PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Special Meeting of the 2023-2024 Session

Tuesday
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(Pages 1-52)

Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	*Premier*, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency *and* Finance & Economic Development
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP,	*Deputy Premier*, Minister of Education *and* District Administration & Lands
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Minister of Tourism & Ports
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister of Health & Wellness *and* Home Affairs
Hon. Johany S. "Jay" Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister for Border Control & Labour
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Financial Services & Commerce *and* Investment, Innovation & Social Development

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon, JP	*Acting Deputy Governor*, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, KC, JP	*Attorney General*, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Ms. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	*Deputy Speaker*, Parliamentary Secretary to Tourism *and* Social Development, Elected Member for Savannah

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	*Leader of the Opposition*, Elected Member for George Town East
Mr. Joseph X. Hew, MP	*Deputy Leader of the Opposition*, Elected Member for George Town North
Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, JP, NP, MP	Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. David C. Wight, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town West

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town East
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE 2023/24 SESSION
TUESDAY
14 NOVEMBER, 2023
10:08 AM

[Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning, Honourable Members. I will call on the Elected Member for George Town West to grace us with prayers.

Mr. David C. Wight, Elected Member for George Town West: Good morning. Let us pray:

Almighty God, from whom all wisdom and power are derived. We beseech thee so to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Parliament 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, King Charles, III; William, 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 amongst us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands; the Premier, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition; Ministers of Cabinet, ex officio members, Members of the Parliament, the Chief Justice and members of the Judiciary, 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; and 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: You may be seated. Proceedings are now resumed.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND DUE EXECUTION OF OFFICE

The Speaker: Mrs. Gloria McField-Nixon, please rise.

Hon. Gloria M. McField-Nixon, Acting Deputy Governor, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service: I, Gloria Michelle McField-Nixon, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty, King Charles III, his heirs and successors according to law, so help me, God.

I, Gloria Michelle McField-Nixon, do swear, that I will well and truly serve His Majesty, King Charles III, his heirs and successors, and the people of the Cayman Islands in the Office of Ex-Officio Member of Parliament, so help me, God.

The Speaker: On behalf of this honourable House, I welcome you as honourable temporary ex-officio Member, and welcome you to take your seat. You may be seated.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: None.

OTHER BUSINESS
PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTION

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 10/ 2023-2024 MOTION ON LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town East.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town East: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2023-2024, which is a Motion on Lack of Confidence in the Government.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved. Is there a seconder? The Elected Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town North: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise to second Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2023-2024 — Motion on Lack of Confidence in the Government.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Madam Speaker, before you move on, I will seek to move an Amendment to the Motion in both the title and the Resolved section. I tried to see you at the last minute but it was not possible, so I crave your indulgence, and that of the House, to move it. Under the Standing Orders, Madam Speaker, you can waive the notice.

The Speaker: Notice has been duly waived.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that you did try to reach me, however, this morning I intentionally refrained from making any contact with any Member. I apologise for the inconvenience. We will move forward with the Amendment.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, just to say that in the title, the Motion will read, "Lack of confidence in the management of the country by the Premier".

That's the title, and the Resolve section will be: "**BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** Parliament does declare a lack of confidence in the management of the country by the Premier.". I will have the written version in a couple of minutes, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Has this Amendment been discussed with the Mover? Since you're not the Mover of the Motion, I just want to ensure, for clarity, that the Mover has agreed to these amendments.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I can say he has not.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, there is no need for me to discuss it because any Member can move a Motion in this honourable House at any time, given the Standing Orders. Out of courtesy alone, I would, but I have not been able to do it.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, may we ask you for a quick suspension so we can discuss it amongst ourselves?

The Speaker: We will take a quick suspension. Members can remain in their seats until we resume.

Proceedings suspended at 10:17 am

Proceedings resumed at 10:48 am

The Speaker: Proceedings are now resumed. You may be seated.

I think we will resume by having the Mover of the Motion speak to the Motion.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism & Ports, Elected Member for George Town Central: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. The substantial Motion, yes, that's correct.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, before we went to a break, a Member of the House proposed an amendment and that matter has not been resolved.

The Speaker: We took a suspension and looked at making changes, however, we are not going to deal with an amendment at this moment. We are going to [have] the Mover of the Motion speak to it, as is.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, if you would allow, just for clarity, the Member who proposed those amendments has withdrawn—

The Speaker: The amendment was not properly moved or seconded.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, thanks very much. I'm not going to prolong by covering what you said, but just to make it absolutely clear that a Motion can be moved at any time, with the consent of the Speaker; and a Motion can be moved against any Member at any time, with the consent of the Standing Orders.

The Speaker: Thank you, Elected Member for West Bay West.

Can we please move on with having the Mover of the Motion speak to the Motion? Thank you.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: May I have the lectern?

[Pause]

The Speaker: While we're waiting, I want to take a few moments to acknowledge all of those who we have in the gallery, especially our former Members – Dr. McField and Mr. McLean.

I can't see if there's anyone else upstairs, but I want to welcome you all. My eyes don't serve me very well, but all of you who are upstairs in the gallery, I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules for this very important Meeting.
[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Oh, I didn't see— I still can't see her. We have former Speaker, Ms. Mary Lawrence. Madam Speaker, we welcome you this morning. Thank you for gracing us with your presence.

Mr. Leader, please proceed.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, despite having it moved and seconded, I have yet to read the Motion itself. Therefore, before proceeding with my debate, I will do so, Madam Speaker.

This is a Motion on a Lack of Confidence in the Government, as required by Section 51 of the Constitution.

WHEREAS having regard to the general conduct of the Government since it assumed office;

AND WHEREAS the Government, which the Premier announced would be known as "PACT", assumed office on 22nd April, 2021, comprised of twelve of the nineteen elected Members of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS at the first meeting of Parliament one Member of the PACT Government was elected as Speaker, leaving the Government with eleven Members and with a parliamentary majority of four;

AND WHEREAS on 22 October, 2022, the then Minister of Finance, MP for Bodden Town West, Mr. Christopher Saunders, resigned from the PACT Government and joined the Opposition bench, thereby reducing the number of Government Members to ten and increasing the number of Opposition Members to eight; [Madam Speaker, I do have an amendment to make after I've read this, but I'm reading it exactly as it has been written]

AND WHEREAS on 30 November, 2021, MP for Bodden Town East, Mr. Dwayne Seymour, left the Opposition bench and joined the PACT Government as a Minister, thus restoring the Government's parliamentary majority to four;

AND WHEREAS on 22 September, 2023, then Minister Dwayne Seymour made a speech in Parliament which was highly critical of the Premier and his leadership of the Government, and followed the speech with his resignation from the Government, thus again reducing the number of Government Members to ten and increasing the number of Members in the Opposition to eight;

AND WHEREAS on 9 November, 2023, MP for West Bay West, Hon. McKeeva Bush, issued a statement wherein he asserted, among other things, that the Government was leading the country in the wrong direction and announced his resignation from the PACT Government with immediate effect;

AND WHEREAS as a result of MP McKeeva Bush's resignation the PACT Government no longer holds a parliamentary majority as there are now equal numbers of Members on both the Government and Opposition benches, 9 each;

AND WHEREAS section 74(2) of the Cayman Islands Constitution order 2009 (as amended) declares that the quorum for meetings of the Parliament *"…shall consist of a majority of the elected Members of the Parliament in addition to the person presiding."*;

AND WHEREAS in consequence of the foregoing the Government is without a parliamentary quorum and can only hold meetings of the Parliament and conduct the country's business if at least one member of the Opposition is in attendance;

AND WHEREAS Government's current authority to spend money to pay its bills, fund financial assistance to those receiving stipends, pay salaries of Civil Servants and pensions to pensioners will expire on 31 December, 2023;

AND WHEREAS Parliament must meet shortly in order for Government to present the Throne Speech and the 2024/2025 Budget and pass the necessary Appropriation legislation to ensure the Government can meet its financial obligations;

AND WHEREAS there has not yet been any announcement regarding a date for the holding of the Budget Meeting of the Parliament and time is running out;

AND WHEREAS it is apparent from the statements made by the Members who have resigned from the PACT Government that there are major disagreements within the Caucus and the Cabinet of the PACT Government regarding the Budget and otherwise;

BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Parliament does declare a lack of confidence in the Government.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to move one amendment to the Motion to correct an error and that is in paragraph four, the fourth recital.

[Crosstalk]

Amendment to
Private Member's Motion No. 10/2023-2024
Lack of confidence in the Government

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: The Amendment that I wish to move, Madam Speaker, is in the fourth paragraph, the fourth recital which reads:

"**AND WHEREAS on 22 October [2022] the then Minister of Finance, MP for Bodden Town West, Mr. Christopher Saunders, resigned from the PACT Government and joined the Opposition bench, thereby reducing the number of Government Members to ten and [increasing] the number of Opposition Members [to eight]— it should read eleven and seven [respectively].**

That is the Amendment that I wish to make to the Motion.

The Speaker: The Amendment has been moved.

Well, I guess it's self-explanatory, but do you wish to speak any further to the Amendment?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, it is, Madam Speaker; it simply corrects an error.

The Speaker: Do I have a seconder to the Amendment to the Motion?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I second the Amendment to the Motion.

The Speaker: The question is that the Motion is amended in the fourth recital to read:

AND WHEREAS on 22 October, 2022, the then Minister of Finance, MP for Bodden Town West, Mr. Christopher Saunders, resigned from the PACT Government and joined the Opposition bench, thereby reducing the number of Government Members to eleven and increasing the number of Opposition Members to seven.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.
Agreed: The Amendment passed.

The Speaker: The amended Motion is now open for debate.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it's a matter of some significance that I rise this morning to speak to a Motion expressing a lack of confidence in the country's Government. It truly brings me no joy, Madam Speaker, but it is a step that all of us in the Opposition feel compelled to take. The country simply cannot go on as we have been.

We in the Opposition know it, those on Government benches know it, therefore, I believe this morning that the Motion should succeed, and with its passage, it will mean that the sitting Premier will be required to demit his office. Premier Panton and I have been colleagues, and despite recent differences, he's someone I do like and respect personally; however, even he must know that his Premiership has run out of road.

The recent resignation of the Member for West Bay West from the Government, is the third such resignation that we have seen this year as the PACT Government under his leadership has continued a slow process of disintegration. I have spoken many times about the PACT's in-fighting being bad for the country, and to me, this most recent resignation is the final straw, but let us be clear, Madam Speaker: The events that led to this lack of confidence debate did not start with the resignation of the Member for West Bay West, nor is this all about the parliamentary arithmetic.

With each successive resignation, we have heard more and more about the divisions and disagreements plaguing the Administration from the start. The consistent message from each successive resignation is that those divisions have been allowed to grow, and the disagreements to fester, because of a lack of clear leadership from the Premier. Each resignation had its own trigger. Those former Members of the Government now sitting on the Opposition benches, can speak for themselves during this debate about their own experience, but the impact of their leaving the PACT Government is crystal clear, Madam Speaker.

These three resignations have left the Government unviable, under the leadership of the current Premier. That is the reality and, as the famed expression goes, 'the buck stops with the Premier'. He is the captain of the PACT ship, and inevitably responsible for the position that this Government now finds itself in.

Madam Speaker, a Lack of Confidence Motion is not a tool to be used lightly. My colleagues and I, in the Progressives' Opposition, have undertaken this process in all seriousness. We take this step only because the country needs a solid and capable Government, not the chaos that we are witnessing. We bear no malice to the Premier, or indeed, towards anyone else in the PACT Government; but the reality is that they, particularly the Premier, cannot offer the country the Government it needs. We are compelled to bring this Motion if we are to be true to the oath we took when we were sworn in. As representatives of our people, it is our duty to act to restore a stable and effective Government to these Islands. We are carrying out that duty this morning.

The issues we must debate today are matters of enormous importance to the future of all who live and work in our Islands. I have addressed many of these issues over time, on a regular basis. The failure of the Government to respond quickly enough, or effectively enough, to the cost of living crisis; the apparent helplessness of the Government as people become evermore fearful of the spread of violent crime; the need to do more to tackle a raft of issues— from housing, to traffic congestion, to our still-struggling tourism industry.

These are all issues I have spoken about as recently as last month. They are obvious, not just to the Opposition but to the country and so, Madam Speaker, I will not dwell too much on the Government's long list of failings today. Instead, I will speak to the immediate and grave concerns that are addressed in the Lack of Confidence Motion that we filed with Parliament on Friday.

Firstly, because of the resignation of the Member for West Bay West, the PACT Government no longer holds a parliamentary majority, as there are now an equal number of Members on both the Government and Opposition benches— nine each.

Madam Speaker, Section 74 (2) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order, 2009, as amended, declares that "**the quorum for meetings of Parliament shall consist of a majority of the elected members of the Parliament in addition to the person presiding.".** The consequences of this is that the Government is without a parliamentary quorum, and they can only hold a Meeting of the Parliament and conduct the country's business, if at least one Member of the Opposition is in attendance so, Madam Speaker, in its present form, the Government cannot perform the fundamental duty of calling and controlling the affairs of the Parliament.

Madam Speaker, the Premier, of course, could ask you to resign and allow an outside Speaker to be brought in to bolster his parliamentary position with one more vote, but you, Madam Speaker, cannot be forced out if you do not wish to leave the Speaker's Chair so soon, and interrupt the work that you have started there. The Premier does not control the votes to do that but, even if you did assist the Premier and PACT by departing the distinguished role of Speaker to become a Parliamentary Secretary on the PACT's back bench, the Premier's majority remains on a knife's edge with no guarantee as to how many rebellious independent PACT Members will be in their seats for crucial votes, including the coming budget.

I don't have to tell anyone in this House, Madam Speaker, that the Government's current authority to spend money to pay its bills, fund financial assistance to those receiving stipends, pay civil servants' salaries and pensioners' pensions, will expire on the 31st December, 2023. From what I understand, the budget remains in terrible shape regarding preparedness, with few of the current Ministers agreeing to it. Indeed, it is apparent from the statements made by the Members who have resigned from the PACT Government that there are significant disagreements within the Caucus and the Cabinet of the PACT Government regarding the budget and related matters.

It may be possible for the Premier to try again to paper over the increasingly wide gaps in the PACT, and to push through a budget, but even if a budget can get through the House it will, I suspect, merely postpone the inevitable disagreement over priorities, leaving it to fester until it comes out in yet another crisis, in the not too distant future.

There is a more immediate problem. Even if a budget has been agreed, Parliament must certainly meet soon for the Government to present the Throne Speech and the 2024-2025 Budget, and pass the necessary Appropriation legislation to ensure that the Government can meet its financial obligations for the coming two years. However, there has yet to be any formal announcement regarding a date for Parliament's budget meeting and time is running out. Even if such an announcement were to come soon, the Premier may not be able to rely on enough of his Members to vote for the budget he is trying to push through.

This is an unprecedented situation, Madam Speaker. We have current and former Government Members speaking openly about the ongoing failure of the PACT to put together a cohesive budget, and we all are hearing huge concerns from across the public and private sectors regarding this Government's failure on this one fundamental matter. Putting together a budget is a basic governing function, and the abject failure to get it done so far must be addressed. Therefore, Madam Speaker, we are here today principally because the PACT Government cannot carry out really important governing functions and has, as I have said, become unviable. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to remain.

Madam Speaker, our sincere belief is that these failures lie in the main with the Premier's leadership. An early political lesson for me was that the main goal following an election is not just doing whatever is necessary to get into Government. Indeed, it should not be doing whatever you have to do to become Premier. Indeed, and instead, it is about forming a Government capable of moving the country forward— one capable of coming together and staying together, over the term.

Following both elections in 2013 and 2017, the Progressives did not just try to get the numbers to form the Government. We worked hard to form a Government capable of moving the country forward. One capable of coming together and staying together over the term. We worked hard to form a Government that could work together and agree on a programme for Government that all involved could then work to deliver.

I saw that process working from both sides, Madam Speaker. As an independent in 2013, I was a Member of the Coalition with the Progressives and then in 2017, as a Progressive, I was involved in bringing together a Unity Government. Both Governments worked collectively and cohesively, to develop and to deliver the programme and priorities we had agreed; both governments were led by a political giant, the Member for Red Bay, who held us together through difficult times, allowed and encouraged full debate and participation within the Government Caucus, and ensured collective agreements were reached and then adhered to.

The PACT Government has failed because it never had an agreed programme for Government. Instead, PACT put forward a Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) two years ago, that was just a compilation of individual priorities to which no one had any real commitment. That SPS was not a programme for collective Government, it was a licence for individual Ministers to do their thing. That initial failure could never be overcome because in the current Premier, the PACT Government lacks the kind of positive political leader we benefited from in the previous two Progressives' Governments. Because of that lack of leadership, the PACT Government, under the Premier, has not shown the capacity to stay together and hold it together.

The inescapable conclusion is that, at a time when Cayman is facing enormous challenges, all the evidence shows is that, sadly, a Government with Premier Panton at the head is just not up to the job. In my debate today, and in the contributions from my colleagues that will follow, we will lay out that evidence; and what I ask, Madam Speaker, is that it should be on the basis of that evidence that Members of this House should vote.

Even as they recognise the validity of the case that the Opposition will present, some from the Government benches opposite will be tempted to vote against the Motion before us today. For some of them, self-interest, and the desire to hang on to power at all costs, will push them to vote 'No'; but it is not them I seek to address today, Madam Speaker. When the time comes, they will have to answer for their actions to the voters in their constituency, if they strive to keep a failed Premier in Office. Those I seek to address today are not self-interested and power hungry. Some on the Government benches are willing to put the country's interests first.

We know from the press reports, Madam Speaker, that some Members of the Government have already been to see the Premier, to ask him to stand aside in the country's best interests. We know, therefore, that there are those Members who have lost confidence in the Premier. They cannot, in all good conscience, try to persuade the Premier to resign one day, and vote to keep him in Office the next. As a result, I expect those men and women to do what they know is right, and act now in the best interests of the Cayman Islands and its people.

However, even as I do so, I know they may still hesitate to support the Motion even though they recognise the Premier's failings and know that his continuing in Office would create more problems, some of his colleagues may hesitate to take the significant step of voting him out of Office. They will hesitate, Madam Speaker, out of a sense of personal loyalty to the Premier and their Government colleagues, and out of a hope that despite how awful things might appear now, it all might just get better.

As you know, loyalty is a rarity in politics, Madam Speaker— when we see it, we should respect it; but to those opposite I say: loyalty to your colleagues is admirable, but let me remind you of an old adage: *Only give your loyalty to those who have never given you cause to question theirs*. Look around at your colleagues, and ask if some of them deserve the loyalty you want to show towards them as you vote today.

In addition, Madam Speaker, there are those on the Government bench who will face what could be called a conflict of loyalty. The choice is loyalty to their Premier and a Government they hoped would achieve many things but is sadly failing, or loyalty to our Islands and people who look to the Government to be unified and capable of moving the country forward and improving the lives of our people. That is a conflict of loyalty to a failing PACT enterprise, versus what is truly best for the collective good of our Islands. That conflict of loyalty cannot be resolved by Members continuing in the way things are going hoping for better, but knowing things will get worse.

Those opposite whom, I know, have doubts that things will get better for a Panton-led PACT Government, but choose to ignore this truth should carefully consider the line that would have been drawn when this vote is taken— a line that once drawn, may not be able to be undone. In voting against the Motion, the country will have no illusion that you will have voted to support a failed Premier, despite your misgivings.

As the situation worsens, as it undoubtedly will, there will be no room for quiet discussions with voters to persuade them that you did not support everything the Premier and the PACT Government did or failed to do. Your vote, based on misplaced loyalty, will tie you to a failed Premier and a failing Government. I must concede that the Premier deserves your loyalty by virtue of his position, but loyalty comes in many forms. American diplomat Robert *[Sic. Richard]* N. Haass is quoted as saying, **"Speaking truth to power is actually a form of loyalty"**, and we know, as I have said, that some opposite, have shown that type of loyalty in private, willing to speak truth to power and tell the Premier he has to step down. Now is the time for those on the Government benches who know the truth, to stand up and speak it in public.

On the 7th May, 1940, with Britain battered and bruised, and facing what seemed like an imminent invasion, it was not the Opposition, but fellow conservative Leo Amery who said to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, *"You have sat there too long for all the good you have done. In the name of God, go."* Who in this Government will now show the same courage to say what needs to be said?

Keeping your fingers crossed and hoping it will all work out in the end will not get vital improvements to public services delivered; nor will it help to mitigate the cost of living crisis, nor help to get a grip on crime, nor help solve the challenge of affordable homes. All of those things require a new Government and leadership that does not just say it is working together to get things done— it actually does work together to get things done.

There are two potential paths to putting such a new Government in place. Obviously, my preferred solution would be to form a new, Progressive-led coalition if possible. Despite the difficulties of working within this dysfunctional Government, there are those on the Government benches whom I believe we can work with to implement important policies that make a real difference to people's lives, therefore, it could be possible for those of us in the Opposition to work with those Members of the current Government who, like us, are willing to put differences aside and work together in the best interests of our people.

Admittedly, that is a short list in my view, however, an alternative path is for the PACT Government to reform itself under a new leadership with a new Premier. This solution would certainly not solve some of the deep-seated divisions within the PACT Government that have been so clearly on display since the Government was formed, but if a new leader can bring the various individuals together, create a sensible programme for Government, and command the loyalty of those within the Government, then a more coherent and cohesive PACT could yet emerge.

What this country needs are new leadership, and a stable and effective Government. In the Opposition, we will respect the right of a new Premier to be given the chance to lead and to get a budget passed. Either of the paths I have outlined is potentially viable. Both would give the country fresh leadership, and both are a better alternative to early elections that, in my view, would themselves be an unnecessary and unwelcome distraction.

While the Opposition is willing to give a new PACT Government under a new Premier some leeway, there is little time to waste in tackling the country's many challenges. Therefore, I put any new PACT Premier on notice: We will be holding you and your colleagues to account, just like we have the current Premier. We will scrutinise your performance, and we will challenge you to respond effectively to deliver for our people. We will not hesitate to move to criticise if performance does not improve. That has always been, and remains the job of the Opposition. There is a path to putting a new Premier and a new Government in place, and it starts with those who recognise the need for change voting with their conscience in support of this Motion.

For a new Government to be formed from within the PACT, the current Premier needs to step down, and the PACT Members select a new Premier and Deputy Premier. They would also need to bring back into the fold either one or more of their former Members now sitting in the Opposition, to strengthen their numbers. The new Premier and Deputy would then need to wrestle what has been a dysfunctional group into a cohesive Government, and get a budget passed. All of this is harder than it sounds and may still fail in the end, but it is an option, and if taken up and successful, then we in the Opposition would have achieved our goal of a changed Government that can hopefully be more stable and effective.

The other path is for those on the Government benches whom we believe we can work with— and they know who they are— to vote 'Yes' on this Motion, and join us in a Progressives-led Government of National Unity. There is a clear set of priorities that I know we could agree upon. I have set out those priorities very clearly over recent months, Madam Speaker. Three of those priorities are about tackling what are the most pressing challenges facing Cayman at this time. Those are:

1. To overcome the ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis;
2. To reduce crime and the fear of crime; and
3. To enable better, more affordable access to housing for our people.

The other three priorities are areas where action in the next two years covered by this Budget is necessary to meet the immediate challenge, and better prepare the Cayman Islands for the future. Those are:

1. To restore Cayman's economy to a path of steady, sustainable growth;
2. To accelerate action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts; and
3. To respond positively to the challenges of an ageing population.

The Progressives are willing to work with those Members of the current Administration who share those priorities with us, and who we believe can act in the country's best interests. Additionally, it is incumbent on the PACT to change and improve from within. Now is not the time for more chaos, Madam Speaker. The country needs, and deserves stability. The disunity, infighting, and serious lack of progress on things that matter to Caymanians must end. Either through a renewed PACT, or a Progressives-led Government, the country and our people need and deserve an effective, cohesive Government willing to act in the best interests of the country and not in the self-interest and self-preservation of elected Members.

This is a time for responsible politicians, whatever their past affiliations, to come together and tackle the country's challenges. The Progressives have shown, during our last two Administrations, that we can work constructively with others for the benefit of our people. We have done it before, and we are willing to do it again now.

To bring about change, the House needs to pass the Lack of Confidence Motion before it today, and I ask all those present in these Chambers to follow their conscience. As I said at the outset, the current PACT Government and Premier Panton have run out of road. It is clear that the Premier cannot lead the kind of stable, effective Government that is needed in these times.

Madam Speaker, it is time for change… the House needs to vote for that change.

Thank you, Madam Speaker

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Madam Speaker, I've been in

meditation all weekend on this vote. I really did not sleep much and this morning on the way down, I stopped by Spotts Dock, and I saw this Cuban guy out there fishing. He did not really understand English too well, but I got the chance.

