PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Third Meeting of the 2024/2025 Session

First Sitting

Friday
31 January, 2025
(Pages 1-15)

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	*Premier*, Minister of Finance & Economic Development, Education, District Administration & Lands, Financial Services & Commerce, *and* Health
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	*Deputy Premier,* Minister of Tourism & Ports *and* Social Development & Innovation
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports, & Heritage *and* Home Affairs
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, OCI, JP, MP	Minister of Border Control, Labour, Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency *and* Wellness

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert Hon, JP	*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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	*Deputy Speaker*, Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. André M. Ebanks, MP	Elected Member for West Bay South
Mrs. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Elected Member for Prospect

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

ABSENT

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West, Parliamentary Secretary to Border Control & Culture *and* Planning, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport & Development
Mr. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Heritage

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
THIRD MEETING OF THE 2024/25 SESSION
FRIDAY
31 JANUARY, 2025
10:54 A.M.

First Sitting

[Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning. The Third Meeting of the 2024/2025 Session of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands is commenced. I would invite the Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports & Heritage and Home Affairs to grace us with prayers.

PRAYERS

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Minister of Youth, Sports & Heritage, and Home Affairs, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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, happiness, truth, and justice, religion and piety may be established 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 the 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 in Thy great Name's sake.

Let us say the Lord's Prayer together:

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

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

The Speaker: None.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: I am delighted to announce that today is the birthday of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Happy birthday, Honourable Leader.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

Report & Recommendation of the Minister Responsible for Lands on the Vesting of Crown Land Block 25B Parcel 470 (part) to Peter Jervis, Rose Ebanks and Maureen Jervis-Brooks

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Finance & Economic Development, Education, District Administration & Lands, Financial Services & Commerce, and Health, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you and good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning all.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Report & Recommendation of the Minister responsible for Lands as it relates to the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2025 Revision) [Sic 2005] for the sale of Crown land at Registration Section Spotts, Block 25B Parcel 470 (part) to Peter Jervis, Rose Ebanks and Maureen Jervis-Brooks.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if I may first provide some background: Block 25B Parcel 470 comprises of an undeveloped, square-shaped small parcel of Crown land, being 0.2297 acres in area, located on Mangrove Avenue in Prospect, Grand Cayman. The Parcel's origin is derived from a 1987 subdivision and the Parcel is zoned low density residential. It is 2 to 3 feet above sea level and partly wet.

Mr. Speaker, the adjacent property is a residence, namely Block 25B Parcel 471, registered to a Peter Jarvis, Rose Ebanks and Maureen Jervis- Brooks since 1999. There has been minor encroachment of development over part of the boundary and onto the Crown Parcel. The inadvertent encroachment appears to have taken place many years ago, however, it was only noticed recently, when the owners prepared to put their property up for sale.

Mr. Speaker, the owners contacted the Cayman Islands Government and requested to purchase a small strip of the Crown Parcel in order to regularise the encroachment. Cabinet reviewed the report of the matter and agreed that the parties could negotiate and sell approximately 0.06 of an acre (2,926 square feet or 26 per cent), portion of the Crown Parcel to the adjoining landowners.

Mr. Speaker, three valuations of the land to be transferred are required under the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2025 Revision) [Sic 2005]: one from the Government's Chief Valuation Officer (CVO) and two from independent property valuation companies hence, the table I'm about to explain outlines the three market value opinions obtained:

Lands & Survey Dept.	KastleCay	Charterland
$43,000	$80,000	$47,000

Mr. Speaker, a figure of CI$57,500 was negotiated between the Valuation Office and the purchaser.

After careful analysis and consideration of the report provided, Cabinet resolved to advise Her Excellency the Governor to approve the sale of the approximately 0.06-acre portion of the Crown land of 25B Parcel 470 to Peter Jervis, Rose Ebanks and Maureen Jervis-Brooks for a consideration of $57,500; however, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet has not waived the stamp duty due on the said transfer. The purchaser will [also] pay for the survey work required to enable the subject portion of the land to be subdivided from Parcel 470 and combined into Parcel 471.

Mr. Speaker, I can indeed confirm that as required by the Act, the details of this proposed land disposition have been published in the Cayman Islands Gazette on 17th January, 2025 and in a local newspaper, namely the *Caymanian Times,* on the 21st January, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, accompanying the report are all of the documents as required, and indeed specified, under section 10(2) of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2025 Revision) [Sic 2005], including the valuation reports.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to elucidate on this important matter.

Cayman Islands Constitution - Electoral District Boundaries Order, 2025

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament the Electoral District Boundaries Order, 2025.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as you would rightly know, having duly approved, there will be a Government Motion which I will speak to later today so in the interest of time, I will reserve my comments and debate thereon.

The Speaker: Very well.

Cayman Islands Stamp Duty Act (2019 Revision) - Stamp Duty (Rates of Duty) Regulations, 2025 - (SL 3 of 2025)

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Once again, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament, the Stamp Duty (Rates of Duty) Regulations, 2026 [sic].

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that the Government accepted a Private Member's Motion led by the Official Opposition, Motion No. 1 of 2024-2025, on 9th October, 2024. The Private Member's Motion called for the Government to remove the impediment that prevented Caymanians acquiring their first or second property from enjoying a Stamp Duty concession simply because the property fell within a certain geographical area within our Islands. The Government accepted that there was a need to remove that impediment and therefore agreed to the Private Member's Motion.

The impediment is found in paragraph one, Mr. Speaker, under the Schedule to the Stamp Duty Act (2019 Revision) under the head of duty entitled **"CONVEYANCE OR TRANSFER of any immovable property"**. It states that the charge to duty is 7.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent is a rate that is higher than Caymanians acquiring property for the first or second time would normally have to pay if it was in another segment. This impediment is removed now by Regulation 2 in the Stamp Duty (Rates of Duty) Regulation, 2025 that was just tabled.

