

CAYMAN ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET ADDRESS TOGETHER WITH GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT

SECOND MEETING OF THE 2017/2018 SESSION

Fourth Sitting

Friday
3 November, 2017
(Pages 1-47)

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon W McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MLA
Speaker of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA	*The Premier*, Minister of Human Resources, Immigration and Community Affairs
Hon. Moses I Kirkconnell, JP, MLA	Deputy Premier, Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
Hon. Juliana Y O'Connor-Connolly JP, MLA	Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands
Hon. Dwayne S Seymour, JP, MLA	Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing
Hon. Roy M McTaggart, JP, MLA	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Joseph X Hew, JP, MLA	Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure
Hon. Tara A Rivers, JP, MLA	Minister of Financial Services and Home Affairs

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Gloria M. McField-Nixon	*Acting Deputy Governor*, Responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W Bulgin, QC, JP	Attorney-General, Responsible for Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MLA	*Deputy Speaker* - Elected Member for West Bay North
Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks, JP, MLA	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Mr. David C. Wight, MLA	Elected Member for George Town West
Mrs. Barbara E. Connolly, MLA	Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr., MLA	Elected Member for Prospect

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, MLA	*Leader of the Opposition* - Elected Member for North Side
Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr., MLA	*Deputy Leader of the Opposition* - Elected Member for Newlands
Mr. Anthony S. Eden, OBE, MLA	Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. V. Arden McLean, JP, MLA	Elected Member for East End
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MLA	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, MLA	Elected Member for George Town Central

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FRIDAY
3 NOVEMBER 2017
10:57 AM

Fourth Sitting

[Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning.

I will call on the Honourable Attorney General to say prayers this morning.

PRAYERS

Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, Attorney General: 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 Legislative Assembly now assembled, that all things may be ordered upon the best and surest foundations for the glory of Thy Name and for the safety, honour and welfare of the people of these Islands.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Proceedings are resumed.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: We have apologies from the Member for Savannah, who is not able to be here.

Honourable Members, Erskine May speaks to many things that we do not do in this Legislature because we do not have the ability by way of funds, for instance, or just the way our small Assembly works under our rules. As much as I have been criticised on a radio show this morning, I take this procedure to say that my ruling in not allowing the term of what is called "Shadow Cabinet" to be used in the House is that Shadow Cabinets are made from a party machinery; that is what Erskine May speaks to.

The Opposition in this House has said to the public of this country, in the general elections in May, that they are Independents. They were elected as Independents; they are recorded in our records as Independents. Our record speaks to Independent Members being, Honourable D. Ezzard Miller, Leader of the Opposition; Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, MLA, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Mr. Anthony S. Eden, Elected Member for Savannah; Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West; Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, Elected Member for George Town Central; and Mr. V. Arden Mclean, Elected Member for East End — all independents.

The fact that, somehow, the Member for North Side is the Leader for the Opposition is their business. I think our Constitution says they can choose a leader. My business is to see to it that proper process and procedure is carried out in this honourable House and our rules, and the precedents and conventions we have followed over the years and which have worked for us, are not changed just to suit someone. Our Constitution does not say that they can form a shadow Cabinet, and all of my discussions on the Constitution told me that to have a shadow Cabinet, there has to be party machinery.

That they are independents and have chosen to band together does not mean that I have to change the standing of this honourable House. When the Leader of the Opposition comes from the largest majority party, they can choose themselves what is called

a "Shadow Cabinet"; that is their business, but they are not a party. Erskine May speaks to all this as the largest minority party that has certain rules and rights. How do they turn all the independents who say that they are not a party into a party machinery with the machinations they want? Our Constitution is specific.

I wonder, I must say, if I had taken the offer and been their Speaker, what would be the process because I would not have changed. I know the rules; I know the processes of this House.

The procedure of a Member wishing to speak is to catch my eye. Yesterday, I called the customary three times for Members to speak. After the third time, I was calling on the Mover for his right of reply; I saw the Member for George Town Central scrambling to stand. Another Member, I thought, rose as well. I considered that they are new Members here, and changed the customary three times call and allowed the House to continue the debate and called on the Member for George Town Central as my eye caught him first. Had he said to me, *I am not ready,* and sat down, I would have gone to the next Member — the Member who is now debating.

For him to get on the radio and say that I somehow forced him to speak and he wasn't ready is an insult to the Presiding Officer. Both Members are in contempt. I will decide on the next course of action, if any; but the Leader of the Opposition ought to know what contempt is, and that there are rules. You do not just go out and do [something] because you can do it on the radio. Members ought to know that.

If the Public Accounts Committee Members feel so strongly about government employment then they have avenues, as Members of this honourable House; but if it was intended for the Public Accounts Committee to go after every department of government or government statutory bodies who employ people, then perhaps all of us would be on it, because all of us would want to say something about government employment, but that is not the purpose of the Committee. That is not the role of the Committee, and there are rules.

I am not new here. I have given over 32 years of service. I know the game and the Member for the District of North Side is playing it well, probably right down to a Motion that they would bring, but they all catch the Speaker's eye.

My rulings yesterday are all in accordance with our Standing Orders, our Immunities, Powers and Privileges Law (IPPL), the precedents and centuries old conventions that we use and are still relevant and must be used when Members choose, for their own opposition purpose, to go outside rules that they must abide by, whether they like the Presiding Officer, or whether they like the Government, or not. This House is bound by those rules. If they are smart enough to get away with it, if they know parliamentary procedure that much and can slip by, well, perhaps then they will but I am not new, I am well-seasoned and I will ask this House: who is the final arbiter of the rules I carry out? I ask Members to abide by those rules.

I am the Presiding Officer, whether you like me or whether I chose not to be a part of any particular side in the past. I am the Presiding Officer. When you speak, you don't speak to Members; and we allow banter to-and-fro in the cut and thrust of debate — and some levity, but when you deliberately get up and refuse to look at the Speaker, address the Speaker… you are not addressing the Chamber as such, you are addressing the Presiding Officer. You are not addressing the television, the radio, or the Gallery as such. You are not addressing a particular Member and if you care to, and you know the rules, and you somehow get away with it well, that is the cut and thrust of debate that we accept, but when you deliberately do as I have seen because you don't like the Presiding Officer and perhaps because the presiding officer chose to be where he is at, not on their side, if I must say so, I am not a part of the Independents.

Honourable Members, what occurred on the radio this morning is a contempt of this Honourable House. I will decide and look at the rules accordingly.

The Member for East End.

Mr. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am trying to clarify something and get your ruling on this. In your statement, you said the Independent Members over here are not a Party...

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I am not allowing further excursions into the matters I have spoken to.

Madam Clerk.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: There are none.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: There are none.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READING

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017

[Continuation of debate on the Throne Speech and Budget Address, together with the Government's Strategic Policy Statement]

The Speaker: The Appropriation (Financial Years 2018 and 2019) Bill, 2017. Continuation of debate on the Throne Speech and Budget Address together with the Government's Policy Statement.

The Member for George Town South continuing; the Member has one hour and 20 minutes to her benefit.

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Elected Member for George Town South: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I continue with my contribution to the 2018-19 Budget.

An analysis of the data shows that approximately fifty per cent of our high school graduates remain in post-compulsory education or training one year after completing compulsory education, so we have three and a half years to make up the remaining 25 per cent; but Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am not entirely satisfied with students receiving only one year of additional post-secondary training. We need to ensure that the additional year or, indeed, all years spent in post-secondary education adequately provide necessary training and experience so as to allow our young people to be fully prepared and qualified to take up jobs in our Islands, some of which are held by guest workers on work permits, who are qualified and experienced.

Mr. Speaker, as a country, we cannot afford to allow our young people to be satisfied with the minimum, so we need to encourage them to take up full Certificate or Degree programmes, locally or overseas, that will allow them to take their place in the job market here or elsewhere and thus enable themselves and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the University College of the Cayman Islands, or UCCI, as our national Tertiary institution, contributes to realising the national vision for tertiary education in the Cayman Islands. While it delivers a number of academic programmes, UCCI also seeks to become influential in the development of TVET through its TVET Committee, and through a restructure and relaunch of its TVET programmes. This should further ensure that our students are presented with career choices that are based on their aptitude and interest and will ultimately lead to gainful, decent employment.

Mr. Speaker, we will be working diligently to achieve the target 75 per cent set by this Government, and in order to do so, we will be working closely with all stakeholders, including career guidance counsellors, to ensure that our students are presented with clear and appropriate employment pathways from high school to tertiary education and training.

Turning now to health care, I am pleased to see that the Premier has spoken of the much-needed mental health facility. Families whose loved ones will require the services offered at this facility are relieved that this care will be received at home in Cayman where family members are able to visit them and support them. It is intended that this facility will be built on government-owned land in East End, which is in close proximity to existing farms in the area. It is my hope that, where appropriate, the patients will be taught farming and other skills. This will not only be therapeutic for them, helping with their recovery but also provide them with useful skills upon their release.

I see the Premier has addressed the complexities of the health care system, Mr. Speaker; in doing so, I am sure he will appreciate any kind of input other Members of this honourable House can provide. I have thought long and hard about this area over the years. I have listened to the concerns expressed not just by members of the public, but also by our legislators. The spiralling cost of health care pre-occupies many minds. When I entered the private sector, some 35 plus years ago, the lifetime maximum an insurance company would spend on any one individual client was $1 million.

As far as I am aware, this figure is still the same today, even though the cost of health care coverage has increased significantly. Perhaps it may be time for the Government to enter into discussions with the insurance industry with a view to increasing their contribution to the indigent fund, increasing the maximum lifetime coverage as well as reducing the number of illnesses deemed to be pre-existing conditions which they do not cover. What I consider unfair, Mr. Speaker, is that many persons who have health insurance become indigent if they develop a major illness, despite having paid high premiums for many years.

Another area that needs attention, in my view, Mr. Speaker, is the role of the private sector when their staff members develop major illnesses. Many of them pass over their staff members to the government once they have exhausted their insurance benefits; I very much doubt that in any private sector company the number of persons in this situation is large. It must also be taken into account, Mr. Speaker, that quite a number of our private sector companies are quite prosperous. It would be gratifying if they allowed their moral conscience to guide them when dealing with this particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that this Government is as concerned as our residents are over the increase in crime in our community, and is committed to recruiting additional police officers whose focus would be on deterring and detecting crime as well as making their presence felt in their communities. I believe that a more holistic approach needs to be taken in regard to deterring crime. A closer look must be taken at social intervention. I note that it is the Government's intention to review those departments which deal with various forms of social work. In doing so, I hope we are going to look closely at the work of the National Drug Council, child prevention programmes, drug intervention programmes, community-developed intervention and parenting programmes. These programmes must be robust and effective if they are to make a difference.

The relevant departments may also need institutional strengthening if they are expected to carry out their duties effectively. They must also work in close collaboration with each other, and they will all have to work closely with education, where most issues affecting children present themselves first.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to address this House. I wish to thank my constituents of George Town South and others, for sharing their concerns with me. I am committed to doing my best to formulate solutions to the many issues articulated, and I will certainly call upon them and this honourable House to assist.

I also wish to thank the Honourable Premier, my Minister, the Honourable Julianna O'Connor Connolly, Cabinet Ministers, Councillors, and my Chief Officer and his team for their support. Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank the Honourable Finance Minister and his team within the Ministry of Finance for their excellent work and commitment in producing this two-year Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Austin O. Harris, Jr., Elected Member for Prospect: Mr. Speaker, it has just recently come to my attention that we only have nine Members present; one from the Opposition and as such we do not have a quorum.

The Speaker: Thank you, honourable Member for Prospect. I knew that Government Ministers were in a meeting. I would hope that other Members will come back in as soon as they can to form the quorum. I think we are quorate now.

Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Minister of Commerce Planning and Infrastructure: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make what is my very first contribution as a Minister in this Government of National Unity. It is certainly my great privilege and honour to address you and my fellow Members today, as I present my thoughts, views and ideas about the present and future, and the policies, programmes and projects of my Ministry and the entities within the Ministry of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, none of this would be possible without the confidence and support of the people of George Town, and in particular, George Town North and so, I will take just a brief moment to talk about some of the challenges that we are facing as a constituency in George Town North, and I am sure some of my other colleagues will identify with these.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues plaguing our constituency, and it is growing at an alarming rate, is the issue of abandoned cars and illegal or unlawful garages that are popping up on the roadsides, within residential areas and, in some instances, public lands. Not only are they an eye sore, but they also create an environmental hazard and, of course, it has become known that quite often, it is where persons will hide drugs, guns and other illegal paraphernalia. We are in desperate need of an update to our Public Health Laws to give the Department of Environmental Health the necessary enforcement authority to assist in dealing with this growing problem within our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that we are facing in our communities is the issue of loud music. Whether they are parties, or sometimes called fish-fries or just referred to as gatherings, the unfortunate truth is that, quite often, these loud music sessions go on throughout the night and it has really created a major issue for many of our residents, especially our senior residents who are having difficulties sleeping at night due to the loud music. Quite often, this is accompanied by the presence of gambling and other illegal activities. As you would have seen in the press quite recently, one of the newest trends is rooster fights; they are even importing those from overseas now.

I must pause here, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Commissioner of Police who spent a few hours with me on a Saturday, touring my constituency and seeing some of the challenges we have. As you know, my constituency of George Town North has quite a few areas of high density residential and many of the residents there face these issues on a daily basis, so I want to thank the Commissioner for taking time out to see this for himself. I also want to thank him for his efforts and his commitment to community policing; as the George Town North representative, I am very pleased that this budget displays this Government's commitment to fighting crime by financing 70-odd more police officers over the next two years and the equipment to enable them to carry out their duties, and I look forward to meeting our community officer.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the issue of theft and robbery. Quite recently we had a very brazen

armed robbery at The Wharf Restaurant which was highly publicised. We are making efforts within the constituency to clear out lands that sometimes harbour or assist criminals in avoiding being captured, allowing them to have time to lay low, as they say. We have identified a number of these areas in and around George Town and George Town North and we are working with the NRA and community groups to clean them up and keep the brushes low to remove what is almost a perfect hiding place for persons who are evading the police; planning or trying to escape after having committed these serious offences.

Mr. Speaker, another issue that my constituency faces, which is not unique to my constituency, and we all experienced it most recently, is flooding. I can say that much work has been done in the last four years in addressing this and, in particular, in my constituency we have seen quite a bit of success. We have also seen in some of the other constituencies where we have been able to manage the water quite quickly. I have been touring some of the areas outside of my constituency that are severely affected by the flooding, and we have identified some areas where we will make efforts to try and alleviate it the next time we have these sort of rains, but there is much more work to be done and as development continues, I can see that this issue will not go away but, in fact, perhaps, grow in nature.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight that we have plans to upgrade the West Bay Road. Plans to implement additional traffic calming measures, also to enhance the southern end of West Bay Road, which is the main tourism area on the Island, and we are also looking forward to the implementation of a pilot programme with LED lights, which should help brighten the area and make it safer for pedestrians. Of course, and I will touch on it a bit more, the George Town revitalisation will be very important for the constituents of George Town North and, in particular, the ability to redevelop our most urban areas within the capital. As I said, I will speak to that a bit later on in my presentation.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I am equally delighted that some of my cherished priorities are among those that the Government will work on to accomplish in these two budget years. These priorities include improving the quality of people's lives, building innovative infrastructure and new and improved motor ways for stress-free commute; promoting urban development, mainly through the George Town revitalisation project, affordable energy through implementing the National Energy Policy and the setting up of a small business development centre commonly referred to as a SBDC.

It was indeed a proud moment for me as a Minister, Mr. Speaker, to have been a part of the Throne Speech, Government Policy and Budget presentation last Friday, in which the stellar performance of the Government was outlined. It was made crystal clear how robust, vibrant and dynamic our economy is, and how we are poised for strong economic and social growth built on the foundation provided by the previous administration of which I was a proud member. I am thrilled, Mr. Speaker, for what the future holds for these beloved Islands we call home and our people but, especially, our younger generations.

I join all in this noble House, Mr. Speaker, and indeed all in the Cayman Islands, when we give fervent and heartfelt thanks to God for sparing us during this very active hurricane season. I share with a saddened heart our collective sympathy for the ravages visited upon so many of our brothers and sisters within the region. We in the Cayman Islands, ably led by our Leader, the Honourable Premier, have shared some of their pain and tried to show our solidarity, support and empathy in concrete terms, for some of those nations so badly hurt in the twin devastations visited by hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to continue my contribution with a hearty vote of gratitude to her Excellency the Governor for her final Throne Speech to this House. I fully endorse the Honourable Premier when he thanked her in his Budget Policy Statement. Governor Kilpatrick, who has graced these premises periodically over her extended tenure as the Cayman Islands Governor, has always displayed great enthusiasm and devotion to the people of these Islands. Her interactions with our people have always been warm and cordial, and she has always been very welcoming. In her address, the Governor reiterated that our Government of National Unity will continue the major projects begun by the last administration.

Mr. Speaker, in one way, I cannot believe that it was just over four years ago that I first entered these Halls as a public servant and that this is my second term in office. Time certainly has flown. Coming into public life with a strong private sector and corporate background, in the past four years I have come to appreciate the challenges the public service faces in the provision of vital services to its clients, its customers, who are the people of these Cayman Islands. My respect for the civil servants, who are hard-working and strive daily for the excellence that the Head of the Civil Service, the Honourable Deputy Governor, constantly demands of them, has grown. I am very happy to be associated and working with the civil service at this time, in their evolution and their path to greater efficiency; however, there is much to be done, and it is my intention to ensure that the requisite processes and procedures are put in place to ensure that going forward, quicker and more efficient service is received by the business community and, most importantly, the public at large.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the move to the two-year budget cycle. As the Honourable Finance Minister stated in his budget address, I, too, firmly believe this change will significantly improve the efficiency

and productivity of both the Legislative and the Executive Branches of our public service and look forward, along with the wider public, to getting more robust information on the actual performance of our public sector agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I fervently laud the financial discipline and custodial care that our previous administration ushered into Cayman's public life under the venerated past Finance Minister, the Honourable Marco Archer. This firm foundation is being taken forward and built upon by our present Finance Minister, the Honourable Roy McTaggart. As a member of this Government of National Unity, I am delighted that the Government's physical strategies to manage finances are governed by three guiding principles:

1. Generating substantial operating surpluses each year;
2. Levying no new taxes or fees on the public;
3. No new borrowing apart from refinancing a portion of a 2019 Bond that the Government is committed to from the past.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is of vital importance that I reiterate what the Honourable Finance Minister stated in his Budget address: that the last time the Cayman Islands Government introduced significant revenue measures was in the 2012/2013 Financial Year. It is truly phenomenal that for the last four budget cycles we have not sought to implement increased revenue measures; in fact, we have done the impossible and actually reduced the fees charged by government, whilst at the same time, ensuring that so many vital projects and initiatives have been taken forward. This is no small feat, and I am enormously proud to be a part of this remarkable Government.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the best results come from teamwork; in that regard, I have the distinct honour of working with a team of dedicated civil servants who comprise the staff of the Ministry of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure. I sought to visit every department under my Ministry to get a better understanding of what they did on a day-to-day basis and what challenges they encountered in carrying out those duties. It was an eye-opening experience, as to the vast complexity and diversity of the services they deliver on a daily basis. Those visits equipped me and my Ministry with a deeper understanding so that we were able to submit a meaningful, effective, and well-balanced budget submission, which I will now highlight for the Members; however, before I do so, permit me to outline some of my deepest convictions and what I truly expect of every one of us who serve the public through this Ministry, beginning with myself.

