciate the importance of this stability to each and every Caymanian and to each and every business in Cayman. You would also appreciate how hard we have worked to restore confidence in Government and

in the future of Cayman. This renewed stability and confidence can be measured in our better relationship with the United Kingdom and improved partnership between Government and business. Couple this with the restoration of Government finances and a much-improved economy, and you get the picture of just how much has been achieved in two and a half years. Madam Speaker, none of this occurred by chance. It occurred because this Government has a clearly defined vision and plan for Cayman, and it occurred because we set about it in a disciplined way to carry out those plans.

Our first Strategic Policy Statement in November 2013 began to lay the groundwork for the success that we have had so far. Madam Speaker, as you know, our first SPS used as its basis, two objectives: Government's 2013–2017 Medium Term Physical Strategy, coupled with Government's broad goals and objectives.

The strategy is a four-year financial plan that seeks to restore Cayman's public finances to a sustainable level in a realistic manner. It sets out the targets and parameters to be met annually so that Government finances would meet all the requirements of the Public Management and Finance Law by 30th June 2016. I am happy to remind this House and the listening public that this Government has met the agreed targets each and every year. And all things being equal, we will be fully compliant with the requirements of the law by the end of June next year and will therefore have proven our capability to assume fully autonomy of the budget process. I am especially pleased that all of this has been achieved without the need to impose any new taxes on our people or businesses, and without the need for any new borrowing. Neither has any new borrowing planned over the remainder of this term. Indeed, Madam Speaker, we have greatly reduced Government debt and have also reduced the fees and taxes on individuals and businesses. I will say more about this a bit later.

Madam Speaker, the second plank of the Strategic Plan was this Government's 12 broad goals and objectives. These were agreed by all Members of Government over several days of examination and discussion and covered activities around strengthening the economy, developing our workforce, securing the community, reforming the public service, modernising our infrastructure, providing for a health populace, improving education, improving good governance, developing Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, balancing environmental protection with development needs, improving agricultural production, and working toward a more just society.

Our strategy provided the broad parameters around which Government could spend on capital investment and on operating expenditure, while simultaneously reducing debt and building cash reserves. To complement this, the broad goals provided the priorities on which Government would spend and invest.

In other words, Madam Speaker, the Government did what most households do: consider your income, identify your priorities and spend accordingly, including paying down loans and putting something aside for a rainy day.

I beg your indulgence, Madam Speaker, to highlight a few of the priorities items of two and a half years ago and to note their status today.

- Improving tourism crews and stayover numbers—done;
- Implement the George Town revitalisation project with phase 1 focusing on improving road corridors—started;
- Supporting small business by reducing taxes and assisting entrepreneurs—done;
- Support responsible larger-scale developments, including those using local investment—started;
- Review the Public Management and Finance Law and make required changes and introduce multi-year budgeting—started;
- Improvements at the airport and crews and cargo ports—started;
- Create a solution for the George Town landfill—started;
- Review and improve the education system—started;
- Introduce daylight savings time—started;
- Approve amendments to the Trade and Business Licensing Law—done;
- Approve and implement a Builders Law—done;
- Approve a National Conservation Law—done;
- Approve a new Liquor Licensing Law—done;

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members will quickly realise that all of the aforementioned, and much more, has either been accomplished or is underway and will be completed over the remainder of this term or within the next three years, should God and the good people of the Cayman Islands see fit to return this Government to lead the country following the general elections in 2017.

As I keep saying, Madam Speaker, this is a Government that gets things done. And I say again, Madam Speaker, this did not happen by chance.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker.

I say again, Madam Speaker, this did not happen by chance. It has happened because we cre-

ated a sensible, achievable, multi-year Strategic Plan as a guide. Each year we carefully prioritised both capital and operating expenditure. And, importantly, we were disciplined in carrying out our plans. So today we have an economy that is stronger, an economy where business confidence has been restored. An economy where private sector investment is growing and is set to grow further with major private initiatives such as the Kimpton Seafire Hotel which opens in November 2016 with 266 rooms and seven restaurants; The expansion of Camana Bay, including a new hotel; The redevelopment of the old Hyatt's site; The redevelopment of Treasure Island into Margaritaville Beach Resort. And at St. James Point, a new \$200 million hotel and resort at Beach Bay, among others, close to completion or in the works.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, there are several new developments of varying sizes in the planning stages or under construction along the Seven Mile Corridor, South Sound, and out to the eastern districts and over in Cayman Brac. Developers from small to large have seen improvement in the economy and are preparing for an increased demand as condos sell and tourist arrivals increase. These all provide jobs and further enhance the economy as well as generate good revenues for Government. Add to these plans to expand Health City, Cayman Enterprise City, and promising developments around intellectual property, strong financial services, and increased tourism numbers, and there is no doubt that Cayman has a good mix of solid economic drivers for growth over the next three to five years. Our tourism arrivals are at record highs because of the work that we have done. Last year Cayman welcomed 382,816 air arrival visitors. So far this year, through the end of September, we have had 295,469 air arrival tourists. Our goal is to grow the visitor air arrival numbers past the 400,000 volume level over the next two years. We anticipate 387,566 air arrivals by the end of this calendar year and 411,192 by the end of 2016. This is achievable, Madam Speaker, given the number of new hotels coming online.

Speaking of increases, from June 2013 through the first few days of this month [November 2015], 3,109 new trade and business licences have been granted. This is a result of renewed confidence in the Cayman economy coupled with reductions of fees to small businesses made by this Government to encourage entrepreneurship. This has provided opportunities for Caymanians to own their own businesses and has made jobs for our people.

To further help small businesses, earlier this month the Cayman Islands Development Bank began offering a loan programme tailored for those who own small- and medium-sized enterprises with proven track records for at least two years. The programme has been structured in such a way as to maximise the assistance we can give while not imperilling the bank's financial stability through bad decision-making

as has been the case under previous administrations. This loan programme enhances Government's already strong initiatives. For business owners these initiatives include reductions in licensing fees, duty costs, and the benefit of CUC [Caribbean Utilities Company] duty reduction, among others.

Private sector investment and growth coupled with Government's own infrastructure developments will help grow our gross domestic product [GDP] by a projected 1.7 per cent in 2016. GDP growth is expected to continue to rise annually over the medium term, closing out 2019 with a projected increase of 2.5 per cent. Madam Speaker, these are healthy and stable rates of growth. Importantly, they are sensible, targeted rates of growth that avoid rapid, unplanned economic expansion that could outpace the ability of the country to effectively keep up. So the economy has grown well over the last two years and is expected to grow further in a sustainable fashion. With this growth, hundreds of private sector jobs have been created and overall unemployment has fallen from 6.3 per cent in 2013 to 4.7 per cent as of December 2014, rising slightly during the off season to 5.6 per cent in September 2015.

Madam Speaker, there is though, a sore spot in the otherwise remarkable recovery of our economy. While overall employment has fallen, the unemployment of Caymanians has increased marginally from 7.9 per cent to 8.3 per cent over the period from October 2014 to April 2015. While this increase may perhaps be explained by the seasonality factor, the reality is that Caymanian unemployment numbers are headed in the wrong direction. We are working with the Chamber of Commerce in the private sector to get more of our people employed and get those unemployment numbers once again going in the right direction. I believe that together Government and the business community can solve this challenge. But, Madam Speaker, let there be no misunderstanding, while we will continue to work with businesses to help grow the economy and create jobs, this Government will not sit back and accept that Caymanians who are willing and capable of working are being passed over. We recognise and value the contributions of all who work to help us build this economy, but with almost 22,000 work permits on record, it must be possible for businesses to hire more Caymanians. The good news, Madam Speaker, is that we believe that by working with the private sector we can improve those numbers as projected job growth should see the unemployment rate reach a low of 4.5 per cent by 2019.