Regulation 2 repeals the section of the Principal Act that hitherto prevented a concession being available to Caymanians because the property was in certain geographical areas in the Islands, in particular, the Seven Mile strip and parts of Eastern Avenue—therefore, Mr. Speaker, when the Regulations that I have just Tabled takes full effect (and that is expected to be within the next 21 days), Caymanians will be able to enjoy a stamp duty concession when purchasing property in areas such as Britannia, West Bay.

Regulation 2 makes another important change. It brings into effect the current dollar thresholds that are being used in assessing whether a Caymanian acquiring a property for the first or second time will be eligible to receive a stamp duty concession. An illustration in the Stamp Duty Act itself, states that a Caymanian acquiring property for the first time does not have to pay any stamp duty if the value of that property does not exceed $400,000. This is an outdated value, and the Regulations that have been Tabled updates the recent practice that was intimated when the former Premier, the Member for Newlands, was here, that the figure of $550,000 would reflect that regime and Government's desire, it is continuing to be used. This update is achieved now by Regulation 2.

Mr. Speaker, the Regulations that have been Tabled were prepared under the authority of section 27 of the Stamp Duty Act (2019 Revision) which specifies that the regulations so drafted, **"are subject to negative resolution"** of this said Parliament. In turn, this means that the Regulations I just Tabled will take effect after three weeks have elapsed, unless the Regulations are negated by a contrary set of regulations that the Parliament approves. Given that these Regulations are positive for our Caymanian people, I therefore cannot see that any single solitary Member of this Parliament would challenge them.

May it please you, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Ltd – Annual Report for the Year ended 31st December 2022

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism & Ports and Social Development & Innovation, Elected Member for George Town Central: I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to lay before this honourable House the Annual Report of the Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre (CTCEC), for the Financial Year ended the 31st December, 2022.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Deputy Premier wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with section 44(6) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision), it gives me great pleasure to place before this honourable House the Annual Report and audited financial statements of Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Ltd. for the fiscal year ended the 31st December, 2022.

Mr. Speaker, the audited financial statements show that net loss for the year ended 31st December 2022, (the year after COVID), was $9.578 million. The Centre had current assets of $2.34 million and non-current assets of $70,823,000. Total assets amounted to $73.163 million as of the 31st December, 2022. The Centre had current liabilities of $1.63 million and non-current liabilities of $7.42 million. Total liabilities amounted to $9.065 million and a total shareholders' equity of $64,097,000.

Mr. Speaker, this was an unqualified audit opinion by the Auditor General signed off on the 16th October, 2024. The Auditor General stated, **"In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the company as at 31st December 2022 and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards."**

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Turtle Conservation Education Centre is pleased to have received this unqualified opinion, and is proud of the continued hard work that has been undertaken by the CTCEC's team, led by its Chief Executive Officer and its Chief Financial Officer, to receive this opinion from the Auditor General. I take this opportunity to thank the Centre staff—all good, hardworking Caymanians; and the Office of the Auditor General, for the work they have done in producing these audited financial statements for our Turtle Conservation Centre and Education Centre for the fiscal year ended the 31st December, 2022. I invite all Members of this Parliament, as well as the public, to review the report in detail.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman Airways - Annual Report 2023

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to lay before this honourable House the Annual Report of Cayman Airways Ltd for the year ended the 31st December, 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered, does the Honourable Deputy Premier wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

In accordance with section 44 (6) of the Public Management and Finance Law (2020 Revision), I place before this honourable House the audited financial statements of Cayman Airways, Ltd. for the year ended the 31st December, 2023.

Mr. Speaker, during the fiscal period, the airline transported 422,189 passengers on a total 10,417 flights. During the period, the airline also transported over 2,134 tonnes of cargo. In June 2023, the airline relaunched nonstop service between Panama and the Cayman Islands, and in October 2023 the airline launched a new regional route with nonstop service between the Cayman Islands and Barbados. In November 2023, the airline also expanded its Los Angeles service by adding a second weekly frequency.

Additionally, incentives such as participation in the United States' TSA Pre-Check programme, and the installation of seat-back power underscored a dedication to passenger satisfaction by the company; by participating in the United States' TSA Pre-Check programme, enrolled passengers on Cayman Airways are provided with expedited security procedures, allowing more efficiency for our airline.

Mr. Speaker, Cayman Airways proactively addressed the volatile and unpredictable cost of fuel in 2023— by actively monitoring and aggressively pursuing alternative alternatives to minimise fuel cost, the airline showcased a commitment to financial prudence. The airline focused on maximising uplift in lower-cost jurisdictions and tankering sufficient fuel so as not to require uplift in more expensive markets.

Cayman Airways consumed 5.05 million gallons of fuel in 2023, compared to 6.94 million gallons in 2019, and 4.53 million gallons in 2022 (the first year of post-pandemic flying). This marked a 27 per cent reduction in fuel consumption from 2019— something this honourable House should be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

During 2023, the airline reported a net loss of $9.6 million with current assets of $16.8 million and non-current assets of $32.85 million, Mr. Speaker. Total assets amounted to $49.65 million as at 31st December, 2023. The airline had current liabilities of $44.55 million and non-current liabilities of $27.65 million, total liabilities amounted to $72.2 million and total liabilities and shareholder deficits was $49.6 million.

Mr. Speaker, the financial statements have been audited by the Auditor General in accordance with the provisions of section 60(1)(a) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision). An unqualified opinion has been issued on the 2023 financials, with an emphasis of matter for the company's reliance on financial support from the Cayman Islands Government. The Auditor General states that the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the company as of the 31st December 2023, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year ended the 31st December 2023 ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards, better known as IFRS.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank the Board and management of Cayman Airways, Ltd., for their efforts in producing these audited financial statements, and the Office of the Auditor General for auditing them— but, more importantly, the amazing staff, for their hard work in keeping the company going, and all of our national airline's committed customers.

I now invite the Members of this honourable House and the public to review this report in detail. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman Islands Government 2021 and 2022 Annual HR Reports

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Mr. Speaker, good morning. I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Government 2021 and 2022 Annual HR Reports.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Deputy Governor wish to speak thereto?