As Members are aware and may have often heard, it is only when we are willing to lead by example and through enlightened and convincing action, that we can expect reciprocity with dedication and eager participation from the people who put into action our policies; that is to say the civil servants. Coming from a background of being a small business entrepreneur, I have personally expressed disappointment and dismay in the past when government red tape reared its ugly head and dampened, if not stymied, the plans and aspirations of our entrepreneurs.

We need to make it easier to do business without being stifled by red tape, Mr. Speaker. We cannot expect to improve the quality of our people's lives when we do not correspondingly improve how they can undertake their business more easily and, therefore, more efficiently. However, we also require and expect the private sector to do their part in the spirit of partnership and embrace change and new practices.

I am extremely happy to state that our Government National Unity has put in place exciting and far-reaching strategic broad outcomes we are committed to, and are taken forward in this overall term in conjunction with deadlines for completion within the coming two years of this budget cycle.

This ethos gels happily with one of my prime priorities, Mr. Speaker, which is to reduce red tape for our overall business community, but especially for the entrepreneurs overseeing micro, small and medium-sized businesses. Since I am one of these people, I can directly relate to the issues and demands facing these segments, and I am best placed to ensure that the appropriate changes occur. These small businesses are the backbone of the Cayman Islands economy and provide the majority of employment opportunities for Caymanians. Let us never forget that it is with their growth that our overall national economic progress is linked.

A thriving entrepreneurial community moves the Government away from having to take a predominantly welfare-style approach, builds individual and national wealth and, additionally, provides Caymanians with a real sense of worth. In this regard, I would reiterate previously stated views that it is essential that all Caymanians fully benefit from the economic success story that is the modern Cayman Islands. I remain committed to ensuring that this trickle-down effect of wealth occurs within these Islands.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that our commitment to the micro, small and medium business segments has resulted in a growing and thriving economy with renewed investor confidence and continuing expansions of small and large businesses. The immediate benefits have been more economic opportunities and more jobs for Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, over the past four years, the previously Progressive-led Government helped Caymanians start more than 1,000 new businesses. The strategic broad outcomes put in place by the Government of National Unity include the following priorities within my Ministry and those actions which we are committed to. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive

list, Mr. Speaker, please permit me to list some of these proposed actions and initiatives:

1. Continue with and accelerate the implementation of the George Town revitalisation project;
2. Develop and implement sector-based plans that support the diversification of the Caymanian economy;
3. Develop and implement area-based plans that support economic grow across Grand Cayman and the Sister Islands;
4. Improve and advance the support available to entrepreneurs wanting to start and grow small businesses;
5. Remove unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy from the small business sector; and
6. Complete a new National Development Plan.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry and Departments have commenced and will continue to develop significant initiatives in all the above-referenced areas in order to meet the strategic goals set out by the Government. Let me start with one outcome that is very close to my heart — the micro, small, and medium business sector.

I am happy to state that one prime initiative will be the setting up of a Small Business Development Centre, better known as the SBDC. As Members will note, we have allocated funds in this two-year-budget to set up such a centre, intended to operate as a one-stop shop to promote and cater to the interest of micro, small and medium business sectors. We are currently working closely with the Cayman Islands Small Business Association and the Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the centre will be tailored-made to meet the needs of our entrepreneurs. The Centre will utilise and benefit from local and international best practice standards. Members will recall that my Ministry hosted a two-day workshop in mid-September this year, where a highly regarded expert in the field from the United States helped us understand and engage better in taking this idea forward.

It is intended that the services provided by this Centre will include professional business counselling, technical training, and assistance with gaining access to start-up funding. For adequate funding to be available, we need both the public and private sector on board, and we will work with the local banking institutions to ensure that the appropriate support is forthcoming.

As stated in the National Unity Government's Policy Paper, it is the intention that the Government, via my Ministry and the Department of Commerce and Investment, will reduce the level of regulations that hinder small businesses. Mr. Speaker, we also plan to introduce a tiered fee structure to ensure equitable payments across business entities based on their size.

Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that we have a finger constantly on the business pulse, and are thus more receptive to their needs, my Ministry will hold regular meetings with the Cayman Islands Small Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce. This will enable us to see how we can provide extra support, including relevant advice and training to new entrepreneurs. Whilst Government will lead from the front on this vitally important initiative, I will continue to ask for the support of the Chamber and the Cayman Islands Small Business Association along with the private sector and, of course, the community at large.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent some time explaining this new centre, as I believe it is a long time coming, and we as a Government are committed to making the smaller entrepreneurs in our community function in an easier climate and gain prosperity. In this regard, the Department of Commerce and Investment has proposals in train to significantly amend and make easier the application process for both Trade and Business Licenses and Liquor Licenses. The Ministry and DCI recently completed a full review of the Trade and Business application process and the agreed amendments, some of which will require legislative changes, and which will reduce the administrative burden placed on the applicants by 47 per cent for sole traders and a whopping 66 per cent for companies. These are very significant and long overdue revisions, and are but one early example of the pace of change I wish to see.

Mr. Speaker, it is intended that both the Liquor Licensing Law and the Trade and Business Licensing Law will be amended in 2018/2019, to bring full effect to the changes envisaged. In conjunction with my e-Government and Computer Services Department, this initiative will be supported by the development of a new online application system for use by the Department of Commerce and Investment and its applicants. This new system will be introduced within the first quarter of 2018. The launch of the Cayman Business Portal will provide the ability for the Department of Commerce and Investment and the General Registry to exchange information in order to advance the effective delivery of their services to individuals and businesses. This inter-ability to cross over information will provide immediate benefits to our clients to support applications for business licenses.

Mr. Speaker, with more than 45 per cent of all businesses registered as sole traders, the fee discounts programme for a small business continues to be very successful. Over 4,000 small and micro businesses have already taken advantage of this programme. The benefits far outweigh the circa $2 million the Government has and will continue to commit to the initiative.

Mr. Speaker, Members are also aware that the Cayman Islands are gearing up for the fourth

round of evaluations by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in December of this year. This is a regulatory audit to ensure compliance with international standards governing financial services, terrorist financing, and money laundering.

Members are also aware that in March this year, Cabinet designated the Department of Commerce and Infrastructure as the Cayman Islands regulator for local designation, non-financial business and professions. Whilst the assessment is wide-ranging across many areas of the Cayman economy, from a Department of Commerce and Investment perspective, data about the realtors and dealers in precious metals and stones will be presented to highlight compliance. As part of this strategy, the Department of Commerce and Investment, early in October, held a highly informative workshop for Members of the Real Estate and Jewellery profession. In turn, this was to prepare them to comply and meet the requirements of an ongoing National Risk Assessment Survey, during which time the Department of Commerce and Investment will be contacting all local realtors and dealers in precious metals and stones. This will assist persons in the private sector to participate in data provisions for the FATF assessment.

The Department of Commerce and Investment, therefore, Mr. Speaker, has a critical role to play in diminishing the risk of terrorist financing and money laundering to our jurisdiction and in maintaining a supervisory framework for real estate agents and dealers in precious metals and stones, consistent with the FATF Standards for Anti-Money Laundering and Counterfeiting Financing of Terrorism. Mr. Speaker, I have again elaborated on this initiative in some detail, since it is such an important one in ensuring that the Cayman Islands remain proactively on top of an international regulatory assessment.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the Department of Vehicle and Driver's Licences (DVDL). As Members know, the Department is well into implementation of the new vehicle registration system and, despite some initial teething troubles, it is now firmly on track. The new and revised plates continue to be supplied and are a vital component of the new system, which will allow for better registration and monitoring of vehicles for revenue-gathering purposes. It will also provide extremely valuable assistance to the law enforcement agencies. The additional phases of the new system are provided for in the new budget and, once it is fully in force, the system will be one of great benefit to our community.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very happy to announce that in short order, the department will reintroduce and make available the always popular personalised licence plates. The special edition licence plates will include new and unique Cayman Islands features of the Cayman Islands, including the West Indian Whistling Duck, Stingray, and Coral Reef designs.

Mr. Speaker, the department continues to improve road safety education through the Drivers' Education Programme in the two Government High Schools. As you are very much aware, the West Bay Licensing Office has outgrown its office space and is facing increasing customer service demands; hence, the department is in the process of identifying a suitable new location. Similarly, the department will be improving customer service at the main Crew Road location by hiring two new licensing officers by the end of this year, adding a further two licensing officers in 2018, and two more in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, as the numbers of vehicles continue to increase at a phenomenal rate, we must ensure that the necessary resources are put in place to guarantee continued great customer service. While civil servants do a fine job providing the service expected of them by the general public, it is important to me that we, in Government, ensure that the Departments are given the appropriate tools for the civil servants to provide the first-class service expected of them.

I note the Deputy Governor recently introduced a five-year strategic plan towards creating a world-class civil service. I applaud that initiative and its ideals; however, we as a Government, and all Members, must do our bit in ensuring that the appropriate resources are in place to enable this goal to be achieved. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the Government and I are committed to funding a comprehensive redevelopment of the Department of Vehicle and Equipment Services (DVES) and its North Sound Road compound. Funds have been placed in the budget for this project, which is anticipated to commence in the first quarter of 2018. The redevelopment aims to create a safer working environment whereby the staff, particularly mechanics, can work under a proper covered facility; a far cry from the working bays that are currently insufficiently covered and do not protect the staff from the elements.

Mr. Speaker, I visited the DVES offices and it is a crying shame the conditions in which those staff members have to work. The new facility will also provide much needed additional work area as well as expanded administration space. With the new changes completed, we expect improved service delivery; and, as I outlined, to create better working conditions for all current and future staff, including administrative, as well as incorporating important technological advances in the industry. Additionally, on the fuel supply and management side, the department is in the process of revising its current fuel supply contract for the next five years and will be replacing fuel storage and supply hardware such as tanks and pumps, something that has been long overdue. Action in this area will also commence within the first quarter of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, with an eye to continuing to modernise and standardise the Government's vehicle fleet, and in keeping with Government's commitment

to the National Energy Policy, it has been agreed that 10 per cent of the Cayman Islands Government fleet will be electric within five years. Work in this regard will continue over the next two years, and this will include the installation of the requisite vehicle charging stations.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the Facilities Management Department, which will take on this important task along with the Department of Vehicle and Equipment Services. The Department, while continuing to effectively manage the Government Administration Building, will also work to ensure continued full occupancy of the Government Administration Building; and improve the building's sustainability and maintenance procedures, including maintaining its LEED or Lead in Energy and Environmental Design, Silver Certification.

The Department will also ensure proper maintenance and upgrade programmes are undertaken in the Cayman Islands Environmental Centre that houses the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) and the District Community Centres and Town Halls. Facilities Management Department is committed, and will continue the maintenance schedule at the District Centres to address needs as it relates to air conditioning, electrical, and plumbing repairs.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the much-needed upgrades to the East End Community Centre's kitchen, which we have heard pleas for over and over again, will commence in short order. This kitchen presently provides meals to over 50 elderly persons in the community three days per week.

Moving next to the Department of Planning: Government has an excellent track record of attracting new businesses and, Mr. Speaker, this is happening at an unprecedented rate. As the Honourable Premier mentioned in his statement, and I quote: "Promoting business growth and development is key to Cayman's prosperity." He went on to state that the sharp increase in planning approvals from 760 projects, valued at an estimated $342 million from January to October of 2016, to the now 1,013 projects at a value of $688 million for the same period in 2017 demonstrates increased investor confidence in the economic performance and the fiscal stability of the Cayman Islands. However, such new development brings with it a significant challenge to the infrastructure and, especially, to the demands made on the Department. On the one hand, investors want a swift and easy bureaucratic approval process, while on the other hand, the Planning Department needs to be satisfied that new development meets the required standards.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is not deaf to the demands of the private and public sectors in this regard, and steps are being taken to ensure a simpler, quicker, and more user-friendly application process is put in place. Government is aware of some of the concerns, and we are taking measures to deal with them during this budget period. Mr. Speaker, some of the actions the Planning Department will seek to take include:

1. Fully implementing the Builder's Law and Regulations to strengthen and develop the building industry;
2. Commence a process to update the building code and related codes to ensure that the built environment remains safe and resilient to both natural and human-made disasters;
3. Protect the economic welfare of these Islands by ensuring the built environment is safe and resilient;
4. Drive efficiency gains and increase customer satisfaction by using the e-Government solutions and platforms, notably through the online planning system (OPS), to increase a level of workflow management and the frequency and scope of communication with its clients;
5. Streamline and strengthen the development of the regulatory process through the introduction of professional registration legislation for key service providers — notably architects and engineers.

Mr. Speaker, the Department, in conjunction with the Central Planning Authority, will also commence and complete a long overdue review of the 1997 Development Plan and its associated legislation, to ensure that the planning system remains fit for purpose. As I mentioned, clearly the review of the 20-year old Development Plan is long overdue, and I have given it priority. The Islands-wide review will include a full public consultation to ensure that we get a plan that works for all within the Cayman Islands and will be completed within the next 15 months.

Mr. Speaker, Members will know from the previous budget that the Department of Planning has been highly successful in the launching of its Online Planning System. The first phase of the Online Planning System was launched during the previous administration. They have now launched the second phase in the online submissions, which covers both a project application relating to planning permissions and permit applications in relation to the construction process. Throughout each procedure, applicants and agents are now provided with automatic email updates of reviews and inspections.

Mr. Speaker, for the general public who is watching and listening, and for Members of the House, what it means in real terms: As I visited, I saw the demonstration between a review of plans being done manually, and one on the online system, and the difference is one person sitting with one computer, one screen, and simply having the online submissions overlaying each other and identifying the changes; and as the planner makes notes, those notes automatically go to the client. That is the new online planning system. The old system, which I saw in action as

well, is a person sitting with two computer screens, with one set of plans on the computer screen, one email file open on the other screen and three physical plans laid out on the floor around him; and that is the difference, Mr. Speaker, in how this online planning system will reduce the time and increase the efficiency of the department.

Planning has also established a Public Education Program, and is working hard to make its process more accessible via radio, TV, trade shows, and providing timely responses to its dedicated question and answer email address info@planning.gov.ky. Additional improvements in customer service can be expected in 2018, both online and as a launched internal education plan to cross-train staff to ensure consistency within the Department.

Mr. Speaker, additional improvements will occur in phases in 2018, to further enhance the customers' experience. These improvements will be undertaken in tandem with the work underway by my e-Government and Computer Services Departments, the proposed work of which I will now highlight.

Mr. Speaker, IT Services are an important and essential tool for any large business entity. It is therefore vital to have a properly functioning and well-resourced entity that is also staffed with properly skilled personnel. However, due to lack of past funding, significant gaps in skills and resources have been identified within the Computer Services Department, and it is imperative that such deficiencies are addressed at the earliest opportunity. In this regard, Members will note that money is allocated in a new budget to replace essential hardware, effect much-needed infrastructure improvements, and provide additional human resources. A review of the Computer Services Departments' operations will also be completed to ensure that the department is only tasked with those requirements it is able to properly meet. A key component of this review would be to identify those opportunities for the Department to actively pursue and deepen public-private partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, the department will continue to facilitate continued economic growth by meeting its expanding business requirements within the Government. This includes supporting and maintaining 41 in-house applications, 6 third-party applications, 71 websites and core revenue earning systems that bring in revenue of some $650 million yearly. Equally as importantly, the Computer Services Department will continue to partner with the National Workforce Development Agency (NWDA) on a clearing-house system to connect Caymanians with local businesses, thereby increasing job placements and identifying opportunities to meet the Government's objective of achieving full Caymanian employment.

The department will continue to improve the reliability and security of Government's information network, which you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, is vital to ensuring a stable and effective Government.

Mr. Speaker, cyber security is a matter of particular concern, as was highlighted very recently by a local cyber-attack. The Government needs to better protect itself from these attacks since the confidentiality of data gathered is vital to the Government's business. This area is therefore given top priority and proper funding put in place to address our needs.

Mr. Speaker, another initiative very close to my heart is e-Government, due in no small part, as it ties in directly to reducing red tape, making it easier to do business and increasing revenue for Government. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that I have been given responsibility for the E-Government Department. There are many projects already in motion, and more are planned for the future across all of Government. A very good example is a recently introduced, highly successful online application for the service of Police Clearance Certificates.

Mr. Speaker, for its part, the e-Government Department will introduce many more such new online services and revamp existing applications and portals, so as to enhance overall customer service. For example, the public can look forward to a new customer online registration service which will involve the introduction of an electronic I.D. card for easier access to all government online-business services, and will be a one-stop shop for all government agencies. Participation will be totally on a voluntary basis, but I am sure that people will quickly see the great benefits offered, and will wish to sign up. In short, Mr. Speaker, the departments will be linked with one another, which will reduce the onerous burden on the customer of repeatedly having to fill in forms to provide the same information already given to another government entity.

Mr. Speaker, I will now move on to the Public Works Department (PWD). PWD will continue to provide high-quality maintenance support for over one million square feet of public facilities, and over 100 public beaches, parks, cemeteries and public open spaces, as well as to plan, design and construct new public facilities and execute necessary expansions and refurbishments to existing public facilities.