Besides unemployment for Caymanians there are other challenges we are faced with; one of the most recent examples being the concern that money transfer agencies no longer have access to Cayman banks. Madam Speaker, just a short couple of hours ago we, the government held a press conference, myself and the Minister of Financial Services, with GraceKennedy Money Services to announce the

Western Union has reopened for business in the Cayman Islands and that once again it is possible for people to pay for overseas remittances in Cayman Islands dollars and they no longer need to scramble around to get US dollars to send overseas.

Madam Speaker, the reasons for this glitch in the money transfer business were complex, but it essentially revolved around the risks perceived by overseas regulators concerned that terrorists were looking to fund their illegal efforts using money transfer companies. Those same regulators were also concerned that money transfer companies may also unknowingly be used to launder money. I don't need to go into all of the details here, but the short of it is that the issue was hurting many people in our community and their families overseas who rely on remittances. Indeed, many people were anxious about the upcoming Christmas season and the limited ability to make those remittances. I congratulate the Minister of Financial Services and his team for working with GraceKennedy to come up with a viable solution and I also wish to congratulate and thank the Foster family for accommodating Western Union.

Madam Speaker, this issue was also damaging what this Government has established as an improving economy that has provided stable Government revenues and I am immensely pleased that it has been resolved. Government's strong revenue stream, coupled with firm control over expenditure, has delivered and will continue to deliver solid surpluses that are used to rebuild cash reserves to pay down debt and to invest in our country and our people. And so, Madam Speaker, cash reserves are projected to rise from about \$173.9 million at year end 2014, to an expected \$340 million at the end of this financial year.

Meanwhile, core Government debt has been reduced from about \$548.5 million to \$503.3 million over this same period. And as the Minister of Finance has noted, we are expected to be in a position to repay the US\$312 million bullet bond when it comes due in November 2019. This will mean that by the end of the financial year 2019, core Government debt will be reduced to \$193.6 million. In short, Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands economy is in safe hands with the Progressives-led Government.

Allow me to run through several of the fiscal successes that we have achieved. Government's financial performance exceeded budget expectations for both fiscal years 2013/14 and 2014/15 and will continue to do so over the next three years as demonstrated in this new Strategic Policy Statement. Annual accounts of Government agencies for 2014/15 were prepared and submitted to the Auditor General for examination within the legal deadline. We will continue to make improvements as we go forward. The 2013/14 audit opinions resulted in no Ministry, portfolio, or office receiving disclaiming or adverse opinions. Financial results for statutory authorities and Govern-

ment-owned companies for 2014/15 are significantly better than budgeted. Continued repayment of public sector debt is planned, as I have just outlined. Compliance with all borrowing and cash reserve ratios will be met in 2015/16 and beyond, with the exception of 2019 when the bullet bond is repaid, as, Madam Speaker, has been explained by the Minister of Finance.

We promised the country to restore Government finances and we are fulfilling this promise. We are, Madam Speaker, a Government that gets things done. Our “to do” list shows that work on the initial phase of expansion to the Terminal Building at Owen Roberts International Airport is well underway. We will continue with the next phase starting in January with a completed date in the first half of 2016. With expansion and improvements Government continues to provide opportunities for Caymanian businesses to participate in the project; hence, creating employment for Caymanians. These jobs will be needed during the construction phase and into the future as more workers will be required at the airport and at the stores, restaurants, and other businesses that support the airport and the traveling public.

As I know you are keenly aware, Madam Speaker, over in Cayman Brac we have made significant improvements to the Charles Kirkconnell International Airport, enabling the airport to handle international flights. The first flights began this past weekend from Cayman Brac to Miami and in just a few days, on the 20th of November, Cayman Airways will fly from the Brac directly to Holguin in eastern Cuba. Because of the improvements made to the airport under our watch, Cayman Brac has seen a 20 per cent increase in arrivals from a year ago. That means an increase in visitors which is helping to bolster the economy on the sister islands; an increase that has spurred the Brac Reef Hotel to invest in upgrades to the property to cater to the increasing visitor interest in Cayman Brac. The improvements at the airport have provided 21 more jobs for firefighters, immigration and custom officers, and at the Cayman Airways call centre and airport ramp. This is not only a starting point to trigger more jobs, but it is an investment in our people and the future of the Brac.

Madam Speaker, we took office with the promise that we would fix the George Town landfill and provide a solution for the long-term processing of our refuse. We knew the task was complex and there was no magic bullet to be found, but we promptly started down the road to come up with a holistic and sustainable solution to managing the country's solid waste. I am happy to say that now through the end of this month, the draft National Solid Waste Management Strategy is in the public domain for discussion. Once we get feedback from the public, the Strategy will be finalised and an Outline Business Case developed on the best options for the successful implementation of an Integrated Solid Waste Management Sys-

tem for the country. As the timeline is now set, we could be looking at work starting on the landfill in 2017. As I have said in this House before, Madam Speaker, the process may appear slow, but it is sure.

As I have also said previously, Madam Speaker, whatever options are presented by the experts to solve our landfill needs, we know that recycling and composting must be part of the solution. In order to jump-start this aspect, Government has already begun to encourage more recycling and composting to further help improve waste management throughout the Islands. Madam Speaker, those of you who are already taking your recyclables to the various bins around the Islands, I thank you. You are doing your part, but in the New Year recycling efforts will be further ramped up with new recycling stations added and private sector companies being contracted to collect items for recycling.

Madam Speaker, another major infrastructure project this Government had the will to take on was that of cruise ship berthing. When the people of the Cayman Islands elected us, they did so giving us a clear mandate to deliver on our campaign pledges, one of which was to build a cruise berthing facility in George Town Harbour to help ensure the country's continued economic success. We are doing things differently than previous administrations, which cost the country millions of dollars for breach of contract because of an unwillingness by the then-Government to follow the rules. I believe in all sincerity that the country has never before had a Government such as ours that is this open with its projects and willing to accept challenges and consider options where practical. But that is expected of us as a progressive government. Openness and transparency—coupled with accountability—has always been our *modus operandi*.

I must reiterate, Madam Speaker, that, the Cabinet has not yet made a final decision on this all-important project, but we will not be intimidated by special interest groups or individuals at the expense of the greater national good. It is said that the finest steel must go through the hottest fire and we pledge to make a responsible decision that takes into account all of the factors. There are hundreds of local jobs that cater to and depend upon cruise tourism. It is our duty to ensure those jobs are kept intact, maintained, and expanded on into the future. These jobs include Caymanian tour and taxi operators, employees of George Town merchants and restaurants, and employees of businesses of all sizes across Grand Cayman that cater to and benefit directly and indirectly from cruise tourism.

The Outline Business Case estimates that about 500 jobs will be made available during construction of the cruise and cargo facility. This will mean real, tangible opportunities for Caymanian businesses, professionals and trades people to be involved in this historic and economically important project. The large nature of the project is such that local businesses will

also benefit through an increase in sales and revenues.

Once the cruise berthing facility is up and running, the increased economic impact is expected to continue, adding about \$245 million to our gross domestic product (GDP) as well as employment for about 1,000 people over the next 20 years, assuming at least a 1 per cent growth in cruise visitors. Net benefits increase to a potential \$1.2 billion if cruise visitors grow by at least 3 per cent per annum. At the end of construction, the port would have been built mainly by Caymanians for Caymanians and will be owned by the people of the Cayman Islands.

Insofar as local labour is not available, there will be a need for guest workers who will also contribute to the economy for the time they are in Cayman. They will need places to rent and they will buy goods and services from local businesses.

Hand in hand with the development of a cruise berthing facility is the revitalisation of George Town. Plans are under way to improve the green spaces in George Town, including a new seaside park area in South Sound and a park in the vicinity of the old Glass House. I have seen the initial architectural renderings for the South Sound Park and it looks impressive. The adjoining landowners have all agreed to back the plans and I look forward to seeing the public make use of the park. The old Glass House should be demolished early in the New Year and a local business has generously committed to completing the new park at cost. Both are expected to be completed next year.