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I have much to say.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present in this honourable House the 2021 and 2022 Human Resources Annual Reports for the Civil Service. These reports document trends in Human Resource activity for the Civil Service, as well as provides statistics on employee headcount within the Statutory Authorities and Government-owned Companies (SAGCs).

Mr. Speaker, while these reports cover 2021 and 2022, I would respectfully request a bit of latitude in my remarks, as from time to time I will mention some statistics and achievements for further years (2023-2024). I crave your diligence.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Portfolio of the Civil Service has responsibility for providing me with corporate HR management information to support decision-making within government. HR Annual Reports are produced as part of this service, and contain detailed information relating to operational HR matters throughout the prior years and statistical trends over a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021 there was an overall increase in the size of the public service with increases in both the civil service and the SAGCs from the prior year. At the end of 2021, the number of Caymanians employed within the public service was 5,205, which represented 72.5 per cent of the public service. Within the Core Civil Service, Caymanian representation increased by more than 1 per cent to 71.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, by the end of 2022, the number of Caymanians employed within the public service was 5,197 representing 71.4 per cent of the public service. Meanwhile, Caymanian representation within the Core Civil Service decreased slightly, going from 71.8 per cent to 71 per cent. Although this slight decrease may be viewed as discouraging, when compared to the Labour Force indicators published by the ESO [Economics and Statistics Office] during fall 2022, the percentage of Caymanians in the core Civil Service is higher than the Caymanians' working age population by 26.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, between 2021 and 2022, female representation within the Core Civil Service held steady at 55.7 per cent, which is 6.5 per cent higher than the percentage reported in the ESO Labour Force indicators for the female working age population. I'm happy to report that 50 per cent of my senior team are women.

In terms of the Civil Service benefits package, much work was done to uplift salaries between 2021 and 2022 with increases taking effect in both years. Notably, in 2022 the Civil Service increased salaries for civil servants through the implementation of a 2 per cent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in September 2022, and the award of a one-pay increment broadly equivalent to 2.5 per cent to civil servants which took effect in December 2022. Compared to December 21, when the average Civil Service salary was $53,443, salaries increased by $3,414 per year, bringing the average salary in 2022 to $56,857. The year 2022 marked the eighth consecutive year that the average Civil Service salaries increased. Mr. Speaker, we owe the Government of the day grateful thanks for their support of the Civil Service in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, the public service stands as the largest employer of Caymanians. We are proud to have maintained this standard and aim to further grow our already high percentage. To support this objective, the Civil Service has made numerous strides in internal development and promotion opportunities for Caymanians. The Civil Service has already yielded significant wins including:

i. Caymanians currently leading all five branches of our uniformed services, namely: The Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, Customs and Border Control, HM Royal Prison Service, Cayman Islands Coast Guard and the Cayman Islands Fire Service— Mr. Speaker, you will recall that not long ago the majority of these posts were held by non-Caymanians, now they are all held by our people.
ii. Within the core Civil Service, Caymanians hold 64, or 81 per cent, of senior leadership roles (i.e. Chief Officers and Heads of Department); and as at 31st December 2023, non-Caymanians only held 15 senior leader roles or 19 per cent.
iii. Caymanians hold 100 per cent of the Deputy Chief Officer roles, save for equivalent specialist positions which have other primary designations such as Deputy Auditor General, Deputy Solicitor General, and Deputy Ombudsman.
iv. The Civil Service continues to uphold its:
    a. "Caymanian first" policy for hiring, where Caymanians who are the most qualified for a post are offered employment. Moreover Mr. Speaker, in cases where Caymanians qualifications and experience are ranked broadly equivalent to their foreign counterparts, they are given preference and appointed; and
    b. Organisational practice to advertise posts held by non-Caymanians prior to contract renewals, allowing for qualified Caymanians to be recruited for the position, whether it is a new position or a post for which the contract is being renewed.
v. The Civil Service also continues to steadfastly maintain its ability to:
    a. Hire returning Caymanian graduates, without open competition. This initiative provides our returning scholars with opportunities to utilise their newly gained expertise within the Civil Service as they start or advance in their careers.

Mr. Speaker, just two weeks ago I was privileged to appoint a young Caymanian, Jada Evans, to a post in the Ministry of Health as a returning graduate— the smile on her face when she received her contract, was unforgettable. We also have three returning Caymanian graduates working in the Ministry of Sports: Aysha Ebanks, Abraham Powery and Aleigha General— all outstanding young Caymanian graduates. I'm sure the Minister will attest to that.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Mr. Speaker, we also offer on-the job training and job shadowing via diverse talent management tools, including acting appointments, secondments and allocation of additional duty assignments.

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service has continuously taken steps and produced initiatives to increase the number of Caymanians in the Civil Service. These highlighted initiatives allow for us to continue our efforts

to provide opportunities for Caymanians to join the Civil Service, and experience pathways of professional growth and advancement.

I now wish to speak on the bespoke programmes and initiatives which have benefitted numerous Caymanians.

I am delighted to share that the Civil Service College has established a Scholarship Programme, which will develop the skills and career prospects of our Caymanian civil servants. This amazing initiative, which is only available to Caymanians, provides financial support to scholarship recipients and inevitably provides them with the tools needed to progress in their respective fields of study. With the knowledge gained, Caymanian civil servants will bring fresh perspectives and enhanced skills, and will make significant contributions to their departments. This Scholarship Programme will ultimately lead to more effective governance and improved services for the people of the Cayman Islands.

The first civil servants to receive scholarships under the new Civil Service College Scholarship Programme are seven talented Caymanians representing a diverse range of government ministries, departments and sectors. The Scholarship Programme has given them the opportunity to pursue their academic studies to enhance their professional expertise and their career development. These civil servants are:

- Tiffany Jackson, Department of Lands & Survey;
- Lisa Malice, Ministry of Home Affairs;
- Shelise Jeffery, Portfolio of the Civil Service;
- Shanna Wallace, Ministry of Tourism and Ports;
- Shennon Hanna, Account Officer, Ministry of Education;
- Peta-Gay Brown, Department of Lands & Survey; and
- Serena Whittaker, Facilities Department, Ministry of Planning.