It is one of my routines, Madam Speaker. When I first got elected, I used to stop at Spotts Dock on the way down. I would take in the water, look at the waves, and say a prayer before coming to Parliament— and the prayer is pretty much always the same, whereby I ask the Lord and hope that day, that the meditation on my lips and all the other stuff that goes with it are pleasing to Him. I'm not a practicing Christian, Madam Speaker, but I was raised by good parents, good grandparents, and good family to fear the Lord, and not to lean on my own understanding.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, I will say this is actually a really sad day for me. I personally know the work that went into the creation of the PACT Government and, while most Members may not know, I was actually the one who first coined the term PACT, when we sat down drafting the very first press release. It is from that initial draft, that every other Member was able to put on their touch, to find something that we actually could agree on.

I remember going through it and the genesis behind it, Madam Speaker, and to the public, was 1994's Newt Gingrich and the Republicans Contract with America, in terms of what they wanted to achieve for their people. I remember the time we spent as a group, putting together the Strategic Policy Statement. We sat, and we all agreed on what those objectives should be. That was required, as per law, three months after the General Election and in that Strategic Policy Statement, we had ten broad outcomes.

I was very pleased with that SPS document and the camaraderie that was used to put it together; and I can say, Madam Speaker, regardless of what people may think, having disagreements in politics is healthy. After all, democracy itself is a system that recognised that there will be disagreements, division, discord and dissent; but what it also says, Madam Speaker, is that you should have dialogue, debate, discussion and then you come to a consensus. It has always been about ideas and competing ideas. Politics itself, Madam Speaker, isn't easy.

Madam Speaker, this morning I received a call from a constituent which really summed everything up for me. It is a constituent who is struggling to keep his business open. A business that he has put everything into— his sweat, tears, blood and toils— for the last seven or eight years. Last week he reached out to me, and I tried calling Minister André. I didn't get him. I called Minister Bryan, I got him, and he said he would speak to his Chief Officer and get back to me. That is what we in this House [are] elected to do, Madam Speaker. There are a million and one things hurting our people, and to see us sitting here on this Motion, when so many people out there are hurting and struggling, actually makes me feel almost ashamed to be a politician.

When Joey called me last week about signing the letter I said to him, afterwards, could I add to the Special Meeting asking for the pension to be dealt with also [because], Madam Speaker, if I don't get at least 10-15 calls a day, on when the pension is going to come through, I don't get plenty. As such, Madam Speaker, I am serving notice now, that at the end of this Meeting I intend to go around and ask for a Special Meeting next week just to deal with that Pension Bill, so at least people can see that politicians can come together in a Special Meeting to do something.

I have a woman right now waiting to have her mortgage paid off as a Christmas present to her family, with the last thing she has to go with after having her mortgage increased by over $2,200 per month. She sees the light at the end of the tunnel that she can be mortgage free, debt-free, by the end of the year. That shouldn't take long because it passed unanimously in this House. We can come here, everyone says their five minutes, we pass it and get it okayed by the Governor, and the pension companies can start to work and people can get money.

Madam Speaker, when we delivered the first budget, there was a line or a prayer from Reverend Peter Raible that in fairness when the Honourable Member for Red Bay responded, he had a nice little response to it. What it basically said, Madam Speaker was:

"We build on foundations we did not lay;
We warm ourselves by fires we did not light;
We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant;
We drink from wells we did not dig;
We profit from persons we did not know.

This is as it should be.
Together we are more than any
one person could be;
Together we can build across the generations;
Together we can renew our hope and our faith
in the life that is yet to unfold;
Together we can heed the call to a ministry
of care and justice.

We are ever bound in community
May it always be so."

Reverend Peter Raible

When I was delivering the budget at the time, Madam Speaker, the reason I used that was because it is important to recognise that in governing a country one of the things you need is consistency.

You know, people talk about Cayman being the Singapore of the Caribbean. You know what Singapore had in about sixty years of independence? Three Prime Ministers. In the Caribbean we have not found a way to build institutions for continuation.

Madam Speaker, we are here for four years; do you really and truly think that in four years we can solve/fix problems that have taken ten, twenty, thirty, forty years to accumulate?

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: We're not going to score a goal every time we go on the pitch, Madam Speaker, but our objective as Parliamentarians in this Session is to keep moving the ball quicker and closer to the goal, so that whoever comes in after us can say that we, too, built on foundations we did not lay.

Madam Speaker, about two or three weeks ago, I had an opportunity to address the Youth Parliamentarians, and one of the young parliamentarians asked me a question that really, in the six years of being elected, gave me an opportunity to finally understand fully what it is that I want to do as a Member of this Parliament. The question the young lady asked me, which really gave me pause was: If there was one thing that I would like to see done in Cayman, what would that one thing be? Just one thing.

It took me a while, Madam Speaker, because there are many pressing issues out there and it's kind of hard to zero in on one thing, but the one answer that came to me for some strange reason— I don't know why it came to me that day, but it was the answer that came to me— was *for everyone to see how really valuable and important they are, and just how needed they are.* The reason I bring it up, Madam Speaker, is that scientists have actually calculated the odds of people being born, and came up with the number 400 trillion to one. The odds of you being born [are] 400 trillion to one. A number that is very hard to even comprehend.

When you think about it, Madam Speaker, everybody has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents and so forth. When you factor in the probability of your parents even coming together on the day that they met… if one person had a headache or didn't show up at that particular event, it wouldn't have happened. Your parents would not have met. There could have been so many things— sickness, wars, famine, you name it. Then you multiply it again with your four grandparents coming together and your eight great-grandparents. I mean, it is so difficult.

The point I want to make is, Madam Speaker, that when you have odds of 400 trillion to one, it means the universe wants you here. You are special, and it is not for any of us or anyone, to sit and make anyone feel less than they are. Earlier this year, the US Surgeon General said that the newest or latest pandemic in the United States is loneliness. People are feeling alone; and it's not just people living alone, Madam Speaker. People are in large families, they are in crowds, and they still feel alone— something in them is missing.

Something I wanted to get across to the young parliamentarians that day, Madam Speaker, is that in a country such as ours, with a 95 per cent service base, it means that our economy is predicated on people providing a service, offering a service. If we have people, our own people, not realising their full potential, it simply means that the Cayman Islands is not realising its full potential. Then the question for us, as Parliamentarians is what rules, laws, regulations, legislation can we put in place to allow our people not only to realise their potential, but to really put out what they can deliver?

Madam Speaker, Members may recall when we looked at the institution of government itself, that if you understand the three pillars in any society, government just didn't appear. It started out when people came together as a community. I've said it before, and I think it was one of the reasons why after the 2021 elections I gravitated to the Premier, because his tagline was "*Community Builds Country"*.

If you understand the genesis of any society, it started at the community level; then, as people started to trade amongst themselves, they created an economy, and as the community grew and the economy grew, it created a government. As a result, the natural order is community, economy and government. That's the natural order of a country starting out,
Madam Speaker.

The Caribbean, or the New World as they put it, didn't necessarily start that way. The economy came first, because the Caribbean and elsewhere were exploited for its agricultural resources; then, the government put in a system to manage the economic affairs. The last thing on the totem pole, Madam Speaker, was the community— or the community of slaves as they had it; so, what we found in the Caribbean was the economy, the government, and then the community. That is the burden of just about every other Caribbean island.

I guess what made Cayman different, Madam Speaker, is that we were able to go the right way because we were not "exploited for agricultural purposes". In essence, we were able to build what we have today. There was a time when the world didn't come to us. What did we do? We built our own boats and we went to the world. Fifty years ago, Madam Speaker, at the point when I was born, Cayman was only importing about 30 per cent of what we needed; 70 per cent was actually self-sufficient. We were actually self-sufficient.

Madam Speaker, where we have lost track in Cayman, is when they would get up and say, *well, we know we need to do this because our competitors are doing this and our competitors are doing that*. The truth of the fact is, that in terms of how we develop, we have no competitors. What we had is what other countries are striving for. Nowhere else on this planet, Madam Speaker, you find 140-150 different nationalities on 102 square miles; nowhere. You'd have to go into a large metropolitan [city in] United States, San Francisco, New York or wherever to find such numbers; and even then, you won't find them in 102 square miles.

Cayman is unique, Madam Speaker. That's why I have always said to new Caymanians and people who call Cayman home, do not try to turn Cayman into where you left. You came here to make a better life, Cayman has provided that. Why are you trying to change here into where you left? Why? It is all of the little, unique things, the little quirks that people complain about, that make the magic of Cayman.

I really feel sad for many older Caymanians who have seen these islands come from nothing, become something and slowly going back to nothing. A couple of months back Dr. Steve was here, Madam Speaker. I called Dr. Steve and I said to him, *"I really feel sorry for you*." I called Gilbert McLean and said the same thing, "*I feel sorry for you guys*. *You have seen where Cayman was coming from; the potential — the promise— of what Cayman could be, and then to sit back and just watch it start to slowly go down…"*

Madam Speaker, I didn't really plan on speaking this early because I was still in my thoughts listening to my music and getting in the frame of mind. Then again, maybe I'm glad that I actually get to speak this early, because what I'm looking for is a tone of where we need to get to. I don't want today's debate going into anything personal.

Madam Speaker, when I left the Government, the message I sent to my constituents at the time was, "*whatever the differences are between the Premier and I, it will remain personal, private*"; and the reason for that is my personal political philosophy. I do not speak badly about anybody publicly. That is my personal belief, and the reason for it is that it's a privilege and an honour to sit in this House. Every time I come here or into this Chamber, there's a feeling that comes over you. Only people who are sitting here now and who have sat here can truly understand what it is like to sit in these green chairs and represent your people.

It is one of the highest honours anyone can get. I've said to people from [the] get go, "*I applied for a job to build up and uplift Caymanians, and if I have to tear down one Caymanian to get or keep this job, then I would have failed."* That's one reason, Madam Speaker, that when people get up and say to me, '*Chris, this one said this and that one said that'*, my response is always the same: '*Bless them. Bless them. Pray for them'*. I'm a public figure, I will take public licks; it's what I signed up for.

A couple of weeks ago, Madam Speaker, I was with a constituent of mine helping her to write a letter to go to the bank asking for a little break because her payments have gone up. She said to me, '*Chris, all of that stuff that's been said, why don't you come out and say something*?' I said, '*darling, here we are trying to get the bank off your back, keep your lights on and keep groceries in your cupboard*. *What would you think of me if I'm out there wasting time on what people are saying about me? If I start responding every time someone says anything bad, I'll never be able to do any work for you. What would you prefer me to do, be here with you or be out there defending this? As a matter of fact, I'm sure you would probably prefer if none of these problems existed, and the only problem you had was people saying something bad about you*.' She said, '*You know Chris, you're right',*

Madam Speaker, that's what it is. We are guardians of the potential and the promise of what Cayman is. By now, everyone who has listened to me knows my position and where I stand for different things; it has been no secret, but at the end of the day it is about uplifting and building our people and what we can move forward with. Equally, Madam Speaker, I must admit that last December was really a time of political reflection for me.

What triggered it was, Madam Speaker, when my firstborn was visiting. We went to the barber together, and he said to me, '*Daddy, how is life in Government,*' and I almost gave my son the standard response that I would give. Then it occurred to me that I was speaking to my son and as a parent, as a father, if I can't sit down and give my son the unbridled truth, then something is wrong. I said to my son at that time, '*Son, I am afraid that your dad may be a part of a racist government*.' I said as much that fateful Tuesday morning, Madam Speaker, when I had to put the last Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper, in his place. I told him about the conversation I had with my son.

Madam Speaker, the *duppy* of that former government still roams these Halls. We saw it just recently, in the pepper spray vote, where every single Member except one, voted for the pepper spray. We know where the former government stood on it, but at the end of the day, our job is to look out for the people who voted for us.

Madam Speaker, I will say this much: sometimes it takes a lot to say what you have to say, and really and truly don't give one whatever about what people think. The message I sent to my constituents the day I left was actually written in January, between a meeting I had with Minister Bryan and a meeting I was going to have with the Premier.

Minister Bryan asked me to attend a meeting at the Marriott with him, to go through the beach erosion issue and what we could do to help; and at the end of the meeting we sat on a bench outside and he said to me, *"You talk to your friend yet*?*"* I said, *"What happened*?*"* He said, "*Boy, you know, the Premier is pissed with what happened in Cabinet the other day."* I said, *"What do you mean*?*"* He said, "*Boy, he said to me, 'Kenneth you were bad enough; but Chris jumped over the fence and ran five miles down the road, screaming'",* and so forth.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yep, thank you, Minister Bush reminded me.

I wrote the message that I sent to my constituents that day, on the drive over. I honestly prepared it

that day. I don't know what my meeting with the Premier would have been [like]; I don't know what the mind set would have been, but I made up my mind, then and there, that if the meeting went sideways, I was going to say, '*Premier, hold on for me one second, don't move*', and I would go on my phone and send that message out blast. Of course, I think he's on my distribution list and his phone would have vibrated and he would have said, '*what does that say'*; and I would say, '*check your phone'*. That basically would have been me saying, '*I am out of here, I gone*.'

I remember saying to the Premier at the time, that every day Caymanians get up and go to work and put up with managers and bosses and supervisors who give them a hard time for no reason at all, just because they can, because of who they are. I said, if we have to sit down at this stage, at this level and take it, then we would have failed, because how can we go out there and fight for our people and defend our people, when we can't sit here and defend ourselves against a civil servant from the UK who just happened to get Cayman as an assignment.

Madam Speaker, as I said in my email to the Governor at the time and I stand by it, Member of Parliament (MP) means more to me than Deputy Premier (DP). This House, my membership in this House and my ability to come here and advocate for my people, means more to me than anything else politically.

Last December, Madam Speaker, and I've said it already, I called the former Premier, the Member for Red Bay and I apologised to him. I said, *"You know, Sir Alden, I gave you a hard time when I was in Opposition. If I had known [then] what I know now, I would have been a little easier on you; but then again, you have to take some blame too because, maybe if you had explained to us how challenging, how difficult it was, maybe I would have taken it much easier on you "*— because, Madam Speaker, I will tell you straight up, *Government not easy*. What we do isn't easy.

I understand what the Member for West Bay West was trying to do with the vote this morning, because we are going to ask Members of the Government to vote against the performance of the Government, when I know for a fact, [that] some of them over there work like dogs. I know for a fact some of them are on the phone at 12, 1, 2 o'clock in the morning because I used to be on the phone with them. They work like dogs.

I can't sit and say to Minister André, who just got us off the grey list, *"You're doing a bad job"*. I can't tell Minister Bryan, having seen the tourism numbers before we left, and seeing what's out there in the industry, that he's doing a bad job. Minister Jay, too, is out there working like a dog, Madam Speaker. I know it's difficult to sit down and say to people, vote against yourself, or the Government, for not doing a good job, when collectively or individually— whichever way you want to look at it— these guys are working like dogs for their people and their constituents.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you *it nah easy.* I know. I believe that everything that happens, happens for a reason. I can say publicly now, that as much as I tried to look calm, cool and collected, when I was in Government I used to have chest pains and lower back pains. I found out, after I left, that my family actually set up a chat group to speak just about my health. Did Christopher get enough sleep? Did he eat properly— all those kinds of things. They actually thought I was on the verge of a heart attack or a stroke. Well, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that since I left, I have not had one chest or lower back pain.

It has given me an opportunity, Madam Speaker, to really get back to focusing on being a parliamentarian. I buried myself in putting together a Consumer Protection Bill. Why it was important to me, was because in the last government, Sir Alden made a big step in moving this body from a Legislative Assembly to a Parliament, but for some strange reason, we're still behaving like a Legislative Assembly. Slowly, we need to move away from the days of parliamentarians bringing Motions; we need to start bringing Bills, but that requires resources.

Madam Speaker, right now I'm working on another Bill that aims to deal with consumer protection strictly on the banking side of things, which is not included in the Bill that I did. Just the banking aspect of it for people with mortgages, banking fees, and all those kinds of things— and Madam Speaker, it's a lot of work. You need a lawyer, and I can tell you, you're going to need resources.

Madam Speaker, within the Constitution, the Attorney General is the legal advisor to both the Parliament and the Cabinet. The truth is, Madam Speaker, the Parliament itself is without a legal advice. We need resources here to actually get this kind of stuff done; to get meaningful changes made for our people, and not be dependent solely on the Attorney General's Chambers.

I wrote a letter, only God knows how long ago now, Madam Speaker. Other than an out of-office [automated reply], I haven't got a response to it yet. I don't know why, but I'm saying to myself how, as a Member of Parliament, I can't even get a response from the Attorney General's Chambers, when constitutionally, he's required to be the legal advisor to the Parliament. How can we sit here— and I'm saying right now, Madam Speaker, that as the Government is putting together the budget, that they start looking at putting resources here, that will allow parliamentarians to do a proper job for their people, bring proper legislation for their people; legislation that is actually meaningful. Legislation that can make a difference.

Madam Speaker, I really do feel badly for the Premier, I do. I think the Member for West Bay West, the Member for Cayman Brac East, the former Leader of Government Business Mr. Kurt Tibbetts, and Mr. Truman Bodden are pretty much all we have left alive who have sat in that chair. Oh, and Sir Alden, the original

"two-term"— sorry, that's our nickname for him; "two-term", because at the rate things are going, it looks like he's going to be the only Premier in Cayman who served two terms.

I do not know what it takes to sit in the [Premier] chair, Madam Speaker. I can't tell you the mind-set it takes. I can only tell you the mind-set as an MP, and as a Minister. Even when you're Acting, Madam Speaker, it is not the same for recognising that the buck stops with you. It isn't an easy job, it is not. I can't speak to what it takes to go inside it. I can tell you about the stress that I had in my role. That is why, regardless of what [happened], I've always said to people, *pray for him, lift him up; he nah got an easy job*.

Madam Speaker, we spend so much time tearing each other down in this country.

An Hon. Member: Yeah!

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: And that's why I have said, the biggest challenge in Cayman right now is *bad mind*. We can no longer feel happy for our people. As I mentioned earlier, being born is 400 trillion to one; every single one of us has a unique gift. Some people's gift is to run fast, some people's gift is to sing, some people's gift is to reason. I mean, everyone has different gifts, but whatever your gift is, Madam Speaker use it. Don't sit down and begrudge somebody else for their gift because you do not have it.

Madam Speaker, the crossroads that we are at in Cayman, for this Parliament, is what is the message we're going to send? Madam Speaker, I have received messages from MPs in just about every single Overseas Territory [asking], *What's happening in Cayman?* Cayman has become the de facto leader of the Overseas Territories; some may disagree with it, but it is where we stand. Again, I give former Premier, Sir Alden his credit in really putting Cayman on the map in a leadership role amongst the Overseas Territories, and also former Premier, Mr. Bush. They worked really hard for Cayman to reach where it is, that other countries are now looking to us for guidance, for an example.

Madam Speaker, I guess I'm happy that I got a chance before it starts. I don't know the speeches that people have written; as people can see, my days of writing speeches are done unless, of course, a Bill is being introduced, because the Standing Orders don't call for that in a debate. I don't want anyone to see me get up and read something and wonder if it is someone else's words. The words here are mine.

Madam Speaker, this morning my mother sent me a bible verse. I think it was II Corinthians, and it spoke about "uneven yoke". I think the first time I heard the term, if I can be brutally honest, it was in a Lloyd Lovindeer song. It's not something that crossed my mind, but it talks about, *do not be unequally yoked* or something to that effect; and Madam Speaker, the question the Caymanian people have to now ask themselves is: What is the direction they want in our country, and I'll tell you why I brought up the term unequal yoke. Maybe it was providence that my mother chose to send that to me this morning.

Madam Speaker, if you understand how Cayman operates, it's a service-based economy, meaning taxation is normally driven by consumption. The cry we hear the most is [about] our eroding middle class. The reason our middle class is being eroded is a general rule in economics whereby only one group of people pays taxes, namely, the middle class. The poor don't pay taxes because they really can't afford to, and the rich don't pay taxes because they own all the industries and if you hike up the cost, they'll just put it in the price and pass it on. Therefore, the only people who truly pay taxes in a country is the middle class, and as the cost of living goes up, and the tax burden becomes greater, it is felt by the middle class.

Madam Speaker, I have people asking for assistance now who have never, ever, ever asked for assistance before.

We have not done a good enough job of insulating our Islands against many of these external threats. I've said this before and I'll say it again: We have a population that can fit inside a stadium. The problems and challenges we are having are things that can be easily managed. I've also said, and I will go to my grave saying it, that *the things that are wrong with Cayman can still be fixed with the things that are right with Cayman,* but Madam Speaker, we have to get back to the things that are right.

About two weeks ago, Madam Speaker, I did an obituary for one of my constituents, Ms. Esther McLaughlin of blessed memory, and the night before, [while] I was reading the obituary and preparing for it, something triggered and I said it at the church service. It was about building and upholding our institutions, and I think it was probably Ms. Esther's final message to me.

Madam Speaker, I spoke about continuation earlier. We talked about Singapore with three Prime Ministers in sixty years; they have had continuation of policies and that's why I said, **"we build on foundations we did not lay"**. The one institution, Madam Speaker, that has been the backbone of what we have in Cayman is the church, and each of us is sitting in this House, this Parliament, watching that institution be eroded in the name of tolerance or whatever.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you something. Do you know what they are doing with some churches In the United Kingdom? They are turning them into apartment buildings because people stopped going to church; and if we sit here, Madam Speaker, and allow the one institution that has been the cornerstone of our success to be eroded, we would have failed future generations. As I say all the while, *'we are not going to be remembered for what we inherited, we're going to be remembered for what we leave behind.'*

Madam Speaker, this morning as I stood up on the dock at Spotts, I felt the waves; I know the sea was

a little rough this morning. A Japanese scientist, Dr. Emoto, did a study of water because after all, our body is still 60 per cent water. Water has a calibrating effect for us. It calms the nerves. You could be having a bad day, you go by the sea/beach, you put your feet in the water, and you see your problems start going away. That's why people spend millions of dollars every year just to come to our beaches; something some of our own people no longer even enjoy or remember to enjoy. Madam Speaker, it was when I sat there and looked out, that I fully understood why they say, ***He hath founded it upon the seas.*** [It is] then you understand the importance of water; the importance of the sea, in terms of trade, et cetera, and where we are in the grand scheme of things.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure everyone was expecting brimstone and fire, and for me to go through all the problems I had with the Premier, et cetera, but that is not my style of politics. I do not tear down nor attack people, and this is why I can say to anybody in and outside this honourable House that I've never gotten elected by saying anything bad about anyone.

People tell me that, you know, maybe I'm too naive for politics, that sometimes you have to throw licks, and all those things; *nah*. Everything I have, is because I was blessed to have gotten a scholarship and an education that was paid for by the people of this country. They invested in me at a time when many Caymanians didn't have the opportunity as they do today, to go off to school. I have made up my mind that I'm going to use my productive years, regardless of how many of them I may have left, trying to give back to the country that gave me so much.

Madam Speaker, what has made Cayman unique isn't income inequality, but rather, income mobility. From where we start, I look at my own family. My grandmother, who arrived here in the 1940s, had ten children and only one was able to maximise educational opportunities during his time, which is Mr. George McCarthy. He will tell you, and I will say it every chance I get, the late Jim Bodden and the late Tom Jefferson were instrumental in his life story. They did something they didn't have to do to help him, and it opened the door for many of us.

Of my grandmother's ten children, one was able to go to University during their productive years; of her grandchildren, I think 16 of 33; and of her great-great-grandchildren, it is about 100 per cent if they want to, but they'd have to sit down and worry about whether or not they will have that opportunity— and in fairness to the Minister of Education, [it is] something she's passionate about. She has really gone out of her way to ensure that Caymanians get that educational opportunity because she, too, Madam Speaker, was born in a time when those things were reserved for a chosen few. Now we have an opportunity to really invest in our people.

Madam Speaker, going back to the old income mobility, I said all of that to say that it's about creating opportunities for our people. That is what Cayman is built on, creating those opportunities. It comes back to the point I have said before: the biggest challenge that we have in this country is *bad mind*.

There was a time, Madam Speaker, where we only had six LCCLs in this country— McAlpine, Asphaltic, CUC, Cable and Wireless, Esso and Texaco; I think for 30 years we had around six. Today we have over 300. I'm old enough to remember the days [when] you saw somebody in a new car, *"Oh, he fronting"* so what, if he's fronting? At least some Caymanian is going into business with some foreigner and getting some benefit out of it, but what do we do? We do everything to make the Caymanian not get a piece of the pie, then we sit and complain about foreigners getting too much.