Phase 1 of the George Town revitalisation project has started with major upgrades to Godfrey Nixon Way and Smith Road already completed. Humber Lane will soon be completed and linked to Smith Road, connecting Smith Road to Elgin Avenue, and Elgin Avenue will later be connected to Eastern Avenue via a new road—all of which will take traffic congestion out of the town centre and allow for some roads to be pedestrianised or made one way to improve traffic flows. Other road works involve significant improvements to Linford Pierson Highway, giving it four lanes, widening of Thomas Russell Way and improvements to Edward and Fort Streets.

The public, particularly the business sector, now has an opportunity to provide their input on how to best improve the town centre once the roads have been completed. Once plans begin to take shape, it is anticipated that what comes forward will provide true economic and social renewal for George Town. This includes the introduction of mixed-use buildings in the town centre to encourage people to again make their home there and bring back life to George Town in the evenings and on weekends. The revitalisation of George Town will help bring businesses, jobs and added opportunities back to our capital.

Madam Speaker, it also gives us an opportunity to spread the economic opportunities beyond

Cardinal Avenue and North and South Church Street and into the capital's historic neighbourhoods. Some have noted that the revitalisation efforts could be seen as the gentrifying of parts of George Town. This is certainly not the case. Revitalisation is just that—a chance for renewal and a rebirth. The planned new roads will improve more than traffic congestion. They will also improve land values and property owners will have opportunities to develop or to sell their properties if they wish. Revitalising George Town is about benefiting the entire town—everyone who lives in George Town, does business in George Town or owns property in George Town—not just a select few. Without initiatives like this, George Town's business centre and its historic neighbourhoods will severely decline in the coming decade. Madam Speaker, we cannot allow this to happen under our watch.

So, Madam Speaker, we have worked extremely hard at providing an environment where business can flourish and where Caymanians can have opportunities. Caymanians understand well that we cannot build this country alone and so we welcome those who come to help us work and build. But, as I have said many times, as we build Cayman and create opportunities for others to join us, it must be understood that Caymanians will not be left behind. Caymanians must have access to the opportunities that arise from the work that Government does. And in fact many of our people have benefited from these opportunities over the years.

Let me assure this honourable Legislature and the public at large, that every major new development that starts up in Cayman, especially if they receive concessions from this Government to ensure the project starts, are advised that Caymanians must be employed during the construction phase as well as afterwards. Additionally, concessions granted are done with a requirement that construction starts within a reasonable time or the offer expires.

Madam Speaker, it has been said that a rising tide lifts all boats, but a rising tide will not lift people who cannot get on board the boat. So as our economic tide once again rises, it is important that Caymanians have opportunities for education, training, retooling, and a chance to show what they can do. We in Government will do our part, but the private sector must help as well.

We have had discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and with larger businesses in the hospitality and banking industries, and we will continue those discussions to ensure that the opportunities that abound in Cayman continue to be spread to all that live and work here. The conversations have been fruitful thus far, and we look forward to continued cooperation and partnership with the private sector in this regard.

We all recognise that there has been a structural shift in our two pillar industries since the 2008 Great Recession and we cannot ignore that reality.

Financial services business is growing, but there have also been consolidations and some financial services businesses have decided that operations need to be leaner, and so some jobs in banking, for example, are fewer than they used to be.

We are seeing what are, undoubtedly phenomenal growth opportunities in the hospitality industry, conversely, with several new hotels, resorts and restaurants under way or being planned. The Kimpton Seafire alone is expected to need some 400 employees when it is completed. This is why, Madam Speaker, this Administration has started the Hospitality School and are trying hard to grow the trainee student numbers this year and every year going forward. Every young person who graduated from the Hospitality School was able to find employment in good paying jobs at a hospitality employer of their choosing. We have a number of Caymanians now training in a variety of hospitality roles overseas. The opportunities abound in a whole range of roles in hospitality, and the overall salary package and benefits are also good. Caymanians need to once again look at the good jobs in hospitality as being good jobs for Caymanians. The hospitality businesses that we have spoken with have indicated that they will continue to work with Government to not only encourage Caymanians to enter this industry, but to also seek them out and to continue to provide opportunities for training and advancement. Our efforts will be redoubled in the coming years, and given our track record, I have no doubt that we will be successful.

Madam Speaker, the hospitality training school model is proof that this partnership can pay dividends and we thank the businesses that worked to help ensure the success we have had so far. As a consequence of this success, a cross-ministerial effort is now under way to see how else we can use the hospitality school model and to work with private sector, including the Chamber of Commerce, to develop various work programmes that provide skills and educational opportunities to Caymanians that can lead to real job opportunities.

We also know Madam Speaker, that there are some Caymanians who may need a bit more assistance than others and we will be looking over the short and medium term to see how best to move them to employment. In the short term, this will include what we are terming the “Caymankind” work programme where individuals will be provided an opportunity for temporary employment with the Department of Environmental Health and the Recreation Parks and Cemetery Unit to assist with an Island-wide clean-up programme. This will provide some relief for as many as we can afford over the Christmas season and will mean a better Christmas for many families. I am sure, Madam Speaker, that we will see more comments from some that this is a waste of money. Well, that is one point of view. But in my opinion, it comes mainly from those who do not know the meaning of need, of

not having the means to put food on the table, let alone buy their children a gift for Christmas. This programme will not be operated like others in the past.

It will also allow us to get more people registered with the National Workforce Development Agency, and to get them into programmes that can assist with longer term employment. This is not a handout, Madam Speaker, but a hand-up for some individuals to get back into employment for a short period and to then hopefully start on their way to full-time work.

Caymanians desire nothing more than to work, to provide for their families and to have an opportunity to build a career. Therefore, we are refocussing our efforts on preparing our people to join the workforce. A technical and vocational education and training coordinator has been appointed and will take up his position in the National Workforce Development Agency in January next year. He will provide planning and implementation of programme activities that support a national TVET [Technical Vocational Education and Training] agenda. He will also provide on-the-ground support to help job seekers receive the training they need.

The Ministry of Education is exploring and collaborating with the private sector to develop and deliver community-based apprenticeships and work-experience internships. The Ministry also plans apprenticeships within the Public Works Department.

The recent work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Employment provides insight into the various barriers to employment, from lack of transportation to a criminal record. We are now actively working across the ministries and with the private sector to mitigate those barriers and move people from welfare to meaningful work.

Another pledge we made was to reduce the cost of living for our people and residents alike. This is something near and dear to us all. Our people have no other place to call home. So while many boast of our high per capita GDP, we also know that not all of us fall on the right side of the income curve. Therefore, if the cost of living is not reined in, our people will not enjoy the fruits of their labour, save for their future, invest, or spend to support the wider local economy.

Our first commitment to address the cost of living was to introduce no new revenue measures. We recognised that we could not effectively tax the country out of a sluggish economy and to date we have stuck to this pledge. Government has done its part not to increase the burden, but we are now shifting our attention to where our people truly feel pain—at the pump! This, Madam Speaker, as has been explained by good friend and colleague, the Honourable Minister with responsibility for the Infrastructure, has the ability to impact so many areas in our economy.

Madam Speaker, since coming to office, we have been concerned that the prices at the gasoline pumps do not generally fall in line with changes in refined fuel prices on the global market. The Minister of

Infrastructure has already advised that he is seeking a third fuel provider to help drive competition and thereby lower fuel prices. He has also been challenging Cayman's two main fuel suppliers to provide information on the cost elements, which determine the prices at which they sell fuel to the local gas stations, as prices at the pump appear to us to be too high. Additionally, he set about looking at a legislative and regulatory framework that would assist with ensuring that prices for refined fuel sold locally are fair.

We are confident that all three Cayman Islands can have optimum fuel prices while allowing the petrol companies a fair—and not excessive—return on their investments. But to be able to do so practically, and to be able to seek legal remedy, Government must be in a position to know the exact cost, not an estimate, for which fuel is acquired and marketed by the fuel importers.