The Public Works Department will also continue its focus on improving customer service but, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, you and the Members would be aware of the Major Projects Office established within the public works department to manage the Government's major capital projects. This office has been a great success and was even lauded by the Office of the Auditor General in a recent report. The Major Projects Office is presently overseeing the following projects:

- The Cruise Terminal project;
- The Airport's development project;
- The Integrated Solid Waste Management project;
- The long-term residential Mental Health Facility;

- The completion of the John Gray High School;
- The new RCIPS Headquarters; and
- The new Courts facility

Mr. Speaker, I am particularly excited and plan to champion another project spearheaded by the Public Works Department; that being the Apprenticeship Programme. This programme perfectly emphasises the Government's commitment to, and support of, technical and vocational training, as was outlined by the Honourable Premier in his Budget Policy Statement.

Mr. Speaker, you as the Father of the House, and all Members here, can recall that we have talked for many years about setting up a proper technical and vocational facility to enable successive generations of our youngsters to get into the lucrative trades. However, despite good intentions, this work has languished over the years. It is in this light that the training provided by the Public Works Department under the Apprenticeship Programme takes on a new meaning.

My Ministry and the Public Works Department are committed to meeting the needs of young Caymanians looking into careers in the trades, notably, the highly lucrative construction trade. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, the Public Works Department has stepped up to the plate and has begun offering apprenticeship training itself. Public Works Department will now expand its very successful construction vocational training pilot programme.

In July this year, after a one-year apprenticeship, five young Caymanians, all from the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC), completed the Pilot programme when they were assessed at the Public Works Department for the internationally recognised City and Guilds Certification out of London and achieved either foundation or proficiency–level certification. This is a significant milestone, as it is the first time that this level of construction vocational certification has been delivered in the Cayman Islands.

The Public Works Department has taken on this responsibility to promote the careers of young Caymanians, not only through providing mentorship during internships of students from the high schools, but also, additionally, through proper technical training, which can lead to an internationally recognised certification. It has now been agreed that the programme should be expanded through the provision of additional and new facilities and specialised training personnel.

The 2017/2018 Apprenticeship programme that began last month offers both levels 1 and 2 City and Guilds training. Mr. Speaker, 15 apprentices are enrolled in the programme. Three of the level 2 apprentices are graduates of the Pilot programme. I am happy to say that the programme will expand again in September 2018 when it is anticipated that some 30 apprentices will be enrolled in Levels 1, 2, and 3 programmes. The intention is to make the Public Works Department an accredited training centre for such internationally recognised construction vocational training within the next 1 to 2 years.

The added benefits are that we will be training young Caymanians not only in the government's employ but for employment within the private sector as well. I heartily endorse the Government's plan to develop a coherent strategy to better use such programmes, including working with the private sector to identify their needs for trained employees, and improve employment opportunities for our people.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier mentioned previously, this newly expanded programme is positive proof of this Government's commitment to training and education, and ties in to the further general commitment of ensuring that at least 75 per cent of our high school graduates seek further education, either academic, technical, or vocational by the end of our administration. A noble goal, indeed, and one I am sure all Members will agree with and support.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I will now move to another very important agency that I have responsibility for, namely, the National Roads Authority (NRA), and the provision of road infrastructure. As you are aware, infrastructure needs to keep pace with development not only to retain the current level, but also to attract new and revenue-generating development activity.

Our Government is fully committed to investing in the road infrastructure but, equally important, we have got to continue to maintain some $802 million in assets currently under the management of the National Roads Authority. Accordingly, Members will be pleased to learn that the final phase of the ongoing Linford Pierson Highway will be completed in 2018. Government has also given its support to a significant number of other major ongoing projects. For example, Members have seen significant improvements to the Esterley Tibbetts Highway.

Mr. Speaker, before I outline some of the other road projects that the NRA will be working on during the two-year budget term, I have to emphasise that revisions to the Roads Law; the NRA Law and Regulations; as well as revisions to the Explosives Law and its Regulations, will be brought to the House during this two-year term. As indicated, I will now list some of the planned road works, as funded from the operational road fund budgets in the upcoming years:

- The Grand Harbour roundabout;
- The Silver Oaks roundabout circulating path;
- The Silver Oaks roundabout additional circulating lane;
- The Walkers Road three-lane improvement scheme;
- Shamrock Road west-bound;
- The Butterfield roundabout;
- The CNB roundabout;

- The Eclipse Drive (which will be done with public/private financing initiatives);
- The Esterley Tibbetts Highway, (from Lime Tree Bay remediation at the Water Plant)
- The Seaview Road continuing;
- The West Bay Road Fire Station to Marsh Road;
- The Bodden Town Road (continuing);
- The North Sound Road from Shedden Road signal to the Butterfield roundabout;
- Major intersection upgrades, eastern on West Bay Road, Smith Road and BT Way.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, the following new roads will be funded from the Government's Capital Development Budget.

- Selkirk Drive reconstruction, curb and gutter cross sections, phases 1 and 2;
- The Crew Road widening from Nevis Close to Agnes Way;
- The Shedden Road widening from NAPA to the Elizabethan Square;
- The North Church Street improvement – Mary Street to Eastern Avenue
- The Linford Pierson Highway widening-phase 2;
- The Eastern Avenue to Elgin Avenue new connector road;
- Stadium Drive to Walker's Road;
- The road widening to three lanes from Silver Oaks to Shamrock Road
- The West Bay Road south rejuvenation, as mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, last but by no means least, I turn to some ministerial-level projects. As I mentioned when I first began my contribution, my Ministry has placed special emphasis on urban redevelopment, a subject very dear to my heart, and I have prioritised the George Town revitalisation plans. Mr. Speaker, you are aware that the previous Government's NGOs, business groups and the general public have all talked about the need to revitalise George Town and re-energise a flagging urban landscape once the offices and business centres stop humming after five o'clock in the evening.

Mr. Speaker, urban redevelopment is also a vital tool in the fight against crime and urban decay. The Progressive Government was well aware of the need for such revitalisation, and had been committed to this cause over the last three to four years. Mr. Speaker, the Government of National Unity and my Ministry will continue to take this commitment forward. We have prioritised improving and expanding the road network within George Town to better serve the public and to help George Town's revitalisation.

Greater emphasis will be placed during the next two years on the development of Central George Town's business district. We will review and intend to implement fully the George Town revitalisation plan, and one way of accomplishing this will be the establishment of the Urban Redevelopment Commission.

Mr. Speaker, it is envisioned that the success of this initiative is dependent on a private-public sector partnership. The plan is for the Ministry to recruit an individual who will be responsible for the implementation of the George Town business revitalisation plan. As the plan is to engage our private partners, it is proposed that the project manager will engage the private sector partners and act as a liaison to government agencies to facilitate the implementation of the project. The plan itself envisages more effective public/private sector partnership, which will assist us in accomplishing this much-needed revitalisation project.

Mr. Speaker, as mentioned earlier, my Ministry will also be striding forward with the implementation of the recently announced National Energy Policy, to which the Government remains fully committed. Government and my Ministry support renewable energy initiatives for the Cayman Islands. Assistance will also be provided via the newly appointed National Energy Council. Mr. Speaker, we also need to ensure fuel supply security for the Cayman Islands. Government will continue to explore areas where we can best support specific targets by provisions of specific subsidies and via other means.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry will be examining the possibilities of the recreation of a National Investment Bureau, with a view to encourage overseas and local investments in the Cayman Islands. I envisage this investment bureau as being a one-stop shop for investors wishing to do business with, or in, the Cayman Islands. Most countries around the world have such an entity and if the Cayman Islands are to compete in the World Market for these very valuable investor dollars, then we must not only be proactive and market ourselves, but we must also look to put in place the appropriate centralised office to meet the needs of these potential investors.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to touch upon one other plan that the Honourable Premier mentioned in his Budget Policy Statement: that of beach access. I whole-heartedly endorse the further strengthening of the public's rights to beach access through policies, procedures and regulations that guide operations of the Public Lands Commission, which was established in June of this year. I welcome that the Commission will ensure that beach access by the public is safeguarded and maintained on all three of our Islands. Our beaches and coastlines are a national asset, and as such, should remain a viable endowment and cherished legacy for our future generations to enjoy; there can be no compromising on this. Our land, sea, and sand should remain our collective national legacies for our present and future generations to enjoy in perpetuity.

Mr. Speaker, I also join the Honourable Premier when he commends the Department of Tourism

and the Cayman Islands private sector tourism partners for remaining unified, innovative and consistent in their efforts to promote the Cayman Islands as a destination of choice; and I commend the Government for placing adequate funds in this budget to ensure our tourism industry thrives. This is certainly money well spent, as the return to our people in jobs and livelihoods far outweighs what we put in.

I also welcome the more aggressive approach that will be taken to eradicate the invasive green iguanas and the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes.

Mr. Speaker, I would certainly be remiss if I did not endorse the proposed Cayman Honours Scheme. Our people are our greatest asset and we ought to honour those who made significant contributions to the development of this nation. It is also with a glad heart that I endorse the increase to poor relief and pensioners who receive less than $750 monthly in payments; we need to look after our own and ensure that all Caymanians live outside of poverty and with dignity.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it is a truism to say that this is truly a people's budget; one that is taking care of so many aspects of our people's needs. Mr. Speaker, much serious thinking has gone into this budget, which includes a number of historic firsts.

Let us give thanks to the God Lord for sparing us and ask him to give us fortitude, compassion, and gratitude for the things that we have almost taken for granted in these Islands we call home. Let us also work together as the mature representatives our people wanted us to be when they sent us to serve them in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the support for my submissions to this budget from all honourable Members of this House. I thank you, and may God bless you and these Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

[Applause]

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

The Member for East End.

Honourable Member, we can take the lunch break now or we can do another 10 or 20 minutes.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am okay with where we want to go but if we are going to start, I need the... oh!

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: We will continue for another 10 minutes.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It appears I have been promoted or demoted, whichever way one looks at it.

Mr. Speaker, in a few days, that being November the 15th, it will be 17 years that I have served representing the people of East End.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, the Premier said the 8th. We were elected on the 8th but we were sworn in on the 15th. We good.

Mr. Speaker, when I came here as a freshman I recognised, like all freshmen, that I had much to learn. I soon learnt there were two things that were pivotal in my success as a legislator: one was that there were written rules; the second was that there were unwritten conventions that needed to be taught; I needed to learn from other Members. The rules, albeit rather old, were laid out in the Standing Orders so it fell to my responsibility to read and understand those Standing Orders. Conventions were to be given to me through Members who had served here for a longer period of time.

Mr. Speaker, I had the best teachers anyone could ask for, and permit me to tell this country who they were. Those teachers were the late Captain Mabry Kirkconnell, the late Edna Moyle, Roy Bodden, Gilbert Mclean, the Honourable Kurt Tibbetts, the Honourable Anthony Eden, the Honourable Linford Pierson, Frank McField, the Honourable Julianna O'Connor and your good-self. I could not have asked for a better set of teachers. I now recognise that the same role of passing on conventions was passed to me.

I am grateful to the people of East End who gave me this opportunity, but I am also grateful to those current and past Members who gave me a glimpse and taught me about this thing called Governance and Legislature. I also understood that I had a part to play in learning the rules, so I put my back to it and every opportunity I got I travelled to other countries within the Commonwealth to understand how this new career that had been entrusted to me had to go. I started reading everything I could find. I spent thousands of dollars to purchase books, so much so that I recently brought some for my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town West — seven or eight of them.

Mr. Speaker, there are many stories of critique by those Members who taught me that the Premier and I can recall. One in particular was when the Honourable Linford Pierson stood on the Floor of these hallowed Halls and stopped the Premier and I from reading our speeches. He did it firmly but respectfully. In that first year, I recall the Premier and I staying up until four o'clock in the morning preparing speeches for that day. The Premier, more so than I, would come in with three-inch binders filled with them, and we would read and read. The Honourable Linford

Pierson got up one day and quite gently, but firmly, brought our attention to 32(4), but they had given us sufficient latitude by that time to get an understanding of what our responsibilities were.

I recall also that we were taught by those Statesmen and Stateswomen that we had to obey the rules. I recall that one of my most embarrassing days in this House was when the Honourable Julianna O'Connor-Connolly, the Speaker, summoned me to her chambers and she didn't say very much; she just said, *Stop it!* Of course, cutie Arden McLean, *Madam Speaker, what did I do now? You know what you did* — and that was the end of the conversation.

Mr. Speaker, many days, in the thrust of this debate, when the Premier and I were fighting back to back against all others, the Speaker, the Honourable Julianna O'Connor-Connolly would look over her glasses and I knew I had trimmed my sail too close to the wind and what was next, so I had to tic-a-tac and find another wind source.

I recall Captain Mabry (bless his soul), when I was debating a Motion or a Bill on the live-aboard boats in the canals, and I believe he mistook sewage for something else and he suspended the proceedings. He made the late Cline Glidden (bless his soul), who was a friend of all of us, summon me to his Chamber, and he said to me that he and I had spent five years on the Planning Board and he had never heard me use such language and he was not going to allow me to do it. I understood then that he had mistaken what I had said and I explained it to him, but the key was the lessons that were taught and learnt in the Speaker's Chamber.

It was recognised, agreed, understood that we were all grown men and women, who all had a responsibility to learn the rules. Rolston Anglin, Cline Glidden, the Member for West Bay Central, Lyndon Martin, we were all new and were termed by the then Governor as being "young Turks", but we were enthusiastic and were fighting for a cause. In that first year, many days I felt the Honourable Julianna O'Connor-Connolly pull my coat sleeve and say, *Sit down.* Many a day she would do that to me and I thank her for it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the conventions I learnt here was that during the Throne Speech and Budget Debate, which was always joined, and we have had them come at so many different times — May, August, November, December... We understood it was the only time in the year that you could say your ABCs forward, backward, and sideways. Absolute latitude was given because that is when Members could respectfully say everything and anything about the governance of their country and in advocacy of their people. Those were the days when the Premier and I; Rolston, Cline and Lyndon stood on the Floor of this honourable House and never gave in because we believed in a cause, and we fought therefore.

Mr. Speaker, that is also the story I have learnt from my travels. Throne Speech is a pivotal part of the governance of one's country and it is the reason we came here — to participate for or against the manner in which our country is governed as representatives on behalf of our people. I trust that it may long survive in the "thrust" of these politics.

I have said many times that on the 15th day of November 2000, I walked through that door with my family to be sworn in here, and I cannot recall a steeple being above the door. What I do recall was when I was lined up behind here, waiting to be the next, and slipping from chair to chair, I leant my head back against that slate that came from Scotland and it was cold because I had cut my hair very low and I looked towards the heavens and said, *God, I hope it is not this cold in here*.

I am here to tell my fellow colleagues and this country that there were times when the water was boiling, and times when there was ice on this floor; but it has been the most enjoyable journey I ever had, and I hope for these new ones that the same happens to you. This is the place where many lessons are learnt; it is the place where your life will change forever.

The Premier and I came in here together. We have been on different sides and have governed this country together, but we have never lost respect for each other. We have fought back to back, we have fought with sabre-rattling, but we have *never, ever* lost respect for each other and today I know that if he has to defend me with his life because of right, he is going to do it, and he knows the same about me. Despite what others may think about that rivalry, his children are off-bounds and I expect mine to be the same.

That is what this means. We are, first in the Constitution, Caymanians. The Premier hopes that he will read my obituary—.

[Laughter]

Mr. Arden McLean: Long may he live, but that he will not do.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I think we are ready for the lunch break.

Mr. Arden McLean: That is fine.

The Speaker: The House will suspend until 2:15 p.m.

Proceedings suspended at 12:56 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:53 pm

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017

[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Proceedings are resumed.

The Member for East End continuing. I think the Member had about one hour and 40 minutes left.

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

Mr. Speaker, when we took the luncheon break, I was about to say one other thing before I go into my real contribution to the Budget, and it was that within days of entering here, which was in November 2000, I joined the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Branch as a life member.

At the time, your good self was the Vice Chair of the region, I think, and within six months the conference was being held in St. Kitts, and Mr. Martin and I were chosen to go to that conference and you as Vice Chair, appointed me as the representative for the country (for the Branch that is), thus my baptism into what, I should say, is one of the best things any Member could get into is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, so I would encourage all Members to pay close attention to it and get involved in it. It cannot do you any wrong. You played a part in giving me my baptism too. Sometimes you submerged me for too long, but I have always been like the Phoenix — I rise from the ashes.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to turn to some of the subjects in this Budget that may very well be viewed as a "Houdini" budget, because all the Government speeches thus far in defence of this budget sound good. Anyone can read a prepared speech when they have a theme, and that is what is expected. The Government is going to defend their budget; it is up to us to see the areas where there are concerns and that the people are not necessarily benefiting from, and there are many areas in the budget that we are concerned about. I know the Minister of Education is anxious to hear what I have to say about education, so I am going to oblige her and start with it.

Mr. Speaker, I have always been very close to the East End School; long before I was elected, even. There was a point when one Minister stood on the Floor of this House and banned me from that school. I was there the next morning, so his instructions to ban me did not work very well... Well, maybe it worked for less than 24 hours. There was another time, when the people of East End got so aggravated with what was going on; the student body and the faculty, arriving there that morning found all the gates locked with chains and padlocks.

Mr. Speaker, I have always viewed myself as having a particular responsibility of representation to the people of East End, but to the country in general; thus, my proposal to the now Opposition to start doing some visits — and I want to talk about that a little later on; because in East End, Mr. Speaker, every time there was a crisis we resolved it but then, there was another crisis and we resolved that, and it was isolated to the East End Primary School, with little or no knowledge of what was going on throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, much of what I am saying does not fall squarely on the shoulders of any Education Minister, and I am not blaming them, because they come to this honourable House — every one of them religiously — and answer the questions that we ask based on the information that is available to them. Thus, it is time, I thought, that we should find out what is actually going on across our public education system; especially seeing that for almost everybody in here it is their Alma Mater and we have spoken so ill of education for so long.

Mr. Speaker, I know the previous Minister brought the Education Law. In there, they have a Council which has a little broader authority and responsibilities than was with the Education Council before. It is my understanding, through the papers, that Daniel Scott from Ernest and Young is the first Chair. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have known Dan Scott all my life and I can promise this honourable House and this country that he is not going to take it on unless he gets results. However, I should say to the Minister that both of them have much work to do.