Madam Speaker, when I look at some of the comments— although I rarely read them. I remember last year February, leaving the PACT Caucus chat group, there was a headline in the *Cayman Compass* that read, **"10,600 work permits deferred over the last 10 months"**. We sat, and as the Minister at the time I can tell you that we had over 3,000 people receiving stipends and I said to the Board at that point, "*We can't afford to give away these jobs because if we do, when our people come off those stipends they will have nothing; so, unless it is absolutely necessary and a renewal, you sit down and park them grants, because our people need opportunities in this country."* Madam Speaker, I got my licks for it. I remember that night in the Caucus room, only Bernie Bush and Kenneth Bryan stood by me. I took my licks.

There was another headline, Madam Speaker, you can go back to, I think, December, January 2021 [sic] 2022. It said, 66 [sic] [41] PR revoked for non-payment. I took my licks again. People come to this country, apply for Permanent Residence (PR) and the Right to Work; they're making their money and wouldn't pay the PR fees— but they could pay the lawyer to go defend them when I took it away. I took it away; took my licks.

Madam Speaker, something that really bothered me with my former colleagues, is within about four or five days after I left, they reversed one of the policies I put in that required temporary work permits to be advertised on the Government Portal. Now, for that policy to have been approved, it goes through Caucus, we agreed there; it goes through Cabinet, we agreed [to] it there; and the minute I split, that decision split with me too. I sat down and said, well, politics being what it is… I was a bit disappointed, I won't lie, because we saw abuse in the temporary work permit system that extended into the work permit system and denied opportunities to many of our own people. Again, Madam Speaker, it is what it is. That's why we have elections, and some things will be dealt with on the election trail.

Madam Speaker, as we sit here and debate this Motion—and I jumped up because I realised no one else wanted to jump up and say anything. I don't know

if I've succeeded in maybe changing the tone. I hope I have; it is not a situation of fire and brimstone.

I will close with this analogy that my son put in our family group chat: This guy said he went to visit his coach and his coach said he's worried about the future and he asked him why. He said, '*my grandfather walked 10 miles to work, my father walked five miles*. He says, *I'm driving a Cadillac, my son is driving a Mercedes, my grandson is driving a Ferrari but I fear that my great-grandson will be walking again.* He said the reason for that is, *tough times create tough people, tough people create easy times, easy times create weak people, and weak people create tough times.*

We need to make sure that we have not become part of this easy time, or that the easy time that we have inherited has not allowed us to become weak, because I can tell you right now, this generation, will have much to answer to. The things that I had growing up, which allowed me to realise my potential, we have taken away from our people. One of the basics is the Caymanian Protection Board. We took it away from our people. That was something that many of us in here benefited from. People may not like it, but I'm just going to say what I say because Madam Speaker, I'm 50 years of age now and I realise as I get older, my ability or filter to say what I want to say increases.

Equally, Madam Speaker, at the time when I came out of school, I could have literally gotten 100 per cent land loan, no deposit down. I could get financing to buy an apartment for 95 per cent if I wanted to or you could get a mortgage at 95 per cent financing. We had all of these benefits growing up, and we have sat and allowed all of these changes to happen and affect our people; and you know, Madam Speaker, they would say that oh, [it is] because of global standards, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, a few months ago, some of us were at the regional Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference in Turks and Caicos. They are using Basel I in Turks and Caicos. Basel I; one of the first basic ones from the '70s and we're over here rushing all of these global standards that end up leaving our people behind— but Madam Speaker, you know the joke in all of this? We want all the global standards, but the global standards that deal with our people's compensation aren't there; the global standards that deal with maternity leave aren't there; the global standards that deal with basic vacation aren't there; the global standards that deal with something as simple as Social Security aren't there.

Madam Speaker, as I said before, we have a 95 per cent service-based population. It means that our people need their health to get up, go out and make a living. Equally, Madam Speaker, 95 per cent of our population is one heart attack, one stroke, or one medical emergency away from being bankrupt. Those are the things that we need to be focusing on. Those are the things that are important to people.

My political agenda is simple. I think about the things that keep people awake at night and that's what I want to focus on. I would love to get up and say, well I'm a big environmentalist, but I will be honest with you, cost of living is killing my people too much for them to worry about the environment; honestly. They say '*we'll get to that, but Chris, right now, insurance, mortgage rates, food prices; that's important*'. I look forward to the day, Madam Speaker, when all we can worry about is the environment, but for my people in Bodden Town West, my hard-working, aspirational Caymanians, it is what keeps them awake at night.

Madam Speaker, one of the last meaningful institutions we created in this country—again, it goes back to the point I made about the continuation of policies and the continuity that a country needs—was CINICO under Gilbert McLean, I think, maybe, 20 years ago next year. People cursed him when he put CINICO in place. How many Caymanians today, if it wasn't for CINICO, wouldn't have any insurance at all.

Some Hon. Members: True.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: They cursed Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) when he put in Social Security in the 1930s; they cursed him and called him all kinds of things. Today, Americans live by it.

Madam Speaker, we have structural problems in this country that need to be fixed, and I can say to everyone listening, I'm not going to sit down here and tell anyone that any one Member in this House loves Cayman less than me; but I can tell you that I don't think anyone in here loves Cayman more than me— and my own wife will tell you that because I always tell her, "*Listen, I can find a new wife, I can't find a new country"*. She will tell you that.

Madam Speaker, I said all that to say this: we need to sit down and focus on the things the public wants. I'll tell you right now, Madam Speaker, I want my Special Meeting for next week. I want legislators to come here for one day next week and pass the Pension Law, so people can get relief; and Madam Speaker, as the Government is putting together and finalising the budget, I'm going to make a call again, for the Civil Service or the Public Service pay increase.

I will tell you right now, Madam Speaker, I will wait until the deliberations and hear what everyone will say, that people will know exactly where I'm voting, but I can tell you one thing, if that Pension Law isn't passed and takes effect so that people can get relief, and if the civil servants and the public servants in this country, who are struggling, can't get their money, I can tell you right now, I don't know what the outcome of this will be today; but I guarantee you are going to deal with it again in six months, because those are two things that I need for my people. We need those things; our people are hurting.

What has been the fundamental difference in Cayman politics has been priorities, what the priorities

of different governments would be. That has always been the one thing that takes up the room. I don't hear anyone inside here preaching independence, I don't hear anyone preaching socialism, communism or any of that. What I hear people talking about is prosperity and a better quality of life for our people.

Madam Speaker, for those who are listening, I am really sorry that we may seem to be distracting with the things that may be a priority, but I also understand where the Opposition is coming from in this, because right now there seems to be a lack of priority on the things that matter. I know for a fact— because he has said it to me— that Minister Bryan is willing to park all of these major projects to focus on cost of living to help our people. He has said as much to me, that it is a priority for him. [Regarding] the things he wanted to get done, he said, '*right now, cost of living is killing my people and I need to free up my funds to direct it there, to help our people*.' That is a priority.

Madam Speaker, that priority has to be shared by the leadership of the country as well, and I believe that is where the challenge is.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to leave with one last observation. The current Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) is still in effect until the 31st December [2023]. Inside that Strategic Policy Statement, there are 10 Broad Outcomes, within those 10 Broad Outcomes the most repeated objective, which is actually contained in three of those 10 Broad Outcomes, is the expansion of CINICO. Now, I understood from speaking to the management of CINICO [during] the last Finance Committee, that it is on track to start for 1st January. Now I'm beginning to hear rumblings that it may not be the case.

Madam Speaker, again, the Strategic Policy Statement is something that was approved by the Caucus, by the Cabinet and by the Parliament. It goes back to the free healthcare for our children and seniors, something that we had, growing up, that we have taken away. Free healthcare. That, too, is buried within that Strategic Policy Statement.

Madam Speaker, this challenge we have right now, especially the budget, I could tell it was coming. The reason being, one of the first conversations I had under forming the SPS was with the Cabinet Secretary. When he came and said, *well, you know, this is what we want to do and set it up in this format, and this way, et cetera,* I remember saying to myself, *when did this switch to the civil servants driving policy*? The document says Strategic Policy Statement, the Constitution is clear: policy is driven by the Cabinet, policy is driven by elected officials. I actually felt insulted when I had that conversation with the Cabinet Secretary. Like I said, Madam Speaker, at that point– from December to January 2022, I started mentally checking out. It just reinforced, *Chris, it's time to go.*

Madam Speaker, let me tell you something: we have some good people in the public service who have worked really hard and have done a great service to this country that we can never thank them for; but equally, Madam Speaker, we have some dead weights in there and people with their own agenda. I can tell anybody, when I used to say we need to get this or that done, and they were like, *well, Minister, this and that,* I was like, *listen, this is what we discussed in Caucus. If you got a problem with it, go put your $1,000 up, go run for office and get elected; but you're not going to stay in one place, rise to the top, and then believe that you are going to start setting policy.*

Madam Speaker, truth be told, many of the challenges that we have in this country, it is us as politicians who have given away the authority that people gave us to make their lives better. We have done it. We have nobody to blame but ourselves, nobody to blame.

As I sit, Madam Speaker, I talked about the unequal yoke [passage] that my mother sent to me this morning, and I will say to my colleagues, if the only people in a country who pay taxes, are the middle class, then we need people with middle class values, middle class understanding, and middle-class struggles. Only then, can you understand what the majority of our people are feeling. Madam Speaker, I don't drive an electric car, [so] I know the price of gas. Okay?

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, it is time that the people in this country start looking at people who share their values and share their struggle.

Madam Speaker, I'm a second-generation Caymanian. Almost every day, I have to address my "Caymanianness". I don't have a typical Caymanian last name, I don't even have a Caymanian accent and you listen to people [say], '*Oh, Chris trying to bring garrison politics in Cayman'*. Anyone saw the definition of garrison? Anyone looked up the definition of garrison? Talk about poverty and crime rates and this and that— *anybody look up the thing, nuh?* I can tell you right now, that's not Bodden Town West, you know; but what do we do? People in this very place, fuel the hate groups and division groups—

An Hon. Member: True.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: —And rather than build up our own people, we spend days in and days out tearing people down. That's why in the morning, when I'm dropping my kids to school, they never listen to the talk show because, regardless of the challenges and the struggles we have, Cayman is still one of the best places to live and work; and the only people who have not recognised that, is our own people.

What do you think the people from overseas say before they come here? They say to somebody, *'you know, I applied for a job in Cayman. If I can get that job, my life would be better. I can send something home; you guys would be better*.' This is a land of opportunity. We have built something really great here

that can attract over 100 different nationalities and because of selfishness and bad mind, we are struggling.

Madam Speaker, over the weekend I tried to look at why are we here; and do you know why it is? The short man that left just the other day, the Governor. All of the strife and trouble that he caused within the group, that little short man… See, he is gone, but do you see who is still here? Who else you still have to deal with? He has gone on his retirement and is probably watching right now, and do you know the part about it that really bothers me, Madam Speaker?

The Member for George Town South can tell you, because we have heard stories of the insults that man put on our Caymanian women, our own Caymanian people. They will not say anything about it, and I am not going to bring up their names. You know what I'm talking about too. The part that bothers me is not that he behaved the way I expected him to behave. The problem is when our own Caymanians go to them and try to say, "*He don't really mean it, you know*—

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders: *"He didn't really…"* and do that kind of stuff. It is our people's inability to stick together and stand together why we are here!

Let me tell you something, I watched that man literally destroy the relationship between me and the Premier at the time; and any of them over there can tell you, no one defended the Premier in that PACT group more than I. They can tell you that, because at the end of the day, I do not know what it is to sit in that Chair; I do not know what it is for the buck to stop there, but I do know this, if he fails, the entire country fails, and that's why I keep telling everybody to pray for him.

Madam Speaker, I have been elected six years. One person who is still a Member of this House, whom I have a newfound respect for, is the Member for Red Bay. When we were sworn in, he and I had a conversation and he said to me, *"Chris, any advice you need, any guidance you need, call me. Don't need to think, call me. You guys are my Government now too; I need you guys to do well. Call me."*

I have spent the bulk of my political career being on the opposite side of the Member for Red Bay, but he can say "*Call me*." And there were times I did call him. You know why? Because he had eight years' experience as a Premier, four as a Minister before that, and he has been elected for a long time and regardless of what people may think of him, one of the reasons why he has my utmost respect is that for many Caymanians, when getting a legal footing could have been very lucrative, he chose public service. He gave to this country his best productive years, when he could have gone out and made a ton of money, and then get into politics. He gave that to this country, and that is one of the reasons why I could never say anything bad about him. I may have disagreed with some of his policies and his priorities, but I can never speak badly about him.

Equally, Madam Speaker, I look at the Leader of the Opposition; everybody knows he does not need the money to do this, you don't need this; but you know what, when that love of country bites you, it's the same thing and every single one of us in this House knows— and I know I'm preaching to the choir— that when that bug bites you, it bites you. A week does not pass that I don't ask myself, "*Chris, why the hell you got yourself in this business?"* but then you know what? You get that one call, or that one message that reminds you that you have a platform in which you can help people. You cannot help everyone, but you can help people and if you can't help, at the very least, don't hurt.

For those of us in here, who leak information and do all kinds of stuff to tear us down, when you go to bed at night, you have to live with yourself. We have some demons running around in this country, that if we do not check them, they will destroy what we have, and we in here need to stop it.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay: Stop paying them.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders: Stop paying them too, I agree with you, Member for Red Bay.

Madam Speaker, I know there are many people watching both locally and internationally who are invested in Cayman, and people who do want the best for Cayman, and I can tell you, once you start worrying about losing your seat, it is exactly when you are going to lose your seat. They did a survey of politicians who failed to be re-elected, and they asked them, *"If you knew you were going to lose, what would you have done differently?*" they said they would have been bolder. My friends, you do not know what the next election may be. You do not know what your health may be and you do not know what your priorities may be, but for right here, right now, we have this time. This is our time to work for our people.

Madam Speaker, our people are hurting. I have seen people scream over their light bill last summer. For those of you watching, I am going to ask you to google the oil futures for next summer; it is not pretty. What increased the forecasts is that something major is happening next year, the US presidential election, and the Arab world has decided they are not riding with Biden. Mark my words, they are going to rinse it off on everyone who depends on oil, and we are going to feel it at the pump, and at the plug. I am going to say to this Government right now: *cut back on your money*. Start shoring up your money, because you will need that next summer to offset many people's utility bills.

The world is literally on the brink of a war, if this thing in the Middle East does not calm down. You saw what happened recently with the US Treasury, they could not find anyone to buy their own government bonds. Interest rates are expected to go back up *again* because now the government is trying to raise money— and a way to raise money, is they can keep

throwing more interest rates on people— they are going to put more interest rates on those bonds. We saw the UK Government try that and look what happened to the UK. It is the US's turn now.

I do not want to come down here and talk doom and gloom, because nobody likes a bad-news bearer; but Madam Speaker, it is the job of everyone elected to this House, to prepare the Cayman Islands, and to protect Cayman's people, from what is to come— and we cannot say we have not been warned because, Madam Speaker, the truth is that we have had many people who stood where I stand, in this very House, and said to the people, "*Don't do this, don't do that*", and they *cussed* them and called them all kinds of things.

My former colleague from Bodden Town told Caymanians long ago, *"Don't sell your land! Don't do this, don't do that."* They called him '*communist*'. They called him '*socialist*'. What do we have today? A land problem. When I was growing up, Madam Speaker, when buying a piece of land, the first thing somebody would ask was, "Swamp land?" Now, as long as it has a Block and Parcel, they really do not care. That is the difference. Our people have been warned long enough, and they never listened, and that is the reason the Bible tells you, **"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."**

The fundamentals of what made Cayman what it is, are still there. I am not a practicing Christian, but I will tell you that we need to do what we need to do, to build back our community churches in this country. We need to start spending money and help with many of those little programmes that the churches had, that we have now left to all of these different groups— and when you look at some of the programmes these groups are running, they're educating your kids with all kinds of things that we, as parents, do not even want to deal with.

Now, I do not beat down any church's door, but I do understand when God said, "**If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive your sins, and will heal your land."**

Madam Speaker, this country needs healing. This country needs leadership. This country needs to put the church back on its foundations. "*He hath founded it upon the seas"* needs to mean something, once again.

[Desk Thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders: Until we start rebuilding Caymanian institutions, it is not going to get any better.

Madam Speaker, I don't know if anyone was expecting fire and brimstone, or big secrets, or for me to spill any differences between me and the Premier. That is not going to happen. I do not join the politics of tearing people down. Whatever I choose to do, I am normally good at it, and the last thing you want is for Chris Saunders to go into the business of tearing people down, because if I ever went down that route, it would be something epic, too. That's the reason I avoid arguments and different things with people. I try to live well with everybody regardless of what they think of me.

We have many new Caymanians in this country. People get up and talk about, *"Oh, Chris got elected because of the Jamaican vote."* Let me tell you something. There are no Jamaicans voting in Cayman. The only people who can vote in Cayman are Caymanians. If people have come here, integrated into our community and become part of us, we need to accept them; and that is the kind of thing that people deal with on a daily basis. Now, we have sat here and have imported our own discrimination on our own people. We now have Caymanians being told that they need to go and get a letter from immigration to prove that they are Caymanian. This is what this country has come to.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: If we do not start focusing on our own people, many people will not get re-elected; many people.

I have listened to the debates and the contributions, and I listened to the tone, but I expect that when we adjourn today, we can adjourn to sometime next week, to come and deal with the Pension Bill, because I have been listening out for that to determine the way I vote. It is going to be material on how I vote today. I need that Pension Bill passed. My people need money. People are hurting, and they do not want to come to the Government and they do not want to come to NAU (Needs Assessment Unit). They have money sitting down there and some of their pension companies are losing their money too, so they might as well get it.

I wish everybody the best of luck. Premier, while you did not defend me as much as I expected you to— and that's fine, we are built differently— at the end of the day, you are a Caymanian, the world is watching, and the last thing I want is for anyone to believe that Cayman is being run by some crazy types; but blind Bartimaeus could see this one coming, you understand me, and now here we are.

I understand what the Member for West Bay West was trying to do. Like I said, I really do feel it. The Leader of the Opposition made it clear in his contribution. It is very hard to ask people who have been working like a dog to do this— putting up long hours, lack of family time, lack of sleep, to then say, *"Oh, the Government is failing"*; but as he also said, there are ways in which you can fix it and I think he has done a good job outlining them. Now, like everybody else, I will wait and see what is going to happen.

With that, Madam Speaker, since no one wanted to jump up and speak, and since I don't need a paper to speak I hope the debate continues. At least we have set the tone— nothing vitriolic to paint up the

airwaves and that kind of stuff. At least people can look back and say that we have mature and responsible political leadership in the Cayman Islands. For all those listening, pray. Pray.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we will pause the debate to suspend for one-hour lunch. We will resume at 1:45.

Proceedings suspended at 12:45 pm

Proceedings resumed at 1:58 pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed. You may be seated. We will now continue with the debate. Does anyone else wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Health & Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina Turner, Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Prospect: Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to rise this afternoon.

I want to start by acknowledging what a privilege and honour it is to serve the people of my country, both as an MP for Prospect, and as a Minister responsible for two of the largest Ministries: Health and Wellness, *and* Home Affairs. We are not on the Floor of this Parliament today to pass legislation that might lower the cost of living or the 2024/2025 budget; [instead,] it bothers me that we have been brought here to debate a Motion of No Confidence in the Government of the Cayman Islands.

I have listened to the justifications of the Motion, Madam Speaker. I have listened to the evidence and some of the reasons as to why this is supposedly good for our country. We are in this honourable House because we are elected to serve the people. Are we listening to the people? Are we hearing the people? Understanding that right this second, we are at a crossroads where, based on this Motion and why we are here, the opportunity presents itself, based on evidence made and amongst ourselves, whether we consider to reconstruct who the people have voted for to make this Government, or do we create, in my words, a "hybrid" of a new government because of dismays? We don't know, based on what is here, but— is that what the people want? Have we gotten it right? Have the people gotten it right? But we're here to debate that today.

When I consider the circumstances that we have inherited as first-time politicians…

Many of us, like myself, embarked on this journey, Madam Speaker, to make a difference. If anybody knows the game of politics and democracy, Sabrina Teresa Turner can tell you, for what I endured in the first seven days… If there's one person who knows the definition of 'democracy', and '*the people will have their say'*, is Sabrina Teresa Turner— and I've done no different, as I stand here today. I have to listen to the people. They have to be proven that their voices matter, that their vote matters. Contrary to what we feel, how we think, at the end of the day, this is the job that we signed up for: To be of service to our people.

You know, we took this on [during] an unprecedented situation. A global pandemic, the closed borders; soon thereafter, the war in Ukraine, Madam Speaker. The highest inflation in more than twenty years. Increased cost of fuel, and as my colleague on the other side stated, there is more to come— and our country was changing faster than ever. Madam Speaker, those are just some of the circumstances this Administration had to face. Label us how you want.

The fact that we, a group of independents, had to come together to form yes, this Coalition Government, in those circumstances, Madam Speaker, it was to be expected that there would be choppy waters to navigate. Whenever you are trying to do something brand new in this setting, under difficult circumstances, it's going to be challenging. No one said sitting on this side of Parliament was going to be easy. It was alluded to right there today. No one said it. If you're giving service to *everyone*, it's not going to be easy. We set out to do something that had never, ever, been done before. Why? The people said, "We do not want the previous construct.". A full coalition of independents? However, it was what the people wanted, Madam Speaker.

The people did not want, and I'm hearing it loud, a *PPM-led Government.* The people of this country wanted, and want, a Government that would put people-first. They were hurting, and they saw where they needed leaders who would care and be compassionate. For once, balance needs and the economy. Yes, the economy has to grow and prosper, but what is the economy if Caymanians are falling and hurting? In all honesty, Madam Speaker, we cannot continue to grow if our people are left behind, and from what I'm seeing, that is why we are where we are today.

Madam Speaker, debating this puts us in a very awkward position. Have I ever seen myself on this Floor, at this juncture, doing this? Have I ever even envisioned this? No, but [such] is democracy, it's how Parliament works; and we are here not only to defend what we have done in such a short time, but also to defend whether or not our leader is fit to continue in the post— am I not right? What is the biggest factor? It is that, although we are elected to serve, some way, somehow, we have to remain loyal to what the voters are saying. Take it all you want. Beat me up on the campaign. Right now, it is not a campaign, but the survival of what has never, ever, been done before, Madam Speaker.

We were never given a chance! We were failed from the get-go. We were branded as colour prejudiced, un-educated— all sorts of names were thrown at us, Madam Speaker. It brought us to tears! I have never, ever, embarked on so difficult an exercise [as] to do a budget with the people in the front. Something is wrong. We can't be fighting for a people budget and get this; and then you are going to tell me that today is

about loyalty versus disloyalty? It is about truth versus lies, Madam Speaker.

Our service is to be for people versus commitment to ambition, power and greed, Madam Speaker! Where is p-e-o-p-l-e in that? Non-existent. Talk about us all you want, talk about us individually how you want, so what? When you're elected to serve the people, it comes with the job. You use that wood to light your fire, because the talk will not stop; because one of these days, they are going to stop talking and take notes, because it's obvious that we are doing something right.

[Why] bring this Motion to the Floor when we are supposed to be trying to deal with a budget! If there was absolutely anything about caring for the people, lowering the cost of living, [why] it never happened after the budget? Aren't we elected to ensure that our country can run? Debate the budget, but at least allow us to get the budget done for the next two years then vote us out— let the people vote us out; but give us money, *nah*, so that at least we can keep paying the bills.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: It is blocked because of this! We have civil servants here who are helping, guiding us through, making sure we don't fall foul of the (Framework for Fiscal Responsibility) FFR, and this is what we are doing? We got a hurricane in our neighbourhood and this is what we are doing? How can you tell me you're the voice for the voiceless, hope for the hopeless? You better keep over on this side if you know what is good for you, because I tell you who are listening: The world is listening, and if you think we got problems yet, you will see the truth in our people.

When it comes to Caymanians, the silent majority must no longer talk in the shadows because many a time, as first-time politicians, we wonder how we are doing, because we only hear the negative! The time has come that we need to celebrate our wins for such a short time; be proud of what this first time, never-been-done-before construct has been able to deliver. I plead to my people, I plead for my colleagues— allow us to finish our term. Just allow us to serve the people, and let the people have their say come 2025.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Politics is local, but it's international too. It is a crying shame that those who we have allowed to be here with us, looking at the accomplishments of my colleague to get us off a 20-year grey list— and this is what we are doing? And *unnah* want to talk about "stability"? That is d-u-n-e-d— done. I ain't dumb, because I know how to spell it, but this is what's going on. I am ashamed to know we are here today and hear the utterances in the background— "*a bunch of clowns; can't even appreciate what we're doing."*

You know why we can't get many of our wins out on the Floor? Because we are busy working! We are showing up to our Ministries, we are showing up to work. We are on time. We read our Cabinet papers. We research our Cabinet Papers— and we challenge what we do not agree with. I am on my phone, yes, because I'm speaking with my Ministry staff. Remember, it is not about personal attacks here today. It is talking about competence, statesmen and women; and this is the wrong place to show your Olympic skills, because this is not a track.