To this end, we tabled in the Legislative Assembly, changes to the Dangerous Substances Handling and Storage Law so that fuel importers are mandated to provide Government with the actual cost of the fuel they import or risk paying a fine of \$250,000. These changes have been passed into law, and as we have seen, the prices are now coming down, even before the law has come into force. Perhaps, Madam Speaker, they are seeing the light?

To further reduce the cost of living, this past January Government reduced the duty Caribbean Utilities Company pays on diesel by twenty-five cents per gallon. The savings from this is now reflected in our electricity bills. There will be an additional twenty-five cents per gallon reduction next January, moving us from a high of seventy-five cents per gallon to just twenty-five cents per gallon by January 2016 under this Progressives-led Administration.

This reduction means a cost savings to all who use electricity in our homes and businesses and equates to \$8.4 million dollars annually, left in the pockets of CUC electricity consumers. So you see, Madam Speaker, how focusing on fuel alone can have an impact? It is our hope that as fuel prices fall, as they should, the net impact will be felt across other areas in our economy, putting even more money back into the pockets of our citizens.

The cost of living has also been kept in check by Government reducing the import duty on most consumable goods from 22 per cent to 20 per cent, providing a savings to consumers of at least \$4 million dollars annually. All of that is proof positive that this Progressives-led administration gets things done.

At this year's Fidelity Cayman Economic Outlook in February, I also announced that the negotiations with Dart for the sale of the freehold of the Dragon Bay lands had begun and we were negotiating for fair market value. Dart currently holds the leasehold of this property under a 99-year lease, which has a balance of about 75 years to run. I'm pleased, Madam Speaker, to announce today that negotiations have

been successfully concluded, and once the matter is finalised in accordance with the requirements of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Law, the details of the sale will be brought to this House for final approval.

The valuations required under the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Law came in at US\$16 million on the high side and US\$12 million on the low-end of the spectrum. The Department of Lands and Survey successfully negotiated for a price of US\$14.574 million for the sale of the freehold of the property. Dart has committed to developing the property and Government will make revenue from property sales and development as a result.

As part of the deal, which was negotiated as part of the third amendment to the NRA [National Roads Authority] Agreement, Dart has also agreed to extend the Esterley Tibbetts Highway and make more improvements to our road infrastructure. Dart will build an additional two lanes of roadway from the Century 21 Roundabout to the Butterfield Roundabout near A. L. Thompson's. This will include a new roundabout in the vicinity of the Lakeside Apartments on Esterley Tibbetts Highway, which will ultimately accommodate the Airport Connector Road. While Dart will fund the road works between the Century 21 Roundabout to and including the roundabout near Lakeside, Government has agreed to fund the extension south of the new roundabout to the Butterfield Roundabout. Dart and the National Roads Authority are currently working out the details of these much-needed road improvements. Once the matter is finalised in accordance with the requirements of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Law, as I've just said, the details of the sale will be brought to this House for final approval.

Madam Speaker, confidence in Cayman was evident again this past September when Government inked a deal for the construction of St. James Point, a \$200-million-dollar hotel and condominium project to be built in the Bodden Town District at Beach Bay. We have signed a deal with the developer that takes into account the expected large contribution to the economy and have given some duty concessions on imports of materials along with other new hotel properties. Madam Speaker, the details of this deal were made public some months ago. Madam Speaker, the concessions that we have given will be returned to the Government and the people of the Cayman Islands in spades when the hotel and condos are up and running and tourists are spending and enjoying the offerings of the eastern districts. It will mean money spent in the Cayman economy, jobs during the construction phase, and good jobs for Caymanians after construction. On completion, the St. James Point project will assist tourism numbers and benefit the economy.

In addition, greater demand for the services of Health City could bolster stable growth for tourism services. Indirectly, these are seen to generate economic expansion in other areas, particularly wholesale and retail, transportation, and the utility sectors.

Madam Speaker, one of our top jobs and one of our toughest jobs when we took office was to restore investor confidence in Cayman. Our success is proven in the number of private sector projects in the pipeline. We have kept our promises. We get things done.

Madam Speaker as our business community reaffirms its commitment to hire and train Caymanians, this Progressives-led Administration understands, all too well our obligation to provide well educated and work-ready Caymanian employees.

Education has been and continues to be a major priority of this Administration. School reports have shown improvements, but they also show we are falling short in some respects. We are working with educators to ensure that standards continue to improve and that they are more result oriented. Government is committed to education. We are spending the money and we expect results.

Madam Speaker, the previous PPM Government laid the foundation for the transformation of our education system into a world-class structure. This year, amendments will be made to the Education Modernisation Law, 2009, which was never brought in to force. The revised law will, among other things, establish the starting of school age as five years at the beginning of Year 1, empower the Minister [of Education] to establish a national curriculum in government schools, establish an Office of Education Quality Assurance, require all schools to have a written Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy and make it an offence to create a disturbance on school premises.

Our focus is on long-term economic growth and developing the skills of our people for that future economy. We know that if our people can't find gainful means of employment, crime could increase. That could harm our reputation on the global stage, give would-be visitors pause to consider another destination and, more importantly, bring harm to our people.

While the elected Government does not have constitutional responsibility for the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, we do control its budget. To that end, we will continue to ensure police powers and resources are proportionate and effective to detect and reduce crime.

There are things, however, that we can do, and have done, legislatively to address crime. Under this Administration this House approved the Secondhand Dealers Law to protect the public from unwittingly purchasing stolen goods from licensed second-hand dealers and better regulate pawn shops and metal dealers to track who has sold what to them, helping prevent them being used as dumping grounds for stolen items. It is also an additional law enforcement tool.

We successfully passed the Conditional Release Law, which will have a major impact on re-offending rates. The objective is to help rehabilitate prisoners to function in society and live useful lives, to

protect society from the criminal acts of repeat offenders and to reduce costs of incarceration.

Part of that rehabilitation includes allowing some offenders in the prison system to take part in projects that aim to assist the community and allow prisoners to pay back to society. To date, projects undertaken have included painting of the George Town Fire Station, refurbishing three houses, and assisting on restoration work at the Botanical Gardens. I can also report, Madam Speaker, that Government recently hired seven new prison officers.

While I am on the subject of our prisons, I must express my dismay at the fact that some of the people being incarcerated should not even be there. I am speaking about our people with mental illness. That is why we have developed a Strategic Outline Case for a new long-term residential mental health facility. It is time we took care of those among us who are most vulnerable. Mental illness is not a crime, but more often than not those with mental illness find themselves housed in our prisons because we just don't have enough bed space at the hospital. Despite this, it is at the hospital and Health Services Authority [HSA] that we are making great strides, giving that Authority a sense of direction and purpose. Under the past administration, the HSA had no long-term or short-term plans to effectively provide high-quality, cost-efficient health care.

Madam Speaker, we have not forgotten the dream of home ownership that many Caymanians struggle and strive to achieve. Therefore, we are making it easier to buy a home for qualified Caymanians. Last month we restarted the Government Guaranteed Home Assisted Mortgage programme, which backs first-time Caymanian homeowners by guaranteeing 35 per cent of the deposit. It allows buyers to borrow up to the full cost of the home without making a deposit. This approach opens the door for many to home ownership and is a hand-up, not a handout.

Madam Speaker, this Administration has also done much to modernise our legislative framework. Members of this House and the public will recall that we passed a motion moving us to One Person, One Vote and single-member electoral districts in time for the elections in 2017. The Order made by the Governor establishing 19 single-member electoral districts was gazetted today. At the last meeting of this House we also passed a motion to start the process of making this honourable Assembly autonomous, putting responsibility with the Honourable Speaker and the Clerk, and we also agreed to have the Standing Orders of this House modernised. These, Madam Speaker, comprised an overall package that I think is so critical in moving the Cayman Islands into the modern era of democracy with an advanced Constitution, a modern Parliament, and an equitable electoral system.