I believe I can speak for the Premier as a Minister of Education. His heart was in the right place, but he found himself with his heart full and his hands empty; and I suspect successive and previous Education Ministers found themselves in the same position. Mr. Speaker, if what we found at our government schools does not make a human being cringe, then something is wrong with them – nothing moves them.

Mr. Speaker, there is success in our public schools, but we are not enjoying the success nor providing for additional success. One of the successes that our public school enjoys is like when I was at CUC; my dearly departed friend, Pedro Echenique was in charge of the line and I was Customer Service or somewhere. Pedro would hire and train the people and we would take them from him but he did it in stride and he understood that you cannot stop people's progression. The education system is the same thing. Here is what is happening: the teachers teach our kids, especially the high-flyers, and there is no sixth form for them to attend, so they go to the private school and the private school takes the credit for having turned out good students in the country. If we are going to contain our public system, then we must get the credit thereof.

Mr. Speaker, we speak of vocational training all the time. *"Oh, we need a vocational school"* — something I do not support. I believe we would be better served sending them overseas so they can get that experience, but not that I do not support vocational training because I told my two, if they were going into a vocational career to pick barber or mechanic; people's cars are going to break down and their hair is going to grow and you will always be in a job.

Mr. Speaker, many of the teachers we met talked about starting the vocational curriculum earlier, like at the last year of primary school or thereabouts

or the first year in junior high, as we are calling it — used to be Middle School — to expose them to it. What exposed me to vocational training was when I went to the Cayman Islands High School on Walkers Road. Secondary Modern was the vocational part of the High School and once weekly we had to go there to do woodwork with the late Charlie Dixon and mechanics with a couple of English teachers and what have you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take Clifton Hunter because we recognise that the opposition is in a unique position. The Members of the Opposition are only in the catchment area for Clifton Hunter. Clifton Hunter recently celebrated its seven years of existence; six or seven years? Mr. Speaker, it has a wonderful technical section — auto mechanics, woodwork, electrical, but they don't have the tools. Six years, really? Yet we, the public, call for technical and vocational training. Only since we visited the school the first time have we seen equipment being installed... I haven't seen it, I heard of it being installed.

Mr. Speaker, the current Member for North Side and I, and prior to him the late Honourable Edna Moyle, complained that North Side and East End were too far away, [and] it was why insufficient attention was being paid to them. That is not true. That is not true. We thought we knew! The length and breadth of this country, the public system has been neglected.

Let us go West Bay. We haven't gone to Cayman Brac or Little Cayman yet, Mr. Speaker, so I will concede those. Let's go West Bay: six years for the Primary School and four classes per year, 24 classes; that is one to six. It is divided into four classes per year. We have 24 teachers and only six assistant teachers, and let us hear the policy from the Education Department. The policy is that at all times during class, a teacher or assistant teacher needs to be with the children. You cannot have support staff in there by themselves. Now, I want to know how you figure that one out; [and] Mr. Speaker, it is not unique to West Bay, it is the whole country.

Mr. Speaker, our children are smart children. Very smart! Maybe more of us need to go to these schools and sit down, break out with some of them and learn. We beat up on John Gray High School about deviant behaviour all the time. Mr. Speaker, someone needs to go there and break those Year Nine, Ten, Eleven and talk to them; that is what we need to do. We will understand their hopes and dreams; we will understand that they have a say in the future they want, or they need to have it!

The most pleasant experience I have ever had in politics was that trip throughout the schools, and, Mr. Speaker, it cannot be done in half an hour. Half-hour visits cannot do it. At each one of those schools, we may have taken up more time than was necessary or convenient, sometimes all four hours. Do you know what was surprising too? Caymanian teachers are not in the schools. Mr. Speaker, the Minister has a big job to do.

I met a young lady with whom I was *extremely* impressed at George Town Primary. I didn't know who she was when we were touring the facilities, the new hall that they are building, Mr. Speaker, because it is unfinished; they were trying to get it done. Minutes before the tour finished, this young lady ups and tells me that she is Debra Broderick's daughter and she is the Deputy Principal. That was extremely pleasant for me.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: The Senior Hansard Editor who was just promoted to Clerk. I said to her, *What about Policy and getting into management?* She said, *No, I don't want to do that; I am comfortable right where I am.* We need more of that. She is comfortable there. Every one of them told us that, of course, it is money in their pockets, about the Minister announcing a $5,000 minimum for teachers. They said, of course, money is good, but it is not what motivates them. What motivates our teachers is getting more with which to do more.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying all of this because I know that the Minister does not have the time or the energy (she could be Houdini) to micro-manage and see what needs to be done, nor the Minister have it either. You cannot be here every day, you rely on what you are told, but there are many smoke screens that have been up for a long time. I believe what this country and its education system need is a devolution of authority and responsibility to the Principals — and a budget devolution to the Principals too.

Now I know that if Dan Scott gets his way, and I haven't had any discussions with him yet, he will hold someone responsible and that is it but (like in America with many of the Councils in the different States) the Council must be allowed to manage education with the Minister having veto authority. We are fortunate that it just so happened the Minister now is a former teacher. Which other time did we have that? Roy Bodden. Two times in our recent history. Whether good, bad, or indifferent, it says something; but the fact is, education must be given to educators.

They are told they need to meet particular curricula. They do not have textbooks; that is another thing taken out. I must say, in defence of my good friend, the Premier, he tried to put computers on every desk. That sunk somewhere off 12-Mile Bank. Mr. Speaker, they are told to meet the curriculum criteria, no textbooks, and then, when they try to become creative and join life skills with it, they are slapped on the wrist that they are going outside of their remit. Is this really what we are all about?

When I asked about boys with long hair, pierced ears, diamond earrings, piercings in their eyebrows, and the like, I was told that it was human

rights. Human rights? Discipline rights! That is what is needed — discipline rights! This one gets me, Mr. Speaker. If we cannot say who comes into our schools, how, when, then I think we need to find another job to do.

The Constitution says, under Section 20(2): **"Government shall seek reasonably to achieve the progressive realisation, within available resources, of providing every child with primary and secondary education which shall, subject to subsection (3), be free."** Subsection (3) says, **"Every person who is the parent or legal guardian of a child shall be entitled to have his or her child (of whatever age) educated, at his or her own expense unless a law otherwise provides, in a private school (that is to say, a school other than one established by a public authority) and, in such a school, to ensure the religious and moral education of his or her child in accordance with his or her own convictions."**

Mr. Speaker, if it cannot be under our conditions under Part 1 of the Bill of Rights, Section 20(2) of the Constitution, then they can send their children to private school. We cannot stop them. If we do not instil discipline, pride, and esteem in our children, then our country is lost. Every jigsaw puzzle has many pieces, so too, if we liken it to this country and if you miss one piece of that jigsaw puzzle, you do not get a complete picture or portrait of what it should be and I believe one of the central pieces of the jigsaw puzzle for the progress of a country is education. We have a job to do.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier in his previous term talked about how he had other things to do and he couldn't juggle all that we wanted with police and the likes and what have you, but we need to juggle this one.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is saying he has got a plan; you need to involve us in the plan, so that we can fight together.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: No fight? Okay.

I need to be judicious in what I say because it may very well get back and victimisation is ripe in this country. I need to be very judicious in how I say these things. There is a very progressive Principal in our public system, and I will tell the Minister off-line who it is, who said to me that education is top heavy and questioned — *questioned* — the need for a Department.

That is what is happening, Mr. Speaker. We must be shaking in our boots for what is happening out there. I invite everybody to just go and sit and, more importantly, talk to those kids. They are ours, every one of them is Caymanian.

When I was going to school, we had Bob Whitman, Spencer — all foreigners in the same school. Nowadays, the Immigration Department decides where children go. They say foreigners cannot go into our schools; nevertheless, those same kids are going to live forever in this country. Do you see where we are creating a class system in this country? You see, the more we talk about this melting pot, the greater problems we are creating in it. It is wrong.

I have friends whom I grew up with in the government school. The McDonald's, who hitherto were expats, but today I can hail them on the street as my friends. If your child does not go to private school, he is never exposed to an expat, but we want him to live with that expat when he finishes his tertiary education. Is this what we are doing?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Well, they will not be able to bring their children; that's all.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Minister and the Government, and this is no reflection on the previous Minister who sits there; I challenge us all to straighten this out.

The Premier in his SPS said that he recognises that this is his last time, thank God, but he is going to make sure that this time it is action; this is it. If it means by the Constitution he cannot come back, and it means by virtue of me not being allowed back because of too much, then, let's do it. We need to sacrifice our careers to set this country on the right track and it begins today. It begins with this budget. The budget, like the last four budgets, *does not* make sufficient sacrifices for our children. Now, you all have an opportunity to do it. Do it now, because you are going to be reminded. Mr. Speaker, the budget mentioned nothing, or very little, about education — well, the devil is in the details, so I expect the details will be viewed and explained in Finance Committee.

Mr. Speaker, for years now, since 2010, I have gone to Cabinet on a regular basis to present my wish list (so to speak), on behalf of the people of East End. On the 25th of July, I repeated a call on education in the district of East End, saying that, "…*the school is struggling with councillors, primarily because they are changed before the children can develop the trust that is needed for them to be comfortable. The Minister may wish to look into why the current one is being changed for someone who has been there before.*

Statistically, the school's population appears to be increasing in tandem with the district's growth. Over the last few years, we have witnessed a steady increase in the number of new student enrolment. Additionally, the advent of the Health City Development seems to suggest that for the foreseeable future, the school will continue to grow. I believe that the school

needs a comprehensive review of the physical plan. A review which should include: property expansion, classroom sizes, vehicular entrance and exit, as well as additional sports and play space facilities.

Certainly, along with the review of the school in its current location, we should address if it is time to consider whether we utilise the opportunity to look at the combining of East End and North Side Primary Schools and relocating to a suitable location in close proximity to Clifton Hunter. If we are to leave the school within East End proper, then the expansion of facilities is urgently needed, such as purchase of property next to William Allen McLaughlin Civic Centre which will also accommodate an upgrade to the Donovan Rankine Playing Field facilities." [UNVERIFIED]

I haven't seen or heard anything being addressed about it, so I guess it has fallen on barren soil once again, but I will give the Minister the benefit of the doubt. She just came in and I don't know what her constraints are, but certainly, that needs to be addressed. The Member for North Side has agreed that we should at least sit down and look at it. Let us look at it; we cannot get there if we do not look at it.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take up all my time on education, but it is a very important matter. We need to build schools in West Bay because I have never seen more hodgepodge buildings than at that primary school. It looks as if somebody just threw mud at a wall and decided wherever it stuck, they were going to do it, and that is years and years of building on and trying to accommodate the population increase.

Mr. Speaker, it is of utmost importance that this country addresses our public-school system. We said to the previous Minister in Finance Committee that the schools did not have any paper. The Minister turned around, took advice and came back to us saying, "*Oh, yeah, paper has been provided"*, but when we talked to the teachers, they said they [still] did not have any. I do not know where it is going— and mind you, Mr. Speaker, I believe we have to take this with some trepidation. We could be getting spun a story too, but… it could never be that there's collusion from West Bay to East End now, too? It could never be; don't tell me the teachers are colluding. We just need to get this thing done.

I welcome Dan Scott. I welcome the Minister from... oh, all two of them are from Cayman Brac, nah?I know they like Cayman Brac, Mr. Speaker. I know that they will die carrying anything in Cayman Brac, because they want to tip the country that way. Now, let's see what they will do for us down here. I know that both of them are capable. They know that I am in support too. Whatever is reasonable, I am going to support. I beg both of them to move with haste to bring an amendment Bill here for the devolution of authority and responsibility to the Principals.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: No, not the two of you. Not the two of them, Mr. Speaker; I do not trust those two. I said Dan Scott and the Minister of Education. I am sure they are capable and I know both of them will fight for everything for Cayman Brac, and these two as well, but now it is time for them to deal with it straight across the board. I trust Dan Scott; he is someone to get things done and I am ready, whenever.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister wants credit for appointing Dan Scott. Yeah, but we know how that goes: Bracker and Bracker — and that's who you trust, that's who you are most comfortable with, your own people; and she is also most comfortable with my cousin, who is very capable. He is a stickler, so somebody better know what they are doing; that is Darrel Rankine, so Dan has a good person with him there and I believe the Member for South Sound is on it as well. I don't even know how many people are on it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Fifteen? Dan soon straighten some of them out.

Mr. Speaker, this is coincidental, not deliberate, but I need to turn to the dock now. It just so happened that the two of them are sitting together over there, but one leaves while the other stays, and I will be able to handle that one by himself.

Mr. Speaker, six administrations have taken a stab at the passenger liner pier. The last six administrations have done so and not one has been successful with it. I know, Mr. Speaker; I see quizzical looks on some faces over there, like the Member for Prospect who is saying, *Six?* Well, let me name them for him:

- the UDP Government, 2000–2005;
- the PPM Government, 2005-2009;
- the UDP Government, 2009–2012,
- the Interim Government, 2012–2013;
- the PPM Government, 2013-2017; and now
- the new PPM Government, 2017-2021.

Six administrations and we have done nothing with it. What we have spent is money. We went from proposing two sites to separate cargo and passengers, to keeping them together, to everything else. Mr. Speaker, we even went to the point where I threatened to lay in front of a bulldozer; now we are back to removing it, but combining it in Breakers.

Mr. Speaker, there was a point when I wholeheartedly supported the piers. I said that if that was what we were going to do we should get on with it. If we were not going to do it, then stop it and let us enhance what we have. To tell you the truth, I don't know where I am at now — and that is unusual for me, because I always have a position.

I don't know where I am at, Mr. Speaker, because no one seems to be able to tell us what is happening; and I know that the other day we questioned my good friend, the Leader of the Opposition's position in his debate that there is no such thing as $300 million. Nobody must think that I do not come here with my information.

In those six administrations, it went from $350 million to $200 million in July of 2016, to now they don't know how much it is, so please, forgive my good friend for being as confused as they are. He was right! And Mr. Speaker, you know I got evidence; you know that. It even reached the point where two Ministers stopped the UDP and told them, "*do not build it; and if you go ahead with it, I will have no alternative but to tell the Governor not to assent to it.*"

Do you remember that?

The Speaker: I remember plenty.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: *Elefante*. *[Elephant – reference to extent of memory?]*

Mr. Speaker, one thing I have followed closely is the sequence of events during the last 17 years. Now, here we are. Let us come back to the present, after I have now vindicated my good friend, the Member for North Side, the Leader of the Opposition, because he was right. From $350 all over the place it has been; from $150, $200, $300, $350, the injection of 250 to $1.2 billion. Oh! All kinds of things! Not a soul knows what they are doing. They have more paper on that dock now than enough.

We paid almost $3 million in law suits and all kinds of stuff we did. Through it all, this administration and the previous one have been the most secretive with it. Maybe they realised the UDP was too open [and] that is what stopped them. I don't really know, but I do know that they have been the most secretive. We have even asked them to give us a presentation, but they don't trust us; you see.

Nevertheless, the Leader of the Opposition is on the Security Council. He does not say anything to me about it. We can keep a secret until you break it, you know? This is our country we are talking about and [if you] say *you cannot discuss this matter outside this room* I would go and destroy my country — really? That is what you all think we are? Huh? I will beat you politically and would expect you to beat me politically, but when it comes to matters of breaches of security in this country, we have to trust each other.

Mr. Speaker, let me look at what we are doing now. One of the Members over there floated this thing about home-porting. I heard about that and moving up to Breakers and what have you. Before we get there, let us talk about the current dock. The Minister is saying that it is all on track. The Minister is also saying, to justify spending whatever it is; it may be $100 million to $500 million, somewhere in there, and I guarantee you it will fall within one of those extremes. I guarantee you. You were a Councillor for a long time and I haven't heard you saying much about it.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about transfer and bigger ships at this dock. We need to stop saying it. The depth of the water by that dock is only 15 feet. What size ships *unna* bringing there? I want to know what size ships *unna goin'* bring there. Somebody needs to tell me that. I know it is only 15 feet, Mr. Speaker, because many, many years ago I blasted out the rock under water up in the front so we could bring the ships closer in.

The maximum you might get is 15 feet to 20 feet, somewhere in there. How are you going to operate a large ship there? Oh! We are going to dig out Hog Sty Bay; so, how are we going to operate the tugs inside there? The tugs need at least 600 to 1000 feet space to dock up a ship. You really think you got 1000 feet between that thing and where the submarines are? We cannot do it! Lord! We just say these soundbites to justify what we are doing.

Then let us talk about the piers. Mr. Speaker, we continue to say we need four piers—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Two piers. No, it is four piers. It is two piers out, but you have four docking piers — one on either side. We want four. Let us talk about the four. If it is the Genesis-class [cruise liners], it averages 6,000 passengers. On any given day, I have seen more or less five or six ships out there; that is 3,000 to 4,000 passengers. Let us say it is 24,000 people coming off. They come by boat so now, each of those launches carries anywhere between 300 and 400 passengers. They arrive every 20 minutes and passengers disperse.

Now, let us talk about tying up four ships. Like the Member for Prospect said, it changes the face of George Town. Let us get that straight— the landscape changes. We have four Genesis-class liners by the dock, 6,000 passengers each, 2,000 crew each. Let us call it 30,000 people coming ashore. Where are we going to put them? Are we going to melt them into the George Town streets? There is the potential, within one hour, to disembark 30,000 people. *We melting them or wha'? Is that what we goin' do with them?*

Let us take it a little further, Mr. Speaker. A while back we promoted this country's 7-Mile Beach, number 1. Every passenger wants to go to 7-Mile Beach or a big percentage, anyhow. They want to witness this very famous beach so they can take pictures and say they have been there in the crystal-clear waters, et cetera, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, we had a number of places on West Bay Beach that all of those people could go to— Royal Palms, Tiki Beach, Public Beach, The Governor's House [Beach], Calico Jack's... Do we know how many of those are left? Public Beach and by the Governor's Residence. Dart has closed them all.

Where are we going to put our passengers so that they may have a rewarding visit to our country? Of course, we can increase the opportunity for them to go to the Botanic Park, Stingray City, the Turtle Farm, the this, the that, what have you, but how many are going to choose that? We need to talk about the Turtle Farm. We need to get rid of that; sell it off, give it to the passenger liners and make them put a dock out there so they can bring in two ships in West Bay. That is what needs to happen with that.