You have to be dedicated and stop this flip-flopping, jumping, running and scheming; be who you have, stand on your campaign form, and show the people who you are because I'm telling you what: right now, many in here are in trouble if this goes to an early election. You may buy, you may scheme, but our Caymanians are tired of manavelins [leftovers]; we are tired of aggregate, tired of the sofa politician, the fifty politicians— we are out for true leaders! Enough is enough!

I have every right to defend my stance along with my colleagues, and you know why I'm different, Madam Speaker? I was the one on the other end of *"We put you there, you're gonna stay there!"* That's democracy, Madam Speaker, and until my people say move, I ain't got nowhere to go. Even if it means that some of my colleagues are gonna flip and be Olympians today, I am prepared to sit in the Opposition— the Lord will provide; but if you think that's good for our country... Move, if you think you're bad, because the people will take care of you; and if we are going to move forward as of today, call us what you want, you better stay true to this side of the fence.

We can no longer play this game. Our youth and our elderly depend on us— the future depends on us; and you can't tell me I don't know or care about pension and health care. Those legislations are under my responsibility. You can't tell me that I don't care about garbage and how (Department of Health) DEH functions; and care for the prisoners? You cannot tell me that; it is under my remit. These are facts. It is the truth. Don't tell me I don't understand what it is to go one month worrying about how I *gah* pay my light bill— you think it changed because I'm a Minister now? Only now, am I asking for an extension on my CUC Bill.

You think I am going to sit with a Government that does not want the best for the people? What? I ain't no different from anybody else. I am feeling it too. You think I'm gonna sit up for a Government and don't try to make sure that we can deal with interest rates, cost of living. I go to supermarkets; recently more to help people than myself. I hardly do it for myself, why? Because I put people first. Today is done. The flip-flopping, the theatrics, need to stop. Words are wind! Judge us by our performance, by our outcomes.

The waters that we have navigated because the people chose this construct have not been easy, God knows; but we continue to deliver. Give us a chance. I don't want to miss the essence of what is at hand here today because this Floor allows me two hours; it ain't worth it, because the message is clear,

that Sabrina Teresa Turner ("Tunner") ain't going nowhere, and I ain't gonna make nobody threaten me that if some people walk, run, flip to go on the other side, I nah *gah* get re-elected? That is [for] the people of Prospect.

That's what democracy is; but I will continue to deliver until the people say otherwise. I will do it with integrity, and I will follow, and I will be loyal— that's one thing they can't question me about. Yes, loyal to the people. Loyal to the people who have elected me to serve, and this formation forces us to work together because I don't see them as individuals. I see them as their constituencies, and that needs to be reflected on this Floor. Not selfishness, not greed, not ego, not gender! Let's come together for the sake of our country and its people, and not self. Let's be fair. Let's be balanced. Let's do things above-board, Madam Speaker.

There's a saying that goes, *"If you can't take the heat in the kitchen, come out"*, but I *gah* tell you what: I'm not coming out, until the people of Prospect and the wider Cayman Islands say it is time to go. Personally, I have done nothing wrong that warrants me deconstructing what's here. I have been supported by a Premier who has been accused of being prejudiced, self-centred, even corrupt. If he's not fit for the post, let the DPP do their job, nah? but in the meantime, we have a country to run. We have people with feelings, people who are going to sleep without light, without water, without food. We have children who deserve a future!

This needs to stop now. Bring statesmanship back to our House of Parliament. Bring to the Floor real debate that will make impactful changes on lives today and set precedents for tomorrow. The truth hurts—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Makes you sneeze too. Maybe that's a sign, and you all need to apologise.

[Laughter]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: The joke is over. This is not a joke. People's lives are at risk here. We are talking about mental health, and public health. This stuff will bring all sorts of stress on people. I know what the people of this country went through this weekend from Friday. The speculations, and to have utterances naming the new Minister of Health. Really? Not if the people got anything to do with it. Not today. I will defend this role as long as there is democracy. I will not throw anybody under the bus, but I will defend my integrity. I will defend my performance, and I will defend my colleagues on this side.

Now, whether this event is a rude awakening of setting the path for the way we move forward, let's do it on the Floor of Parliament— the same place where we swore to serve the people of this country. Stop the shenanigans, for God's sake.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Let's come together. Let's be the group of change. Let's be, and continue to be, the Government that was centred— truthfully— around its people.

I will leave with a short quote from Warren Buffett, and I need you to listen closely. He states, **"Look for three things in a person:**

1. **Intelligence;**
2. **Energy,**
3. **Integrity.**

If they don't have the last one, don't even bother with the first two.".

I will go down when it comes to morals and integrity, because money can't buy that.

[Desk thumping]

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

Does the Mover— the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Finance & Economic Development, Elected Member for Newlands: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am typically not one of the fire-and-brimstone-type debaters or contributors either. I very much prefer calm discussion and debate; of course, there are times when it is necessary. I don't think this is one of those times, Madam Speaker. I think we are setting an example for our country and for those watching externally.

Madam Speaker, this Motion is clearly designed to be opportunistic but it's politics, right? That is what we face. Such is the arena we are in. Governing is hard, Madam Speaker, no question about that. It has been, and always will be; but, Madam Speaker, sometimes I'm not sure that it has to be this hard, because since coming into office, we have not had a break from the constant attacks and insinuations. This is against a record which I think any Government would want to have.

Madam Speaker, I think if we go back to the period in which we were elected and move forward from there, we are talking about a Government that had the task— the unenviable task— of reopening an economy that had been locked down, and it was not easy, Madam Speaker.

As I have said in the past, the previous administration did a good job dealing with the decision to lock down and our people's safety at the time; but it doesn't change the fact, that the hard part was reopening as safely as possible, because we had to transition from an environment where people were not exposed to COVID and then would certainly have a significant reaction. Madam Speaker, we successfully achieved the

reopening of this country and our borders with a record low loss of life in comparison to many, many other places in the region. It was inevitable that there would be some, it is what happens when you reopen borders and allow people in. We end up dealing with that.

We successfully transitioned with the assistance of all Members on this side of the honourable House, Madam Speaker. We worked together, we encouraged, we provided hope, and a sense of confidence. We achieved one of the highest vaccination rates in the region which medical experts, I think, would tell us was a very good thing. It is what significantly contributed to our good record.

Now, there is a suggestion that the Government has not achieved/delivered anything for the country. Let's think about it, Madam Speaker. If we look at the most recent economic report, it shows significant economic activity at around 3.4 percent. The hotels are busy. We transitioned the reopening in a safe way. People had the confidence to come and visit the Cayman Islands because they thought it was a safe place to visit— and they were right, and here we are today. We have a good economic growth that is generating business for people all across this country. We have an unemployment record that is at the lowest point it has been for probably three decades. Do we know that there are Caymanians who need employment? Absolutely, but these are facts which reflect very positively on this Government's performance.

While we are talking about performance, let me note that the fourth recital that the Leader of the Opposition sought to amend, incorrectly states the date when the then Minister of Finance resigned as 22nd October, 2022. In fact, it was the 21st March, 2023. I note that only to say, that if you are going to say that you are so capable, and that you can do a better job than the Government, then I would like to think that you would be able to get details like this right.

Madam Speaker, my colleague on this side of the aisle… The Minister of Education has done an excellent job both in that role and in her role as Deputy Premier. She has led the way in increasing scholarships for young Caymanians. Significant increases for those who were doing undergraduate degrees or bachelor's or associates and those who were doing graduate degrees as well. We also have an improvement in the level of scholarships for TVET (Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training) in the region of about a million and a half. Excellent, excellent opportunities created for our Caymanians, our young people, to be able to get scholarships.

The Cayman Islands, our home country, have been described as a special place. That is absolutely true. We cannot deny it. All of us in this honourable House could never take a different position on that; and the opportunities that it presents should be for our Caymanians as well, not just people who arrive here and seek to participate in the economy. We must have opportunities for our people and having increases in scholarships to be able to improve the level of education, improve the opportunities for our Caymanians; that is valuable. There is no doubt, and it has been demonstrated empirically, that the better educated you are, the greater opportunity you have, and that is what helps to build and maintain our middle class. Education is the greatest equalizer that we know of, and I think our commitment to that has been unmatched at this point. We are here to deliver those opportunities for our people.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Prospect, the Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness, has used her expertise in the medical field to help develop that Ministry extremely well. She has done a good job there. We have great initiatives going on to make public health an organisation within the government that is going to make significant changes to help improve the wellness of our people. It will also help to provide a structure within which, at any time in the future, if there is something like another pandemic or some other health-related threat to our country, that work will be critically important, and that is well under way.

She has also been dedicated to the completion and opening of the Poinciana facility, which was originally called the long-term mental health facility. We look forward to that being completed very shortly because, again, it is something that is essential to the health and wellness of our people.

The Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, and the rest of us, have been driving forward growth, improvement, and delivery of affordable housing for the people of this country, in numbers that have been unmatched. We are on track to deliver much more than has been built in the past by previous administrations; and not just in one location but several different locations across this country. He has been doing good work addressing that issue, that need, which we all know is critical. We have had a housing task force which has spent countless hours working with all of the technocrats across the different Ministries to identify the areas that we need to focus on, to improve the quality and opportunity for our people to get affordable housing in this country. That work has been critical, and it is being delivered and our people are getting those opportunities. They are turning over keys to people.

We have been delivering infrastructure as well, which helps to improve our quality of life; it helps business and helps people move around. One of the critical things we are doing at this point, as well, is focusing on public transport and incorporating that into a strong initiative to ensure that people will have an opportunity to utilise public transport that is much more reliable and efficient in the near future. We look forward to getting that in place because it is essential for us. We know we do not have the ability, the resources, to constantly build roads, nor the physical space to do it so, we have to find ways of improving mass transit; that is being achieved.

We also have the Minister for Financial Services and Commerce doing an excellent job. As has been noted previously, he has been working with his colleagues to get legislation through to deal with initiatives to make sure that as a country and as a financial services centre, we are able to pass inspections and achieve that gold seal from the Financial Action Task Force to get us off their grey list, their enhanced review lists. That has been a signature accomplishment of the Government, as well— yes, it builds on other work that has been going on for some time, but it does not reduce the significance of the achievement of the Ministry, the Minister, and the Government, in providing support around that.

Madam Speaker, we have a number of very positive things happening. We have also delivered initiatives that help our people in tangible, meaningful ways. We did the Electricity Assistance Programme (EAP) for six months last year, at a peak period which helped 22,000 households, so if people want to talk about the issues around cost of living, yes, we have been conscious of it. Yes, we have been addressing those issues. That is a perfect example of the kind of initiative that helps people with those issues.

We have made significant reductions in fee levels for seniors. We have reduced import duties for a range of items that help families. Of course, I am not deliberately ignoring the very significant free food programme in our public schools, starting with our primary schools and then into our high schools. That is another really important programme that was delivered by this Government to benefit our families, those with children in all of the public schools. That is not something to be ignored. A very, very positive contribution.

This Motion talks about the conduct of the Government and suggests that there have been significant issues. Some would have you believe that there were arguments leading to fights and similar types of suggestions, none of which is accurate at all. I do not know why we have so much misinformation that just spreads around in the environment today, and is repeated as if it is truth. No such thing happened, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: There are discussions about throwing chairs... Well, unless you live a different life than I did. I certainly can tell you that I have never seen anybody get into any fight at all; it does not happen.

As parliamentarians who care and are passionate about our people, yes, there are times when we have discussions that get heated, but that does not mean that it ends up in any physical altercation. Far from it. These things are not accurate at all and are designed to simply suggest that the Government does not function well and that, perhaps, I am not a good referee. That is not the case, Madam Speaker, categorically, not the case.

Madam Speaker, I want the people of this country to understand that from the day we were elected, this Government has been serving them, and serving them well. We have been dedicated to achieving and making a real difference in their lives. Not just trying to address reopening the economy, not just trying to ensure that the economy is strong, but we have been recognising and seeking ways to address the cost of living issues as well. Inflation, which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition himself noted previously, is driven by external factors and therefore not easy to address.

The suggestion that we have traffic and cost of living issues, and that somehow there is chaos around dealing with that— I do not think there was chaos when the people were getting a benefit from the electricity support programme. The suggestion that the issues of housing are not important, and that we are not addressing them… I have just outlined, and it is clear in reports, and from what you can see on the ground in various affordable housing projects, that we are delivering on behalf of the people of this country in record levels; I don't think there is any doubt about it— and traffic, Madam Speaker? It has been the bane of our existence for as long as I can remember, unfortunately, and I believe will continue to be a problem until we improve public transport, which is something that we are dedicated to doing as well.

Of course, for the Opposition to become the Government they have to come after me. I understand that. I understand it fully, but let's be honest when addressing the facts; let's make sure that we are reflecting reality, and not just making up facts that do not exist. This job I have is not one that you run for, unless you are a full party with a leader. That is not what is reflected across this side. I did not campaign on that basis, so the suggestion that I was “chasing power" and that sort of thing— nothing is further from the truth, Madam Speaker. Purely a desire to help our people, to be a servant of the people, is what drives me. I was asked to be Premier.

I did not go out and campaign on that basis and I think that, while we have had some issues with people who are young, energetic, dedicated and passionate, [such issues] do not detract from our ability to deliver on behalf of our people— and we have been doing so, as a Government. All the suggestions of dysfunction are a vast exaggeration bordering on untruth, Madam Speaker, not a reflection of any kind of reality.

Loyalty has been described as if it is something bad, but loyalty enables us to work together, it enables us to deliver on behalf of the people of our country. Madam Speaker, we are at a stage now where we should be finalising the budget and coming here in a few weeks to deliver it, but yet we are here arguing, wanting to disrupt— change, the Government.

The representation made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in his comments on the Motion was that there are a significant number of Ministers who do not have agreement on the budget. Madam Speaker, that is not correct. I am not saying that we don't have one or two issues which I am seeking to resolve, but that does not mean that we cannot get it done. The description is one of a government that cannot move forward. Well, we do have options. If it turns out that we do not have an option, Madam Speaker, then we will have to deal with it at that time.

We understand the reality that on December 31st of this year the legal authorisation to spend money in this country expires, and we have to have a budget in place. We all fully understand that, and it will get done, but it will not get done if we spend time here fighting over who is going to be the leader, and who is going to be the Government. It is the people who are depending on it— the civil servants who have to get paid; the people who are going to benefit from all the initiatives that are affected in the budget— who will be harmed by us not being able to get down to business and get the budget here.

Madam Speaker, I entered politics with just one goal in mind, and that is to help our people and help this country. A country that is special, a country that has amazing potential, a country that is so different from so many other places. That is what makes it special. What makes it desirable to so many people. We have to keep it that way. We cannot lose that; but you know what else we have to do? We have to ensure, as I said earlier, that the opportunities which are available to people who come here, are available to our Caymanians as well. Our Caymanians need to be first. They need to have the opportunities to be able to develop themselves, have families, live their lives and become prosperous just like anybody else who may have come here in the past and done so. In fact, they should be at the head of the line.

Madam Speaker, as I said, public service for me has never been about power. I am purely about being a servant of the people. Certainly not about making money, and I think that is something we all share on this side— we are committed. That is why we have described our group as having a very people centred approach. Yes, we understand that profit is necessary. Yes, we understand that a strong economy is necessary. Yes, we understand that businesses have to do well, but in terms of Government, we need to be able to focus resources on benefiting our people as well. Benefiting those who are vulnerable, benefiting our seamen who helped build this country, benefiting our veterans who fought in wars or served otherwise, to ensure that we have the freedoms that we enjoy today. We have been putting in place ways to improve and support their lives; significant amount of funding to ensure that we have the scholarships, that we feed our children and help our families, to make sure that our veterans, our elderly, and our most vulnerable, and those people with children, get the support they need.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, this is not a case of a government that has not been delivering; you just have to look at our record— look at the current circumstances. As I said, we understand and it ever will be the case that we have specific areas of challenges, as a country, that we have to focus on. I don't think we will ever get to a point of perfection. I don't think we will ever get rid of all of the issues we have to deal with, but the suggestion that this Government hasn't been achieving anything on behalf of the people? Nonsense.

Nonsense, Madam Speaker. We have done a good job. We have been delivering. We have been educating. We have been making sure that our children are healthy; our families have opportunities, and we are providing support for them in various ways, and we are going to continue doing so, Madam Speaker. That is the opportunity that we have to serve out the rest of our term, to make sure that we deliver for our people. There is no reason to suggest that we can't continue to do it effectively, Madam Speaker.

We have a situation right now [and] we all understand what it is, but it is not without a solution, potentially— and if that solution doesn't work out, then come back and tell us that we can't function, but that is not the case today, Madam Speaker. It is not that we have a situation where we have no opportunity to move forward; we do, and we need to be able to get our budget done for our people to benefit. We will then continue to serve our people and deliver for our people, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I know that it has to be about me. That is how it always is; that is how it always is. You have to come at the leader, you have to come at the Premier— but Madam Speaker, I have watched at least one Motion of No Confidence in the past in this country. I cannot tell you that I am a political historian in terms of others that have occurred, but I will say this: Given what the Government has delivered and continues to deliver, and given the fact that this is not about a Premier who has done something wrong, where people are concerned about their ability to continue. Madam Speaker, this is a wholly different scenario from what I've observed in the past and what typically happens.

I have been here serving our people just like all of my colleagues, Madam Speaker. Every one of us have been dedicated. We have cared and have been there to help in every way possible. Yes! Including up until 12 o'clock at night or 1, 1:30 in the morning; it is not unheard of. Very often it occurs, Madam Speaker, but you have to serve with courage too, and sometimes it means taking the harder path that leads to the right result, rather than the easy road that just leads to wrong. That is not what we are about. Being a government that focuses on taking the hard path, getting the right results, is what we have been about.

That's part of my philosophy as well, Madam Speaker, and I want to say that I believe those values are shared by our people— by thousands of Caymanians, if not all Caymanians. It is what they expect from us, Madam Speaker. I stand on the side of the majority of the strong people in this country who want "right" to be delivered. Yeah, we are not all going to agree. We are a beautiful Caymanian tribe, but we are entitled to different opinions as well.

Madam Speaker, as a Government, we have been delivering. All of our Ministries and Ministers have been leading and providing amazing and effective services to the people of this country. I know there are principle positions that have a political price at times, and I am okay with that, Madam Speaker. I know that there are consequences to doing the hard things, the hard "rights". I understand that. I have never been about political expediency, but it is difficult. It is not easy. It is not something you want to deal with sometimes— ever; because sometimes it involves people and families and real lives. These are things that you have to take into account.

Madam Speaker, I chose to be here, and I know all of the Members of this Government who ran for elected office chose to be here to represent the people of this country, and we came together to do it together. We have been providing stability and strength, Madam Speaker; irrespective of any little roughness around the edges. The core of what is happening, and what we are doing, is clear and strong. We are delivering what people expect, Madam Speaker. We are doing it with integrity, and we are delivering in ways that they expect from us.

Madam Speaker, the difficulty that we have at this point— and I'm not talking about the Government, I'm talking about the country— is disagreement over how we address things that are critically important to us, to our current and future success; to the lives of our children who are alive today and those who are to come. Madam Speaker, we have to be able to address critically important things like climate change. We have to build resiliency in this country. We have to make sure that we mitigate the known impacts of climate change. The impacts are becoming clearer— in fact, the impacts are already accelerating, so these are things that we cannot run away from. We cannot make a choice of saying, *"Well, you know, we're gonna do this but not that."*.

We are on an island that is an average of 7 feet above sea level, and most residential areas are actually lower lying than that. Therefore, we have to ensure that we deal with these critically important issues, because it is not just a question of how we prosper today, but how we live tomorrow and what kind of life our children have— and I think we all share the fundamental view that we are not entitled to prosper today, at the expense of the potential prosperity of our children, so we need to get the balance right, Madam Speaker. Sustainability is not just an environmental issue, sustainability is part of a three-legged concept which includes the economy, society, and the environment and getting a balance between them, Madam Speaker.

I know that there are people who think that I only care about the environment. Not so, Madam Speaker, not so at all. I was elected by people; not by trees. I was elected by people, and I am here to make sure that we have the ability to serve those people, the ability to make sure that they have a balance where we have a way of living, a quality of life, and a future for our children. If we don't do that, Madam Speaker, it is going to be the biggest failure of any of us. We are going to be judged when we are not here— that's true. We won't know, but we are going to be judged nevertheless. Our names, our records, are going to be judged.

Madam Speaker, we have to serve our people in ways that ensure they have the ability to live today, to have their being— to prosper. They have the ability to get educated, to get great jobs in this country. They should be at the front of the line for it and, Madam Speaker, we have to make sure that we have a country down the road, whether it is 20 years, 30 years, 40 years. The problem with climate change, Madam Speaker, is that for much of it, we may not see the major impacts until we get closer to it. Yes, we are going to be facing things like hurricanes, increased weather events— we have a hurricane that's potentially going to impact us within days.

All around the world, Madam Speaker, this is happening. We cannot ignore that fact. We have to recognise that our environment is integral to our tourism industry as well, but we have to balance those needs against the needs of our people. The need for housing, the need for farming, the need for infrastructure, Madam Speaker. All of these things factor into the entire concept of sustainability that I believe— and it's not just me. It is not just a concept that I made up. It is one that is shared around the world, and I believe it is one that we all must share because we all want a future for our children and their children.

Madam Speaker, the time for us to have discussions about what we are going to deliver for our people, is when we bring the budget here. We can argue about it then, but at this point the suggestion that there is political paralysis because of numbers, is greatly exaggerated, Madam Speaker, if I can put it that way. We have the ability to move forward.

This Government has been delivering Madam Speaker, and I, as Premier, have not been doing things that my colleagues don't support. We work as a team; we have discussions, we have debates, we collaborate, and we all have one purpose, which is to deliver on behalf of the people of this country, Madam Speaker. We have focused not just on the economy and infrastructure needs, but on real needs of our people— the elderly, the young, those who are disabled, those who need assistance.

Madam Speaker, we need to deal with this Motion, and then we need to get back to working to help

the people of this country. That is what is important, Madam Speaker. We have about a year and a half to go in this term. We need to be able to get our budget here and get it passed. The Members on the other side will have the opportunity to see it and question it; the public will understand what is being delivered in the budget for their benefit and we think it is going to be good news for them. Madam Speaker, the suggestion that we can't get it done? Well, let us find out. Let us find out. We will know soon enough.

Madam Speaker, as we evolve and transform as a country, I want this to be— and it is a shared perspective— a place where all Caymanians can share our history, heritage, culture, and traditions; those things that make us who we are, that identify us as Caymanians. We all wish for a Cayman that will focus on the greater good and the welfare of the less fortunate; that is what we have been trying to deliver, Madam Speaker. If you look at our record, it is reflected very well in that respect. Madam Speaker, I dream of a Cayman where everyone, all of our people, our Caymankind tribe, are able to enjoy the fruit of a steady, healthy-managed economy, and to benefit from the opportunities in this country. Madam Speaker, we have been bringing fiscal discipline to ensure that we are able to do that today, and to continue doing it tomorrow.

We all understand that we have the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility metrics to address. I think, just like we have to be responsible with the physical resources we have, we have to be even more with the financial resources that we have. We have a country that we are trying to build on a solid foundation and continue to deliver on that. That was set out in the first SPS, Madam Speaker, and we have continued to build on those same foundations. We have continued to deliver on behalf of the people of this country.

Madam Speaker, let us deal with the issues that we are confronted with. Let us get our budget down to this honourable House and present it on behalf of the people of this country. This Motion should be voted down, so that we have the ability to achieve that, and to be able to deliver on behalf of our people, Madam Speaker.

We are dealing with many factors, many things, and we are constantly juggling resources to try to ensure that we do so. Indeed, Madam Speaker, one of the important ones is the National Pensions Act (Amendment) Bill, mentioned earlier by the Member for Bodden Town West. Madam Speaker, we are happy that it has run the necessary notice period. It is something we have been eager to [bring] to the House; but rather than wait for the budget period, we are happy to commit to a special meeting to deal with it, so that the people of this country who need it and whatever opportunities it provides for them, can benefit from it, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: We will do it shortly, sir, very shortly.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Well, there were no arguments about bringing it at the time of the budget, but we all understand how much it benefits our people.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Long time ago I stopped being a boy. No, no.

Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the Government, I will always value my colleagues, the contributions, opinions and issues they have a focus on, either for their particular Ministries or the constituencies that they represent, but in fact, we represent everyone in the country as well. We have to deal with issues that relate to everyone. Madam Speaker, that will not change. It is the foundation upon which we work together as a team, to be able to deliver on behalf of this country. Everything else that is suggested that it doesn't work, that it's ineffective, that there's disagreement and dysfunction— not true, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, are we all not human beings? Do we make mistakes? Of course, but it doesn't mean that we can't deliver on behalf of the people, and that is what we do. It is abundantly clear that that's the case and, because we are able to deliver, even if mistakes are made, because everybody makes mistakes, we should continue delivering for the people of the country and not have any kind of change in Government at this stage, Madam Speaker. Not at this particular stage. It is an important critical point. That we agree with.

We need to be able to get the budget down for the country. It is one of the critical things that have to be done and yes, we will have a Special Meeting and have at least one piece of legislation which is an Amendment Bill for the National Pensions Act because we know it is important, Madam Speaker. There are other potential pieces that we may look at as well, but that is something that we will commit to focusing on at the same time that we are focusing on being able to deliver the budget for this country.

Madam Speaker, respect democracy, and allow the Government that has been serving the people, delivering for the people, to be able to continue to do that. Allow us, as colleagues to work to deliver these critical issues at this time. You want to have a fight after that? Fine. Six months later, if you want to have another one, that is fine, but that is not going to help us right now, Madam Speaker. That is not going to help address what we need to get done right now for the people of this country. That is our sacred trust, it is our sacred responsibility, to be able to get that done for the people of this country.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. I know there will be all sorts of comments to follow; but, Madam Speaker, that is expected. The Opposition will take the information that they get from all over the place, and try to suggest that it is the truth, and that it represents a Government that is not achieving anything, but those are not the facts. The facts are plain to see. The facts can be read. The facts are obvious. The facts are present, Madam Speaker. We have every right to be proud of what the Government has been able to deliver for our people, for this country, during this critically important transition out of the COVID environment, into the post-COVID environment, and being able to deliver for our people.

That is what we were put here to do, Madam Speaker. It is what our people expect us to do. As a matter of fact, they expect all of us to work together to be able to deliver on their behalf, to represent them and to provide solutions for them. Our record reflects that, Madam Speaker. We have been achieving, and we will continue to achieve on behalf of the people. Madam Speaker, this Motion deserves to be voted down because our sacred trust is to be here to deliver on behalf of the people. To reflect the wishes that they expressed in 2021, and that we have been toiling to deliver on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues on this side for the work they put in and the efforts that they make to serve together, to serve the people of this country— to make a difference in their lives. I want to thank them, because those efforts help our people, Madam Speaker, but it comes at a price. Many of us have families, and there is a price we pay in relation to the time that we have to spend away from them, so I want to thank them for the work they do. I want to thank them for the fact that they have to sacrifice some of their family time to be able to deliver for the people of this country.

They are dedicated public servants, Madam Speaker. That is what we collectively seek to do; it is what every single Minister, every Backbench Member, every Parliamentary Secretary, seeks to do. We work hard for the people.

Putting this Motion in "File 13", where it should be, will enable us to move forward, get the important work done and deliver further for the people of this country.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this morning I intended on taking the Motion before us against the Premier to a different level; against the Premier, but not against Ministers whom I knew were working and wanted to make things better. We have moved on from that.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I felt that we needed to move to a different level because, having sat with Members for the past couple of months, I know very well where they stand, where they sit, what they try to do. The fact is, many of the things that those Ministers tried to do didn't get done because, for whatever reason, they kept being outfoxed by the Premier on too many things that are good for our people and it's all because he is the Premier, and they are not a cohesive group, and he has a different agenda. I listened to him intently, and if those Members stay where they are, I hope, I do hope, that what he's saying happens— or has happened— where he now agrees it is the case.

I get to the point, Madam Speaker, where the Leader of the Opposition said, *we want a government of national unity*. Well, I agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition; let's accept Kenneth Bryan, Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, André [Ebanks], Isaac [Rankine], Jay [Ebanks] and the others. [I] can't say the Minister of Health because she has made herself plain. She's staying where she is, she is very satisfied that what they are doing is what the country wants some of her words were, "*it's what the country wants"*, but it is not happening. Not happening.

Let's get the government of national unity, but accept these people and form a government. I have made it absolutely clear that I have no aim or objective of being part of it. I have also said many times, that we have the wherewithal and the abilities of people within these two sides to make those things happen, that we *know* need to happen. No good of us getting up here and talking about what happened, what the people wanted, in 2021. Do they know what the people want? I bet you they don't know what a quarter of the people of this country want right now. I know, I've been around it too often.

Madam Speaker, as I keep saying, the same people who burnt down the fire station are cussing the politicians and the Government for not getting it done, not getting the fire put out early enough. No one told me. I know how quickly our people change their minds, especially— especially— when there's high crime and there is a serious downturn.

They can say how many Caymanians are employed, but the net effect of all of that, is that Caymanians might be employed (if that's what they are saying), but look at what's happening to the dollar they take home. *Look at the bills!* And nobody seems to want to deal with Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC) and all the other monopolies that we have; *and*— Madam Minister of Health— if you all want these things done, push the Premier to get them done. I don't believe that such is being done! That's the problem we have. That's why our people are hurting.

We would be glad to move on to a government of national unity, especially if a hurricane is going to hit us. I will see then, how much national unity we are still willing to perform to help each other. I am here, to look out for Caymanians and for those who live, move, and have their being here legally.

I take no other position because I know where we came from. I keep saying, Madam Speaker, as

much as we talk about immigration reform, for anyone to [say] that a population of 10,000 or 15,000 people can bring the level of comfort that this country has enjoyed for the last fifty years, they are talking foolishness, and I am not here to condone such.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I know, we see it. It could not have happened. Where would we have gotten the teachers from? First of all, where would we have gotten the revenue from to assist our people, and do the things that we have done; and that we are still doing, because there are some good things that have been done. Where would it have come from?

Let us not paint this picture for the division it can cause in this country, because there are some strong, strong undercurrents out there against immigration; but I will tell you this, if you want something to destroy this country, go ahead! I hope that you and I can survive on our grandchildren, and [that] each one of us will be able to withstand [it]. Let them go ahead and flag/use these issues, which some of these young people don't know, who are willing to pick up a weapon, and you and I might not be safe in our home. I've been down that road.

Oh, I've spent more than half of my life in the government working for the country and I know when I took my two children and put a mattress on the floor to sleep at night because we were threatened. We don't want this country to get anywhere near those kinds of points; they were few and far between, but let us be more than careful about where we stand. We, must be 130-140 nationalities, have to live together. I believe we have been the kindest and most cooperative people anywhere; in any country. It is what has helped us. We have been able to learn and live with others, even though there are some that I wish I could send them to *[inaudible]* and leave them there.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, Honourable Leader of the Opposition— yes, let's get the government of national unity. That is what can cure this, because some don't see the nuances in parliamentary procedures; they don't.

When the Premier goes as Chairman and the Speaker comes down and becomes another Member, how many Members do they have? How many Members do you have then? What happens? I've said it and I will say it again: I have never voted against a budget because I have civil servants, seniors and many, many things to do for this country, but I have voted against certain heads and that's how things are done. I am not foolish to believe that you should vote against entire budgets.

Now, we have passed budgets without votes— Ha! It was smart of us to do, or the Opposition might have killed us.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: However, we did it. I say without votes, because they were not here.

Madam Speaker, today is that day I spoke about in the last Meeting— the best of times, the worst of times; and Madam Speaker, this is so, not because our island is bereft of ideas and goodwill of our people who mean well, want the best for all our people, and [are] willing to and have given the Government a chance, to see that it's done. No.

We have young people coming on board now, our seniors who can still offer us advice if we would take it, instead of telling them they are too old and must go home— and it's not necessarily me. I'm talking about seniors in this country who have been around, who have degrees, who have experience in management. No, this country is not bereft of these things. We have people here who we need to be using, our own people, rather than bringing all these people who you don't know.

Yes. The best of times; but the worst of times, because we are trying to bring the matters that are on everyone's lips, except those who hate, dislike and are bad minded against others, to where they are affecting our people's lives more positively— and anyone trying to say different about our situation is not being realistic, nor being true to themselves or their constituents.

Madam Speaker… I was asked to join PACT, and not being the happiest to be a part, I did what I thought was best for Cayman at the time [and] I was part of inviting others to join PACT. At the time, I looked at what I felt was uncomfortable, but I [also] looked back on my work over the years, and saw changes in that work that different administrations that I was in could accomplish that, although detractors said were all bad, they still used them. Not much changed, because those things were not as bad as they were touted to be. The only thing they didn't try to change over the years, Madam Speaker— and you are young— was the chair you are sitting in, that I had built and I paid for. It is the only thing that they didn't try to change McKeeva's name from.

Now, Madam Speaker, when I looked at joining PACT, they couldn't match our fight, the efforts, of the United Democratic Party and other administrations that I was part of. Perhaps one or two, but many of them who were outside directing, couldn't. The Member for Bodden Town West spoke about the fight that Mr. Gilbert had, as a government, when I was Leader of Government Business, to get the Cayman Islands National Insurance Company (CINICO) in place, and the licks that he took— and we took, as an administration, to do it. Today, they might complain, but who's complaining? Who's complaining? Look at it.

Look at the many efforts— I look back on it because this might be my last speech, because I don't know if the budget will come or what they're going to do. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, when Duncan Taylor told us that we had to send home six hundred (600) civil servants— that's what they put in front of me— I said, *you must think I fool-fool*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I said, *"That's your job [per] the Constitution, but this Government is not going to agree to that. Do you know what sending that many Caymanians home can do? Probably three or four times that many are going to be affected. No, sir, we are not doing it."* Then the demand for me to put in place income tax and value added tax— you know what that is, right? You pay a tax on everything you purchase; and for me to put in place property tax. Think, honourable Members, where we would be today with those taxes.

They kicked me in the face, too, because I refused to accept their advice to put in place beneficial ownership. You know what I told them there, *I left my pen home*. You don't have it, but you want me to put it in place. Yeah, you must think we are monkeys swinging on trees down here.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: No, we're not doing it.

Let me tell you all younger ones, no need to come throwing blame around, whether you are new or you're in your half-term or wherever you are at.

Where are we? Yes, the Premier says they have "issues" with the budget, and they are down here fighting about who the leaders are. The problem is that, *fi true,* but why are we here? Why are we here? We are here, because we should not be in a budget situation at this point. It would have been good, if all the political advice and civil service advice had been taken from early in the year, but it didn't happen; so ask yourselves why are we down here? Why are we down here? Don't come beating up on me when I sit down, because I have the Standing Orders ready.

I attended a two-day retreat somewhere in the middle of the year, probably June or July, I can't remember which, but around then. This situation is happening, why? [Because] there are various agendas; the cohesion was not there, [hence] the commitment to each other was not there, because you don't have the cohesion. That's how come we are here, Madam Minister of Health.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: What is not true?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: He's not here to correct me though, look at the chair.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I said it, it's on record.

Madam Speaker, now they say it is in good shape. Well, these were the budget and policy issues that stood and still stand in the way, until I see differently. Up until Monday last week, I attended my last Caucus and they couldn't give us one written document! They come and put it on the screen, go through it and answer a few questions, and expect all of us to just… but they told us, they told us, nothing can be changed.

Am I lying? No, I am not lying. The country needs to hear the facts. Nobody can dispute that— and what were the matters? What were the matters? Well, from the 9th October— I think I left it in my car— I wrote an agenda which I gave to Caucus for the Cayman Islands and the Premier, of the various things that we had talked about in July, that we knew we were not getting any funding for; a number of things, and things that we were concerned about.

The first one that I told them [was] my priority was the education situation. Back then, the House had passed [approved], a high school for the district of West Bay, but over a three-year period; and then the Cayman Brac High School, which was also spoken about here and which even the Member for Cayman Brac West said he certainly supported. We didn't know, and I'm going to go into it, the full situation of the Layman Scott High School.

I think that high school was built in '67 or '69, so you know that it has asbestos in it; and you know that, being that old, it is difficult to renovate because of wiring, plumbing, et cetera, thus, the Minister had every right to plug for a new high school. I didn't know. I don't know if anybody knew. That was in June or July but, prior to that, Madam Speaker, it must have gone about three times to the Cabinet, which agreed and decided the business case and all of that. Then you come and say you don't have the money and she can't get it. Yet, you're not hearing the facts of what your surplus is. That was one aspect of education.

Another one, buildings. I call it plant infrastructure. We have the Lighthouse School's teachers having to travel all over the place from district to district to deal with children, because the children are put where? In the primary schools. These are handicapped, Lighthouse School children, put in amongst these areas to cope with it. I don't care how or when we got there, we are there and those should be priorities! To get our children to a place where they can cope, and they can bounce around with those that we bring in, and stand up on their own, then we need to have the best teachers. If you have bad teachers you move them, but you pay the good teachers well; and what is happening, is the money is not there for the teachers either.

That's just a few areas of education— and we don't know all of it, because how it was conducted was that he went to each Minister behind the next Minister, so Tom Brown wouldn't know what Joe Blow is doing and he can easily divide and conquer. I know differently about how budgets work. You sit down with everybody, *this is your money, and this is what we are going to do because these are our priorities.* You don't take Tom Brown down in the back room, deal with him; come back, tell Joe Blow that's not what you said, [and] all sorts of things. Then you [are] blaming the civil servants! And I put up with this, sometimes 11, 12 o'clock at night.

The things for agriculture, which were [also] part of my priorities, the same thing. We don't know if the East-West corridor [stands]— and I say agriculture, but that Ministry. If they know now, we do not know because we hear, well, he doesn't have enough money but he might get $14 million or he might get $10 million. Oh, yeah? Then, one time you said you had a deficit, and another you had a surplus. Listen, *how in the world you can run a country like that*?! How?

An Hon. Member: Say it again.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Jesus, God. [You] can't run a country like that. They're going to get up and curse me, and boy, they have been doing that on the radio. Paid by whom; paid by whom? That's the ridiculousness in this country. When you can't have your way, you pay somebody, a *Nowherean*—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: —to come and cuss us and tell us all sorts of things—

An Hon. Member: Preach it!

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: —and tell you lies, and then you must be satisfied with that as a government. Never, in the worst history of governance that I witnessed, either up there or being a Member here, did I ever see or felt anything like this for this country. It was a month away, from when I'm talking about that these things were delivered. Monday or Thursday, the 9th was a month, and when I prayed that Wednesday night I said, '*God, first thing is you forgive me for my sins; but forgive them, too,*'; something had to give.

Madam Speaker, those were some of the issues. Yes, we have made good on the promise to veterans, seamen and as many poor persons as we could, but other governments did the same thing, and we got to where we were because other governments pushed it all the way.

The East-West Arterial, I still don't know where that stands, while our people and children are still suffering and stressed out coming from there.

The Council— I don't think these are budget issues, but they are certainly policy issues— where one government department is taking the next government department to court. Can you ever believe that is the kind of thing going on [in] this small island that we have? It's a policy we have been asking, *let's change it*. Nothing happened.

We were told in North Side in June or July, that there was $90,000 in the budget for new hires in the Civil Service. *What?!*

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: $90,000?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Sorry, $90 *million* not $90,000. Sorry if I said thousand— $90 million; and alas, when we told them to take it down, they couldn't for whatever reason. You heard one story from the Civil Service and another from the political directorate at the top.

The last one we had, I'm sure if I go through my bag I will find it, I think it was well over $60 million that might have been put in the new budget for new civil service posts in this country, and I said it then— and I say it now: it's unsustainable. We do not have that kind of revenue and we have to push things to the limit, to get the revenue for these things.

On top of that, the civil service cost of living allowance (COLA) for the rank and file of the civil service, is not there; the uplift for the government pensioners who get $500 or $900, is not there either; and listen to me, we took it in good faith— I'm talking about myself because I was there, but the Ministers as well— when the Minister said, "*We are going to give the veterans, seamen and the other poor people the $1250 through the Needs Assessment Unit"* but, they are going to try to bring up the lower ones in the civil service. We are not hearing about that. What we are hearing about is some sort of honorarium and when I asked, *well, what is that?* They said, well, they could not tell me what level of civil service was going to get the honorarium, or how many, or what the total millions were.

I am not against giving anybody anything but, as I said, the COLA for the rank and file is not there, and the pensioners of this country who put in whether five, or ten years, or whatever; they worked, and now they cannot make it. Can you imagine? They cannot make it on the little pension that they are getting.

The next issue, the last one that I had to stop and listen to most carefully and say, *"No, can't be*." The Sovereign Wealth Fund. That raised many devils' heads. From what I know of the sovereign wealth funds around the world, have worked, but they have worked in places like Trinidad. We use that as an example because they have tremendous energy wealth and they can put millions of dollars towards it.

I read and follow Singapore's agenda over the years. They also have one, but they have put in little by little, over 30, 50, years, because they are somewhat like us— they do not have heavy natural resources; but

now we are going to take our $100-and-something million dollars and give it to whom to run?! People in the private sector! Oh, yeah? The same people that lost millions of dollars of our people's pensions! No, the government's pension operations have not lost and have kept us steady, and thanks be to God for them, right? What do you expect me to do? Stand still and take licks? No, at least I might run, even if I can't fire one back.

Madam Speaker, another point. Why are we here? Why are we 9-9 when we had 10 out there with me at least. I came here with a Motion seconded by my colleagues about what was happening to us [with] the energy situation in this country— and not just [CUC], but what the banks and insurance companies were doing to everybody, and I had a case. Not to say that Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC) is not a well-run company. They are good business wise, and they have served us well, but there is a time when we have to look.

What I learned, and I mentioned it back then, was that the Cayman Islands missed a golden opportunity to put CUC on notice that we intend to cancel the monopoly T&D contract. Instead, it has now automatically renewed until the year 2048. I know the Minister is trying to take things in hand, but it has been renewed because the deadline to give them notice to cancel passed, earlier this year, with no action. That was one of the straws that prompted my decision to resign from PACT, as this was a tremendous blow to the Cayman population which is already suffering, because I think that was one of the main ways.

The way the Minister is moving with OfReg is putting them on some notice, but we have to see where that will take us, because we lost that opportunity; go get the contracts for yourself. We must now negotiate a new relationship between CUC, and the people of the Cayman Islands, [as] the legacy monopoly model that has been in place for over half a century no longer serves the best interests of the people of these Islands.

Madam Speaker, CUC's increasing profits can no longer be incentivised by selling ever more expensive grid electricity to our people. An example of this can be seen in that company's recent third quarter earnings report for 2023 whereby they are quoted as stating that net earnings for Q3, 2023 increased by 34 per cent or $13.9 million over the same period in 2022. Uh-huh, that is where a part of my $4,231 went, when it increased over 100 percent. Can you imagine? Over 100 per cent! That's where it went.

In my opinion, this was no fluke or just growth by chance. If you look further to 2021, CUC reported that net earnings for that year almost doubled as compared to 2020; the point being, as a utility company, they have made significant earnings out of what they do for the Caymanian people. This can no longer be sustained, and a change of business as usual is needed for the benefit of our people.

The Cayman Islands broke the monopoly contract over the generation of electricity many years ago. It is time we return it to the people, and give them a legal right to generate their own solar energy similar to islands like Barbados, which means our people buying less electricity from CUC, and dramatically lowering their energy costs and cost of living— it is one of the biggest costs of living we have to deal with. Although it is going back down now, and they will tell you, as they do every year, *"Oh, it's so hot, gotta put it up. It's getting cooler, we bring it down a little bit. Next year, go back up hot."* No! No. Time for change.

We must facilitate financing options so that solar energy becomes accessible to everyone in the Cayman Islands, not just those who have the means. In the process, we must ensure we enhance competition, not further entrench a monopoly. Back in 2011, 2012, around there, we put $15 or $17 million in the budget because England had just put in a programme for solar energy to homes and I asked that donkey, Duncan Taylor, that we needed to do the same thing and our group agreed and you know, that we had to take it out because you know what we were then.

The Government should also ensure that the price paid to consumers for any solar energy that is sold to CUC is done at rates which are aligned with the requirements of the National Energy Policy ensuring that Caymanians are being compensated at rates that provide a net profit to the country. Solar energy can not only save homeowners on their energy costs, but from what we understand, those who do not own a home and instead rent, can also access the benefits of solar energy through the creation of new programmes— what they call community solar. This, I think, is where a person can own a small portion of a large solar array, fully financed by the bank, which provides credits on their CUC bill every month, even though that solar is not installed at their home or apartment, so there are things that can be done and when we want to make real changes in the cost of living, we need to do things like this.

We have to grab hold and say, "*Listen man, this can't continue."* Poor people lying in darkness *now* because they can't pay their bill! And every MP, people are looking for us to help pay electrical costs. This is nothing personal against anybody in CUC. We had to do the same thing with Cable & Wireless, and oh, they cussed some of us in this House us for it. Not Members, but some sitting in the gallery, et cetera, were there and part of it. They knew. We had to take them on. I was the Leader of Government Business and of course, all of that gave all of them all sorts of things to call us crooked. To cause this, and say you are being investigated, and they are going to England, they are going to do this and do the next thing. Stop it. Stop it.

I have never lied to this country, never did; and they can do anything they want to do, but when it comes to trying to change some of these things, the Premier has been absent. I am not willing and what you

have heard me say here this evening, not one soul can come and say any different. Can they say that I did not give the Premier the benefit of the doubt? No one can say that. I offered advice and offered to work wherever I could, without being a Minister. I did not want to be part of a Cabinet, and he was not going to give me anything anyway— beat me behind my back, smiled in my face; but, that was my position. It is still my position.

The Premier has been absent on these issues, and no one here, not one Minister, can say that McKeeva Bush is telling a lie so, where do I stand? I have said what I believe to be the facts, whether it happens or not, I have to vote with the Motion, but I believe that there are good enough people on that side who can prove their worth and work with us if we garner ourselves together, as we say, we are Caymanians and let's work together! Put it together, show whoever talked about the outside world. Show them that we can make changes and the ship can go full steam ahead with the right crew and the right steering.

Let us not be like I was told— I'm not that old— [Andrew] Gerarrd said about Caymanians, as he was leaving: *"If a Caymanian can't be the Captain, he'll go down in the riggings and mash it up."* We don't want that. We don't want that. We don't want that. Let them be the ones that do that kind of stuff. Let us be the ones that can bring positive change for our people.

One last point, Madam Speaker. We built and gave concessions to several clinics— I cannot remember whether Doctors Hospital got it at the time, but it was offered. We built Shetty and gave them good concessions because we believed it would be a good thing for the country, and I believe that it has demonstrated that it is a good thing for this country but still, there are forces in the governance of our health services that refuse to send people there. They rather send them overseas.

The last time the Minister had to get money, I think she said it was something like $26 million that she had to put in. Not blaming the Minister, mind you. I keep saying that even with these government companies, we have a responsibility for policy. My position used to be, '*You the board? You don't want to do what we say? You don't want to do what our policy says? You see the door there? Go through it.* W*e'll get other people who can agree with our policies*.' You might have to take that up, Minister.

I cannot find support to spend $26 or $30 million to send people overseas, when they can get the same service here, either through Doctors Hospital or Health City— and it is going to be better soon, because of the large amount of new equipment and the medical facilities that will be at the new cancer centre. We have to! That money stays here. Yes, they have people from overseas, but look at how much it saves us; and I know because my wife went overseas. It costs thousands of dollars. The first time I had to spend three or four weeks there, when I could have been home. She could have been there, I could have slept up there. Her family, I, could have been moving up and down.

Much easier, a much better position than lying down in some hotel, having to travel with people you do not even know. Right? It means you have good medical care, but we are not talking about the medical care. I am saying that we need to look at these kinds of situations so the money can stay here and traverse through our economy. Twenty-six million dollars, or $10 million? Do the economics for that. That is about 40 per cent, three or four times. If it is 10, we are saving.

Madam Speaker, I will end by saying, again, that the country needs a new look. It is a good time to reset. We said it after COVID, and the Government struggled, the Ministry of Tourism is still struggling and trying to do a good job in getting our tourism back on track and bring it up to par. We can do it, but we need to work together.

The Premier says he understands the opposition's position that it is him. Yeah, once it was McKeeva, and he sat in the gallery, looking on, waiting to take over. Maybe he does feel it, maybe he understands, but I know all of us on this side understand, because I have no doubt what Members on this side are capable of, and what they on that side can do, if we pull together. We can do it, and we need to do it, and we need to put our local people in place who can help us and I know some of that has been done.

Madam Speaker, as I said, let us get the government of national unity. I will vote for the Motion.

The Speaker: I acknowledge the Elected Member for Red Bay, but before you speak, I want to take a moment to acknowledge all of our youth parliamentarians who have joined us in the gallery today. We start Youth Parliament at 3:30 on Tuesdays but, instead of participating in what we would call a mock debate, they are getting to experience first-hand what a real Special Meeting looks like.

As you all can hear, we are debating a matter of national importance and I thank you all for being on your best behaviour, by being quiet. Members in the gallery are not supposed to clap— I am sure that you have already been advised of that; but for others who are here I wanted to remind you of some of the House rules just in case you did not know.