Madam Speaker, I have highlighted only a sampling of the ways this Progressives-led Admin-

istration has tirelessly worked to demonstrate in a tangible way that the Cayman Islands is in much better shape than the way we found it when we took office in 2013.

We have kept our promises. We get things done. We have delivered on our manifesto promises of education improvements, introducing a minimum wage, delivering on electoral reform, working with and encouraging business, and improving employment. But, Madam Speaker, we are not finished.

As you will recall, in September 2014 Government received a report from Ernst & Young [EY] that made more than 80 recommendations for Government reform. The report was clear that it only gave advice and analysis to support Government's consideration as to future action. Government considered the recommendations and used the report as a key input in our decision-making. In so doing, Government recognised that the EY report was only one source of potential projects and other ideas for reform should also be considered. So, for the past year or so, the detailed work necessary to develop and analyse candidate projects has been undertaken. We have kept our promises. We get things done.

Madam Speaker, I believe we have a duty to take a long-term view and to put in place the delivery of the reforms this country needs. If we remain bound to electoral cycles, we remain bound to short-term action that will not tackle some of the fundamental issues we face. Our country needs more than that. Our country deserves more than that. And that is why this Government is setting out a clear plan of future action.

We have excluded some of the EY recommendations because they clearly conflict with our policy. For example, recommendations to raise fees would clearly run counter to the commitment this administration has given to the country to seek to cut rather than raise duties and fees. Alternatively, we have excluded recommendations because the further analysis we have done indicates the benefits are insufficient to justify taking the ideas forward.

As I said earlier, Madam Speaker, Phase One of Project Future includes projects already in flight and I've already updated the House on the Owen Roberts International Airport, cruise berthing facilities, and a new sustainable waste strategy for the Cayman Islands.

We can chalk off one recommendation in Phase One as complete: The EY recommendation to move the London Office to the Portfolio of the Cabinet Office was implemented in July. While it is by no means the most fundamental of reforms, it does show our willingness to get on with things even as we finalise the full programme. Again, Madam Speaker, we have kept our promises.

For example, we continue to make progress in the following projects:

- Work to develop the business cases for the creation of a new Office of the Ombudsman and a new Public Utilities Commission is nearing completion and, if approved, both will move swiftly through to implementation.
- Every parcel of surplus Government land has been reviewed and an initial portfolio for sale has been created. Cabinet has already given approval for the sale of the first of those pieces of land.
- The communications project was kick-started with a Capability Review conducted by the UK's Government Communications Service earlier this year. The next step is the presentation of the Communications Capability Review and its recommendations to Cabinet.
- We are progressing work on the business case for the potential merger of primary schools on Cayman Brac, either on one of the existing sites or a completely new site on the Bluff.
- The Portfolio of the Civil Service and the Public Service Pensions Board launched employee consultations on the proposed changes to the Public Service Management Law and the Public Service Pensions Law to facilitate rising the normal retirement age from 60 to 65. The forecast implementation date for the new retirement age is April 2016.

Another project we hope to complete in the SPS period is a review of the Cayman Islands National Insurance Company, or CINICO.

CINICO provides cover for the whole Civil Service and their dependents, for retirees and for seafarers and veterans. The entire cost of the premiums paid to CINICO in respect of those customers is currently met by Government.

Madam Speaker, the current level of contributions is inadequate to meet future liabilities and a strategy is needed to bridge the gap. The Government has announced it will look at the issue of co-pay for some civil servants. The Deputy Governor has been asked to take the issue forward and is doing so linked to a project conducting a wider review of the terms and conditions of civil servants.

The project will review the operation of CINICO in the context of the wider health insurance market and consider the best means of providing health insurance to civil servants, seafarers and veterans. The project will also examine the scope for CINICO to diversify its range of products.

Madam Speaker, we have laid the groundwork for the remainder of this Administration and into the future because if not us, then who? If not now, then when? It is time our elected representatives look beyond the narrow confines of the electoral cycle and political advantage and look to the future of our people and our country and begin laying the foundation for that future. Ours is a progressive government that looks beyond personality politics focused on self-aggrandisement and political survival as was the case in the past. We have kept our promises. We get things done.

Madam Speaker, as you have heard, Project Future fits in nicely with this Progressives-led Government's Strategic Policy Statement. Uppermost in our priorities is jobs for our people. This administration will continue to seek out private companies that are committed to helping us develop the country and putting Caymanians to work.

Government supports the completion of private sector labour and pension legislative reform. The Labour Relations Bill, 2015 seeks to clarify the 30-year-old Labour Law to protect and enhance the rights of employees and employers where prudent. Government has heard the concerns of the private sector and others and will consider those carefully prior to bringing the Bill to the Legislative Assembly.

The Ministry of Education will implement a new governance model for education based on the results of the Outline Business Case that is being done in this fiscal year. That model includes greater community involvement; improved communication; broader skills by tapping into the experience of volunteers, business, industry and the public sector; and improved accountability, support and challenge for school leadership.

Also, Madam Speaker, the National Training Council will be operational and work with the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs to determine current and future workplace plans including areas of future occupational demand. This will support Technical and Vocational Education and Training in schools to assure quality, sustainability, value for money, and that the needs of stakeholders are met.

Youth and sports facilities will be expanded and upgraded to promote sports development and tourism opportunities including the Haig Bodden Playing Field, the Centre of Excellence at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex, the boxing gym in Bodden Town, the Red Bay Primary School, and the Donovan Rankine and Old Man Bay Playing fields. Over on the sister islands we will complete construction of the 25-metre swimming pool at the Cayman Brac Playfield, as well as complete the internal works of the multipurpose hall on the Bluff. Work will be done with sports associations to strengthen their internal structures and processes and a more comprehensive physical education curriculum and school sports will be implemented.

Just as we are duty-bound to properly train up our future generations, we are also duty-bound to care for our elders and those who have a legitimate need for Government assistance. The Ministry of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports will develop a National Older Persons Policy, a Social Assistance Strategy and complete the Poor Persons (Relief) Regulations.

Madam Speaker, we also have a responsibility, as a Government, to look after those who find themselves running afoul of our judicial system. I spoke earlier of the Conditional Release Law. Going forward we will work with that law in tandem with providing the Department of Community Rehabilitation capacity to increase staffing levels and resources to aid in the delivery of community corrections services. The objectives are to rehabilitate prisoners to function in society and live useful lives, to protect society from the criminal acts of repeat offenders and to reduce the costs of incarceration.

As we strive to assure that those most in need in our society have their needs met, we also keep in mind our fiscal responsibilities. One way we will do that is to implement the Procurement Law, which will lay the foundation for all future public sector procurement in the Cayman Islands. The law will strengthen the procurement process with increased transparency and a greater focus on value for money while providing improved opportunities for Caymanian suppliers to be successful. By setting up Government-wide contracts and doing bulk purchases for commonly used goods and services, the Government will approach the market as a single entity resulting in significant savings because of larger economies of scale and improved efficiencies.

We will also implement the Public Authorities Law to provide a consistent overarching governance, financial management and personnel management framework for Statutory Authorities and Government Companies to improve consistency of approach and to strengthen accountability in the Legislative Assembly and the public.

Madam Speaker, this administration is striving hard to do better with services across the public sector. To that end, we will continue to improve e-Government by developing and implementing a plan to significantly increase e-Government services. Part of that plan includes the implementation of an online declarations processing system, which will allow members of the public to submit and process Customs Declaration forms and imported goods electronically.

The first new e-Government initiative to come through the Steering Committee is the automation of the Tax Undertaking Certificates process, which will complement the suite of e-Government services available to our financial service providers. This is now in the final stages of user acceptance testing. A more significant project for small business services is going through the business case and procurement

processes. In addition, the changes to support the new Trade and Business Licensing Law have been implemented.