Mr. Speaker, my point of argument is: we need to stop using those things as justifications for the dock. We need to stop that. What we need to do is tell the people the truth. Why don't we just build one dock and get two [docking spaces] out there? Why are we going for two piers and four docking spaces?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Maybe we are trying to get to that $100,000 in one fell swoop.

Let us talk about overnighting, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this country is nowhere near resembling Ibiza in the Mediterranean. What are they going to overnight for?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Ask them in the Bahamas. You know what they can do in the Bahamas? They can gamble and those are only one-nighters from Miami. That is the intent of those.

Now, Mr. Speaker, follow my argument. Any ship on the water is operated on efficiency based on time, distance, and fuel burn. Somebody needs to figure out the formula for that and what it means. They have already designed maximum efficiency on that ship; the distance, ports, and the speed they have to get there to achieve maximum efficiency for their bottom line. Now, they need to get maximum out of that one week as well, so they need to visit a variety of countries; so they overnight in Cayman and their passengers do not have anything to do because we shut down at 12 o'clock. There is no attraction at night after twelve o'clock to one o'clock.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Yeah, well, you would know how late it is open.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Because you are the Premier, right?

Mr. Speaker, the laws in this country prevent gambling within our territorial waters, so are we going to change them so they can gamble alongside the dock? That is what we are talking about, because cruise liners maximise their profits by virtue of gambling on the ships. As soon as they depart here, they open the casinos and run eight knots down to Mexico and get in there tomorrow morning. One whole night of gambling! We are going to make them lose that, to overnight here? We need to stop saying these things to justify. Just go ahead and build the docks if that is what we are going to do!

Mr. Speaker, this thing is thrown around about home-porting. I would like to know who came up with that. I am going to tell you in a while how to get revenue, but it might hurt your friends. I am going to give you one good one to get plenty money. You don't worry, *cuz*.

This home-porting thing, Mr. Speaker... there are so many things against it. They are talking about doing a dock in Breakers and they can homeport from there. Isn't that the same thing as mixing cargo and passenger liners out here? Same thing, but let's look at it. Right now the majority of passengers on those liners come from America. They join in Florida. That is why you see vast acreage of parking down by the passenger liners. Why? Because people drive to get to the ship, they don't have to pay for a ticket. They spend $100 or $150 on gasoline and join the ship. We are asking them to spend $500 or $600 to fly out of Miami to get here to join the ship they could have joined in Miami, okay?

We must beef up security. Are we going to pay for that, because the concentration of Americans anywhere is a threat to the world — or a magnet to others; let me put it that way. Let us take one of the smallest ships, three thousand passengers. The ship comes in, say on a Saturday, for the purposes of this discussion, and it disembarks 3,000 passengers and sails on the Sunday, or sometimes the same day. They have to re-provision, but in America. All those things have to be considered.

The first thing is that we do not have the airlift to drop 3,000 people just for the passenger liner in one day so they don't have to pay hotel and the like, but more importantly, we don't have the airlift to take those who are leaving off their vacation. We don't have it; you would have to be Houdini to operate that when they are all going to one particular place. Now, in America, there are many people who come from Europe and the like and go out of Miami, but on different planes, to different locations. Here, they all would have to go to Miami or catch British Airways that night, maybe.

They all can't come in one day either. Where is the room stock, in addition to our 400,000 per year, to accommodate all of them? We don't have it! Why are we constantly on this thing? If we are going to build one dock out there, let's go build it, Mr. Premier;

let us do it and in time, if we need two, we will eventually get there. What we are saying just doesn't make sense — not to me!

I don't know. Everybody that comes into this country and comes up with a hare-brained scheme, everybody swallows it. What happens the day that they have to change out a generator or the shaft on a generator? Do we have the equipment in this country to do that within hours? Absolutely not! All these things, we got to consider. If they need to change out a bearing, do you think we got the type of lowboy required to change a shaft bearing?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tourism and Transport also talked a bit about public transport. I encourage him to do something. Right now the Public Transport Board has put a freeze on all licences. Caymanians can't get taxi or tour licences because there is a freeze, as they feel there are insufficient visitors in the country to justify issuing any more licences. The reverse of that is this Government comes here and says it is the best season we have ever had. How do we work that out? Frozen for years. The public transport councillor from George Town West is on it, right? Listen carefully. Mr. Speaker, that is one part of it you need to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I am the only person who drives on the road in Cayman. I am sure I am not.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: You know you are always on the road going to East End, right? Once or twice a week? I am up there every day. Be careful, I will find you.

Mr. Speaker, that Public Transport section needs to seriously manage those buses. I know they are trying, but it has to be that they're short of staff. Mr. Speaker, the [drivers] do anything; they stop right in the middle of the carriageway — now, I know I am not the only one who sees it — to prevent the other bus from going past them to pick up that passenger just down the road. You mean to tell me there are no police on the road? We are getting to them now, too. There are no police on the road, or is it one of their kind and they don't want to prosecute him? How many times have we not had near misses with ordinary citizens, with these buses pulling out on them? Mr. Speaker, maybe you haven't had it in a long time because you don't drive yourself, but I bet many Members in here have been in that situation. It is wrong! Somebody needs to keep them in control; that is what we need to work on.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn now to the police, since the Premier came here with all his glowing remarks about what he is doing.

Mr. Speaker, he says he is going to put 75 new policemen in place over the next three years. That is all well and good. I don't know where he is getting them from; I hope every effort is going to be made to recruit young, progressive Caymanians, but Mr. Speaker, I should tell the Premier that is not all there is to policing a country. Mr. Speaker, the kind of behaviour that has been brought into this country, we are now required to put mechanisms in place to control it. Here is what we need, in my view: we need to introduce licence plate recognition by passing a law to ensure it is enforceable and send people tickets electronically and charge them large money. I brought a Motion some time ago about our school zones, whereby it appears like the [space] shuttle is driving on the road. We have no respect for other road users. The NRA just had to put traffic calming devices parallel with the airport to try and control traffic flow.

Mr. Speaker, we need something to ensure people are put in a position or disciplined from breaking the law. Everybody does what they want, when they want and where they want, and nothing is said nor done to try to curb the behaviour so it is not only about getting the policemen, it is about spending money to ensure that mechanisms are in place to deal with it. That is where our people benefit from any budget.

I see the Licensing Department is now saying that all of those with temporary plates need to come pick up their permanent plates. They have been saying it for months and nobody is prosecuted. Mr. Speaker, we don't even know what they are doing without licence plates. All manner of crime in this country. I frequent a particular spot and there is a car there with its sticker saying July last year. Really? We need mechanisms. We will have to ask this in Finance Committee: who is responsible for the enforcement of traffic offences, is it the Licensing Department or the police? It appears there is a "grey area" that needs to be addressed. This is the least discipline I have ever seen in this country in my lifetime, and I am sure other Members will agree with me. In the meantime, I better go and licence my vehicle, or you know what is going to happen; I am going to be prosecuted. Why? I guess it is expected of me.

The other thing I want to see the Government do that is not represented here is to have cameras in the police cars, or body cameras if we want to go to that. It protects the police and it protects the citizens. One or the other would suffice; maybe the cameras in the vehicle, because they have cameras on their tasers, I think. We need to do that. It just so happens that this is what we have become and we now need to address it. We are no longer in the yesteryears; they are gone and they're not coming back, either.

Mr. Speaker, can I get a time check please?

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you have 17 minutes left.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I wonder if they took a zero from the back of that or off of the front.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, many of these we will get, but those are the ones I wanted to get in. There are others that I think need to be addressed as well, that have just as much importance: health, provisions for crime, housing, because you know the irony of all this is that no PPM Government has ever built a house. Not one!

Mr. Speaker, I beg my good friend the Premier to not allow himself and I to leave these honourable Chambers, with such legacy. Housing is very important to the well-being of our people. I believe the Premier started his presentation with, "Time marches on, time marches on.". It sure does. From friends to enemies to hug up friends. Time kills you. Time also reminds us that the great equaliser is not far away because there was a time when I looked forward to tomorrow; now I fear tomorrow because it is one less day to get done what we should have done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Speak for yourself too, your days are filled with N O T H I N G.

Mr. Speaker it is –

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, I hear the Premier may be considering constitutional amendments or something like that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: No, no, he does not have to agree. Not what you want to do.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Oh yeah, well you sit down there. Two of you are likely to be crucified in here.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: About you and the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution is what? Almost 10 years old?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Eight years — 2009. If such is the case, we need to clarify a number of things because I believe this is a living document and as time marches on, we need to amend it because what we knew then, we know much more now about the operation of this Constitution.

The one about how we define our positions in here needs to be done. I said that a long time ago, especially the separations in here. Section 68(7) says: **"In this section "opposition political party" includes a group of members of the Legislative Assembly in Opposition to the Government who are prepared to support one of their number as their leader."** If it is not clear enough, it needs to be clearly defined.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: It is as clear as day? To you, as the Premier — so you are saying that we really are the official Opposition, then?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: We are? Okay. And for the purposes of this, we are an opposition political party?

(Inaudible interjection)

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Okay, cool. Thank you, so we do not need to clarify that one for all and sundry then.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue is the appointment of the Premier; as to when you can gain the majority, whether it is within the election or after the election.

We also need to clarify that 400-day absence. Mr. Speaker, we cannot expect to be a country of the modern day on the world platform, have our people work globally, because that's how we are asking them to be, to get themselves educated globally, spend two, three years overseas out of the last seven and can't come home and run for office. That needs to stop. We need to clearly clarify that. I tell you what, if there is a Caymanian who left this country for five years to work in Europe to get experience, while we are here beating up our gums as politicians and they come home and two days later get nominated and win the election, we should be ashamed of ourselves.

We should be ashamed of ourselves! It means we weren't doing the job the people asked us to do. Don't you agree, Mr. Premier? Yeah.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: We need to embrace our people. That is what we want.

Mr. Speaker, during my tenure here, we have even gone so far as to remove the residency requirement to be recognised as Caymanian. Why did we do that? Because we want our people to come back and do it here! That is why we did it, but everybody wants to hold on to something with these old colonial behaviours and attitudes. We need to stay out of our people's bedrooms. Find your own.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. V, Arden McLean: Yes, really.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I only said that because Tony is not here. I say it for your purposes.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is time that we approach the Caymanian involvement in their own country from a little more liberal perspective. We need to move away from holding on to people's hands and leading them or holding them back. They are Caymanians. They must be entitled to it.

The other thing is: when you get on the voter's register you are there for life. You cannot change being Caymanian, you know? You could go to Timbuktu; you are still Caymanian. I see the Attorney General… he is Jamaican, you know? He is originally from Jamaica! That is where he is from. I hope he is not ashamed of it or embarrassed by it because I said it. That is where he is from. I am eight, ninth, tenth generation Caymanian. We live long too, 100 plus, so tell the Premier his wish will not come through. He won't read any obituary here.

Mr. Speaker, I see too many of our children or young adults and these are my last pleas for us to do. We see all these young Caymanians going overseas, getting educated and experienced and coming back here, and we don't want them to participate because they have more knowledge than we do. Sometimes you need to move on; and too many people want to hold on to power when they shouldn't and utilise their authority to hold on to power in this country. Too many people do it!

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Yeah, like you, too! You did it a couple of times, Mr. Premier, trying to hold on to power. Mr. Speaker, he knows the banter is going to go on. I don't have a problem with his banter.

Mr. Speaker, Gibran said, "May the wisdom of God scatter over the ignorance..." I don't want to say all of it because I might not get it right, but Mr. Speaker, I invite your good self, sir, to reconsider some of the rulings you—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Please don't go there.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Your time is just about up and you won't have any time and please do not go there. My rulings are not open for consideration, unless on a substantive Motion, so do not try to get into it, honourable Member; you can't. I think you know that.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am not getting into your rulings.

The Speaker: Don't go into it.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I am not doing that, sir. I never did.

The Speaker: Well, if you go into it... you have gone into it.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: No, I was inviting you.

The Speaker: No. Don't invite, because you don't have that room.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I do.

The Speaker: No, you don't.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, you have ruled that I don't have the right to invite the Chair. It is not questioning the Chair. I have never questioned the Chair. I have invited; there is a difference.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I think you should probably be finished by now.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: No, not yet.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, I do believe that I have wind-up time.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I think you have about two minutes.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: That is mine, isn't it? Mr. Speaker, I hope that I have made some clarity on where I want to be. I didn't go into all the numbers like the Leader of Opposition. There are other aspects of the Budget and Throne Speech and governance of the country that need to be addressed at all times, and that was the theme of my address.

The Premier asked me to propose revenue measures. He needs to look at how the developers are starting the development of properties and selling them. For instance, if a piece of land costs $1 million, it is transferred into the developer's name at 7.5 per cent, which is $75,000; but the house that is subsequently built on it by the same developer is worth $15 million, which is not transferred. We are not getting the transfer tax on that. It will be a difficult thing for us

to do, but if you use $1 million it could have been $750,000 based on the price of that property *in its completed form.* It needs to be addressed, and I see the Attorney General looking. It is going to be a difficult thing for us, Mr. Speaker, but we need to look at it because that is the basis on which developers are doing it now.

I also see that coming from being radio or TV announcers they are now sending out emails saying, *"If you are applying for your residency, call Paul."* Now everybody is a real estate agent, and they have properties so they can invest for their residency certificate or whatever. We need to look at those issues because we are being taken advantage of. Our very people are being taken advantage of. If people want to develop, sure, but they must pay what is required — and if they find loopholes, we need to plug them. In essence, Mr. Speaker, that is what I am saying.

The Speaker: Thank you. Your time is up, honourable Member.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, can I beg to finish off?

The Speaker: How much longer are you talking about?

Mr. Arden McLean: About 5 minutes.

The Speaker: Sorry? No. No. You can wind up to complete.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Well, that is what I am saying, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Not five minutes. You don't have five minutes. Try to finish— you are on to a good thing as far as I am concerned, but time.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: That is what I am saying, Mr. Speaker. I am trying a little thing with you and you still…

The Speaker: You had plenty time to try little things with me.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier and the Attorney General, I believe we need to look at this. The Education Minister is charged with lands, I believe, eh? I believe it is very important and it has been brought to my attention by a number of lawyer-type people. That is how they are structuring those deals now, and we are losing far too much money from it.

The Speaker: Honourable Member…

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank—

The Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: You won't even let me thank you?

The Speaker: It is past the hour. Honourable Premier.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I figure you are going to try that pretty soon too.

The Premier, Hon. Alden M McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Mr. Speaker, I move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) so the Member for East End can continue beyond the hour of interruption.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, we need the adjournment, or to carry on business after 4:30. The Member has finished his speech.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: I didn't think the Premier was moving a Motion for that as such; I thought—

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Oh, yeah.

The Speaker: I thought, as all through your speech you and he had a banter, cut and thrust, I don't think he meant that at all.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Mr. Speaker –

The Speaker: Sorry?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: There is a Motion already.

The Speaker: Yeah, I don't think he meant that at all. He certainly meant to carry on or adjourn the House.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: He is already reneging on everything he ever did.

The Speaker: Yes.

Moment of interruption – 4:30 pm
Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarity, I move the suspension for Standing Order 10(2) in order that the business of

the House may continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order for the House to carry on after 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.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Member for George Town West.

Mr. David C. Wight, Elected Member for George Town West: Mr. Speaker, it is with a deep sense of humility and gratitude that I rise to address this honourable House in this important budget debate, maintaining forward momentum.

I stand here as a humble servant of the people. My presence here today is a sign of the confidence they placed in me and the awesome responsibilities they have entrusted both to me and this administration. I thank my constituents and well-wishers for their consistent prayers and words of encouragement; and give thanks to Almighty God for His favour on our beloved Cayman Islands and pray He will continue to—

Mr. Christopher Saunders: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher Saunders: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can we at least get more Members back in the Chamber, so we have a quorum?

The Speaker: The matter of a quorum has been called to my attention. We are short. Could those Members who left the Chamber please get back?

Honourable Member of the Opposition, they left you by yourself.

I think we are quorate now. The Member for George Town West, continuing.

Mr. David C. Wight: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give thanks to the Almighty God for His favour on our beloved Cayman Islands. I pray that He will continue to guide our path and decision-making and bless our nation.

Before continuing, I would also like to thank three former Ministers for their encouragement, especially since I was elected: the Honourable Norman Bodden, the Honourable Mr. Linford Pierson, and the Honourable D. Kurt Tibbetts. They continue to phone and offer their congratulations and encouragement.

Mr. Speaker, as a freshman MLA, I have had the opportunity to listen to a range of presentations from various ministries and departments. They each made their case for funding for programmes and initiatives within their respective areas of concern. While all submissions were relevant, given that funding is not unlimited, decisions had to be made as to which programmes would deliver the greatest benefit to our people and this country at this time. I extend my congratulations to the Premier, the Honourable Alden McLaughlin, on his Policy Statement and plans for sustained social and economic development, and also commend the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Roy McTaggart, on his Budget Address.

Mr. Speaker, I have always said I feel I have been in politics since 1983 but on the outside. Though I have been a Member of the PPM George Town Executive Committee, in the last five months as an Elected MLA I have seen some of the workings behind the scenes and I always tell the Honourable Moses Kirkconnell how absolutely amazed I am at what details and hard work go on behind the scenes. It is a real eye opener.

In the short time I have been an MLA, I have gained tremendous insight into the processes and inner workings of government. Tourists don't come here by accident; it is pure hard work and dollars that attract tourists to Cayman. I have been extremely overwhelmed to watch how the Ministers, their Chief Officers and staff have put forward their budget proposals but have had to leave, cut their proposal and come back to work on what they want. It is them, the Ministers, their Chief Officers, and their staff, who put in the unbelievable hard work and late hours. Although every Minister would want the entire budget for their Ministry, it is the Premier, the Honourable Alden McLaughlin, who ultimately gives the final okay, but he will go on the advice of his Ministers and consider what is best for Cayman and the Caymanian people. There is no budget that will please everyone.

Observing the budget presentations brought back fun memories of the government that I have been a part of my whole life: a family government. We have had the Premier, the Deputy Premier, Ministers, Councillors, and backbenchers. That is the McTaggart-White family government; with ten children sometimes wanting to diversify and go in different directions, my parents listened to our ideas and requests and my father, who was the Premier of that government, decided the best way forward.