All outstanding Caymanians who are eager to learn more, and move up within the Civil Service. These promising Caymanians are pursuing a wide variety of academic programmes, ranging from Associate Degrees in Public Administration to advanced Master's Degrees in specialised fields. This diversity reflects the Civil Service College's commitment to fostering a public sector workforce with a wide array of skills tailored to meeting the evolving demands of government service.

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service College's training and courses are an avenue to show the Civil Service's ongoing commitment to investing in learning and development. This has resulted in Caymanian civil servants being better prepared to take advantage of career opportunities which arise through internal promotions and job expansions. It is also a direct accomplishment under goal 3 of the Civil Service Strategic Plan to *"Pursue Excellence in Talent Development".*

Another talent management programme within the Cayman Islands Government which has aided the advancement of Caymanians is the Emerging Talent Programme. This programme provides opportunities for persons to gain the practical experience necessary for permanent appointment, as well as facilitate talent mobility within the Civil Service. Under the Emerging Talent Programme, three Caymanians were recruited or seconded to gain experience in their respective fields, with two of the participants being confirmed in post as at 1st January, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service not only aims to provide opportunities for civil servants, but also to the future workforce of the Cayman Islands Government. We have consistently offered opportunities to Caymanian students through our summer internship programme. This annual programme allows Caymanian students to explore the broad range of careers available in the Civil Service. With an array of different jobs available in the public sector, the programme provides an opportunity for students to apply knowledge gained from their studies. Last year's internship programme gave over 90 young Caymanian students a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on experience, enhance their skills, and make meaningful contributions to the Civil Service.

Of the 90 interns, 23 were formally recognised for their dedication, hard work, and professionalism during their summer internships with the Government, with the following awards presented to four interns who exceeded expectations and distinguished themselves in their respective roles:

- Passion: Jenae Whittaker;
- Integrity: Jonah Sigsworth;
- Professionalism: Torrie Lewis; and
- Customer Service: Madelyn Whittaker.

I congratulate these outstanding young Caymanians.

The Computer Services Department proudly achieved a highly successful Internship Programme by welcoming 17 Caymanian students who gained invaluable hands-on experience across various IT roles. The internship programme provided a unique platform for the young Caymanians to work alongside seasoned IT professionals, actively contributing to meaningful real-world projects.

The interns collaborated and worked closely with the IT Governance Team, playing a key role in developing IT policies and roadmaps, drafting business cases, and documenting minutes for the weekly Change Advisory Board (CAB) meetings. Their contributions also included constructing forms using Oracle APEX tools, as well as supporting the development, coding, debugging, and maintenance of Oracle applications. They were also instrumental in the installation

and maintenance of computers, printers, and other computer equipment, and provided critical support by troubleshooting software and hardware issues in the field.

This success story shows the Civil Service's commitment to provide our young Caymanians and future civil servants with the tools needed to excel in their studies and gain the experience needed to advance their careers or future endeavours. Mr. Darvy Whittaker, our newly-appointed Caymanian Director of the Computer Service Department summarised the impact of the Internship Programme in the quote he shared. He expressed that, *"Our interns brought fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn that truly energised our teams. Their contributions were not only impactful in terms of project delivery but also enhanced our own staff's mentoring and leadership skills."* [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Mr. Speaker, many of our high-performing and world-class civil servants began as young Caymanian interns. A significant testament to this is our very own 2023 Employee of the Year, Miss Zhané Rambaran.

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service has always been dedicated to investing in our people, and investing in our Caymanians for the betterment of the public sector and for the Cayman Islands as a whole. Our efforts are not only internal to the Civil Service, but stretch outwardly to the community through our Second Chances Programme. This programme is our way of employing persons who have had a run-in with the law but have shown that they are willing to be productive members of our society.

In 2023, the Portfolio of the Civil Service funded the participation of three persons in the Second Chances Programme. Two participants were paired with jobs in the Department of Planning and the third joined the Department of Agriculture. The addition of the three participants in 2023, brought the total number of programme participants who have been successfully matched to jobs in the Civil Service to fourteen— fourteen Caymanians who were unemployed, are now employed and becoming productive members of our society.

Mr. Speaker, I met one of those young men this morning; he has been with us now for almost two years through the programme. When I met the young man before he came into the programme, he was deflated, dejected, he basically said he wanted to give up. When I saw him this morning it was the opposite; full of life, smiling, very enthusiastic— just really happy to be in the Government Building.

That is what caring for our people is about: taking a chance on those persons, and Mr. Speaker, while we have had fourteen persons come through the programme, we have only had one person who did not stay in the programme, so we are having great success. It shows that if you give persons a second chance, they will make the best of it.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me to not mention the efforts being made to modernise the Civil Service and provide competitive benefits to attract, recruit and retain Caymanian talent. One of the ways we are accomplishing this is through the Civil Service Salary Scale which pays above minimum wage for all positions, including trainee roles. Civil Service pay, particularly when considering total compensation factors of 12 per cent non-contributory pension and non-contributory healthcare benefits, is highly competitive for most entry-level and low-skilled roles.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that just in December, I believe, the Premier announced that the minimum salary within the Civil Service would be $3,000. I am pleased to say that has now been put into effect, and the feedback we have gotten about it from our employees has been tremendous and they talk about how it has made their lives much better.

Even though at times it is challenging to recruit Caymanians into skilled and specialists roles such as law, auditing, and information technology, the Civil Service continues to make progress in this regard.

Achievements such as our successful internship programme in the Computer Services Department; and the appointment of a young Caymanian, Ms. Felicia Connor, as Crown Counsel II joining the Attorney General's (AG's) Chambers, demonstrates that the Civil Service continues to ensure Caymanians are given an opportunity to gain the experience and preparation needed to have beneficial and successful careers in the Civil Service.