Following the workshop with the e-Governance Academy team from Estonia, we are completing the documentation of the overall strategy, preparing the outline business case to implement the strategy and have issued a request for proposal for business process re-engineering support for the e-Government programme.

Heavy emphasis will also be placed on cybersecurity. In today's world, as we have all seen, achieving cybersecurity and data protection is not a single destination, but a continuous journey, and I have advised the staff in the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure that there is a sufficient, urgent focus on data security across Government.

Bringing the Cayman Islands into the twenty-first century will be the consideration of new legislation to introduce trademarks in the Cayman Islands. In fact, Madam Speaker, General Registry staff is already undergoing training and developing systems. The introduction of local registration is expected to provide additional revenue for Government from an increase in registrations and renewal activity and to increase employment opportunities in the Government and the private sector. The local registration of trademarks will also allow residents and local businesses to protect their intellectual property without the need to obtain and maintain United Kingdom or community registrations.

We will also continue to be a force to be reckoned with on the world's financial stage. The Department of Financial Services Policy and Legislation will develop and maintain innovative financial services products that are consistent with international regulatory standards and are intended to both increase Cayman's market share in the global financial services and ensure positive assessments by international standard setters.

As I have said previously, Madam Speaker, Government supports the Deputy Governor in his efforts for real structured reform of the Civil Service and is looking far into the future, not just the remaining months in this four-year term. As such, we will continue with the implementation of the five-year Strategic Plan that will stretch from July 2016 to December 2021. Under the banner of a reimagined Civil Service, the five-year Strategic Plan will improve how the Civil Service operates and improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Civil Service delivers political priorities.

Just as we are working to shore up our Civil Service, I have to acknowledge and I take great comfort in knowing that our Civil Service has a proven track record for meeting challenges head on, and delivering favourable results on behalf of the country.

When faced with the call to *do more with less*, the Civil Service has responded. Headcount within the

Civil Service has gradually declined, and as a result of numerous austerity measures aimed at reducing personnel costs, each year human resources costs have come in below the approved budget, thus contributing millions of dollars toward the Government's achievement of annual budgetary surpluses.

Madam Speaker, the Government recognises those achievements and the sacrifices that have made them possible. While keeping a steady control of expenses, we have endeavoured to reward good stewardship. In June 2014, the Government awarded a one-off 2.5 per cent honorarium to the Civil Service. This was followed in July 2015, by the Government awarding a 4 per cent cost-of-living adjustment to all civil servants.

In 2013/14, the Immigration Department undertook a process of job evaluations, which resulted in pay increases for Immigration officers. In the current financial year 2014/15, other uniformed positions have also been evaluated. As a result of favourable job evaluations, customs officers have received pay increases and similar increases are currently being made to police officers.

We note, Madam Speaker, that notwithstanding such efforts, civil servants' pay has been controlled by strict policies for many years, oftentimes to the detriment of our most loyal and hard-working staff. As at 30 June, this year [2015], approximately 35 per cent of the Civil Service have suffered pay stagnation where they have not seen any increase in their pay points for seven or more years. This number increases to almost 50 per cent of the Civil Service who have experienced pay stagnation for five or more years. The result, Madam Speaker, is that highly experienced employees may now be earning less than persons who are newly hired for the same roles. In such cases, new employees have been able to negotiate higher salaries; meanwhile, the pay for long-serving staff has been frozen. This has resulted in sometimes pronounced disparities between existing staff and new hires.

I'm happy to say, Madam Speaker, steps are finally being taken to address these issues as well. The Government has commenced a phased approach to this problem. Starting in the current financial year, teachers will be the first to see pay increases to remedy pay stagnation. Teachers whose pay has not increased for three or more years and who have received favourable performance evaluations, will receive between one to three increments based upon how long their salaries have been frozen.

In 2016/17, this programme will be rolled out in phases across the wider Civil Service. The Government has approved a bespoke budget, which has been earmarked for addressing pay stagnation within the Civil Service. This will allow the Civil Service to address the internal pay inequities that have crept into the system as a result of prolonged austerity policies that froze pay for existing staff, even where those em-

ployees earned additional qualifications and proved themselves to be excellent employees.

Madam Speaker, while the Government wishes it could do more to reward its staff, it is important to recognise that programmes have been deployed in a consistent, sensible and sustainable manner. We cannot fix everything in this term. In the coming financial year, we will continue to support the Civil Service while still holding it accountable to achieve favourable results on behalf of the people of the Cayman Islands. The Government has taken a responsible approach to restoring the fiscal health of the country and it has shared the fruits of this success with those who have helped to make it possible.

Madam Speaker, please allow me before I conclude to speak a bit more about the world around us. It is by God's grace and divine providence that we set out these plans for our future. We have striven as a Government to put our people first, to put the long-term stability, our international reputation, and our children's future at the heart of what we do. We have worked together as a team and indeed, everyone in this country has laboured with us to turn things around. We have done everything within our power. But as we well know, Madam Speaker, there are many things that are outside of our power. Indeed, our world is faced with challenges, the likes of which we have never before seen. As a country whose economy is dependent upon confidence, whether as an investor or a traveller for pleasure, we must continue to keep a watchful eye on the events of the day.

Madam Speaker, in this interconnected world, few places on Earth today will be immune from the impact of further escalations in this global war on terror—and I'm tempted to say *global war of terror*. And as other parts of the world wrestle with this war, and the ensuing migrant crisis, we must not forget that political and economic realities are changing right here in our own neighbourhood. We have had our fair share of experience and challenges managing our own migrant crisis. Overnight, this too could escalate. Furthermore, as we approach our very own Cayman Thanksgiving on Sunday, 6th of December, we must pause to give thanks for safe passage through another hurricane season. This did not have to be the case, as every resident here during Ivan or Paloma will recall. This is why we reached out in support for our neighbours in Dominica when disaster swept lives, livelihoods and communities away just a few months ago.

Yet in the face of all this, Madam Speaker, we still have hope; hope for a bright, prosperous and peaceful future. This is an administration that has a vision and a plan. And even if the world goes through a rough patch, we will still benefit by taking the steps we have to maintaining sound fiscal management and placing the well-being of our people at the centre of all that we do. This, Madam Speaker, is what each of us

took an oath to uphold and protect when we were sworn in.

So, Madam Speaker, as I present this motion for approval of the Strategic Policy Statement, let us continue to look to the future—not just the challenges, but the opportunities that will also come through technology and other breakthroughs in health care, energy, transportation, agriculture, education, management of natural resources and communication. We must ready our people and our children not just for today's economy but for the economy of tomorrow. If we are wasteful and saddled with debt, we might not be able to afford the future.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, let the naysayers spout vitriol all they want. I am reminded of the words from American essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, **“Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage.”**

Madam Speaker, this Progressives-led Administration has that courage. We've proven it time and again during this term. It has so far been a good season for the Cayman Islands and Caymanians and all who live and work here and invest here under this administration. So I am confident, Madam Speaker, that in their full wisdom, the people of the Cayman Islands will in due course continue the season of the Progressives-led Government.

Throughout our tenure we have been transparent, open and honest, sharing with this House and the wider public milestones—and there have been many—that the Progressives-led Administration has made from getting back on course and staying the course. Now is not the time to change that course. We can never, ever go back to things as they were.

Madam Speaker, we knew when we took office that we would not be able to leapfrog from where we were; a time of grave concern and uncertainty, a weak economy, failing businesses and dire unemployment, to where we needed to be in a single bound. We have made progress and we are determined to keep our promise to the people of a brighter future. We are and have been a Government of transparency that has restored the confidence of the United Kingdom, restored stability to the country, restored confidence in the Government and restored the economy. We are good stewards of Government's money and we will remain disciplined in our approach to public expenditure.