Elected Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay: Madam Speaker, would it be convenient if I moved the Motion for the House to continue beyond the hour of interruption now, rather than in 10 minutes?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: You can; yes. You can.

The Speaker: Go ahead, move it.

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, I need a seconder. I beg to move that the business of the House do continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do continue past the hour of 4.30. All those in favour, please say, Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.
Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, would like to acknowledge and thank the former Members of the House and the former Speaker who are here, as well as the youth parliamentarians, for coming and for observing the proceedings in Parliament today on this important matter.

Madam Speaker, in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* on the eve of his demise, Macbeth gave one of the most famous soliloquies of those in Shakespeare's many plays. Macbeth, facing doom, said: **"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out, breath candle! Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."** That, Madam Speaker, would be an appropriate epitaph for the speech delivered this evening by the Honourable Premier in defence of his Premiership.

Tomorrow, the 15th of November, will be exactly twenty-three years since I was first sworn in as a Member of the then legislature. In that company was also the honourable Minister of Education, the honourable Member for West Bay West, Mr. Gilbert McLean and Mr. Frank McField. I say that to say that there is not much I have not seen in those almost twenty-three years, but the one thing I have never seen until now, is a Government that expects to govern without a parliamentary majority. I have counted over and over; I cannot get more than nine elected members on that side, no matter how hard I try and there are now nine here. I believe the term for it is a hung Parliament. I think I have read that somewhere.

The only person who does not seem to understand the arithmetic is my good friend, former colleague, Minister in my Government and schoolmate at law school for five years, the Honourable Premier.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: If you tell me how you can get ten out of nine, then maybe I have gotten it wrong so, that can only be that the Premier is contemplating asking you to relinquish your high office and join the government backbench, because there is no space for another Minister.

Madam Speaker, I do not know you well, but we have spent a little time together, especially on one trip that we made to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in the UK. I believe I have told you more than once that in fact, I have been amazed at how well you have taken to your role, given that you had no previous parliamentary experience before you were elected in 2021.

I think you are doing a remarkable job, and I told you then— I took the liberty to tell you then, because we were not in this formal setting— that you need not worry about the Premier or anybody else moving you, because the Constitution is written the way it is written to ensure that the sitting Government cannot remove a Speaker simply because they disagree with his or her view on a particular matter. It takes a two third majority to move you, so those nine out there cannot move you. Do not let them intimidate you if that is what they are trying to do.

Hold on to that Chair, Madam Speaker, with even more strength and stubbornness than the Premier is holding on to his Premiership. He is holding on to it like death to a dead man's jacket, to the detriment of his Government and, dare I say, to the country. The time comes in all of our lives, when there is a situation that no matter what we try to do, we cannot fix and when you reach the point when you know you cannot fix it, you have to accept it.

There was a little song they used to teach us when we were in school. I will take a little liberty with the number, but the song is the same: *There were 12 green bottles standing on the wall, there were 12 green bottles standing on the wall and if one green bottle should accidentally fall, there'd be 11 green bottles standing on the wall; 11 green bottles standing on the wall, and if one green bottle should accidentally fall, there would be 10 green bottles standing on the wall…*

Lo and behold, there were 10 green bottles standing on the wall— and I'm not sure it was accidental, but one green bottle fell and now there are just nine green bottles standing on the wall. It is parliamentary arithmetic, Madam Speaker. You can't get a majority if you only have nine. There are nineteen elected Members, so Madam Speaker, I caution you again. I give you my advice as a veteran who sees real promise in an up and coming representative: don't make them— or him, if it is just him— destroy your political future.

Madam Speaker, it seems to us on the outside, that there is not even an attempt, on the part of the Premier, to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic; he is not even trying. For the Titanic, the strike of the

iceberg was fatal. It took time for the ship to go down, but legend is that the ship went down with the orchestra still playing. I don't know whether the orchestra over there is playing, or crying, or what it is doing, but I believe the fate of the PACT Government is the same as that of the Titanic, so I'm going to say to the Members over there…

I mean, I always knew the Premier had acting ability, right? Any lawyer, any decent lawyer, must have some acting ability, otherwise you cannot do the job properly. I know him, he is very good at certain things— not at leadership, but at certain things. He would have us believe that all is peace and unity within the Government Caucus and Cabinet and, *"Yes, we have our differences, but we resolve them in a mature and dignified manner."*. Lie. Lie.

Madam Speaker, not just by the three Members who have now come to this side, but by some sitting over there, have I been told stories that made my eyes bulge. I could not believe that elected members would use such language toward other elected members who are part of their group, so don't believe it. There are many over there who are less than satisfied with their lot but for reasons which escape me, and I won't go down the road of speculation, seem prepared to stay.

Madam Speaker, there is another little poem I'm going to read to the Members. I don't know this one by heart, though; somebody sent it to me just a while ago. It's written by a lady called Jessie Bell Rittenhouse, and it's called, "*The Door".*

"There was a door stood long ajar
While I went trying other doors
To which I had no key.
And when at last I turned to seek
The refuge and the light
A gust of wind had shut the door
And left me in the night."

I say to the Members over there: The door stands ajar for us, with your cooperation, to put together a Government of National Unity which can take this country forward. As I think I have said to each of you who have spoken to me and my team, a thousand times since the last election, I have no further personal political ambition. I want nothing but a good government for my country and my people.

Many of you in this room who are elected— some of you sitting on that side— have told me more than once that it's a disaster; that you are so stressed out, you don't know what to do. You can't get any leadership, you can't get any progress on key things, no agreement on priorities. You think I would stand here and make this up? Now is your time to make that fateful decision. Let's collectively give this country a Government which can actually get things done.

What are you all going to do about the budget— assuming you can even reach an agreement to bring it here? Sit and wait and hope and pray that at least one Member of the Opposition votes on the budget or each item in the annual estimates?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: And where is your quorum? The Constitution says a quorum is the majority of the elected members plus the presiding officer. That is ten. Ten over there. I don't know. I heard some mutterings from my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town West; maybe— maybe, he might be going back over once he gets his pension thing sorted, I don't know.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: I don't know. I don't know what sort of deals are going on, but my logical mind says that unless the Premier is a magician, he cannot make ten out of nine.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: I have the assurance of the Member from Bodden Town West that he is going absolutely nowhere.

Madam Speaker, [though] the Premier spoke for more than one hour, he spent less than two minutes on the issue I am talking about, namely, the Parliamentary arithmetic. He sought to defend the progress his government has made on a range of things— he would. He's smart. He would have noted that the Motion does not really say anything at all about the failures of the government. There's just one line that says, *whereas having regard to the general conduct of the government since it assumed office*. That's quite deliberate because right now the issue is not how well or not the government has performed. The issue is that the government is in a constitutional crisis and the Premier is in denial. Unless he has ten seated over there, he has no quorum, let alone getting anything passed.

The other matter, which is dealt with in the Motion and he spoke about, is that we need a budget. We need a budget. I have been through I don't know how many. Close to twenty, because it's only since we went to the two-year budget that we only get two budgets a year [sic *administration*]. In the old days, it was a budget every single year. This is the 14th of November and the budget isn't even agreed yet; and I can tell you, without calling any names or taking any tales, or naming anyone, you can't be elected for twenty-three years, served three terms in government, two of which you were the Premier, and you don't know the system— and the people.

I am telling you that I am constantly told by civil servants about how terrible things are, and it has gotten worse recently; about how many civil servants are having to take medication to control things like their blood

pressure and their stress levels so they can sleep at night. How the budget team is completely wiped out— absolutely exhausted— because they think they have gotten some progress, then everything they propose gets blown up again.

Yet the Premier comes here with his woe-is-me speech, pretending all is well, and life within the PACT Government is paradise. Madam Speaker, in politics, the only thing worse than believing the other side's propaganda is believing your own; and I believe that is what he is trying to get the members of his team to do— believe his propaganda, which does not accord, does not even come close to what is the reality.

Now, Madam Speaker, my good friend, the Honourable Minister for Health, Wellness and Home Affairs spoke passionately, but at least in this respect she spoke erroneously, when she asserted that this government of independent Members experiment was the first for Cayman. Those of us who have been around, including the two former Members whom I spoke about just now, Doctor Frank [McField] and Mr. Gilbert McLean, not to mention the Father of the House and the Minister for Education, will tell you that the 2000 Elections gave no clear results because there were no national teams (with a small "n"), running.

The Member for West Bay West had the biggest team— four, including himself. Then there were the Honourable Kurt Tibbetts and myself in George Town as a team, and Messrs. Gilbert McLean and Roy Bodden in Bodden Town but there were no teams, and so what we had to do— I was a complete political greenhorn— was to try to put together a Government out of those.

The first attempt at putting a Government together didn't even make it to swearing-in. The second effort made it one year before that Government crashed. That spelled the birth of the United Democratic Party (UDP), and then the People's Progressive Movement; but this belief, which has been sold over and over again to our people, that *"Oh, in the old days everybody got elected as independents and each man and woman had their own mind, and could do whatever they want"*? Nonsense. Nonsense.

In modern political history, that is since 1976, only twice have independents formed the Government and dare I say, without causing condemnation, both have failed. Let me rephrase that. One failed miserably, and the other is failing even more spectacularly; and the reason for that Madam Speaker, it should be so obvious, is that you can't do anything without organisation.

You can't put together a group of people whose only motivation in being together is that they will make up a sufficient number to form the government. They have no cohesive plans, policies, priorities, programmes. All they know is, *"I want be in government"* but, even before you were sworn in— all of you would have had that experience by now, Madam Speaker, you got people coming to you: "*Boy, Mr. Alden, you know I need this. I need to fix this. I need that. I need the next thing."*. They don't even wait till you get sworn in.

I remember, Madam Speaker, I was so exhausted the first time I was elected, I ran a six-week manslaughter trial right through the elections. That is how silly I was, because I had no idea how difficult politics were. I was wiped out, so I did not wake up early on election morning. I slept. What woke me up, was somebody pounding on the door at about 7:30. That was my first request for financial assistance and people had not even voted yet.

I say that, Ma'am Speaker, because that is the level of expectation there is once they believe you are going to be in a position of authority or power, and so we do a disservice to our country, and to our people, when each of us runs around with our separate Manifesto, *"This is what I gah do for you. You can rely on me, I gonna change education"*— who and you? One person cannot change anything. Maybe their mind, not much else.

Madam Speaker, if the country has not learned the lesson about the absolute political nonsense of electing a group of independents and expecting a particular result after this failed experiment, then I lose all hope in our people's good sense.

Madam Speaker, I did not believe in parties, I bought that line from Mr. Truman Bodden hook, line, and sinker because my family was a die-hard Unity Team supporter, the late Haig Bodden was my mother's brother and before him, my grandfather, Allen Mack, so I was brought up on politics. I was brought up to believe the nonsense that Truman used to talk about how bad parties are for a country; but the experience following the 2000 elections, not once but twice, cured me of any doubts I had about the importance of parties. Not that parties can't do bad things, but at least a country knows what policies it is voting for when it supports a certain group of people, and you can hold them to account. What they say that PACT thing stands for again? People-driven. I am not going to go into all of that, I will leave it for the budget but… accountability. Accountable to whom? Not accountable to the broader population.

Madam Speaker, this was the first Manifesto of the People's Progressive Movement, 2005. I'm gonna lay it on the Table of the House so it can go into the archives. It is no mistake, Madam Speaker, that the front cover has the faces of the members of the team, because everybody here signed off on it, so when you are the Leader of Government Business and so and so starts, *"No, no, I nah agreeing to that"*— you already agreed to it. Here it is. Currently the poor Premier has, well, I know how many he had; he had twelve of these. Now he's down to nine so it is going to get easier to get agreement. You are not able to pass anything because you don't have a majority, but it will be easier to get agreement.

[In] 2009, 2013, 2017, 2021, we put our names to this. The people know what we promised, and no Government is ever able to deliver all it promises, but at least you know what they promised and you can beat them up for it. Now you got, I was gonna say you got eight governments, because you got eight Cabinet Ministers, but I suppose you got to count the Caucus members too, because the Member for West Bay West just made his speech about why he left— because he has his agenda too, and his agenda is not being moved forward. Madam Speaker, if I could ask the Sergeant, with your permission, to lay this on the Table of the House.

Madam Speaker, in my view, today is not just about whether or not the Lack of Confidence Motion succeeds. I suspect it will not because, even if one from the Government side votes with us, we are still short three, because a two-third majority is required for the Lack of Confidence Motion to carry— but my question is: *And then what?*

Unless the scenario that I painted with respect to your good self plays out, God forbid, Madam Speaker, the Premier is going to leave here the same way he came in, with less than a parliamentary majority… and then what? For the life of me, I cannot understand— you all did not want to deal with us, and I will not go down that road— why you could not have done whatever was required to hold your majority, and let them come over here instead?

I got beaten up for it many times by *Cayman News Service* (CNS), et cetera, but I repeat these things because they have guided my decision-making and my judgment over my political career. First, politics is the art of the possible. It is the art of the possible. If you think it is impossible, forget it; and this is most important in the context of the current political crisis: Politics is the art of compromise.

Madam Speaker, you think that in eight years there were not moments, periods, when I said, *"Al, you can't do this anymore."*. The lowest point of my political career was standing there, as Premier, introducing a Bill that would give same-sex-relationships, legal status— and I am excusing the Minister of Education from this entirely because I knew where her position was "from morning", the old people say. You may like it, or hate it, or think she's wrong, that is fine; but I knew where she was.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: I know I did not.

[Laughter]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: However, to have two Members, not just vote against the Bill, which I would have taken, but to have one of them get up and I mean, tear a broadside in me… I felt like… I almost quit. I almost quit when I was doing my wrap up and I left that chair, and never went back to the Government Administration Building for three days.

I understand these things, Madam Speaker, you can't sit in that chair and not understand it, but you have to make decisions, and I talked to enough of my team who said to me, *"No, Premier, you can't quit; you can't quit";* but from what I am hearing, and have heard for ages now, the converse is true with respect to the present political crisis. Many of his Members are asking the Premier, *"Please, let's rearrange the deck chairs. At least let's show some semblance of trying to accommodate what others want."*.

Madam Speaker, I will close with another of Shakespeare's soliloquies, and it is in the context, Madam Speaker, for those of you who like Shakespeare, or learned Shakespeare. This one, from *The Merchant of Venice*, is about when Portia's husband to be is being chosen from Portia's many suitors. What they have to do is to open a golden casket and read what's in it and this is what the first one found:

All that glisters is not gold—
Often have you heard that told.
Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold.
Gilded tombs do worms enfold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgment old,
Your answer had not been inscrolled
Fare you well. Your suit is cold
Cold indeed and labour lost;
Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!

I bid you well, Mr. Premier.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Elected Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am a little under the weather, and thank God for that. It means I won't speak long. I know most were probably expecting that I would say a few words. To be truthful, I was hoping that I wouldn't have to get up today; but after some of what I have heard thus far, I thought that I needed to get up and add some words to the debate on this Motion, No. 10 of 2023-2024.

Madam Speaker, why are we here? That is the question. We are here because since March, Members of the current Government have been disappearing and running to the other side. Madam Speaker, I want to say that sometimes the strongest among us are the ones who smile through silent pain, cry behind closed doors, and fight battles no one knows about. Madam Speaker, I believe that there are some very strong ones in the PACT Government who are smiling through silent pain, crying behind closed doors and fighting

battles no one knows about. I comfort them by saying, in your darkest moments, God is there.

Madam Speaker, there is so much to say and obviously there were things that were said here this afternoon that you would want to clarify. There are certain types of politics that I've never enjoyed, Madam Speaker; that's the personal politics. I don't believe in it because I believe that we are all Caymanians. I believe that all nineteen of us were elected and none of us in here woke up any morning and said, *I want to destroy the Cayman Islands*.

All of us have different intentions; hence the reason why I voted against "One Man, One Vote". Back then, when we had our public meeting, I stated my reasons why I thought it was very dangerous for a small population such as the Cayman Islands. One of my reasons was that, when I first got elected I had to comb the whole of Bodden Town from Spotts/Newlands all the way to Breakers; a very difficult task.

I got 1,000 votes and I'm thankful to those who voted for me at the time, but with this new construct, if five people ran in any constituency, a person could get 200 votes and actually keep winning until they die. I saw that as dangerous, and many of us voted against it at the time. I think the United Democratic Party (UDP) voted against it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, I say that a culture is strong when people work with each other for each other. A culture is weak when people work against each other for themselves.

Madam Speaker, I went over and worked with the PACT Government and I ran with the Alliance that the People's Progressive Movement (PPM) led at the time and I want to say this because I keep hearing things about the PPM government and about why they don't want a PPM-led group or to be involved in it. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I was treated with the utmost respect.

After being called out publicly by the former Premier, Sir Alden—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: He called me out publicly while eight of us were in a room trying to hold on to our Government. Obviously, when they call you out, then your constituents start calling you, Madam Speaker, you've got to act on your constituents' instructions.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to be the representative for Bodden Town East. I am a most unlikely, unassuming politician and probably one of the last Mohicans, if people understand what that means.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: As my good friend for Bodden Town West said, every one of us is here on this earth for a reason and we must be respected in that manner.

I thank those persons in the gallery for showing up today, Madam Speaker. I'm indeed proud that they are interested and taking interest in the business and politics of this beloved country. Doing this ensures that it should never cross your mind to want to live somewhere else other than your home in the Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, after being elected in 2021 I sat for about seven months with the group that I ran with, and I stayed loyal to it. I understand what it means to be loyal, but we can't get to the point—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I know you warned me.

We should never get to the point where loyalty becomes insanity, you know. We have to know when to get off of that sinking ship, and for people to talk—as I was going into the PPM discussion— about "this is what the people wanted".

Madam Speaker, the first time in the history of politics in the Cayman Islands, I remember the honourable Dr. Roy Bodden saying, *don't become a Minister because you're gonna lose your seat because you got to spend too much time in [the] Glass House and you can't go see your people*. Often, once you became a Minister, you would lose your seat because you didn't have enough time to spend in your constituency and someone else would do it for you.

Madam Speaker, working with the PPM: As I was saying, I don't understand where the perception came from that working with the PPM would be working against the people of the Cayman Islands. All the things that I see that the PACT Government wants, are some of the same things that I see the PPM want. They want the same thing for this country as any other government. When I got called by the PACT Government, I looked at their manifesto and what they had put together and I saw some good things there, right?

Minister Jay, Minister Kenneth, my good friend for Bodden Town West, Mr. Saunders; and others. Not everybody wanted me over there at the PACT. I knew that from the start because many people never called, you know, but I went over anyhow to try to assist in the ways that they said they wanted me to assist. I'd just been the Minister of Health going through a pandemic that no one had seen in over a hundred years and not many people knew what to do at that time. Some laughed, some cried, but I know that no one died under my watch, so I must have been doing something right.

I thank my team for having such confidence in me. I thank Sir Alden for having confidence in me during that time. After about the fifth one I remember saying to Sir Alden, "*You can go ahead and go to those press conferences because I really don't think I'm*

necessary anymore" and he said, "*No, Minister, I'm not leaving you behind".* I thank you, for not leaving me behind.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: That was a trial.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, you hear many things. You hear about coming on time, you hear about working, being in your Ministry; experience is a hell of a thing. Experience teaches you a lot, and I'm going to try not to go down certain roads.

Madam Speaker, I heard him talking earlier about no fighting. I never told anyone that I saw a fist fight. I told people that I was the calm in the room. I never saw any fist fights in that room, in the Caucus.
[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'll just leave it there because I don't want to go into that kind of politics. We are here today because I believe that we can offer this country a better way forward. The PACT Government tried, it hasn't worked the way that they intended, and now we need a reset.

When I called Confidence Motion [No. 2/2022-2023], after persons came to me while I was sitting with the PACT and said, *you know, we need to do something because the Premier is not taking advice, he's not listening, he's doing things on his own, et cetera, yadda, yadda* I said, okay, I have a relationship with PPM, although upset with me right now. Let me reach out because they are the duly—

I said, do not look at the PPM as the PPM. You need to look at them as the duly elected; the only group who can constitutionally actually make up the government without a new election. That's how we need to look at it. If we keep looking at it as the PPM, they're only six. If six more come, then it is a bargain, we stand at the table and discuss it and hash it out. Who's going to be leader? Who's going to be Deputy Premier? I don't know, everything is open; but it has to make sense.

An Hon. Member: Yup.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Oh, they don't want me over there. They don't want this one and I hear they don't want two of us, nonsense. They didn't tell me that. Did they tell you that?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: No. He told me he didn't want me but that's okay.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: But we need you.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: He didn't tell me that either.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: But you came anyway.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: And sat very far.

Madam Speaker, I am telling you that the reason I am here today is because the Motion has been called. Thankful all nineteen of us are here in this Parliament. I am not here to try to make strife or try to make enemies out of Caymanians. That's never what I'm about. Everybody knows me. They know the kind of personality I have; serious looking in nature but sweetest at heart. Would give you my shoes.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: What size is it?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Size 12. Thirteen if they're longer.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, I really didn't want to get up today and speak. I was hoping that we could come here with thirteen people to get the job done, or we could even do it before we had to come here today and embarrass this country, making the world look at us as if we don't know what we're doing. Nineteen Caymanians can't get together and say, look, this makes sense. Let's just go in a different direction. We can't keep going in the same direction if it's not working, we know what the problem is. We know what the problem is, and who is causing the problem.

Madam Speaker, let me remind people of the reason I left the PACT Government. **"It is with extreme regret that after much prayer and consideration, I hereby tender my resignation as Minister in the PACT Government, effective immediately.**

Since being elected in 2009, never have I experienced such disorganisation and lacklustre leadership.

I honestly crossed the Floor in November 2021, in order to assist this Government and to lend my experience. Further, it was an attempt to give the country some calm and assurances. [It did so at the time].

In my opinion, the autocratic way and manner in which the Premier of this country leads his Caucus leaves [me] much to be desired. It is my experience that it is his way or no way. The Premier's failure to adequately engage and empower the Civil Service, his inability to keep his PACT group cohesive and focused, his inability to get the 2024-2025 budget completed in a timely and consultative

manner, his inability to listen and his inability to show fairness to all of his Caucus are untenable.

In my respectful opinion, our country needs leadership that has its entire Caucus' support and one that our constituents can feel inspired and proud of. The Premier must ensure a people-centred government and provide hope for our people during these challenging times.

Please accept my assurances that in spite of this resignation, I am fully and deeply committed and remain passionate about serving my country as a Member of Parliament, and I am willing to continue to serve faithfully in a similar capacity for the benefit of our country and beloved people. May God continue to bless these lovely Cayman Islands."

Madam Speaker, let me tell you something, I don't have to ask anyone whether Dwayne Seymour can do his job. I know I can do my job. I am so unassuming. The bar is so low that I always win.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I love it, you know.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Oh, my gosh; and that's how I want it, you know.

Madam Speaker, the PPM never interfered a day with me in running my Ministry, because they saw I was producing. There was nothing on my desk to be signed, policy was set and everybody just had to go do what they had to do.

An Hon. Member: True.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I don't hire and I don't fire, and I know my responsibility. I know how to handle my Ministry. I know how to go and come. If I'm needed, they know they can call me and I'm there in a flash. I know when I need to be where I need to be. I was on time for all of my children's deliveries.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I hope that message gets through— and it wasn't boring.

Madam Speaker, the Caucus voted for the Leader to step down. On this side, we are only following your lead. One day of running a country badly, is hard to recover from. We can't wait until 2025. It has gone too bad. Maybe if it started differently— and I had much respect for the persons over there when I said in my departing speech, that there are many good people over there. I know every one of them by first name. I have family members over there. I have sisters over there, right? I thought I could work with what I found over there. It wasn't ideal. They had many new persons, that's all it was.

Just like maths, *if you start wrong, you gonna end wrong,* so here is what I think happened. You had many new politicians who got Minister. They tell you one of the first evils is, if you just got elected for the first time, try not to take ministership. Try to learn the craft first, let your learning curve complete itself, because you miss some of the points. There is nothing more valuable than sitting in the Opposition or the Backbench and learning this trade. Yes, that in itself can be done; I have friends who were first time elected and took ministerships and didn't get re-elected. You know, it is a serious sin and one to think about.