Mr. Speaker, another of our efforts to attract and retain Caymanians is our family-friendly employment offerings, which were designed to attract family-minded employees and show we are an employer that cares. Included in our family-friendly benefits and perks are:

- Non-contributory CINICO health insurance without co-pay or deductibles;
- Newly enhanced paid maternity and paternity leave, which took the total maternity leave benefit to 110 days, of which 60 are fully paid, and doubling both the leave and pay component of paternity leave;
- Generous annual leave, ranging from 18 to 28 days per annum;
- Two wellbeing days per year to support mental health and wellness;
- Diverse development opportunities which are free to all our employees; and
- Non-contributory pension which is paid to the Public Service Pensions Board at 12% of total salary/wages and which converts upon retirement to an annuity for the lifetime of the member.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands Government offers a very competitive benefits package for civil

servants, which in many cases extends to, and positively impacts numerous Caymanian families as well.

Despite the efforts, programmes and initiatives already in place to attract and retain Caymanians, we continue to explore additional avenues to attract even more. That said, Mr. Speaker, going forward, the Civil Service will review possible options to further attract qualified Caymanians, including:

- Increasing opportunities for Caymanians through the expansion of the existing Emerging Talent Programme and the CIG Internship Programme;
- Seeking to further enhance the CIG's benefits package;
- Enhancing succession planning; and
- Linking Civil Service employment efforts with the Ministry of Education's Scholarship programme (which I know our Premier is very happy to hear).

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service has made many strides to grow and enhance our services, increase our efficiencies, and invest in our civil servants by giving them the tools needed to deliver outcomes, grow professionally and provide quality service to the community. Caymanians continue to lead, grow, and advance in the Civil Service and wider public sector; countless testimonials can attest to this, and the wide range of skills and capabilities they bring to the work they do.

It is my hope, that I can continue to witness young, qualified Caymanians find their way and career paths within the Civil Service as I did, guided by the leadership and mentorship of senior-level Civil Servants in their entities. When investing in our Caymanians we are not just supporting their growth, but also strengthening the Civil Service with a future workforce which is better prepared, confident— and more connected to the needs of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Ministry of Border Control, Labour & Culture - Cayman Islands Government - The Immigration (Transition) Discussion White Paper – Consultation Overview - (22 January 2025)

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister of Border Control, Labour & Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, and Wellness.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Minister of Border Control, Labour & Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Wellness, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, a Motion entitled public consultation on the proposed amendments—

The Speaker: Motion? Honourable Minister, I don't think you mean Motion.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Sorry.

The Speaker: It's a Discussion White Paper.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yeah.

The Speaker: You can start again.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House a Government Motion entitled—

The Speaker: It's not a Government Motion, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Sorry.

The Speaker: It's a Discussion White Paper.

[Pause]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Immigration (Transition) Discussion White Paper.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[Long Pause]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask the public to peruse the Discussion White Paper and give as much feedback as possible.

Thank you.

2023-2024 Annual Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee

The Speaker: I recognise the honourable Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament, the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Briefly, Mr. Speaker, to commend the Report to the Members of this Parliament as well as the public. It contains a very succinct report of

the Public Accounts Committee's activities for this past year.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that it is the final report of this session of the 2021 to 2025 Parliament that I will be delivering. It has been my pleasure to serve as Chair of the Committee, and I'd like to go on record in acknowledging and thanking all of my Committee members for their support and their presence at our Meetings; and for contributing to it throughout the four years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge and thank the Auditor General and her team for the great support they have lent to the Committee during the past four years, as well as the Financial Secretary and the Accountant General who, in accordance with Standing Orders, are permanent members of the Committee. Finally, having said that, I would like to mention as well, that the Auditor General will be leaving her post at the end of February. I put on record our thanks to her for her services over the years; but particularly, again, from us on the Public Accounts Committee for these past four years. I wish her Godspeed as she returns home to her family in the United Kingdom.

Thank you very much, sir.

2023-2024 Annual Report of the Standing Select Committee to oversee the performance of the Office of the Ombudsman [Deferred until February 3rd]

The Speaker: The honourable Member for West Bay North is absent from today's Sitting. Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you. Mr. Speaker. That observation is indeed correct, so I beg with your indulgence and that of the House to move a Motion for the deferral of the laying of this Report until Monday.

The Speaker: The question is that the laying of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Standing Select Committee to Oversee the Performance of the Office of the Ombudsman be deferred until Monday coming. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.
Agreed: Laying of the Report deferred.

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I have no answers.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I have given leave to the Honourable Minister of Border Control, Labour & Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Wellness to make a statement.

Honourable Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency

National Conservation Act Amendments and Withdrawal

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the undeniable fact is that there are several provisions in the proposed National Conservation Act.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, the National Conservation Act is an actual piece of legislation in operation, so I think the use of the word "proposed" there, is mistaken.

Proceed, Honourable Minister. You may start again.

[Pause]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the undeniable fact is that there are several provisions in the National Conservation Act (NCA) that have given rise to difficulties and therefore require amendments to address said difficulties. Some of those difficulties were highlighted in the Court of Appeal Judgment in the case of Central Planning Authority (CPA) v National Conservation Council (NCC). There is a legal/policy issue as it relates to the proportionate balance to be struck between the powers given to the NCC to override decisions of other public bodies, (potentially including the constitutionally created Cabinet) and the ability of those other public bodies in the exercise of their own statutory functions.

There is no denying that the extent to which it is desirable to change that balance is ultimately a political question that can only be constitutionally affirmed by this Parliament – which originally enacted the NCA. Therefore, the proposed amendments would seek to make the legislation more workable without fundamentally undermining the ultimate policy intention underlying the NCC, in particular, the principles that:

a) All public bodies in exercising their functions should avoid damaging the environment when possible;
b) Where environmental harm is likely to result from a public body's activity, it should consult with the NCC before embarking on it.

One of the sections of the Act that has given rise to the most difficulty is section 41 – which imposes a general obligation on all public authorities – and in certain cases gives the NCC the power to veto decisions of such public authorities, or to require the decisions to be taken only subject to certain conditions dictated by the NCC.