I want to personally thank my elected colleagues on this side and you, Madam Speaker. I especially wish to thank the Minister of Finance, the Financial Secretary, and the entire team in the Ministry of Finance for their hard work in preparing the Strategic Policy Statement. It would be remiss of me if I did not also thank those public officers who are committed

to the change that is required to move our country forward and who work hard every day to ensure the success of our policies. I appreciate everyone's contributions.

Madam Speaker, everything this Progressives-led Government does is for the betterment of the Cayman Islands, her people and those who call our shores home. We are looking far down the road, not just the remainder of this term. We are laying a solid foundation for a Cayman that will continue to have strong economic growth and sound public finances; a Cayman that will provide a safe and attractive living environment, economic opportunities and employment, a high standard of living, and a good quality of life for all our people.

We have kept our promises. We get things done.

May God continue to guide us and pour his blessings on these beloved Cayman Islands. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Does any other Member wish to speak? Final call—does any other Member wish to speak?

If not, I will call on the Honourable Premier, if he wishes . . . I recognise. . . I beg your pardon. I recognise the Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Madam Speaker, I will be really quick.

Madam Speaker, I just want to go on record to thank the Premier and the Government for the kind words that were said about the Civil Service in the Premier's speech and for recognising the hard work that the Civil Service has been doing over the years which has resulted in better pay for all our hard-working civil servants in terms of the one-off payment that was made and the return of the 3.2 per cent roll-back on the COLA, also a 0.8 per cent increase in the cost of living as well.

Also, Madam Speaker, the Premier alluded to the fact that there has been a bespoke budget in the upcoming budget to deal with further pay inequity. We are very grateful for this, Madam Speaker. I want to assure this House that the Civil Service will continue to work hard. What we are doing now is all about performance and accountability, is that we are not going to be rewarding civil servants with an uplift in salary unless they have been performing at a set standard. I want the House and the country to be aware of that. We want to encourage our civil servants to perform at the highest levels and that high performance will be rewarded.

Madam Speaker, also, we are moving forward with our Strategic Plan, and I'm very excited about that in terms of where we are going. It will be looking at customer service. It will be looking at leadership. And, of course, work into the priorities of our elected

leaders. That plan, Madam Speaker, will be rolled out in February 2016.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I again just want to go on record and thank the Government for their support of the Civil Service. Thank you.

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

The Honourable Minister responsible for Education.

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

Madam Speaker, I too rise to just thank the Minister of Finance for delivering the SPS on behalf on the Government and the Premier for outlining in greater detail some of the achievements of this Government to date, but also some of the areas of focus going forward.

Madam Speaker, without going over ground that has already been covered by both of my colleagues who spoke before, I just want to briefly expound upon a few areas that were discussed in the SPS and in the Premier's contribution as it relates to the focus on education and the focus on employment. Madam Speaker, as the Premier outlined and as the Minister outlined in his contribution, the Government is committed to sustainability and promoting sustainability and growth in the country. And, Madam Speaker, I am sure you, as everyone else in this room is aware, that you cannot talk about future prosperity, future sustainability, future viability of a country without talking about ensuring future education and career prospects for the people of a country.

So, Madam Speaker, as was mentioned in this House, one of the first things that this Government embarked upon, on taking office, was really to look at the framework; the framework for education, and therefore the framework for future success of our students today. But, Madam Speaker, we didn't do so in isolation as we know that the development of our people needs to look at not just our students today but those who have passed through the system. So looking at training and post-secondary education, training, tertiary training, and the like, the Government, as the Minister and as the Premier outlined, will be looking very carefully at continuing the path for education transformation, the path for workforce development that has been laid before but certainly has been looked at with a very critical view to identifying the strengths, supporting the strengths, but also addressing head-on the weaknesses that may exist.

In doing so, Madam Speaker, one of the first things that we recognised as a Government was that we needed to focus on looking at how we recognise our teachers. How we recognise and support and acknowledge the contributions of our educators. And

so, it gives me great pleasure to not only echo this Government's commitment to addressing issues such as the pay stagnation concerns and the salary inequities that have crept up over the years as a result, especially as it relates to our teachers, our educators who lay the bedrock and the foundation, as I said, for future prosperity of our people with respect to the lives that they touch on a daily basis, which are our children. And so, Madam Speaker—

Moment of interruption—4:30 pm

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, permit me please to recognise the Honourable Premier. We have reached the hour of interruption.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 10(2)

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2), in order that the business of the House may continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order allow the business to continue beyond the hour of interruption.

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.

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

So, as I said, Madam Speaker, the Government very early in its tenure—and as a matter of fact, from as early as August 2014 when I delivered the message at the Education Professionals Welcome of that year, gave a commitment on behalf of the Government that we would be charging the Civil Service to look at finding a way to address this pay inequity and remuneration, especially, as I said, as it relates to our teachers. We recognise the contributions of all of our hard-working public servants, Madam Speaker, and that was done so eloquently by the speakers before me, but we also, going back to the fundamental principle underlying this SPS, we recognise that future sustainability and prosperity of this country relies and lies within the hands of our children who are the future of this country. So, therefore, we need to ensure that we recognise the contributions of those who work to shape and mould our future.

We therefore gave the commitment, Madam Speaker, from 2014, that we would be looking into this matter to try to find a solution to address this in as expeditious a manner as possible. So, again, we are happy to have delivered that message in August 2015 at the following years Education Professional Welcome where as a Government we took a very concerted and deliberate decision once we received that recommendation from the Portfolio of the Civil Service as to how we could begin to address those concerns. We made the necessary adjustments to ensure that we could start addressing that in this very budget year, as was outlined earlier. And so, Madam Speaker, I am happy to say that I have been informed that those educators qualifying pursuant to the parameters set will be seeing some adjustment to their pay as early as December of this year, December 2015, in time for Christmas.

Madam Speaker, this is certainly something that I wanted to share with colleagues in here to say that as was expressed previously, we are a Government committed to not just making promises but actually following through with those promises. In this respect, Madam Speaker, I have also asked the Portfolio of the Civil Service as the Ministry to continue to look at ways to address possible salary and remuneration inequities that may exist in the broader context with respect to teachers and educator's salaries. And so, the work will continue to do the kinds of investigation that needs to be done for us to be able to take comfort that we are recognising our educators in such a manner that underlies the very importance that they play in this community.

Madam Speaker, you would have heard me make a number of statements over the past several days about some of the efforts to support educators through training and development and otherwise. But, certainly, this is something that from the financial implications it is something that we see as a Government that is worth investing in amongst the other things that have been outlined.

Madam Speaker, we also had a question on the Floor of this House and also questions from the public, about continuing to make sure that the policies that we adopt actually reflect the needs of the community and so one of the recent emerging ... and I don't want to use the term "problem," because of all problems to have this is certainly a good problem to have. And that is we are having more and more qualifying doctors, Caymanian doctors who are now faced with the need to go on to do specialisations to be able to better serve the community that they are charged to serve as medical professionals. And so, Madam Speaker, the Government continues to invest very heavily in education, heavily in scholarships, and as was said, we want to see the results of this investment.

Madam Speaker, the Education Council has recently agreed to make sure that there are certain

scholarships available to those qualifying doctors to go on to actually achieve their medical specialisations and the amounts of those scholarships would actually be seen as being higher than the average scholarship allocation, due to the fact that these specialisations can be very, very costly. And also to bring it in line with what is being offered in partnership with the Seafarer's Association. So there is no scholarship arbitrage, so to speak, between the medical professionals, but the Ministry of Education, the Education Council, and the Health Services Authority, will be making more detailed advertisements about this scholarship availability which the application process for overseas scholarships generally opens this December 1st and runs until the 31st of January, with respect to getting your applications in to be able to be considered for scholarships for the upcoming 2016/17 academic year.