As heads of our household, my mother and father kept the balance between our needs and wants, always considering what was best for our family and our business enterprises. The budgeting process for this country operates in much the same way, and it falls to the Honourable Premier and his colleagues to ultimately determine how best to apportion funding

based on the best interest of our people and this country.

Some of my favourite times were the long hours spent listening to Uncle Roy on his porch and I know the same goes for my cousin, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Roy McTaggart. He was extremely proud to share stories from days gone by and what he had done for Cayman. There is no way that I would want to be any part of a party or government that, in my opinion, would do anything that would destroy his hard work and legacy and that is why I am a proud Member of the PPM Progressives from 2002 and now a proud Member of the Government of National Unity, and I am very proud of this budget.

My years as a successful businessman enabled me to understand and contribute to the process and have provided me with characteristics such as drive, persistence, and accountability that are equally relevant to business and to my role as the people's representative.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Premier has assigned me to two different ministries, namely, the Ministry of District Administration, Tourism and Transport with oversight for the subject area of transport and to the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands, with oversight for the subject of sports. While at first, it might seem like an odd combination, the fact is that tourism, sport and transport are all interlinked, and each is vital to advancing the agenda of the other. Indeed, anyone who knows me, or knows of me, would be aware that my passion for sports goes back more than four decades to the days when I proudly represented these islands in Cricket.

I consider it an honour to have input into the development of sports, as it is a subject that will always be close to my heart. I just want to read a text I just got, which shows the progress of sports in Cayman: "We continue to make strides in all sports across the world; today, Vanjae Ramgeet won the amateur roundabout Box Stock Division at the World Watercraft Championship in Naples, Florida." — I got that from Ventisha Conolly, who is very proud of what she is doing.

[Applause]

Mr. David C. Wight: Mr. Speaker, as a long-time sports enthusiast and participant, I am very glad to be the Councillor for Sports at this exciting point in time. Cabinet has decided that National Heroes Day 2018, which falls on January 22, 2018, will focus on sports. Having represented the Cayman Islands in cricket, and knowing the challenges and benefits of competing and representing one's country at that level, I am, therefore, extremely pleased that National Heroes Day will serve as a means to highlight this important aspect of our society.

Mr. Speaker, National Heroes Day is one of the largest cultural events on the National Calendar. Under the direction of the Ministry of Culture, the National Heroes Day Committee, which is responsible for executing this annual event, has, therefore, had representatives from the various National Sports Associations, the Ministry of Sports, the Department of Sports as well as the district Constituency Representatives and Representatives from Government Information Services and the Protocol Office.

The Committee has used the same categories as have been used in previous years. It has been working on identifying early pioneers; that is, persons who made a significant contribution to the early development and delivery of sports in the Cayman Islands and pioneers who made significant contributions from 1960 to 2006, and emergent pioneers, those being persons who made significant contributions from 2007 to the present. Persons who are now deceased but who were leaders, or long serving members or significant contributors in specific areas of sport, will receive a certificate of recognition. There is also a category for those who may not have been leaders but have been long serving in a particular sport.

Mr. Speaker, the general public was asked to nominate those persons that were felt to be deserving of these awards and the Committee has spent considerable time reviewing the nominations. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that those deserving sports heroes will be duly recognised in next year's National Heroes Day event, and as the Councillor for Sports, I am looking forward to celebrating with the well-deserving recipients at this event, and continuing to support and highlight the positive benefits of sports to our Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I came up with a slogan and I wish the Honourable Deputy Premier, Mr. Moses Kirkconnell, was here because I haven't even told him, but I would like to find out what he thinks. My slogan is "Float the dock to be able to float education."

[Laughter]

Mr. David C. Wight: I am going to repeat that for you, Mr. Speaker: "Float the dock to be able to float education." I say that because while education is not a revenue generator for the Cayman Islands Government, it consumes significant resources and the government must use revenue from other sources to pay for it. An expanded port would provide significantly more profit for the Port Authority and therefore more dividends to the core government, which is used to fund things like education and I want to go on record to say that education is extremely important to this Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Tourism's budget address was filled with positive news, particularly regarding our tourism industry's growth. I trust that it will provide confidence and reassurance to the public at large that the tourism industry is in good hands and is outperforming expectations. Outstanding results over successive years have brought millions of investment dollars to our economy. As the Minister

stated, based on performance to date, and forward booking to the end of 2017, we estimate finishing the year with a combined on-island visitor spend of approximately CI$644 million or USD $766.5 million from cruise and stay-over arrivals.

This is just one example of the direct spend going into our economy from the tourism industry, and there are more. Given the strength of the industry, new properties are planned, existing ones are being transformed, and more jobs and business opportunities have been created. This is all good news for the country and even better news for the hundreds and hundreds of Caymanians who depend on the tourism and hospitality sectors in order to support their families.

Mr. Speaker, using transportation as an example, it is easy to see how more visitors on Island translate into more business for taxi drivers, tour and omnibus operators, and even limousines. To meet growing demand for these services, the Public Transport Board approved 52 additional licences in 2016 including forty-one taxi permits, one limousine, one water sports and eight omnibus licences. In 2017, 30 additional licences were issued, allowing for 11 more taxi permits, 10 more tour operators, six more omnibuses, two more in water sports and one more limousine licence. These increases represent more employment and opportunities for Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, growth brings opportunities for change and I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that a comprehensive review of the National Taxi Rate System was recently conducted by Deloitte at the request of the Board. This review looks at modernisation options for simplifying the charging process, and will include recommendations regarding the current rates which have remained unchanged since 2008. The report is currently being prepared and once the Public Transportation Board of Directors has had an opportunity to evaluate the findings and make their decisions, an implementation plan will be developed. Further updates will be provided to the public at that time.

Mr. Speaker, turning our attention now to sports: it is a well-known fact that sports play a positive role in the areas of social, health, education and business activities just to name a few. Sport is also a big business on a global scale, due to its ability to break down barriers and bring people together. As a result, sport fans think nothing of travelling hundreds or even thousands of miles to participate in an event to support their favourite team and players. Over the years, we have become accustomed to seeing events such as the Flowers Sea Swim, the Cayman Islands Marathon and the NORCECA [North, Central America and Caribbean] Volleyball Confederation, and these have been joined more recently by a host of others.

One such example is the upcoming NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] Cayman Islands Classic, which is a men's pre-season basketball tournament. This event takes place from the 20th to the 22nd of November at the new John Gray High School Gymnasium and will feature eight top Division 1 men's college basketball teams from the United States. Hundreds of fans, alumni and supporters are expected to travel with each team, leading organisers to anticipate at least 1,000 visitors arriving on Island for this event.

Mr. Speaker, this influx of visitors drives a corresponding increase in demand for a range of support services, which in turn provides an immediate injection of funds into a wide variety of local businesses. In this instance, due to the sheer volume of visitors expected, all available transport companies have been engaged to take care of the transportation needs. The number of rooms required is so high that three hotels are providing accommodations. We also have restaurants, car rental agencies, attractions and a host of other businesses that will be patronised during the tournament, enabling them to earn a welcome boost to their bottom lines.

The benefits of hosting tournaments are not confined to commerce. Whenever and wherever possible, opportunities are always sought to ensure our people reap direct benefits too. While the visiting teams are on Island, coaching clinics will take place to give our youth an opportunity to learn from some of the best on how to improve their own skills. When I say the best, I should perhaps point out that the team from the University of Iowa ranks at number 10, while Cincinnati ranks at number 15 in the League. In addition to the coaching clinics, other members from the basketball programme will be volunteering behind the scenes, making this a truly all-inclusive experience. Over the four days of the tournament, CBS Sports will be streaming the games, providing our Islands with extensive media exposure online and through various social networks.

Mr. Speaker, high-profile events such as this build the Cayman Islands' credibility as a sports tourism destination, which translates into long-term sustainable benefits. Taking into account that the average sports visitor usually travels with one or two family members or friends, sports tourism presents a lucrative opportunity to promote other aspects of our tourism product to this captive audience. The initial impact of hosting a tournament may be a cash injection to the economy, but the longer-term impact is the conversion of sports fans to tourists, leading to repeat visits.

Mr. Speaker, as the councillor for Sports, I am committed and look forward to doing all that I can to support the development of sports, both at the community level and with respect to promoting sports tourism. Since sports is a passion of mine and a passion for many in this country, I keenly support the principles of sports for all and will be targeting sports-based initiatives to enhance youth development and community cohesion.

To touch on my constituency, George Town West, I am proud to say that Councillor Barbara Connolly and I opened our District Constituency Office for George Town South and George Town West. I would like to go on record to thank Minister Hew, because whenever I call about any problem within our constituency, I get a call within hours. In fact, even today, I showed him a message I got from one of our constituents who was very pleased with an update on Goring Avenue, so I would like to thank Minister Hew.

(inaudible interjection)

Mr. David C. Wight: I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Sports for the individual support, assistance, and guidance they have provided to me since I became a part of their respective Ministries. It is amazing how little words can be so comforting and confidence-building. I am on a floor with five Ministers and every day I get suggestions and words of advice which I deeply appreciate.

I would like to thank the Premier, the Honourable Alden McLaughlin, the Honourable Julianna O'Connor-Connolly, the Honourable Dwayne Seymour, Minister of Health, the Honourable Joseph Hew, of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure and the Honourable Moses Kirkconnell, Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport. I work on the same floor with the four of them and each day when they come into the office or I pass them on the floor, I get pure encouragement, and that is helpful for me. My cousin, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Roy McTaggart, and the Honourable Tara Rivers, the Minister for Financial Services, are on different floors yet again — whenever I see them, I get comforting words that are appreciated and I thank them very much.

I work with the Ministry of District Administration, Tourism and Transport and the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands, and I have been welcomed by everyone, but I would like to mention a few who have gone out of their way to make my life easy:

Mr. Joel Francis in Sports. Whenever I call him, I get a response within minutes and the problem is solved. A special mention to those where it seems I live nowadays, namely the Ministry of Tourism and the special ladies therein: Ventisha Conolly, Sue Ransom, and Gina Matthews. They make me feel like I am doing nothing but floating along and getting congratulations, but it is because of their hard work and time. I really appreciate it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. David C. Wight: I will do so privately.

I also wish to extend thanks to the Chief Officers and the talented and experienced civil servants who work alongside our private sector partners to grow opportunities and improve the quality of life for all who call these Islands home.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, to those who claim that I am sleeping as a newcomer, I want them to think that over; but I am not going to stand and talk, just to hear myself talk.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: We will take the suspension at this time until 5:45 pm

Proceeding suspended at 5:06 pm

Proceedings resumed at 6:05 pm

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017

[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: The House is now resumed, please be seated. Continuation of debate.

Does any other Member wish to speak? The Member for West Bay Central.

Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks, Elected Member for West Bay Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Her Excellency the Governor Helen Kilpatrick on the Throne Speech; the Honourable Premier on the Budget Policy Statement, and the Honourable Minister of Finance on his first two-year Budget Plan for the period 2018-2019.

Mr. Speaker, this is my first Budget as a Ministerial Councillor for Environment and Housing, so it is a great privilege to address this honourable House on these subjects. Having been involved in water sports since the age of 10, I can tell you that the environment, both around our shores and on land, has always been a true passion of mine. The matter of affordable housing is equally important for me, as we seek to ensure that all Caymanians have the opportunity to own a place they can truly call home.

Environment - Achievements and Challenges: Mr. Speaker, not long after taking office in May, the Honourable Minister and I met with the Department of Environment's (DOE) Director, Gina Ebanks-Petrie, and her deputies, to learn about the important work being implemented by her department. I was very impressed with the many good works being carried out by the Department of Environment and the entire team, and I share their aims to protect our natural resources in these beloved isles. I had never made it a secret that I have my own views regarding management of the environment, but no one should ever doubt my passion and love for the environment,

whether on land or the ocean, so I do appreciate and respect the hard work that is done by the staff of the Department of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, during the 2016/2017 Financial Year there have been significant achievements on challenges pertaining to the DOE which I wish to note and share with Members of this House.

First of all, I am pleased to say that in 2016, the Ministry commenced the Endangered Species Trade and Transport (Amendment) Law 2015 to implement the Convention of International Trade on endangered species of flora and fauna. The aim of this Law is to better regulate the trade and transport of animals and plants between the three Cayman Islands.

The 15th of August 2016 saw the commencement of Parts 5 and 7 of the National Conservation Law; however, sections 46 and 47, which deal with the Environmental Protection Fund, have not yet commenced. I know my colleagues in the Department of Environment may disagree with me, but I have to say I am glad that these sections have not yet commenced, and I will say why shortly. Parts 5 and 7 relate to the issuance of permits and licences as well as general obligations under the Law, including the obligations of all government entities to consult with the National Conservation Council.

Mr. Speaker, section 5 also provides for a new licence regime for spearfishing that would allow the importation of parts for spear guns. It was obvious from the representatives' debate that the will of the people on the passage of the Law and this licencing regime was one they wanted; however, after a full year, the National Conservation Council (NCC) has yet to act on the wish of this honourable House and the Law. Instead, the National Conservation Council noted in their 2016 Annual Report that, and I quote: **"The Council's view is that as spearfishing will thus continue to be a licensable activity for the foreseeable future, it is difficult for the Council to justify licensing of spear guns in the absence of the expansion of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The reason for this is that section 22(1) requires the Council to be satisfied that any such licensing will not be detrimental to the survival of, nor reduce any population of, a protected species."**

I am not an Attorney, Mr. Speaker, but the relevant section speaks to licensing to an individual, and not to some broad requirement to licence. If the Council can be satisfied that the individual is responsible and will spearfish only in agreed areas, then I humbly suggest that the Council should follow the Law.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the NCC, I am certain with the best of intentions, may be attempting to put their will before that of lawmakers and, interestingly enough, may also be utilising the spearfishing licensing issue as some kind of quid pro quo for expanding marine parks. If so, I must say this is not their role. They should instead follow the Law or make suggestions on how to clarify it, so they can do the job required by the Law around licensing.

It is because of issues like this, Mr. Speaker, along with the concerns expressed by the Premier, as well as the Minister for Health, that I am pleased the remaining sections have not been commenced and why I support the review of the National Conservation Law. The purpose of the review would be to ensure the law is working as intended, and to fix any areas where it is not. We will appoint a review committee of various stakeholders, including a representative from the NCC as well as the DOE.

Mr. Speaker, in November 2016, DOE hosted the Annual Golf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute meeting, which touched on important subjects such as marine protected areas, the management of spawning aggregations, and the climate change impacts on marine environments.

In April 2017, with its project partners from University of Liverpool and Exeter in the UK, the DOE completed its first year of research and monitoring in a two-year Darwin Plus-funded project aimed at assessing the conservation status and needs of seabird populations in the Cayman Islands, including the regionally important Red-footed Booby colony on Little Cayman. The project is now in its second year and, following completion of a final period of field work early in the year, data analysis will be completed. The recommendations for conservation actions will then be deployed.

In May of this year, DOE celebrated another significant accomplishment. On recommendation from the National Conservation Council, the first terrestrial protected areas established under the National Conservation Law were approved on Crown Land in Grand Cayman and Little Cayman. The Crown Land is in the proposed Barker's National Park, Vital Cay and the Crown Mangrove Cays along the Western perimeter of the North Sound. Also included in Crown Land is the Central Mangrove Wetland, Crown Land in Lower Valley Forest and an additional parcel of Crown Land in Booby Pond Nature Reserve.

Mr. Speaker, turning now to an issue which I know is the topic of many conversations both among the Members of this House and the general public, the green iguanas. This invasive species has become a serious nuisance following its population explosion following Hurricane Ivan in 2004. They are an extreme nuisance and finding a solution to control them continues to be very vexing, to say the least. It is a pity, Mr. Speaker, that the country, including the Management of DOE, did not undertake the eradication of green iguanas a few years earlier; I believe we would have been further ahead but we are where we are and this funding, if used wisely, should make a dent in the population of these pests. We will continue this funding in years ahead, increasing it as resources allow.

Having said that, bounty hunting by registered Caymanians, paid per iguana kill, has not made a significant impact on eradicating the green iguana population which has grown beyond one million, but undoubtedly, for every one we cull we are preventing the population from increasing by several hundred. By the 1st of November 2017, cullers had removed only 16,500 iguanas, which is a small number compared to the wild population; but as dead iguanas will not reproduce, by my estimation we have avoided many thousand more green iguanas being added to the wild population — and, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that if we pay the cullers adequately, we may find more cullers coming forward and much more culling done.

Turning now to the National Housing Development Trust (NHDT). The Trust has worked to progress the plans for affordable homes to join the existing ones on the Bodden Town site. I am pleased to advise, Mr. Speaker, that the Trust has very recently received the necessary planning and building control unit approvals to build these additional units, and I expect that they will commence construction early in the year. The past year also saw the NHDT entering negotiations with various banks to launch a second Government-Guaranteed Home Assistance Mortgage (GGHAM) programme. Initially rolled out between 2007 and 2012, this programme helped 325 Caymanian families achieve home ownership. Mr. Speaker, I believe we will be able to provide some very positive news on this programme in the very near future.

Department of Environment – looking ahead: I would now like to highlight some of the DOE plans for the next 2 years. Mr. Speaker, the DOE will continue to implement its ongoing research, monitoring, and enforcement programmes aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of native species and ecosystems. Plans are also underway for the establishment of additional protective land area, subject to recommendations from the National Conservation Council, extensive public consultation, and the allocation of the necessary funding from the Environmental Protection Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment will continue its efforts to address the threat of alien invasive species, particularly green iguanas and lionfish. Given that ongoing research and monitoring work has identified feral cats as a significant threat to the health of both the populations of the Sister Islands Rock iguanas and seabirds, the DOE will also begin work with relevant government agencies and external experts to address this growing problem. The DOE will continue to provide technical advice and guidance to Cabinet and other government agencies on plans, projects, and policies likely to have an adverse impact on the natural environment and resources. In addition, the department will continue to provide guidance on ongoing environmental impact assessments, including the Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion proposal [and] the Integrated Solid Waste Management system as well as updates on the Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed cruise-berthing facility.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Cabinet will appoint a Committee to review the National Conservation Law and both the DOE and NCC will have a seat on the Committee. I am looking forward to working with all parties to ensure that we achieve the right balance for the National Conservation Law during the intended review.