In practice, however, the NCC's role had been discharged in many cases by the Director of the Department of Environment acting pursuant to a delegated authority, rather than by the whole Council and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as highlighted in the Court of Appeal judgment, those actions don't always conform with the legislation. In at least one case, there was a preemptive exercise of the NCC's veto power, therefore, Mr. Speaker, there are some issues with the legislation, which may be summarised as follows:

a) Should the NCC have unlimited power of veto over the decisions of the other public entities; and if yes, under what circumstances?
b) Should the obligation to consult with the NCC before making certain types of decision apply to the Cabinet itself?
c) What, if any changes, should be made to the composition of the NCC?

All these, and many other issues should be discussed in this Parliament at the appropriate juncture, to ensure that there is proper realignment of the balance of power under the legislation – not to put the legislation as some have suggested but rather to ensure proper balance.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, I think you meant "not to gut".

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I repeat again— that there is proper realignment of the balance of power under the legislation – not to gut the legislation, as some have suggested, but rather to ensure proper balance— Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By way of example, Mr. Speaker, the current combined effect of sections 41(3) and 41(4) means that the NCC potentially has the power to require Cabinet not to take any decisions that would be likely to have an adverse impact on the environment, without first carrying out an environment impact assessment (EIA), which must be carried out by a person approved by the NCC and in accordance with any directive of the NCC (potentially one person – the Director) and there is no exception for a decision that the Cabinet considers to be urgent— none!

This exists, even though the Constitution in section 44 specifically states that the Cabinet is the body that shall have responsibility for formulating policy and directing the implementation of such policy. This therefore means, that the Director could restrain the Cabinet which, in my considered view, is entirely untenable.

Mr. Speaker, the Government was also mindful that the existing NCC is in breach of section 9 (6) of the Public Authorities Act, which states that public officers/civil servants should not be entitled to vote, and currently the Director has a vote. This is in keeping with good governance, and is a worldwide benchmark and good practice.

Just to reiterate what section 9(6) of the Public Authorities Act states:—

"9. (6) The Cabinet may appoint a public or civil servant to a board however —
(a) notwithstanding any other law, the membership of a board shall not be comprised of more than forty percent public or civil servants;
(b) the chairperson shall not be a public or civil servant; and
(c) public or civil servant board members shall not be entitled to vote."

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to take a moment to express my appreciation to the Leader of the Official Opposition and other honourable Members of the Official Opposition, as well as the Member for Bodden Town West, for their collaborative spirit in working with the Government to ensure that the Parliament is quorate, thereby allowing this honourable House to convene and fulfil its important responsibilities to the people of these Islands. They have demonstrated a commendable understanding of their roles as elected representatives, placing the country's interest above all else. Their commitment underscores the importance of unity during these challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, it is therefore the Government's intention, to withdraw the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence in allowing me to make this statement by virtue of Standing Order section 30(1).

The Speaker: Honourable Minister in the interest of clarity, would you please specify what you mean by "the same".

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: The National Conservation (Amendment) Bill.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I haven't approved any more statements.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: None.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

FIRST READINGS

REFERENDUM (CRUISE BERTHING INFRASTRUCTURE, GAMBLING AND CANNABIS) BILL, 2024

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

CUSTOMS AND BORDER CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP TRANSPARENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 2024

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024 *(Withdrawn)*

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister of Border Control, Labour & Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Wellness.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By virtue of Standing Order 58, I hereby wish to move the withdrawal of the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2024 at this time.

The Speaker: The question is that the National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2024 be withdrawn.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: National Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2024 be withdrawn.

ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT BILL, 2025

The Speaker: The Bill has been deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

GRAND COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for a second reading.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for second reading.

MOTIONS

Government Motion No. 7 of 2024-2025 Recommendations of the 2023 Electoral Boundary Commission

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move Government Motion No. 7 of 2024-2025 Recommendations of the 2023 Electoral Boundary Commission.

The Speaker: The Motion has been duly moved. Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion:

WHEREAS in accordance with the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 (as amended) an Electoral Boundary Commission (EBC) was duly appointed on the 4th January 2023;

AND WHEREAS the EBC reviewed the 19 Electoral District Boundaries of the Cayman Islands and submitted its findings thereon to the Governor and the Parliament in a report dated the 4th August 2023 (the "Report");

AND WHEREAS the EBC recommended that the Electoral District Boundaries, except for those for the districts of North Side and East End, be adjusted, and that the 19 Electoral Districts be renamed;

AND WHEREAS the recommended names for the 19 Electoral Districts and the estimated population sizes of each District are set out in Schedule A of the Report;

AND WHEREAS the precise boundaries of the 19 Electoral Districts are set out in Schedules B and C to the Report;

AND WHEREAS Schedule D to the Report includes an alternative recommendation for 20 electoral districts;

AND WHEREAS the Governor prepared a draft Order giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Report;

AND WHEREAS the said draft Order was laid before the Parliament for its approval by the Premier on the 27th June, 2024 and rejected by a resolution of the Parliament on the 26th July, 2024;

AND WHEREAS section 89(5) of the Constitution provides that if the motion for the approval of any draft Order laid under section 89 is rejected by the Parliament, an amended draft Order shall be laid without undue delay by the Premier before the Parliament.

NOW, THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 89(5) of the Constitution, the Governor has made a draft amended Order.

BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Parliament hereby approves the draft amended Order of Her Excellency the Governor for giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Report.

Mr. Speaker, out of the abundance of caution that it may not have been read or seen the Governor drafted the following order which, with your permission, I'd like to read into the records of this honourable Parliament, "Electoral District Boundaries Order, 2025. Cayman Islands Constitution."