So, again, Madam Speaker, it is about the Government being committed to actually addressing and recognising and acting swiftly to address the needs that the community is now starting to see. As I said, we are getting to the point where having an educated population is not just the exception but it is becoming the rule. And that, Madam Speaker, as I said, is a good problem to have and we certainly will continue to do what we need to do as a Government to invest in our people. But, Madam Speaker, as I spoke to very recently in this House about the investment in our people and the investment in the educators who are there to support the development of our people, we also need to make sure that we continue to create those opportunities for our people to advance, for our people to actually excel in our country.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to echo the words of the Premier and of the Minister of Finance when we talk about making sure that the employment opportunities that are created, that this Government is working so hard to ensure, is developed through creating the right environment to stimulate the economy, creating the right environment to stimulate investment, creating the right environment to stimulate private sector activity—all of this, Madam Speaker, will be for naught if our people do not benefit as a result with respect to making sure that those increased employment opportunities are actually made available to those willing, capable, able and committed Caymanians, of whom we know, Madam Speaker, there are many who fit that bill.

So, Madam Speaker, as we see in the SPS—and it talks about, and it was mentioned, the unemployment rate for the country is on the decline, which is a good thing. The employment rate amongst Caymanians, there was a slight increase, which is a worrisome trend, but at the same time we need to be cognisant of the fact that unemployment is a global phenomenon. It is a global phenomenon that touches every single country, Madam Speaker, and looking at the comparisons of our unemployment rate as can be

seen on page 13 of the SPS, we are currently below the US and other advanced economies with respect to unemployment rate, and also are projected to remain in line, or be below that, of other countries. So, Madam Speaker, I think that that in itself is a testament to the stability that the country is now starting to see. We are starting to see the economic rebound as was expressed and expounded upon by my colleagues earlier. And so, we are looking to make sure that as many of our people as possible can take advantage of those opportunities.

Certainly, since 2013 or since we took office, the Government has adopted a policy of requiring that such projects that were discussed—construction projects, other projects that are expected to come online in the very near future, and have started to come online, there is now a policy which requires that these developments, construction projects and otherwise, they actually seek to take concerted efforts by working with the relevant Government agencies, such as the National Workforce Development Agency and the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre and the like, to source local labour in order to carry out these developments and projects. Not just while the developments and projects are taking place, but after, and post-construction. So, Madam Speaker, this is a real, tangible way to not just speak about wanting to create those employment opportunities, but also tying these concessions with the need to actively seek out local employment to the extent that local employment is available.

So, Madam Speaker, that also, I think, needed to be recognised and highlighted in a way in terms of how this Government is trying to take creative ways to find solutions to some of the issues that exist. As the Premier said, we will certainly always need to have the assistance of guest workers and foreign labour to help us to continue to grow this economy. So, we certainly recognise the need to be able to facilitate employment on all levels that business can thrive. But, Madam Speaker, the country as a whole, and certainly we can't talk about the country without talking about its people, must also be given the opportunity to thrive in this burgeoning and thriving economy.

Madam Speaker, again, the Premier has given his commitment on behalf of the Government, and I want to thank the Premier, as well as recognising that we are committed as a Government to looking at supporting and enhancing our labour and pensions legislation. And, as you know, Madam Speaker, we are currently in the final stages of the public consultation of the Labour Relations Bill and the Pensions Bill. We have received numerous comments on both and we are certainly taking those comments on board and will be looking to make a revised version of each of those Bills before bringing them to the House for final adoption and debate.

So, Madam Speaker, certainly, as a whole, the Government recognises the need to make sure

that once employed, the prospects of people having a positive work experience that is underpinned by legislation in that regard, is something that is very important, certainly to myself, as Minister with responsibility for these particular Bills, but also for the Government as a whole.

Madam Speaker, the Premier outlined in his contribution the work of the Ministry as it relates to the technical and vocational education and training, and how the Government will soon be appointing, or has appointed, and the person will soon take up office, being a dedicated a TVET coordinator, working very closely with that of the National Training Council to ensure that we create those employment pathways for all of our learners and our students before they leave formal secondary education to those who will go on to do the post-secondary education. But, Madam Speaker, it is about not just providing education for education sake, but it is matching and marrying education with actually finding gainful employment and meaningful contributions to the society.

In working hand in hand with the private sector, and with the creators of these job opportunities, including the public sector, we will be creating internship and apprenticeship programmes, as was mentioned, with Public Works, and the likes, to make sure that when we actually go to educate and seek to train, that we are doing so in a manner that is actually going to be then recognised and supported by those persons who will be looking to hire. Therefore we are looking to target the areas where we know we have many guest workers that could be filled with Caymanian employment. And over the years we will be looking to development these types of programmes. We have successfully launched the tourism school. We support the Superior Auto Apprenticeship Programme [SATP]. We have a partnership now with Cayman Finance, which was launched last year, to try to develop these kinds of skill sets amongst our students and financial literacy, and otherwise, with respect to the financial services industry.

So, when we talk about technical and vocational education and training, Madam Speaker, we are not just talking about the “bricks and mortar” type professions. We are looking at all of the relevant industries that would be able to offer these types of training experiences for our students, for our school leavers, and for our people who may be transitioning into a new career, a new profession, a new job because of the changing nature of the jobs and the industries that they may have previously worked in. It is about trying to create those lifelong learning experiences. Certainly, this will be captured in the new Education Bill that the Premier mentioned that will be coming online, hopefully early in the new year as well, which actually dedicates a section to ensuring technical and vocational education and training as something that the country will not just be talking about now, but actually

will have underpinned in legislation to support the work of the Government going forward.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I would just like echo the sentiments I expressed earlier with respect to thanking the very hard-working public servants who made this possible to date, and who will continue to make it possible with respect to carrying out the Government’s policies. I especially want to thank the staff of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, as well as all of the departments falling under that Ministry; the schools, the teachers, the principals, and everyone that has worked very diligently in carrying out what can be considered a very aggressive agenda of this particular Government with respect to addressing the concerns and making sure that we take concrete action and see results in as quickly and expeditious manner as it relates to preparing our future generations who are currently in our education system and those who will be soon in our system. And to make sure that when they leave school, they leave with the foundation to develop whatever skillset they will need to be able to be successful, to be able to be leaders in whatever field, because that is what we are preparing, Madam Speaker.

We cannot settle for just being average in that sense. We want to ensure that our people can be the best that they can be in whatever areas they have the aptitude and the ability to succeed. We need all types in this community, Madam Speaker, and so, we as a Government recognise the need to ensure that the experiences of all of our children are valued equally and that we develop those skills. But also, Madam Speaker, with respect to the ongoing development and training of our people, we recognise that it is never too late. It is never too late for self-improvement, self-enhancement, and I always harken on the experience of my grandmother who went back to school at the age of 60 because she had to quit school at an early age to go out and work the fields. Now, I know we are of a different time and a different era, Madam Speaker, but that is the kind of commitment that we need to inculcate in our children, in our people and so certainly, from the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, we will continue to carry forward to the best extent possible the mandate that this Government has set and that we continue to set collectively about ensuring that we have a sustainable, a viable, and a successful future. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Does any other Member wish to speak? Final call—does any other Member wish to speak?

If not, I will recognise the Honourable Premier if he wishes to exercise his right of reply.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just wish to thank all Members of the House for their tacit approval. I thank the Minister who spoke and thank all of the Members of the House for their tacit approval of the Government's Strategic Policy Statement.

Sorry, Madam Speaker, I should also thank the Deputy Governor for his brief but very useful contribution.

The Speaker: The question is: BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly approves the Policy Priorities Aggregate Financial Targets and Financial Allocations set out in the 2016/17 Strategic Policy Statement as the indicative parameters on which the 2016/17 Budget is to be formulated.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: I believe the Ayes have it. Motion 10/2015-2016 is accordingly accepted.

Agreed: Government Motion No. 10/2015-2016 – The Strategic Policy Statement for the 2016/17 Financial Year passed.

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, I move the adjournment of this Honourable House until 10:00 am tomorrow.

The Speaker: The question is that this 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. The House now stands adjourned until 10:00 am tomorrow.

At 4:52 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am Thursday, 26th November 2015.