Yes, it can work; there are many who have done it and got re-elected. It can work, but the experience I have, Madam Speaker, is that I know when I'm going into an election, I know when you think you're going to win and you lose; I know when you think you're going to lose and you win; and I know when you think you're going to win and win. I know, trust me! I remember them saying, *"John-John can't lose; He's one of the ones who are going to get re-elected."* Let me be careful.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Oh, you proved them wrong.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say this because I think the PPM [is] really getting a bad knock. Yes, the PPM is not perfect, and they will go out and say that. Sir Alden said not everybody is going to achieve everything that they set out to do, but I can tell you that there's only one person I know over there— and persons would otherwise have to stand up and say it— who didn't attach themselves or did not say they were against the PPM during the 2021 election. There's only one person over there who I know didn't attach themselves to the PPM; not necessarily running on the same platform with them but said, *"Oh, I can work with the PPM."*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: To now make it sound— yeah, the guy there laughing; now we're going to make it seem like the PPM is the worst thing since sliced bread? You know, that's not true. That is an effort to divert the good progress that we can make in this country. The PACT Government, we tried, it's halfway through, let's try something else. It's the country we are dealing with.

Let me tell you something, everyone knows I've made many decisions in this country and stood up for country. Many decisions. Some, I was not proud of. In 2012, I had to decide against my good friend, my mentor, the person who brought me into politics— one of the worst things he ever did, bringing me into politics. Now everybody hates Raymond.

In 2017, I was called to serve by the then Premier. In 2020, the pandemic, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I didn't want to run in 2017. They begged me to run because the people know that I will give my heart and soul into everything I do for the people of this country. I am still receiving kudos for the way that I handled the pandemic in 2020; some people didn't understand what I was doing and that's fine. Unassuming. They say in times of uncertainty, when you don't know what to do, you call on who? Call on God. Some were so upset about that. No one knows how much I invoked prayer into the pandemic sessions. Go back and look at it. It was I, and I'm very proud of that. God was very proud of me, He smiled on me for a while and He's still smiling on me. They threw darts at me and they fell before they got to me.

In 2021, I was called again, and whilst being called, I recognised that the Opposition didn't have enough numbers for their No Confidence Motion. I did my research, and [for] the first time ever in the Cayman Islands, brought a confidence vote to support the now Premier, to say let's give him a chance. I did that. No one asked me, no one knew what I was going to say. I wrote my own speech. One of the only things I can do is write, I write all day long. I wrote a story book for every one of my children. People don't know what you know.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say that we have a number of persons over there who are independent most of them. They got together and tried to do something— and I respect that. As I said, there are many good people over there but now, because of the gravity of what's happening in this country… No one knew that the cost of living and the interest rates, et cetera were going to go up like this. We are at a different place now; we need different leadership. We need a coalition on steroids. That's what we need. We need one that can hit the ground running. There's some great work going on right now. I know there are some Ministers who work hard, very hard. I'm not going to get into that.

Madam Speaker, I hear them saying all the time that we have good economic growth. Oh boy, that is one of the worst things you can say as a politician right now. Who is it reaching? It's not reaching people's pocket. What we should have done as a very caring government is to get together and say, *guys and girls, I know we have all this going on; you're doing some great work, but let's pause all that for three months and let's look at what we can do for the cost of living in this country*.

We came up with many ideas in terms of trying to provide a basket of groceries that people could afford in this country. Very important! I haven't heard anything about that. There were many suggestions that came out of the team, of things we could have done to help people. I was against the method that they used for the CUC grants.

An Hon. Member: Yup.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Some people got $20. You know Caymanians, they will frown on you— $20? I told them my suggestion was, let's spend a similar amount of money over the year; let's do it in a manner where we pay people's CUC bill but don't do everybody's at one time, because we can't do everybody at one time so do some, every quarter, right? That would at least give persons that freedom.

If a person's CUC bill is about $2,000 a month now, that would at least give them $2,000 a month relief that they would have at least free cash to do what they needed to do with $2,000; not $20 off your CUC bill. That made no sense! I didn't approve it.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: They wanted to do it again. I said no, no way! It makes no sense. The people out there are not appreciating it. There are two politicians in this House who are social butterflies. I think people know who they are. They were in the trenches a long time— and we never got COVID either, and we were everywhere.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yeah.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say a couple of things, right? When people talk about the PACT Government is running well…

I didn't want to get up and speak, you know, Madam Speaker, because I could say some things that are very damaging. I'm trying to manoeuvre in such a way that I'm respectful of the people that I left there. While I was there, I had fun; we had a good time, we got some things done. I appreciate the people over there. I don't appreciate the policies nor the direction that the PACT Government was going in— and I'll try to be careful how I say these things because we're all Caymanians in here. I don't want to be putting another Caymanian down.

I heard about the Premier before I knew who he was, and I admired that he was a Caymanian who achieved and rose to success in an area that normally, the transient worker would come in and take the spoils, and I was proud of that. I'm proud of any Caymanian who can— I don't want to say outsmart, but you know— stay in tandem with those who come from overseas and bring that knowledge here because we depend on business from overseas, and they come here with that knowledge and get the big positions and I was proud of that, so there's nothing about that.

I didn't want to put down anyone today, you understand, but I just want to say that we can't get anything done. I was the Environment Minister— and we will go into that a little later— and I don't need to be an environmentalist to have common sense.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I want my children and grandchildren to enjoy the same things that we do now. In fact, we did a little too much. I would probably be worse in some of my assessments, but I just want to say that we can't get anything done because of the environment. Why?

We can't get the Light House School or the West Bay School; can't get a cost of living allowance (COLA); we can't get farm roads done in North Side and East End because of the environment. They don't even want to give them the size and the width because they're afraid that somebody will go build there, when that's all Caymanians got— they are land-rich and cash poor. We can't grade the cargo dock because of the environment; no, no. We can't develop our affordable land in East End because of the environment.

That was one of the things that made me go over there, an approach that had never been done before the affordable housing land in George Town. Kudos to the PACT [Government]. Never before had a Minister bought 25 acres of land all in one spot. It was me—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: —for housing in George Town, because houses hadn't been built in George Town for a while.

I did that, and something I said was, let's not use all these 25 acres right away; ensure that we have holding ponds, et cetera, like they do in Florida. I also said, let's create a little area with forty homes or whatever, for Caymanians who achieve in sports. If you win an Olympic medal or something like that in sports or boxing or heavyweight championship, whatever. We would have like, a little Olympic village for Caymanians who were outstanding. We've got to think, we have to try to uplift our people. These are the kinds of things I want to see in a billion-dollar budget.

New school in Cayman Brac, can't build that. The environment said that land looks too good. Barker's Beach cruise tourism— can't do that. Nowhere for the tourists to go; they are taking over Public Beach. Caymanians can't use it, need somewhere for them to go. Buying the Lighthouse Club, iconic; can't get that. Want to buy more beach property, not using it out that fund. Container farming, no solar support, getting jerked around. East-West property; we don't even want to go into East-West Arterial. That is another delay tactic, if I ever saw one.

We, in the PACT Government— many smart people over there— said, *"Look guys, we see that opportunities are going to come up where the land is going to increase in value, let's buy it up so we can save it, so that at least Caymanians can have affordable land to buy."* Forward thinking! No, can't get that, right? Pensions, as much as it has come through, and I thank the Honourable Member for Bodden Town West. I know who didn't want that Pension Motion to come through. I know.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: It was such man.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, something has to give. Is it world acclaim or a United Nations award that we are looking for? What are we looking for?

People are looking for concessions and people need to understand what concessions mean and what it transcends into. We create that. If people want concessions, then Caymanians need to benefit. Either we get some of their condos, or they need to put [money] into a fund, a Social Security fund, or otherwise. We need to benefit from people coming in, intruding on our infrastructure.

We are the majority of the minority in this country. There are only about 40,000 of us, and we have had to expand our infrastructure in such a way— and I shouldn't be paying for that! Somebody who has come in here, and is enjoying the luxuries of my country should be paying for it.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Don't tell me that the Honourable Member for Bodden Town East is not a worthy Member who wants to represent his people well.

Madam Speaker, I hear them throw little slurs, *et cetera*, but do they know that as I got into office, with only six months' previous experience as a Minister, I stopped this country from going down a road that could probably have damaged our Caymanians? They were just getting ready to sign an $8 million deal for a trial of genetically modified mosquitoes. I said, *"Not under my watch. Cut!"*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Youth facility, you should see the corruption that was going on with that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Dwayne Seymour is for country first. Yes, I'm pro-business, pro-opportunity, but country must be first.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, we have to take care of our environment, we have to. Can't let people come here and think that they can do what they want and not have regard for our environment. We need to. Nine million dollars I saved them— cut! Dwayne Seymour. They don't frighten me with their numbers.

ReGen waste to energy, that is a conversation. Now, not many people know about it and no one ever asked me anything. I pleaded, I pleaded, I went to the Governor, I pleaded to get myself involved in the process as the former Minister. I was not accepted in that manner.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'm not going into it; but what I'm saying to you is that the project can be de-scoped and save us some money that we can put towards our surplus, our capital, or otherwise. When we talk about capital, we're talking about our people, right?

As Minister of Environment, I am the person who ensured that we had a green iguana culling, the green iguanas that you see being culled here, it was me who put that in place.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I had to fight for it. You want to protect the Blue, but you want to protect the green. I don't know how they were going to do it. They would have to put up a wall across the North Side.

[When] I set out I asked the Ministry, what can I do as Minister of Environment that you all have been trying to do for many years. That's what I did in all my Ministries. I wanted to make a difference— and I did. I was able to expand the marine parks, the largest protected area in the region, I was told. It hadn't been expanded since 1986; some people cursed me, even in my area in Bodden Town, but it was the right thing to do. Don't tell me that I'm not environmentally conscious.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Recycling programmes and everything else.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, I want to say, respectfully, that I am not here today to cause any trouble. They call me the troublemaker, no better soul than me; if you have me as an enemy, something is wrong with you. I am willing to take the back seat. I don't want any leadership. Leadership is from God, not for me to choose. That's not for me. If God wants you to have it, nobody can stop it. Read the Bible.

I am saying to you that I came here as a representative for Bodden Town East, sent here by the good people of Bodden Town East, and want to achieve things for them, and this country on a whole. When I got there, I said, we need to have the pride— no, NiCE. Sorry, that's your thing, Mr. Bush; you named it.

[Inaudible interjections]
[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I asked for us to have… No, the first programme was called Pride Clean Up.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yeah, my apologies there.

I went in and said, look, I want 25 people hired in every district; Cayman Brac and Little Cayman already had themselves organised. Let's take a mould off them. I said, let's get people to work. We have parks, bathrooms, docks, et cetera that are being vandalised. We need to protect our assets. Let's put people to work. The sargassum— I don't even want to go into the sargassum. They had a task force for four years and no result. I don't know what's wrong with that, must be sarcasm.

I'm not trying to give any licks. People just don't fully know the reason why I said, this is the straw that broke the camel's back, you understand? I don't walk away from things easily. If I was selfish, I could have easily sat down as a Minister, collected my salary, don't say anything and just run my Ministry; I'm not doing it, because I see we're going in the wrong direction. Politics is being dumbed down. We're going to have a problem in 2025. Persons coming into politics, everybody will want to be a Minister. I see the problem coming. Nobody knows what I see. A bad precedent has been set. There are only eight, and you need at least eleven to make up a government, so that one can go to the bathroom.

We cannot come into politics thinking that something or some things that have been happening for the last forty years can be changed in two years. It confuses the civil service. We can't do it just like that, we have to take our time. Not everything that was done forty years ago or the processes that we used are the right processes, but we can't just do it on a dime; we can't do it like that. That's why we're having problems with the budget. We're trying to change everything with the budget, change the processes… Not saying it didn't need changing.
[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Some of it needed changing, but we tried to change too much and now we're in a quagmire. I don't think the budget can be fixed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Talking about crime: You think anyone wants to rob? No one wants to sell drugs and no one wants to rob. They just want an opportunity. A sense of purpose in being a productive member of this society. They just need an opportunity.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: We are not doing enough to ensure that Caymanians have opportunities. Yes, we're doing some things, but I need to see a constant task force trying to come up with ways, and Caymanians benefiting from the success of the Cayman Islands. Billions of dollars pass through this country. Persons come here with no experience and in ten years they can retire with Status. That is not right.

We don't mind people coming here, every one of us has family from some other country. Me, I probably have family from Cuba, San Andres, America, Jamaica, Honduras— Cayman Brac.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I say that to say, ladies and gentlemen, that I don't think we have ever been against people coming here. We understand the value of people coming here. We *appreciate* people coming here, right, but the way that we have turned the system now, we have turned it in a way where it's us against them. We don't even go to the same high school anymore. I have some long-term good friends, persons who were here because their parents were working here and they went to the high school. My good friends still, for over forty years.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, Belize.

We need to understand what we are doing to this country when we make certain decisions. Thank God for the private schools, because we don't have enough government school space. We do not have enough and that's why we have to support them. Even the Wesleyan Church, we need to do all we can to help them. We need to do all we can to help them. Where are those children going to go? There is no space. I tried to get my child into government school and couldn't. Couldn't. Now I have to pay the price, and I'm not a Minister anymore. What a decision. I'll buy a number.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: When it becomes legal.

Madam Speaker, do we realise that there are nine million Americans avoiding taking prescribed medication to cut costs? The same thing is happening here, they can't afford it. They are not working, so they don't have any insurance. Some of them have a little property, so they tell them they can't get the help because they have $1,000 in the bank, you know?

Madam Speaker, I am passionate about my people. I heard the Honourable Member for Bodden Town West say earlier that no one loves Caymanians more than he. I can tell you—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes. I love Cayman.

I love all the people who come here, but the people who come here appreciate what they find and need to understand, I need a little help from you in keeping the stability, in keeping low crime rates, in keeping pristine roads and roadways, cleanliness. I need a little help from you.

Also, everyone who comes here can't get a car. Five hundred cars every month. Who are they for? Every day I see a foreign nationality in a drivers-Ed car programme looking to get a licence they couldn't get in their own country. I see it. Everyone wants a car because they would never own a car in their own country, and I am proud that they get that opportunity, but all the cars are coming East. We had an accident a few days ago, and I know the Minister was stuck in it. One car accident caused a six-hour delay in traffic.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: That one. Condolences to the family of the deceased.

We can't have this one-way thing. We need our East-West [Arterial]. My proposal was not a bad one, it was not overly aggressive. It took the environment into consideration in the sensitive areas. Take East-West up to Lookout [Gardens] and that will help us for a while. There are other connector roads. People say, once you get to Prospect, what are you going to do? The National Road Authority (NRA) has that in check. They have connector roads they're going to create, et cetera. We need to trust them. These guys are engineers, they understand traffic management and they have the traffic modelling system to back them up.

Madam Speaker, I will not go into much more because some things I would have to go into would be condescending to Members over there and I don't feel that well— thank God that I don't feel well. I just want to say there are some good Members over there. Let's do the right thing. I had to make a very serious decision in 2012 to vote against my friend, my mentor, the person who brought me into politics.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: He wouldn't talk to me for a long time— same thing the Premier might do with some of you. I managed to get to him and said, *"Look, Premier, I am sorry for what I had to do. In hindsight, I*

wouldn't have done it because I learnt what I learnt, but I had to do what I had to do at the time."

When I'm looking at the Governor and asking him, is the UK government going to come here and take over?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: That's the question I asked. I had to make my decision. I don't want the UK government coming here! There are too many bright Caymanians in this country, for the UK to take it over and ruin it. We are doing a good job. We don't ask the UK for anything— thank God for that; so, I voted against the Premier. For two years, I felt bad about it. We cried about it and… I'm just saying to you that these decisions are not easy.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I forgive you.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you. He forgave me publicly.

These decisions are not easy. We're talking about friends, about persons you build relationships with; but it's not about the person, it's about the country and I lay it on you: if you decide to vote against this Motion, you are saying, *I am sticking with my man*. If you decide to vote yes, you are saying, *I am sticking with country*.

Ladies and gentlemen, no one has ever known me for lying. It is not one of my traits. I could always defend myself, so I didn't have to lie. People lie when they can't defend themselves.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yeah, there was a time when I could fly, weight constraints. I just want to say, respectfully, that this is not a joke.

I'm saying to you all that I went there, I tried it. You all saw I was loyal, didn't *back* any news out of the Caucus; no one ever heard anything from me. I wouldn't tell Sir Alden a thing, you know; because that was going to compromise my success in trying to move forward with the government that I was with. It didn't make sense— and he wouldn't appreciate it either. He would have seen me as a person who, *Boy, you can't trust John-John. He is bringing everything out of Caucus*. That's not me, that's not Dwayne Stanley.

Many of the things going on right now in this country, whether the mental health facility, ReGen, *et cetera,* were under Ministries that were led by me when I was there. I remember the Honourable Premier saying to me at the time, *Minister, these projects are over 25 per cent, we can't afford ReGen and we can't afford the mental health facility. You need to put them down.* I said, *Premier, give me one month, please*.

I asked the team, why is there only one bidder on this project? Something is wrong. I went to the Governor and asked him about the process in the UK. I said, but if it's not done like this in the UK, why are we doing this? Rule of thumb. Guys, ask questions in your Ministries about the way that contracts are being done and so forth. Rule of thumb: You can't ask a middle-class company to put $1 million up front. You know they don't have it. When we changed that, we got eleven bids and saved $3 million. Ladies and gentlemen, you're dealing with a man of God; every morning I get up, I pray for wisdom. Wisdom is not mine, it's the Lord's. Some people believe wisdom is theirs.

Madam Speaker, I think that I wasn't just a deadbeat Minister, as some would want to say. I think I mean Cayman well. I have respect for all nineteen persons in this Parliament; I just really want us to be brave, be strong. I'm not telling you to be like Dwayne Seymour, right, but I'm telling you, when I stepped away, the PPM didn't even know I was stepping away. I stepped away on my own accord with no attachments, nothing. I saw that it's going in a different direction and I said, "*I need a break from this, it is really stressful. I see certain things going on that I don't appreciate, et cetera."*. I said, someone else would appreciate it, but not me.

Some don't have the same concerns I have, and that's fine; people see things in different ways. I'm not gonna get upset with you. I said my pleasantries and I left. I didn't curse anybody. It is not my style. I don't curse, unless ruffled.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I just want to say this before I end. The Mental Health Facility is very special to me— The Poinciana, right? I would never want to be Minister of Health again. I did that. That's gone. I get bored very quickly, so I need something else to do. I'm just saying that it is very important to me.

I visited a facility in Red Hills, Jamaica, in 2000. Many Caymanians were housed there and also in Bellevue. My father was there and, of course, when I went I carried goodies for all the Caymanians that were there. They came around in a crowd and said, *"Mr. Dwayne, when are we gonna get a facility in Cayman, so that we do not have to come to Jamaica? Our families don't come to see us."* It made me cry. There are many people who want that facility open; their families are still overseas since the pandemic.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to believe. The pandemic has caused a serious mental health problem in this nation for our university students, our high school students. It has caused immense stress on this community. We don't even understand the magnitude. That's why I got tele mental health during the pandemic, so persons could actually— there were some things we were working on. If you're still the Government, I want you all to ensure you expand it. Ensure that we have more mental health support in each constituency.

I like the wellness area that the Minister went into, because that's what can keep the cost down in terms of mental and health care costs, et cetera. There are other things that we can do with capitation models to try to keep the cost down for a while, until we figure some things out; try to meet with these hospitals and try to get, rates, you know. Look at them, what's in the US versus what's here, and have a sheet so that we know that we are paying 50 per cent less or otherwise.

We cannot allow these people to come and jack up their rates comparatively, just because you do not have to fly out. No, we gave you a concession, and we need to have caveats in those concessions that if people are not doing what they're supposed to do, we will take it back and charge you— and I would not want to know that any other concessions are written which do not have some clawback clause where both parties have a responsibility, not just the government giving away.

Ladies and gentlemen—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: They say they want to call election you see, so…

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'm in campaign mode, you know. I have the most public meetings of any Member of the House, so I'm always ready to go. Last election I had thirteen; nobody else had that many. People love my meetings because they get turtle meat, et cetera. They call it treating, and I said, *"Well, treating it is".*

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time that you allowed me. I hope that people understand some of the reasons why I respectfully left, and some of the things that I think we need to do to go in a different direction. I think the Premier should not feel that it is a failure or whatever; I think it's a trial, and it didn't work. It may work next time. I'm just saying that it is not gonna work all the time the way you think. Can't pull thirteen people together from nowhere, and expect that it's gonna work in two years. It's a tall task. I salute you. I used to say all the time that you had the patience of Job— I told you so in your office at one point, but I don't want anything to happen to any Caymanian.

I think it's time for us to move in a different direction. The country is calling for it. You may say some people say, *"Premier stay there or whatever; you're doing a good job"*, and that's fine some people will see it that way. Different people have different needs, but I'm saying to you that the majority of the country is saying that they have lost faith in the PACT Government. Now, people are not gonna say that to your face. People are very funny. Caymanians are some of the smartest voters that I've ever met. You look at how they vote. They vote you out when you need to be voted out. They don't joke with their vote.

I remember a guy came to the polling station, while I wrapped up, and while I am at the gate, the 500 ft, I saw the guy talking to my opponent, and I said, *"but I thought this guy was with me."*. The moral of the story is that, man, they had a big conversation, hugging and punching and laughing. I said, *"Christ, I lost that vote."*. When the person left, that guy came over to me and said, *"Ha. He thinks I'm voting for him."*. Guys, politics are a very serious, serious thing.

I will say this before I leave: All nineteen of us come in here. We have all sacrificed some of you sacrifice your career. You are lawyers— we got about five lawyers in here, accountants, doctors, engineers, businessmen. We got all kinds of people in here that will probably never get a job again from anyone else because someone has something against you. They don't want to hire you because the government that is elected doesn't like you, and you got to go and do something out of your character, out of your profession— and I will say it that way— to make a living; and that is not fair to persons. It was me. It was I. I don't like to say it, but I was there.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: It was me who fought. I said, *"It's not fair that people get elected for four years and then, all of a sudden, bam!"* You can't control whether you stay in office or not.

Then you got no job and you *gah* go beg, so I said, *"Give them at least three months' salary"*, and such is what is in place now. I think it is, where you get three months' salary after you lose your seat. You got three months to find a job and normally you don't find a job in that time, you know, so I am saying to you that all of us are in jeopardy. When election comes, if you had 1400 votes the last time, you start at zero, you know? You start at zero. You hear about, *"This family for me, that family for me."* You better go back.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am saying to you that nobody's mother wants them to go into politics. Very few spouses want you to go into politics. You got to beg— beg 'em— over time; and I say that to the young, budding politicians, to know that they might say, *"I'm 25 years old and I want to get into politics."* Let me tell you, be careful. I'm not saying you cannot do it, but I'm telling you that politics have eroded many relationships. Many marriages it has ruined because you spend more time… You are married to politics, rather than to your wife or husband.

I am not saying it as a warning. We want new, qualified persons to come into politics— new blood; but people can't just wake up one day, pay $1,000 and get into politics. We need to have a political college or something somewhere people can go through and at least be kind of ready. They will know the Standing Orders, they will know Cabinet procedures, and Caucus procedures, et cetera.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Oh, boy, I am getting my cue.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, I will not get into some other stuff that I wanted to get into. I am not getting into it today because it is bad; I am not doing it, so I *gah* close my book and behave myself.

I remember the Premier sang a little song earlier. When the person saw me come over, I heard them talking about *"jumping and going on the other side"* and I remembered this little song we used to sing when we were younger, *"on the river, on the bank."*. That is not me. That is not me. I am here for a reason, and I believe in that reason unless something else happens.

There are some good Members over there, you know who you are. Don't make anything prohibit you from making the right decision today, because the country is looking. Nobody has worked today. I can tell you I got calls from Miami and everywhere else. People are saying, "*Unnah on a break or wha'?",* you know? People are listening to us. If they were tuned out, it would mean they do not care. They are listening. I'm telling you.

Not everybody wants to hear what I gah say, and not everybody will agree with me that the PACT Government has done its time; not everybody will agree with me, but I'm telling you, ladies and gentlemen, do yourselves a favour. You may be able to recover by 2025. Do the right thing. Vote Yes; support this Motion. Nothing about being disrespectful to the Premier. It's about sticking with country. Country should always be first, and it should be people-centred all the time. I love you all.

May God bless this wonderful country and may politics remain civil in this country, cause some things are being said out there... It is unhealthy, and we need to keep it down.

God bless you all.

The Speaker: Members, we will now break for dinner. We will take a suspension until 7:30pm.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Since Members are happy to come back at 7pm, we will be back at 7p.m.

Proceedings suspended at 6:15 pm

Proceedings resumed at 7:08 pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are now resumed.

You may be seated. We will now continue with the debate of the Motion. Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

[Pause]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town North: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to offer brief comments— I know that does not mean much this evening— on Private Member's Motion No. 10, Lack of Confidence in the Government, brought by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and seconded by myself but Madam Speaker, if I could crave the indulgence to read a poem before I start. A poem written by George Krokos entitled, *The Sinking Ship:*

"The ship is sinking and we all have to get out
I wonder if there are enough life boats about,
that are able to take us safely to the distant shore
where we may live happily for a while once more.