"NOW, THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 89(5) of the Constitution, the Governor makes the following Order —

WHEREAS an Electoral Boundary Commission was appointed on the 4th January, 2023 under section 88 of the Constitution set out in Schedule 2 to the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009, S.I. 2009 No. 1379 as amended (in this Order referred to as "the Constitution");

AND WHEREAS under section 89(1) of the Constitution, the Electoral Boundary Commission is charged with responsibility for reviewing the boundaries of the electoral districts into which the Cayman Islands are divided and submitting a report to the Governor and the Parliament containing its recommendations for any changes in the number and boundaries of the electoral districts;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with section 89(1) of the Constitution, the Electoral Boundary Commission, on the 4th August, 2023 submitted to the Governor and the Parliament a report making recommendations for, among other things, the retention of all electoral districts;

AND WHEREAS the Electoral Boundary Commission recommended that the 19 electoral districts be renamed;

AND WHEREAS the report also included an alternative recommendation for 20 electoral districts;

AND WHEREAS the Electoral Boundary Commission recommended that the electoral district boundaries, with the exception of those for the districts of North Side and East End, be adjusted;

AND WHEREAS the recommended names of the 19 electoral districts and the estimated population sizes are set out in Schedule A of the report;

AND WHEREAS the precise boundaries of the 19 electoral districts are set out in Schedules B and C of the report;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by section 89(3) of the Constitution that as soon as may be after the Electoral Boundary Commission has submitted a report under section 89(1), the Premier shall lay before the Parliament for its approval the draft of an Order by the Governor for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report;

AND WHEREAS a draft Order giving effect to the recommendations contained in the report of the Electoral Boundary Commission was laid before the Parliament for its approval by the Premier on the 27th June, 2024 and was rejected by a resolution of the Parliament on the 26th July, 2024;

AND WHEREAS it is provided by section 89(5) of the Constitution that if the Motion for the approval of any draft order laid under section 89 is rejected by the Parliament, an amended draft order shall be laid without undue delay by the Premier before the Parliament.

NOW, THEREFORE, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 89(5) of the Constitution, the Governor makes the following amended Order —

Citation and commencement

1. (1) This Order may be cited as the Electoral District Boundaries Order, 2025.

(2) This Order comes into force upon the next dissolution of the Parliament [which is 1st March]**.** [Sic]

Electoral districts and representatives

2. (1) The Cayman Islands shall be divided into the following 19 electoral districts —

(a) West Bay 1;
(b) West Bay 2;
(c) West Bay 3;
(d) West Bay 4;
(e) George Town 1;
(f) George Town 2;
(g) George Town 3;
(h) George Town 4;
(i) George Town 5;
(j) George Town 6;
(k) George Town 7;
(l) Bodden Town 1;

(m) Bodden Town 2;
(n) Bodden Town 3;
(o) Bodden Town 4;
(p) North Side;
(q) East End;
(r) Cayman Brac 1;
(s) Cayman Brac 2 & Little Cayman.

(2) Each electoral district shall be represented in the Parliament by one elected Member."

And it will be signed off by Her Excellency, the Governor.

Mr. Speaker, the integrity and equity of our electoral system remain paramount, particularly as we approach the General Elections which is scheduled for the 30th April, this year. Pursuant to section 88 of the Cayman Islands Constitution, an Electoral Boundary Commission is mandated to be appointed every eight years to undertake a comprehensive review of the electoral district boundaries and recommend any necessary adjustments.

After extensive deliberation and due consultation, the Commission submitted its report to the Governor and to the Parliament on the 4th August, 2023. The 2023 report, Mr. Speaker, contains some key recommendations including the retention of the 19 electoral districts, with modifications to certain district boundaries, as well as the renaming of the 19 constituencies.

In accordance with the constructional mandated procedure, the then Honourable Acting Premier, MP for West Bay South, Tabled the draft Order from the Governor before the honourable House in June 2024 via a Government Motion; however, on the 26th July, 2024, Parliament resolved to reject the Motion and the accompanying draft Order. However, Section 89(5) of the Constitution provides that in the event of such a rejection, the Premier must, without undue delay, present an amended draft Order for the consideration of this honourable Parliament— Hence the Motion currently before the Parliament, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will highlight a couple of legal and constitutional points.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet approved that the Premier of the Cayman Islands Table a Motion at this said Meeting dealing with the amended draft Order from Her Excellency, the Governor concerning the 2023 EBC report.

For clarity, it is only this Parliament—no one else—under the Constitution that can approve or reject the draft Order from the Governor, and by extension, the recommendations from the EBC; not the Cabinet, not the Premier, not even the Governor. The Premier is therefore duty-bound by section 89(5) of the Constitution to bring an amended draft Order by Her Excellency, the Governor to give effect to the recommendations of the EBC. Once I conclude the contribution, Mr. Speaker, and the exchange in the House is concluded, it then becomes the responsibility of this honourable House to either approve or reject the EBC recommendation contained in the amended draft Order. Section 89(5) of the Constitution expressly provides that the Parliament can reject and give leave to withdraw the amended draft Order of Her Excellency. I would again emphasise that the Parliament is the only body that can approve or reject.

Mr. Speaker, when the original draft Order was before the House on the 26th July, 2024, the then Acting Premier outlined, in considerate detail, the considerations for the House in determining whether to accept or reject the draft Order. These were summarised under four main headings namely:

1. Engagement, efforts and methods;
2. Voter awareness and understanding;
3. The practical implications (particularly near to a General Election); and
4. A preference for a specific term of reference.

I do not propose, Mr. Speaker, then to repeat those observations in detail, but suffice to say that they are still relevant to the Parliament's determination of this Motion and amended draft Order here today.

Mr. Speaker, it is instructive to note that while section 89(5) speaks about the laying of an amended draft Order from the Governor, unfortunately, the Constitution itself provides no guidance on what form the amendment should take. However, from a legal perspective, the current amended draft Order satisfies the constitutional requirement as set out in section 89(5).

Mr. Speaker, the timing of any electoral boundaries' adjustment is a matter of critical importance. We are now less than 90 days away from a General Election, a pivotal movement for our democracy. Any substantive modifications to electoral boundaries at this late stage, we believe in the Government and is supported by the official Opposition, would risk engendering confusion among the electorate, particularly among those segments of our population that may already exhibit lower levels of electoral engagement. As custodians of democracy, we have a solemn obligation to facilitate broad voter participation and to ensure that every elector is unequivocally informed as to their designated electoral district.