Housing – looking ahead: Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the plans of the National Housing Development Trust (NHDT) for the upcoming financial period. The Trust will continue its efforts to keep moving forward with the various housing programmes that are designed to help Caymanians achieve the dream of home ownership. The Government-Guaranteed Home Assisted Mortgage Programme will be relaunched once the Government and participating banks finalise and sign the necessary agreements. I thank the participating banks for their willingness to embark on this programme again, and I know that there will be many Caymanians who will also be grateful for the support. They are able to achieve home ownership through this programme.

The new Affordable Housing Initiative Program continues to provide affordable housing to Caymanians. It gives our people help towards owning the affordable houses that have been constructed in East End, George Town, Bodden Town and West Bay. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the second phase of the Bodden Town affordable housing site is scheduled to start within the coming months. I look forward to seeing these new affordable homes being made available to the deserving families who will have the privilege of owning them. We should also look to encourage [the] private sector to build affordable homes. As the Premier has noted, the Government will look at how to incentivise the private sector, including looking at the size of properties to be used for affordable homes so as to keep the cost down.

Mr. Speaker, as the Government moves forward on many constructive programmes to help Caymanians by giving more to the elderly, more to the students, more to the health services, more for our roads, our docks, airports, solid waste; more for the enhancements of our infrastructure and the safety of our people — Mr. Speaker, more all-around — those who don't want to see these will say nothing is being done.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do something about our students having to get a visa to go to Jamaica to request a Student Visa for entering the United States to attend Universities or Colleges of their choice. I believe efforts now need to be made to get the USA consulate in Jamaica to come to Cayman, which I guess we would have to pay for, but I feel it can be done. The interview process can take place in Cayman, even if they have to take the passports back to Jamaica for processing. I believe we need to do eve-

rything we can, which might mean getting our lawyers in Washington to negotiate a new initiative to afford our students an easier way to get their student visa. This is an initiative we campaigned on, and I believe that if enough effort is given, it can be achieved sooner rather than later.

Mr. Speaker, there is much to say about community pride and how we all can work to keep our districts clean. Our people need to be able to play their part, and the vast majority do, but there are those who are using the Barkers area as a dumping ground again. Hopefully, we will remedy this in the new year by creating employment for Caymanians as cleaners and watchmen for the area.

Mr. Speaker, because you are the Honourable Speaker, I know you would want me; the Honourable Minister of Financial Services, and the Elected Member for West Bay North, to speak on these matters for your constituency. I am aware that you are currently working on specific roads and two area parks suited for younger children — one located in North West Point and another in Boatswain Bay. For our district overall, we are working on a new cemetery and we believe that it is possible to begin in this present budget cycle; also the primary school and the new police station.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I thank everyone in the Ministry who has given me such a warm welcome as a Ministerial Councillor in the Government of National Unity. There is a great deal of work to be done in the months and years ahead but I am confident the coalition's strength will allow us to achieve great things that will benefit everybody in the Cayman Islands.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other — the Honourable Deputy Governor.

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Throne Speech, Policy Statement and Budget Address, and I would like to commend Her Excellency, the Premier and the Minister of Finance for the excellent job in delivering those speeches which, together, set out ambitious plans of the Government for continued sound fiscal management, strengthening governance arrangements and better outcomes for the Cayman Islands and its people.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it was a sad moment for me to listen to Her Excellency the Governor give her last Throne Speech here in the Parliament. She has been an excellent governor and a great boss to me. I learnt much from her, Mr. Speaker. She has pushed me and inspired me to perform at a higher level, which is exactly what a good boss does. I sincerely thank her for it, and I am going to miss her. Mr. Speaker, I will say no more because she will be leaving in March and I will speak at that time, but I do want to wish her and her family God's richest blessings.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the Members here who have spoken and have said some very kind words about the Civil Service. As Deputy Governor, I am proud this afternoon to hear so many of the Members from both sides speak in very favourable terms about the service and acknowledge the good work that has been going on for many years now.

Mr. Speaker, as Deputy Governor and Head of the Civil Service, I recognise the important role that civil servants play in helping the Government to achieve its political priorities. A dynamic and nimble Civil Service is critical for the delivery of exemplary public services, and that is one of the things that the Premier keeps reminding me about — it being nimble and moving things along quickly; it is something that we want to continually focus on. It is important to have an efficient and effective government for turning policy into reality, which positively changes people's lives.

Mr. Speaker I would like to thank the Government for the funding provided in the 2016/2017 Budget to address globally, a longstanding and urgent issue of pay stagnation within the civil service, doing all of this while remaining prudent in our financial management. In my last budget contribution, I reminded this honourable House that in response to the financial crisis facing the Government, numerous HR austerity measures have been adopted within the civil service.

These were very painful at times, including an actual prohibition to offer within-grade pay increases where persons remained in the same job. To compound the issue, while existing staff who maintained the same pay grade were curtailed from progressing in their pay, new recruits or new people coming in were able to join the organisation and negotiate higher salaries more in line with their pay, which had progressed during their careers outside the civil service. At that time, our data indicated there were some 900 employees who had remained at the same salary point for at least seven years.

In addition, as of June 2015, one in every three civil servants were still on the very first point of their pay scales, while during the same period, eight of ten civil servants were on or below the middle point of the salary scale so you can see why, Mr. Speaker, it was really imperative that the Government work with us to remedy the situation. I am so pleased that the Government did and I am very grateful, as are many, many civil servants, so Mr. Speaker, thanks to the funding provided by the Government, we have been able to remedy that situation and this particular austerity measure has now been repealed.

In 2016/2017, more than 1,500 employees received increments based upon their lack of progression for at least three years or more. This, in addition to the 892 employees who in 2015/2016 received pay

increases for promotions, re-evaluations, or increments including teachers, police officers, and customs and immigration officers. I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this has had a very positive effect across the civil service as civil servants can do a better job of taking care of their families and enjoy life a little better.

As the Honourable Premier noted when he announced these awards, the Government was largely able to achieve this by realising savings within the personnel budget and, in turn, reinvesting those savings to reward civil servants' productivity, and it should be acknowledged that the savings in personnel costs were a key factor, allowing the Government to achieve compliance with the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR). I want to emphasise, Mr. Speaker, that in doing all of this, we focused on performance; if anyone was not performing at the level expected, they were not eligible for these rewards because we have to continually focus on high performance across the civil service.

Mr. Speaker, in my contribution to the budget debate, I will be sharing some of the highlights and work we have accomplished during the 2016/2017 financial period, as the civil service works to serve the Government and the people of the Cayman Islands. We will also look at some of the lessons we have learnt, and will use those lessons to perform better. I am also excited to look ahead and share our ambitious plans for continued progress and improvements during the 2018/2019 Financial Years.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to say a few things about audits and accountability. In July 2017, the Office of the Auditor General published a report which followed up on the actions the civil service has taken in response to past PAC [Public Accounts Committee] recommendations on eight reports that were Tabled in 2016. I was pleased to note that the Office of the Auditor General reported that [in] four or half of the Auditor General's reports, the following judgments were delivered: significant progress has been made and the Government has implemented, or has taken action to implement, most of the recommendations. That is good, Mr. Speaker — we got four out of eight; but that is only okay, as we want to have eight out of eight going forward. I do acknowledge the progress and thank all the civil servants who worked hard to achieve those outstanding results.

Mr. Speaker, to drill down a bit into the reports: there was a report on Management and Travel and Hospitality expenditure. The Office of the Auditor General reported good progress. It was noted that we had implemented a travel policy back in 2013, which we had continued to track, and we were pleased to report that across the civil service expenditure on travel had reduced significantly. For example, in the years 2012/2013 to 2015/2016, the Ministry of Finance reported that travel and subsistence expenditures had decreased, resulting in a saving of $3.2M over the four-year period compared to expenses in 2011/2012. In July 2016, we made further improvements and issued a revised travel policy. The Ministry also continued to proactively publish credit card and travel expenses on their website.

I am also pleased to be able to advise that on the 1st of June 2017, we brought into force a companion policy on offering and receiving hospitality, entertainment, or gifts, which was another recommendation from the Auditor General.

The Auditor General also reported on the government's IT security and the Office of the Auditor General reported that the government had made good progress in implementing the recommendations made. This is critical work to ensure the government's information and communications technology is protected.

Mr. Speaker, another recommendation pertained to a major capital project for building schools. The two recommendations from this report involved the development of a new government framework for major capital projects, including changes to the PMFL [Public Management and Finance Law]; carrying out an assessment of the John Gray High School Project site, and developing a strategy to manage risk and future development, which the OAG judged to have been implemented.

Mr. Speaker, the government has made great strides in its management of major capital projects. the investment in the establishment of a major project's office, which the Minister of Works spoke about earlier, staffed with experienced project management professionals, is paying dividends. There is also a newly established governance framework to ensure consistent best practice and compliance with the requirements of the FFR. The progress being made on such complex projects as the development of cruise berthing facilities, waste management strategies and other projects such as the recently completed John Gray gymnasium are all examples of the positive impact this internal resource has had on the delivery of major capital projects.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fantastic achievement for us. Previous Auditor General reports criticised us for the way in which we managed our major capital projects; that has now changed. We are relying on sound project management expertise and have a major project office that will allow persons with the requisite skills to manage our major capital projects. This is very important because over the next few years, the airport redevelopment is going to finish; work on the ISWMS [Integrated Solid Waste Management System] project is going to take off in earnest, and so will the port redevelopment. Those are huge capital projects, and I am pleased to be able to report that the civil service is poised to deliver those projects in compliance with the FFR and ensure good value for money.

The Auditor General Report also looked at the Nation Building programme and found that the deficiencies in the programme were being remedied. We

had issued policies on transfer payments and had established some best practices, appropriate framework, and clear rules and responsibilities to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability for expenditure in relation to transfer payments.

The other report was "Financial and Performance Reporting and the National Land Development in Government Real Property." Mr. Speaker, regretfully, the reports on progress in relation to the other four performances were less favourable, and I spoke about that earlier. The Auditor General judged that some progress had been made in relation to the audits on Financial and Performance Reporting and National Land Development and Government real property; therefore, while progress was evident, it was not at the levels we would have expected and desired. Nevertheless, I would like to acknowledge that in some key areas, important work has been accomplished which strengthened Financial Management within the Civil Service.

Annual Reports: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the continued progress by government ministries, portfolios, and offices in moving towards the goal of all entities receiving unqualified audit reports within the legal timeline provided by the Public Management and Finance Law. We all remember the headlines in the past, which spoke of hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds unaccounted for. I even remember the Leader of the Opposition calling for CFOs to come to the Parliament to explain why the audits were in such bad shape. Well, Mr. Speaker, by 2014/2015 the Civil Service had faced the challenge and started to deliver real results. In 2014/2015, a majority of ministries received clean audit opinions. Today, we have finance teams sustaining this progress by maintaining unqualified audit opinion year after year.

Mr. Speaker, all indications suggest that 2015/2016 will be our best year yet. The Office of the Auditor General has advised that it completed audits of 13 of the 16 ministries, portfolios, and offices and of these, 12 or 92 per cent, have received an unqualified opinion — 92 per cent; one or 8 per cent received a qualified opinion, and none received an adverse opinion or a disclaimer of opinion. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? It means the people now know exactly how their money is being spent. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee has written to commend us, and I understand a Public Accounts Committee meeting is being held in December to recognise these achievements, so Mr. Speaker, in a few short years, we have gone from being summoned to PAC to be criticised to being summoned to PAC to be commended. That is exactly the type of achievement we want to deliver to the Government and to the people of the Cayman Islands — it is what they deserve.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, another important development is that we have now delivered on another outstanding recommendation from the Office of the Auditor General who, in the past, had criticised us for not submitting our annual reports which go into detail about how the money is being spent. Again, in 2015/2016, all agencies submitted their annual reports, which brings our reporting in line with the Public Service and Management Law — some were Tabled even this week.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the excellent continued progress these audit reports have been indicating. It demonstrates we are well on our way to achieving our goal of 100 per cent of our agencies receiving unqualified opinions. We are well on our way.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we have also made important developments in the area of procurement. Again, the Auditor General informed us of some weaknesses in our procurement and in my last budget address, I advised we would be delivering a new Procurement Bill to the House. I am pleased to report that the Bill was passed in October 2016 and Regulations are now being reviewed by our Cabinet with the goal of full implementation of the new legislation in April 2018. The Procurement legislation is just part of the governance framework that has been delivered to ensure fairness, efficiency, transparency and value for money in the Procurement Management System and Practices within the civil service.

Our new Procurement Office, which was established in 2015, has trained almost 200 civil servants in procurement who are using new tools and templates including e-Tendering capabilities. The use of innovative methodologies like electronic reverse auctions, or ERAs, has already delivered significant cost-savings in such areas as pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and school computers.

Mr. Speaker, three ERAs conducted within the civil service in July 2016 delivered net savings of $336,020, while the projected savings from three ERAs conducted for the HSA are estimated to bring upwards of $6 million in net savings, and Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning; based on the 2014/2015 historical spend for core government and HSA, an electronic reverse auction expert has estimated potential savings of $27 million. That is significant savings.

Mr. Speaker, I sat in on one of these reverse auctions just to watch how it works, and it is truly amazing to see it in operation. It's all done electronically. No one knows the bidders' names, but you can see what the bids are. They can see what other persons are bidding without knowing their identities, and

they basically have an hour or two to match the bids. They can see someone is bidding $10; if you feel you can do it for $9.50, you bid $9.50 and it just keeps going down. You can see the level of savings that has been achieved by using electronic capabilities and reverse auctions. We are doing things differently in government and achieving fantastic results.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also talked about government programmes supporting those in need and collecting government revenues, and I am disappointed to note that the Office of the Auditor General reported that only limited progress had been made in these areas of critical importance. We tackled these issues head on and we are going to address them. We are working very closely with our new Councillor for Community Affairs, a very hands-on Councillor, along with our Premier, to ensure that we address these issues and deliver the results that again, our people deserve in this area of supporting our persons who are in need.

Supporting democracy and good governance: Mr. Speaker, the civil service delivered on a number of areas to support democracy and governance. Before I go there, I just want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that the latest Auditor General's Report that spoke about capital projects again mentioned that significant progress had been made in dealing with how we oversee and deliver our major capital projects. However, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that we oversaw the successful elections, which seemed like a long time ago, but I think it was only about 5 or 6 months ago. This was done under a new Single-Member Constituency system and I want to commend the Supervisor of Elections, Mr. Howell, and his team of professionals who worked tirelessly, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we delivered free and fair elections in the midst of the new and significant changes.

Mr. Speaker, this honourable House also passed legislation to create the Office of the Ombudsman, and we are very pleased to say that we have a new Ombudsman in-post. The post was taken up just last month, and I think we are going to see fantastic work from the Ombudsman as she carries out her duties. For the first time, we are going to have independent oversight of complaints against the police; that has never happened before — the public asked for it and the Government delivered.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: I have 20 pages left.

Whistle blowing protection: Mr. Speaker, during the 2016/2017 Financial Year, this honourable House passed the Whistle Blowing Protection Bill 2016, which was scheduled to be commenced on the 1st of February 2018 and is one of the responsibilities of our new Ombudsman. We wanted to ensure she was in post before the legislation came into effect. This legislation applies to both the public and private sectors, and it is a critical part of the country's anticorruption policy strategy. It provides protection, by law, for persons who are often reluctant to report suspected misconduct because they fear retaliation from those who are engaged in the misconduct.

Mr. Speaker, within the Cayman Islands Government, I am pleased to note that in May 2017 we rolled out a comprehensive policy framework for addressing, deterring, identifying, and tackling fraud, which includes an Antifraud Policy, Code of Business Ethics and Conduct, our internal Whistle Blowing Policy, and the policy on offering or receiving hospitality, entertainment, or gifts for the civil service. This brings the civil service in compliance with the new Whistle Blower Protection Law, which requires all agencies — public and private — to put in place appropriate policies in line with the Law. We wanted to get ahead of the game, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have not simply prepared and distributed a detailed policy and hope it will get implemented. Using in-house expertise, we have developed interactive models on these policies which are available online through the Civil Service College. I have required all civil servants to have access to these modules by the end of the month. We want to make sure that the civil servants are aware of these policies. They go online, review the videos and take a test which ensures they are up to speed with our Anti-fraud Policy. We want them to understand what their roles and responsibilities to prevent and address fraud and corruption are.

Mr. Speaker, this honourable House also passed the Public Authorities Bill. The Government now has legislation that provides for a common and best practice governance framework for Statutory Authorities and Government-owned Companies (SAGCs); again, a historic piece of legislation.

Records and Information Management: Mr. Speaker, sound management of public records and information is the cornerstone of good governance. It promotes accountability and transparency and having a robust information management strategy in place ensures better information for a more efficient government. In May 2017 the National Archives finalised a new Records and Information Management Standard for the civil service, which provides guidance to public agencies to assist with compliance measures set out in the National Archives and Public Records Law (2015 Revision).

Adherence to the principles set out in this standard will help us achieve the Government's vision for being open and accountable to the people of the Cayman Islands. As we look forward to the implementation of the standard over the next two years, my expectation is that we will not only upgrade records and information management throughout the service, but that ministries and portfolios and their agencies will be more efficient and effective in serving the public as a result.