The old boat is going down as it has had its day
and all that we know and love is passing away.
It seems strange and sad how this has come about
but the evidence is clear without a shadow of doubt.

For those who have been prepared the way is certain
but for those who are not there's an invisible curtain
between them and that to where they could be going
as the paths to that destination are not at all showing.

There's been too many changes in a world gone mad
and so many of them have only turned out to be bad.
And when people think too much of themselves and
so little of others they perpetuate ignorance
which neglects we're all sisters and brothers.

As people also demand more than personal things of
need it usually only results in satisfying
an obsession with greed.
If this is too strong a statement to which many
will object there are subtle implications
that will prove it to be correct.

Some individual transitions will provide
the necessary steps to begin
as this will set the example for other things
to follow suit and be akin to the general trend
that usually determines the way and pace
which gains momentum at times for most
of the human race.

The systems of nature existing must be maintained
for survival and this means that there will have to be
quite a major revival.

As there's really so much around which we now all stand to lose if we don't do anything about it there'll be nothing left to choose.

In viewing the situation clearly we must all understand the cost of everything we have now before it's all forever completely lost.
And if this seems too much now for most people to consider then it will be more so when there's no alternative to deliver."

Madam Speaker, as I said I will be brief, but I felt compelled as the Seconder of this Motion to say a few words and perhaps bring us back on course to the reason we are here tonight. This is a very difficult debate. Not because you disagree in Parliament or politics, does it mean that you dislike anyone in particular. For me, this is not personal. Persons on the other side are Caymanians; our political views may not align, but that does not mean we have to dislike each other.

On Sunday, I attended the Remembrance Sunday parade with many of you and as I watched the Coast Guard, the Regiment, the Cadet Corps, RCIPS, the prison services, our Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and so many more, young and old and in particular, our veterans, I had a deep feeling of emotion take over me and my colleague, Dwayne Seymour was sitting next to me. Thankfully, I had said earlier how I could not stop sweating, because I started to wipe furiously at my face with my handkerchief; but it was the emotions.

Madam Speaker, it was a sense of pride I felt, watching that parade. A sense of pride in being a Caymanian, but I cannot help but believe that some of the emotions was because of the task ahead of myself and my colleagues in the days to come and possibly, in the days following today.

Madam Speaker, many people have expressed that they want a change, just like they did after the election. In fact, on Friday, I was having lunch in a busy restaurant and I stepped out onto the street to take a phone call and I was shocked when a person stopped their car in the middle of the busy George Town street to jump out and come to high-five me and tell me, *"Go get 'em, go get 'em!"*

I had to retreat into the restaurant because every time people passed they would cross the street or come over and say, *"You're doing a good job. Let's get this done. Let's get this done"* but yes, those who support us will say that to us. Those who do not support us would have another tone, but what I can say, Madam Speaker, is that something is wrong. Something is wrong.

The Premier spoke about all of the rumours. All of these things that seem to have happened in his Caucus or his Cabinet cannot all be lies or made up. We have an old saying, '*Where there's smoke, there's usually fire*.' The press has covered these things. We have seen them play out here in this very Parliament. We have watched in amusement across the Floor. We receive the messages from our Caymanian people who have watched it in amusement on the television or their smartphones. They are talking about it, something has to be done.

They are not saying we have to take over— some do not say that; our supporters say that, but they are saying something has to be done. People are tired of hearing about our problems. People are tired of hearing about PACT's problems, tired of hearing one rumour after the next. I will indulge the Premier, one rumour after the next, one controversy after the next. I will send you all of our videos, Minister, so you can hear what we say. We say it on video, on the record.

Madam Speaker, they are tired of hearing about our problems. They are tired of us being here tonight debating this. In particular, our younger people. They do not want to hear any more about our problems. They want to hear us talking about *their* problems and how we are going to resolve *their* problems and may I be brave enough to say that we cannot resolve their problems if we are fighting amongst each other— and I am speaking in particular about the Members on that side. I can tell you right now, that the fights the Members on this side have, are about who will pay for lunch or something to that effect.

I am talking about why we are here tonight and no, I am not saying we were perfect. In the eight years that I was in Government, we had fights; we lost Members as well. You heard our Premier at the time, the Member for Red Bay, Sir Alden, say he offered to resign on occasions. We were not perfect, but that is not what we are here to debate. We are here to debate that the country is in trouble, and it needs a change. It needs help. Our people are crying for change, for help. I am not saying that they are crying for PPM. It is those on that side who have to decide how that change is going to happen!

If by some miracle, they can come together and find a way to get us out of the constitutional crisis that we are facing with a 9-9 hung Parliament, I will be happy, as long as they have settled their differences and they can go to work for the country in harmony, and bring us a budget that will take us through the next year and a half until the elections. A budget that will help our people. A budget that will not put us in bankruptcy for years to come. A budget where they do not say, *"Oh, we don't care about that. It is not going to be our Government that has to deal with it in two or four or six years*"— a budget that serves the country for the future, and serves the people today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: That is my wish! That is what we are debating tonight. Not, "*What PPM did, what PPM didn't do*." Not "*Who was invited to what meeting and who wasn't invited to what meeting."* That is not what we are debating.

The people deserve a budget that has been thoroughly thought through, that has been created based on consensus; on advice as to what is best for our people and for the future of this country. Not a budget based on promises or threats, Madam Speaker, or promises and threats! That is not the way budgets are done. You do not go to one person say, *"Oh, if you support it, I will give you something"*, and then go to another person, *"Well, that person wanted it so I have to take it from you.*" It does not work like that.

What we are debating tonight is whether we are willing to risk staying in the constitutional crisis that we are facing. Are we willing to risk not having a budget for December 31st and for those who say that we may have rushed into this, that we are power hungry and all that— if we do not do it now, do you want us to wait until December 31st when the country does not have a budget? Is that when we are supposed to do it? Or maybe December 24th, so we can all come out here and spend Christmas. Is that when we are supposed to do it?

We are not playing politics. This is about the future of our country! My children, your children, our grandchildren!

[Inaudible interjections]

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: I want to know, Madam Speaker, [whether] tonight everyone, everyone on that side, is satisfied and confident that they have agreed on a two-year budget that will serve the people of this country's best interest today, and our people two, four, six years down the road, because that is when bad mistakes manifest themselves. It is not about building things to put your name on it or *"Look what I did!"*

One of the largest line items in my first budget was "memory for the central data system in the Government Administration Building" that had been ignored for years. On top of it was the renewal of licenses, so that we could update our systems. You know why they had been ignored for years— because no one can put their name on it. You can go put your name on a computer on our mainframe down in the basement, nobody is going to see it; but it took up a large part of my budget in that first budget that we addressed. That is what you have to do, because it is not always about putting your name on something, Madam Speaker.

There has been much discussion about how we got here, so I will not go over that again. I will not talk about the 16-1 vote, et cetera.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: I am not going to go into that this evening Madam Speaker, but I ask the Premier this: Hand on heart, Premier, do you feel that you are accomplishing your own objectives, your own environmental agenda, because if that is why you are hanging on there, it makes no sense because you are not achieving those either.

You are not achieving ReGen; you are not achieving the beach re-nourishment; you are not achieving the review of the National Development Plan which is the foundation of all sustainability. It is the foundation of beach re-nourishment, or beach protection, or rising sea levels. It is the foundation of affordable housing, zoning. It is the foundation of infrastructure, roads, hospitals— the whole shebang. Talk about sustainability? You cannot talk about it until you deal with the National Development Plan which is twenty-seven years old. Are you achieving your own agenda, Mr. Premier? These are the tough questions we have to ask ourselves.

For other Ministers: You got your "ting", is it a good "ting"? Does it suit the country? Everyone? It cannot be about 'Me'. You are sitting on that front bench, so it is about 'We'. You are representing the people of this country. You are the policy makers, the decision makers, the persons that are responsible for the future of our country and the betterment of our people. There is no 'Me' in that. That is We, the entire population of this country, and the future population of this country. That is your responsibility on the front. That is why you are sitting there.

Madam Speaker, I have to respond to the Minister of Health and I do admire her loyalty to the Premier. I do admire it, but I have all the same questions for her. She talked about the economy growing and people benefiting. I agree with you 100 per cent, but the economy is not growing and people are hurting. She said there are many lies. Is it a lie that the Member for Bodden Town West is sitting over here now? Is it a lie that the Member for Bodden Town East is sitting over here now? Is it a lie that the Member for West Bay West is sitting over here now? If it is, my eyes are deceiving me; but something is wrong— and do you know if it is a lie that other Members have said to me, "*I really feel like walking over there*"? Because I can tell you I know what they said to me, and I can tell you, that you probably had a few days when you felt the same way.

The only thing that we all can sit here tonight and say is the very truth— because each one of us, I hope, can count— and agree on, is that there are nine over there and nine over here unless someone knows something different, but we can all agree on that. That is the truth, and that is the predicament that we are in. That is what we are debating tonight. How do we get past that? Where does the blame fall?

The Premier has done what he can do. He has reshuffled, people have left his Cabinet, so maybe that has been exhausted. Maybe we need to start looking, but what is the root cause of the disharmony in the PACT Government? Or someone has to stand up and say, *"It's me."* Someone has to demonstrate that they are willing to put the country first and say, *"It's better that I'm not in here because I'm not helping. It's better*

I'm not sitting in this Cabinet because it's not helping. I am not doing good for my country by being here. I fundamentally do not agree with what's happening. It's better I not be here." Someone, someone has to, because what do we do next? Kick the can down the road, pray for a miracle that somehow a tenth person shows up on one side or the other, and then we have to deal with it if they show up on this side?

Or do we wait until December 31st when we have no budget, or days before that, when the budget cannot pass. God forbid, God forbid one of you on the other side become ill or something. The country cannot pass a budget because you are not here; and we are not talking six months down the road, you know? We are not talking next year. We should have been in Parliament two weeks ago and debating the budget now. That is what I am talking about. That is what we are debating tonight. That is why we are crying out for our people saying their country deserves better.

One of my colleagues indicated that we are viewed as one of the leading Overseas Territories. The UK has basically appointed us as a model for other Overseas Territories to follow. First responders to natural disasters, you name it. Sometimes they use us to prove a point and then force others to follow suit. How embarrassing is that? How embarrassing is it? The rest of the Overseas Territories, the rest of the region watching us, a hung Parliament, and nobody can do anything about it. What form of democracy is this? My good friend over here to my left, the Member for Bodden Town East always talks about *"we are dumbing down politics."*. Well, I heard the Honourable Minister of Health spell it out— dumb, dumb, dumb. We are dumbing down politics.

Madam Speaker, I said I would not be long, so I will close with this. You were there on Sunday at the Remembrance ceremony, Madam Speaker, and another proud moment was when they played Mr. McCoy's audio tape— I called him Mr. Harry. I had the privilege of serving in Rotary with him, and I loved sitting with him in the pre-Rotary and post-Rotary meetings listening to his stories, so I listened keenly to the audio tape of some of his stories from when he served in the Trinidad Regiment during World War II, when they were responsible for going out and piloting the warships.

Madam Speaker, he said there was a submarine that used to sit just off the coast and would pick these warships off, sometimes picking them off as they were coming into the harbour. He said one day they went out, and they hooked up a warship to tow it in. It had been damaged, and they were towing it in, when a torpedo struck it. The warship started to sink, and started to pull down the tug and with it, all of the people that went out to rescue it. In his story Mr. McCoy said that another brave, quick-thinking Caymanian (I cannot remember the gentleman's name), went and got the fire axe, and with one swoop chopped the rope, separating the tug from the sinking destroyer, saving all those on board the tug.

Madam Speaker, tonight I am looking for those brave Caymanians over there to chop that rope. Save the tug. Save what is left, just like that gentleman did that night.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member— the Honourable Member.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Financial Services & Commerce *and* Investment, Innovation & Social Development: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I won't be long.

First of all, I had not remembered earlier, but when I was looking at my phone during the dinner break, I remembered that tonight was the memorial service at Grand Old House for a young Caymanian Attorney named Liesl Richter, who was taken by cancer at too young an age, so during the dinner break I went to Grand Old House, on behalf of the Government, to share condolences to the family. Gone too soon.

Madam Speaker, I prayed hard over the weekend, through the night, and this morning, about this vote. The T in PACT stands for Transparency, and I will be transparent with the public.

When we Caucused last night and were asking for positions on the vote tonight, I told my colleagues the honest truth: That I had reservations. Reservations because, as the Member for Bodden Town West suggested earlier in his speech, in those days of forming the Government after the April 2021 General Election— a week I probably would never want to relive in my life— we did form for a noble cause, that a collective of freethinkers could pay strong attention to the grassroots and focus on social and community issues.

It is a noble cause, and it remains so, but at the same time, when you hold high office, Madam Speaker, you have a duty and an obligation to exhibit respect, professional conduct, and collaboration. It might not be fair, but it is our obligation. We are to lead by example, and if there has been any success locally or internationally, it's not just by the merit of the work that the Government performed, but by its conduct, and how people perceive you. In those aspects I don't think I could honestly look you in the face, Madam Speaker, and say that the Government hasn't had its shortcomings on those counts.

It is true. We have to acknowledge it, we have to face it, we have to confront it squarely. It is true, what the Member for Red Bay has suggested, that there are civil servants who are more stressed than they have ever been. I've been there. It's not easy to present to Caucus on a good day; it's nerve-wracking. You don't want to let down your Minister. You don't want to let

down your Chief-Officer. You don't want to let down the DG.

At a minimum, they deserve respect in their presentations, and then you end up in an awkward position because you don't want to talk over another Minister and you end up letting it slide, but that means that persons like me, who know better, also bear responsibility. We can't have a situation, and in this case, as the Member for George Town South [sic, North] said, I'm not telling tales out of school. There are things that have happened right here on the Floor of this House for the entire world to see, where you have a Cabinet that seems at battle with itself. Unprecedented. We have to face these issues, and the reason why they matter is because there is a connection between that and carrying out policy objectives.

I think, if the DG was here, he would quote Peter Drucker that "**Culture eats strategy every time"**, so you cannot achieve all that you could— and yes, we have had solid achievements; but if you don't get the culture right, it hinders even higher achievement. When we formed in April, 2021, the rationale was to have those collective thinkers, who could speak freely, converse with each other— respect each other. We have to do so in order to achieve even more for our people.

The Leader of the Opposition laid out two paths, because the arithmetic must be fixed, we can't deny that. If my note is correct, either a new PPM-led Government, or a reformulated PACT and— take names and faces out of it— whether that reformulation puts different people in different posts, is just the start of it. It's more so us committing, as a group, to a better culture; so, my prayer is that, if we are going to fulfil all the challenges that lie ahead— no need to recap them, they have already been set here throughout the night, I will put my hand up to say, *"I need to do better."*. I need to call things out when I see them; I need to step in, and be a larger voice with my experience to say, *"I've been on the other end of that table; that's not good. That doesn't exemplify higher office and it's hindering better performance."*

Now, we have had cycles of this in this Government and yes, we will have these junctures where there is a threat of movement on one side of the aisle, we come back together, we pray, we say it is not going to happen again and then it happens again and now it's 9-9— but I will commit today to my colleagues, as difficult as it is, that if I step up, and you all step up we can fulfil the mission we started. That includes collaboration with the Opposition, and the proof is in the pudding. There are signs of it.

To give credit where credit is due, I told the Leader of the Opposition I would do so when he congratulated the AG and me on Cayman's removal from the grey list— he participated too. I called and asked him, would he come to the Governor's reception for the onsite team that was checking things out with their own eyes, and he came. The purpose wasn't to put on a charade, but to show the visitors that on these types of issues, when it comes to exhibiting strong compliance, there's no political game being played on either side of the aisle.

He conversed with them and we talked about it afterwards and look, it ends with us being a stronger country for it; but now, Madam Speaker, instead of planning business promotional trips— because I have read articles where different markets have begun to open up because we are off of the grey list. There are publications that Cayman Finance sent out where markets such as India and Latin America, that used to have us as high-risk, are now gonna allow some of our transactions. Instead of thinking ahead, planning those business trips and trying to figure out the revenue measures we are here, and not because of anything complicated.

One of my strong supporters said, *"You all's problem is you; not really the other side. You all's problem is you"*, and I don't know any other way to put up a pretence. I have to be honest so, since we have had cycles before, I am going to be honest with my colleagues and say that when I prayed this morning, the thought and the whisper in my ear, which I believe was the Holy Spirit, was to say, "*don't just look at them, look at yourself and say, how can you help"*— but know this:

The sternest notice that I can give the group is that I am serious this time, I will do my part, and if everybody chips in, we can reform somehow and get it together and exceed expectations but I am going to show how serious I am that when, because I am sure a division will be called, that tense division moment comes, the public will know why I will abstain. Then, if we do not make it and there is some crash, some scandal, Premier, there won't be any long letters to you or the Governor. There won't be any me expounding on any breakfast shows. It will be a two-line resignation to say I had to put the country first.

God bless the Cayman Islands. God bless this team. I don't believe that God put something together that was supposed to fail, so let's come together. We have the ideas, we have the heart, we need to improve our culture.

God bless, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* I now call on the Mover of the Motion to exercise your right of reply.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it has been an extremely long day, as we have debated this important Private Member's Motion on the Lack of Confidence in the Government. I wish to thank everyone on the Opposition side who has spoken in support of the Motion, and quite eloquently laid out the number of issues and problems we have experienced in the last, what, 2.5 years. When I set out with my debate, I specifically chose to take it

at a very high level of debate highlighting what I saw were the particular issues and what potential solutions for solving them could look like, and the lack of confidence in government; and I've left it to my colleagues to really put the flesh and meat on the debate and the discussion.

Madam Speaker, I think that the issue and the Motion have been quite ably ventilated today, and I thank those on the Government side who chose to speak. It disappointed that we didn't hear from more Members on that side but, be that as it may, we had three Members of the Government bench, led by the Premier, speak to the Motion.

Madam Speaker, as I listened to the debate, two things really struck me and gave me pause for concern. The first one was what I perceived to be a great contrast in the way it was described by the Premier, of how his Cabinet and his Caucus operate, because he led us to believe that all was hunky-dory and there really were no divisions and discord between them, but we had two former Members of his Government who are now sitting in Opposition to the Government describe something totally different. We also heard one of his own Ministers say tonight, *"We have to be truthful."*. We allude to the fact that these difficulties have existed, and I believe that they have existed for some time, Madam Speaker. We've heard it talked about in the public domain, so we know that the challenges are there. It is not healthy.

The second thing I wanted to mention, Madam Speaker, is that, of those who spoke on the Government benches, it was only the Premier, really, who mentioned, in a very small way, the real meat of this Lack of Confidence Motion and the reason for it— the fact that they are a minority Government. They don't have a parliamentary majority, and if the vote tonight is to quash this and vote down this Motion, we are left in the same position.

The Premier alluded that they could work it out, but it leaves us no better off than we were when we came in here and started the debate. Madam Speaker, I have to say I am fully convinced that we have made the case for there to be a change. It is needed.

Madam Speaker, if we leave in this position, what are we asking? What are we saying? We're gonna leave it to the Governor to do it? You mean the nineteen of us here cannot solve this and deal with it? I don't want early elections. Really? I know that you over there don't want it either, but—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: It is now on the cards. She is not going to leave this for any length of time. We need to look at this seriously.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we have made the case and the Members on that side now know it and understand it, and are coming to appreciate the urgency of the situation, too. We can't let it. It would be a public embarrassment for us all, Madam Speaker; it truly would be. Those are the things that really worry me as we come to the end of this debate and put this Motion to the vote.

How will those on the Government benches vote, when the time comes to take the vote? We just let it go? We are just going to vote it down? Guys, the opportunity is here, it is upon us, and if we vote it down, what next? What then? Ask yourselves that question. We have seen what we have been describing and talking about today, time and time and time again. It really is time for something different.

As we have said on this side, we don't mind if the Government can put together some alternative that would keep you all in power and allow you to fulfil your term of office— that's fine, from our perspective. It's not about me being power hungry and wanting to take the Premier's position. Not so. It's about doing what is right for the country. It's about doing what is doing right for our people. This foolishness really has to stop, and I say it very crudely but, really, Madam Speaker, we have got to do something.

The status quo just isn't acceptable, so I ask you all to think carefully tonight before you vote. The door is open. I know there are those over there that are just dissatisfied and unhappy. Will you have the courage of your conviction to take a move? The country would love for you to do it. Let's do what is right, because that door might slam shut and do so very quickly.

Madam Speaker, with this I conclude my debate and wrap up this evening, and invite us to put the matter to the vote.

The Speaker: The question is, **BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED that Parliament does declare a Lack of Confidence in the Government.** All those in favour, please say Aye.

AYES.

The Speaker: Those against, please say no.

NOES

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, can we have a division?

The Speaker: Madam Clerk, please proceed with the division.

Division No. 21

AYES	NOES
	Hon D. Wayne Panton
	Hon Kenneth V. Bryan

	Hon. Sabrina T. Turner
	Hon. Johany "Jay" Ebanks
	Hon. Bernie A. Bush
	Ms. Heather D. Bodden
	Hon. Isaac D. Rankine
Hon. Roy M. McTaggart	
Mr. Joseph X. Hew	
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour	
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush	
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell	
Ms. Barbara Connolly	
Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin	
Mr. David Wight	

ABSTAINED
Hon. Julianna Y. O'Connor-Connolly
Hon. André M. Ebanks
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

The Speaker: The results of Division No. 21 for Private Member Motion No. 10 of 2022-2023 — Lack of Confidence in the Government: Eight Ayes, seven Noes, and three Abstentions. The Ayes have it.

In accordance with section 51(1) of the Constitution, which requires two-third votes of elected Members of Parliament for a Lack of Confidence Motion to be passed, there has to be 12 Ayes—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: My apologies, 13. As the Motion has eight Ayes, it has failed. For the avoidance of doubt, the Ayes have it, but the Motion has failed.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 10 of 2023-2024, failed.

The Speaker: Before I move a Motion to adjourn, I would like to say a few words.

All evening I have been up here writing, and I'm sure you guys have seen. I have not been doing dictation of your speeches. I have just been in a position where I keep thinking about constitutional reform. To be sitting here as Speaker, and see what's going on, I can't help but put on record that I think we have to eventually get to the place where the Speaker's role becomes autonomous. While thinking about the Speaker's role and autonomy and constitutional reform, I started to think about political will and all the different things that we need legislative changes on, in terms of our Constitution.

I know recently we had the Electoral Boundary Commission do their report, which I'm expecting will be Tabled in Parliament in the future; but you really have to wonder, if Members of Parliament are the individuals who will determine whether that report is accepted or not, if we're ever going to really get to the place where we are thriving constitutionally. We're right back in the same position with the Government having a hung Parliament, and I see it as a sad day for our country.

[As] I heard everyone deliberate, I kept thinking that it would only be fitting for me to remind everyone tonight. I came to Parliament over the weekend, took my Oath of Affirmation and read it over and over because I never want to lose sight of why I'm here.

"I, Katherine Anne Ebanks-Wilks, do swear that I will well and truly serve His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors, and the people of the Cayman Islands in the Office of Speaker of Parliament of the Cayman Islands so, help me, God."

I was placed as Speaker although I've been beaten up by the media because many people seem to have this story that I wanted this position for money. What many people are not aware of, is that the Government was put in a peculiar position having the former Speaker resign, and difficulty with finding consensus to elect an outside Speaker.

While my decision to accept the nomination took me out of my comfort zone, and I knew that I was going to have challenges maintaining the support of some of my constituents I promised myself, when I took this position, that every decision I made would be what's in the best interest of the country, not what would get me re-elected so I took the Speaker position. It was an elevation, of course, but it was also a huge challenge.

I know that I have displayed nothing but neutrality while I have been here, so much so that I locked my door this morning. I didn't want to speak to anyone. I didn't look out here to see if we had a quorum. No one can say that I interfered in this process because, at the end of the day, that is what the Speaker is supposed to do.

I've received calls, and even threats, you know, from a minority of people saying that I should move from this position, and if it needs to be so, so be so. At the end of the day, decisions being made should be what is in the best interest of the country, not just by me, but by every single one of you sitting in these chairs tonight— and last time I counted, it was much more than the one up here.

Something came to my mind last night and I woke up thinking about it. It just keeps chiming, chiming

in my mind. I just want to say, that I pray I live to see the day when a majority of seats of our Parliament will be filled by leaders who possess the political will to make decisions that are in the best interest of the Caymanian people, and for the love of country. Although there are nineteen seats, until we have enough Members who lead based on what is right, the status quo will remain, and Cayman will never work for Caymanians.

Honourable Premier, I call on you to move a Motion to adjourn.

[Desk thumping]

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

I rise to move a Motion for the adjournment of this honourable House *sine die*.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do now stand adjourned *sine die*. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it. This honourable House do now stand adjourned *sine die*.

At 8:08 pm the House stood adjourned sine die.