Furthermore, adherence to the international electoral best practice is absolutely imperative. The Venice Commission on the "Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters" is an authoritative instrument in this regard. It underscores the necessity of stability in the electoral laws. Mr. Speaker, it specifically cautions against the implementation of significant amendments to electoral legislation within the year preceding a General Election, much less 90 days therefrom. The underlying principle is to uphold electoral fairness and to ensure trust and confidence in the electoral process.

While not legally binding in the United Kingdom, or indeed the Cayman Islands, the Venice Commission principles have in fact influenced electoral

governance in numerous democratic jurisdictions, reinforcing the importance of maintaining consistency in electoral administrations.

As we approach the 2025 General Election, Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that all stakeholders, voters, candidates, election officials and the wider public are afforded adequate time to familiarise themselves with any modifications to the electoral framework. Stability in the electoral governance is not merely a matter of administrative convenience, but a fundamental prerequisite for the equitable conduct of electors and the preservation of democratic integrity.

Mr. Speaker, with the EBC's recommendations—they are an intrinsic component of good governance. The timing and the practical ramifications of such changes must be judiciously considered. Therefore, this honourable House is now being called upon to deliberate on the amended draft Order from Her Excellency, the Governor in accordance with the constitutional procedure.

I wish to assure the honourable House, as well as the people of the Cayman Islands, that this Government remains steadfast in its commitment to upholding the principles of electoral fairness, transparency and stability. We will continue to take all necessary measures to ensure that the upcoming General Election is conducted in a manner that instils public confidence and safeguards the democratic rights of all of our citizens.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, while the proposed boundary modifications may not be feasible for implementation at this time, the recommendations set out in the 2023 Electoral Boundaries Commission report may serve as a valuable framework for consideration in future electoral cycles, ensuring that any adjustments are introduced in a manner that upholds both the integrity of our democratic system and the confidence of the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all of the above, the Motion before the House is for consideration of an amended draft Order by Her Excellency, the Governor. However, I wish to remind Members that it is entirely up to this Parliament to either approve or reject the recommendations contained in the amendment draft Order. I am constitutionally obliged to present this to the honourable House for its consideration, and out of the abundance of caution that in the era and days of challenges that no bright soul would challenge the electoral process, in particular, the 2025 Election, based on the fact that there was a constitutional breach of section 89.

I have carried out my constitutional duty, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly just to thank the honourable Premier for, first of all, discussing this with us previous to today and running us through the technicalities. I want to thank the AG [Attorney General] as well for his diligent work. We are thankful that this was picked up and that we will have no issues with the upcoming election and we appreciate the Honourable Premier bringing this forward, identifying the problem and covering all the checks and balances as we move forward into the silly season. Thank you, Mr. 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]* If not, I'll invite the Honourable Premier to exercise her right of reply.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Speaker. It would be remiss of me not to thank all honourable Members who showed up today to make the quorate for their tacit support, fully wrapping their minds around and having the cognisance of the importance to be fully in adherence of the constitutional responsibility as we are eagerly anticipating the results of the 2025 Elections.

I thank you.

The Speaker: The question is BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Parliament hereby approves the draft amended Order of Her Excellency the Governor for giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Report, —that is the Electoral Boundary Commission's report.

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

AYES and NOES.

The Speaker: I believe the Noes have it.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, may we have a division out of abundance of caution that there is a sense of unanimity.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk, please call the division.

Division No. 26 of 2024-2025

Ayes: 0	**Noes: 16**
	Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly
	Hon. Kenneth Bryan
	Hon. Johany Ebanks
	Hon. Isaac D. Rankine
	Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour
	Hon. Joseph X. Hew

	Ms. Barbara E. Conolly
	Mr. André M. Ebanks
	Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks
	Ms. Sabrina T. Turner
	Hon. Heather D. Bodden
	Hon. G. Wayne Panton
	Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell
	Mr. Roy M. McTaggart
	Mr. David C. Wight
	Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

Absentees: 2
Mr. Bernie A. Bush
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush

The Speaker: The results of the division: 16 Noes, 2 absentees.

Agreed: Government Motion No. 7 of 2024-2025 - Recommendations of the 2023 Electoral Boundary Commission failed.

The Speaker: We have reached the end of the Order Paper for today.

Before I invite the Honourable Premier to adjourn the House, I just wish to remind Members that the work of the Standing Orders Working Group has been completed and we have a draft new set of Standing Orders to be considered by all Members of the House. As the Clerk has advised, I have called a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee for Monday at lunch time so that all Members may receive a presentation of the significant changes which are being proposed in the draft. Following that, we will then decide the way forward.

It is my wish, my prayer, my hope, my dream that this House, after some 16 years of trying, will be able to approve a set of modern Standing Orders so that the next Parliament will have something modern and fit-for-purpose to guide the proceedings of this House going forward.

All Members will receive, if they have not yet done so, a copy of the draft for consideration over the weekend, and hopefully you will be able to devise questions and relate what concerns you have about the proposed changes during the meeting on Monday. As I said, we can then decide based on that, how we move forward with respect to this matter.

Honourable Premier, the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move the adjournment of this honourable House until Monday, 3rd February at 10am.

Also, just to give an indication, Mr. Speaker, that in Business Committee, there was consensus to work beyond the hour of 4:30 p.m.; obviously, we will do the appropriate Motions on the said day. The general consensus was between [going until] 7 or 9p.m., left to your entire discretion, sir, and we would not be meeting on Tuesday, as we would be doing the executive work on Tuesday.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier.

The question is that this House do now adjourn until 10a.m. on Monday, 3rd February.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Accordingly, the House is now adjourned until 10am on Monday, 3rd February.

At 12:32pm the House stood adjourned until 10am Monday, 3rd February, 2025.