Human Resources Reforms: Mr. Speaker, within the civil service we have continued to invest in HR reforms over the past year. One critical achievement involved legislative amendments to increase the normal retirement age to 65. These activities could be measured in the number of laws changed, the hundreds of persons consulted, or the hours spent by the various teams in delivering the project; but at the end of the day, the immediate beneficiaries of this policy are over 5,000 public servants who have great flexibility in their careers and who have now gained the opportunity to save longer and increase their retirement nest-egg. For a very long time we have heard that people wanted to work beyond age 60; that they were capable, that they were physically fit and this allows those persons to work up until age 65. The successful implementation of this project also serves to shore up the sustainability of the Public Service Pension Fund, as this has the potential to save as much as $30 million over the long term by extending people's working careers — $30 million, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, September 2017 marks the one-year anniversary of the raise in the retirement age and here are some of the stats that speak to the impact this policy has had within the civil service to date: a total of 261 persons are currently working beyond the age of 60, the previous retirement age. Two hundred and sixty-one persons. A total of 216 persons between the ages of sixty and sixty-four are employed. Of these, 175 have resumed saving towards their full retirement, so they have suspended their pension; they have said they want to reinvest into the pension so that when they retire, their pension will be a bit higher. That reduces our pension liability because more money is going into the Fund. In addition, 45 persons have continued to work at age 65 and beyond, and where persons are able to work beyond age 65, we have kept them on so, Mr. Speaker, we have been flexible.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a bit about succession planning and the advancements of Caymanians in the civil service. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know this is an area that everyone in this House has a passion for. The Chief Officers and I share that passion and we have evidence to prove it. This is probably one of the most talked about areas in the civil service, across the public service and the private sector. What are we doing to ensure that our Caymanians are being trained up and are given the opportunities to better themselves? At the end of the day, we, as the leaders of this country in the civil service, have an overriding responsibility to give our people an opportunity. All of us got an opportunity from someone, and we have an obligation to do the same for the persons who are coming behind us. Just a few minutes ago, the Member for West Bay West and I were talking about the same matter. He certainly shares the same passion in terms of the advancement of Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to supporting the learning and development of our civil servants continues through the work of our Civil Service College, and more and more civil servants are taking up the opportunity to upskill and prepare themselves for improved performance and career advancement, and the latest data indicates and proves it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, 2,044 employees participated in online learning — two thousand. One thousand two hundred and nineteen employees participated in various workshops and seminars that we offered. We had 70 employees graduate with an Associate of Arts in Public Administration through our partnership with UCCI. This included 16 persons who graduated last night. We are particularly proud of the 2017 graduating class as it includes our first cohort of 8 graduates from the Cayman Brac campus. These eight students performed quite well, including this year's Valedictorian for the Associates Programme, Ms. Raquel Matute, who graduated with a 4.0 GPA, Mr. Speaker; our civil servants are doing exceptionally well across the Islands and we are ensuring our civil servants in the Sister Islands have access to good education.

Another 147 employees completed or are pursuing Leadership and Management qualifications through the Civil Service College, which is a centre accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management. Five civil servants earned a full tuition scholarship from the Civil Service College based on their outstanding performance in the Associate of Arts Programme and are pursuing their Bachelor of Arts degrees at UCCI. They earned a full tuition scholarship, Mr. Speaker. A further 10 employees have undertaken a global executive leadership course in partnership with UCCI and the Florida International University. This course is partially sponsored by the Civil Service College. Mr. Speaker, we are doing our best endeavour to give our people opportunities, and you can see, Mr. Speaker, that many, many civil servants are taking up that opportunity to upskill themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we have continued to make great strides in filling senior roles within the Civil Service with qualified and experienced staff. For example, three Deputy Chief Officer roles were filled by Ms. Deloris Gordon, Tammy Ebanks, and Cetonya Cacho; and a Deputy Chief Adviser role by Dr. Tasha Ebanks-Garcia.

Other positions include the Clerk of Courts by Shionna Allenger; two Deputy Collector of Customs, Mr. Jeff Jackson, Mr. Kevin Walton; Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Kurt Walton; Chief Internal Communications Officer, Ms. Aubrey Bodden; Director of Education Services, Ms. Lyneth Monteith, Deputy Director of Community Rehabilitation, Ms. Lisa Malice, a CFO within the Ministry of Community Affairs, Mr. Joel Burke, and here in Parliament, Ms. Debra Broderick was just promoted to Assistant Clerk and we congratulate her.

Mr. Speaker, all these persons have something in common: they are all Caymanians who have filled senior roles in the civil service. All 13 of these persons are Caymanians civil servants who have been promoted; but we have had to fill some senior posts by non-Caymanians. I spoke about the Ombudsman. We have our Commissioner of Police, Mr. Byrne; the Director of the Office of Education Standards, Mr. Peter Carpenter. We have the Director of Children and Family Services, Ms. Felicia Robinson. We have the HR Director of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Dave Bailey, and the Director of Legal Aid, Ms. Stacy Parke.

However, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop here. We now have another Caymanian pilot at MRCU by the name of Mr. Benjamin Tresidder who is flying the MRCU plane, which means both of our MRCU pilots are Caymanian. He approached MRCU wanting to work with them; they brought him on, he went off and got the experience, then came back to the department and has now been appointed pilot.

Mr. Speaker, we have not one but two Caymanians, who recently qualified as tactical flight officers in our Air Operations Unit — the helicopter unit with the RCIPS. They will now be given the necessary support and training, and Mr. Speaker, I do hope one day we will be able to say about our Air Operations Unit what I just said about MRCU: that it is staffed by Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Health where the MRCU is, we have two young Caymanians who have just returned, having received the Chevening Scholarship. Mrs. Christina Ross took a year off. She came to us and said, *I would like to go off and pursue my Master's Degree.* The Chief Officer, Ms. Ahearn, found a way to allow her to go while holding the job for her with another lady from another department who wanted to gain HR experience. She was allowed to come in and fill that role while this young lady realised her dream, and now she has returned.

We have Mr. Richard Tyson, who was formerly an intern in the same Ministry and was also a Chevening Scholarship recipient. He has now come home and is working in the Ministry, and we do hope he will now join the Department of Environment in the engineering field. These are young, bright Caymanians in the civil service. We have a very bright future in the civil service, Mr. Speaker. We have some amazing young Caymanians whom we are giving an opportunity to progress, and they are making us proud.

Mr. Speaker, Succession Secondment Policy: Mr. Speaker, a few years ago we developed an internal secondment policy across the civil service which allowed persons to undertake job shadowing and training for future career advancement. It helped us to break down silos that might impede upward mobility. I believe we may have 10, maybe 20 people who may want to or have taken up this secondment opportunity because we had so many people going off, getting their Master's Degrees in HR and other areas saying they did not have the experience — *I got my HR degree… how can I get experience?* Well, this secondment policy allows them to go and work a few days weekly; sometimes a few months in a particular area, so they can get experience. Over the last few years, at least 42 civil servants have taken up the opportunity. It is more than that, but it is the number I have in front of me right now. Again, it shows our Caymanians are hungry for advancement, and we are definitely meeting that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, we are now looking at a Professional Advisory Committee. Led by the Portfolio of the Civil Service, work has begun to identify the exemplars in various professional and vocational clusters who can work with a team of other internal experts to identify skill gaps and priority areas of training; and advise on succession plans for roles which exist across the organisation. These committees will allow for greater coordination of efforts and commonality of approaches, given the decentralisation of HR responsibilities to individual Ministries and Departments.

Discipline and required leave: Mr. Speaker, another issue this honourable House has rightly taken concern about was the number of civil servants who were on required leave. In other words, out of the office while maintaining full pay; and the number of civil servants who were acting in posts for extended periods of time — the Member for North Side referred to the civil service as Hollywood, because so many people were "acting". In my speech last year I announced that Hollywood had left the civil service and this year I can say so again with confidence.

We have tackled long-term acting head-on and filled the vast majority. I can only think of one senior position that has not been filled. Additionally, during the past year, we have dramatically reduced the number of civil servants on required leave from 26 to 16 persons. Mr. Speaker, please appreciate that this list is not static. The numbers have reduced during the past year with some 11 persons having been released from employment and another 14 having been put back to work.

The number will grow from time to time, when our civil servants' leaders continue to demonstrate zero tolerance for misconduct, criminality and corruption, and take bold steps to investigate allegations when they arise. Revisions are being made to the Personnel Regulations to address disciplinary procedures. Cabinet has already given approval for drafting the instructions — and I do hope to bring back the paper to Cabinet before the end of the year — which will reduce the length of time a civil servant can be on suspension while receiving full pay; and to streamline the steps necessary for releasing persons who fail to uphold the Code of Conduct and meet acceptable performance levels.

Mr. Speaker, we will also introduce policies to reduce the level of sick leave in the Civil Service. As a

caring employer, we will always offer support to those who are genuinely sick, and we will continue to promote wellness to preserve the well-being of our staff and their families; however, there are some persons who, regretfully, have abused sick leave. I am concerned about the apparent ease with which some civil servants seem to be able to obtain sick notes. We will be looking carefully at this issue and closing loopholes where they exist. I predict it will pay large dividends by boosting productivity and restoring confidence amongst the public at large, and the majority of hard-working men and women within the civil service who sometimes shoulder a disproportionate burden when their colleagues do not pull their own weight.

Social responsibility and the Deputy Governor's (DG's) 5K: Mr. Speaker, we are making great strides within the civil service to promote exercise and personal fitness. Our Monday afternoon walk-run club continues to benefit civil servants from a wide range of professional backgrounds and fitness levels. The Deputy Governor's 5K Challenge promotes community involvement, as well as promoting fitness, by raising funds for local charities. I am very proud to say that in 2017 we raised $85,000 for the YMCA.

The event is organised by civil servants and I wish to thank Chief Officer, Jennifer Ahearn, and the many dedicated volunteers who make this event possible. I also wish to thank the many private sector companies who sponsor the event and for showing their support on that day by running and walking side by side with the civil service. Good things happen when we all come together, Mr. Speaker. Over the past 4 years, we have raised just over $200,000 for local charities, and as we enter our 5th year next year, I am pleased to announce that for the first time, the event will be held in Little Cayman as well; this means the 5K event will be held on all three islands.

I want to thank all Members of this House, the Premier and others who have come out — the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier; Minister Hew has been an avid supporter as well and Minister Rivers, and I know Minister Connolly as well. Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join us next year. I know you are an avid walker as well, so I hope that you will come out next year.

The Speaker: No. Used to be.

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Used to be? Okay, used to be.
[Laughter]

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Sir, I promise you we will get you home in time for church if you want to come out.

In addition to the funds raised through our fitness activities, Mr. Speaker, many charities are supported each year by staff donations and civil servants participating in corporate dress down days.

Civil servants also participate in volunteer activities, which this year included reading activities at the Lighthouse School and the Meals on Wheels Programme. A few weeks ago I had the great pleasure of joining about 30 civil servants delivering meals and what a rewarding experience it is, Mr. Speaker, to get out in our community and meet some of our shut-ins and spend time talking with them. It is a real education; I would encourage the public to get out and support these programmes.

Mr. Speaker, allow me a few minutes to talk about the SAGCs that fall under my office. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands (CAACI) is a Statutory Authority that relies on non-coercive revenue for its growth and sustainability and does not receive a subsidy from government. The revenues of the CAACI are mainly derived from the operation of the Cayman Islands Aircraft Registry as a strong competing offshore registration option for aircraft owners, operators, and maintenance organisations based globally.

Over the past 12 months, the CAACI has continued to experience increasing aggressive competition, as other jurisdictions compete for market share of offshore aircraft registration. Additionally, the authority is challenged in its ability to attract and retain ample qualified regulatory personnel that meet internationally mandated standards. Many factors, including constrained resources, competition from jurisdictions where salaries and benefits far surpass the local offering, and the cost of living in Cayman contribute to the recruitment challenges.

Despite these challenges, the CAACI has targeted and achieved conservative growth and maintenance of market share and has maintained a reputation as a credible regulator with excellent client service options. The CAACI has retained the Governor's designation for regulatory oversight for all functional areas of aviation in the Cayman Islands, following successive assessment by the UK's Air Safety International, or ASI, which is carried out as the means of assessing the ability of the CAACI to comply with the UK's international aviation obligation under the Convention of an International Civil Aviation also known as the Chicago Convention.

The CI Aircraft Register realised conservative growth during the period, with 236 aircraft registered at the end of the 30th June, 2017. The CAACI also issues approvals to maintenance organisations based globally, which allows them to maintain Cayman-registered aircraft to the specific standards of our regulatory code. At the 30th of June 2017, there were 240 maintenance organisations holding CAACI approval.

Mr. Speaker, another milestone achievement was the setting up of the Aviation Park within the Cayman Special Economic Zone (Cayman Enterprise City). This allows an alternative means for CI-registered aircraft operators to provide CAT services offshore by establishing their principal place of busi-

ness within the Special Economic Zone. It is envisaged this will help diversify the registration subscriber base and also help the Cayman Islands compete with other jurisdictions that cater to offshore commercial air transport operations.

Mr. Speaker, the CAACI has continued to refine its work processes and procedures, embracing and employing electronic solutions such as its Bespoke Aviation data management cloud-based software VP-C Online, which also facilitate efficiencies and help reduce costs with less paper production and retention of paper archives.

Mr. Speaker, the CAACI continues to contribute to the general revenues of the Cayman Islands Government by making annual dividend payments. A dividend payment of CI$2,301,271.68 was submitted to the Treasury in September 2016 — $2 million, Mr. Speaker.

In looking to the future, the CAACI will focus on the retention of its full regulatory designation by the Governor UK for all functional regulatory matters; to recruit qualified personnel to ensure that we can meet our regulatory mandate and to provide for succession planning and business continuity; development of the CAACI corporate offices at the old Cayman Airways site at the Owen Roberts International Airport, which was just recently approved by Cabinet, so the CAA will have its own home; continue to target conservative growth of the aircraft registry by attracting qualified aircraft owners and operators. It will also aim to achieve the financial results of the approved budget for the upcoming fiscal periods.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to say a bit about the Public Service Pension Board; I know it is an organisation that is very important to all of us.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, Deputy Governor: Yes, as we get older.

Mr. Speaker, a significant milestone was achieved by the Public Service Pension Board (PSPB) in the 2016/2017 Financial Year, marking 25 years in operation. As part of the celebrations, the PSPB was rebranded with a new logo and hosted a series of appreciation events including church services in recognition of retired public servants in Grand Cayman and in Cayman Brac.

The PSPB hosted a gala event in March 2017, when it commemorated the contributions of its founding members, other past and present Board Directors as well as the dedication of the staff of the PSPB who were recognised for their sterling contributions over the last 25 years. It would, therefore, be remiss of me not to recognise the contributions of the Managing Director, Ms. Jewel Evans–Lindsay, who has been at the helm of the PSPB since its inception and continues to see it grow from strength to strength.

Also, worthy of recognition is the fact that the PSPB is an active, diversified investor with a sophisticated investment programme that has shown its ability to achieve above-average results in quarterlies within the best in class in its peer group. The PSPB has the largest pool of investment assets in the public sector and likely the largest pension fund in these Islands, having grown from a mere $3 million to in excess of three quarters of a billion United States dollars under management — approximately 160 times its original size, just 25 years ago. That is significant, Mr. Speaker.

The Government of the day entrusted the establishment and running of the PSPB to a few and, as a result, the welfare of many thousands of civil servants has been safeguarded for years to come. After 25 years, the government, as its principal sponsor, can now stand firmly behind its decision to establish the PSPB, as that decision is validated by the successes I just outlined. The tremendous significance of this venerable institution cannot be overstated; the impact of its work is self-evident in the lives of past, current, and future generations, and I congratulate them on their 25-year anniversary.

In order to make the organisation fit for purpose going forward, the MD has put in place an ambitious plan to restructure it by year's end. The increase of the normal retirement age to 65 was perhaps the most significant change the Public Service Pension Law has done in recent years. This change has had a significant impact on public servants, allowing them to simultaneously continue in public service and enhance their income in retirement. As services to the PSPB membership become more dependent on technology, the PSPB has sought to improve its cybersecurity posture and has implemented a number of initiatives this financial year. With this in mind, the PSPB will continue its cyber awareness initiatives to ensure our staff continue to provide top-class service while ensuring privacy, confidentiality, and the integrity of our clients' data.

Another highlight of the 2016/2017 year was the recruitment of an experienced pensions expert from the UK to the position of Chief Pensions Officer. In support of the PSPB 2022 Strategy, which focuses on plan sustainability and excellence in the delivery of member services, the PSPB priorities for 2018 will include:

- Full implementation and publication of service level agreements to govern the delivery of services to the membership;
- In partnership with my office and the Portfolio of the Civil Service, to develop a pensioners association and advocacy role;
- Procurement of a new pensions administration system that will aid in cutting costs and increase efficiencies in the delivery of services to the membership;

- Implementation of a revised funding plan resulting from the 1st of January 2017 actuary valuation exercise; and
- Continue with efforts to enhance the PSPB cyber-security programme to be in compliance with local and international standards.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to future legislation, my office and my team are working on a number of Bills and Regulations which will be progressed and submitted to caucus and Cabinet for approval.

My office is working on important updates to the Marriage Law and Regulations. We have received a number of complaints of bogus and suspect marriages from our law enforcement agencies; we want to have a law in place that actually works with immigration to prevent such bogus marriages, and grants the ability to properly deal with marriage officers who are not complying with the laws and regulations.

A new Prison Inspection Bill will ensure independent inspection of places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained.

Regulations for the Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Law, 2016 will support the effective functioning of a new Expungement Board which is now in place; and finally, Regulations for the Public Authorities Law will support the governance and human resources practices of public authorities.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, as I mentioned earlier, amendments will be made to the Personnel Regulations to streamline our disciplinary procedures; and also to the Public Service Pension Law to improve the composition of the Board of Directors. Another area of change for pension administration will be amendments to the Public Service Ex-gratia Pensions Regulations to facilitate minimum pension earning thresholds for qualifying public servants.

Regulations for The Standards in Public Life Law will be given effect and, Mr. Speaker, as we all have been talking about, the Legislative Assembly Management Bill to create a management body for the overall separation of this Parliament from the civil service, will be brought in 2018. It is to enhance the operations of our Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I know you are interested in the budget provisions for the Parliament in the upcoming budget. Over the next two years we will see a range of ambitious activities you have pursued, Sir. These will include adopting a Docket Management system, creating a digital library, improving Legislative Assembly security, and enhancing the staff complement to include a Hansard Editor and a Chamber Page, among other things. Those are the highlights.

The Speaker: Those are the highlights?

Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Those are the highlights; yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Standards Unit was moved under my office in order that we can have separation from the actual Education Ministry, as they do the inspections of schools. That office is now up and running and we have recruited staff. I am also in discussion with the new Chair of the Education Council, Mr. Scott, to ensure the Unit can report into his Council so they can drive it in terms of what audits they would like to see; and so there is a reporting structure in that office.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak a little about Project Future which, as you know, the Premier and I launched in October 2015. It was the largest change agenda in the history of the Cayman Islands Public Service, with projects informed by the 2014 Ernst and Young (E&Y) Review.

As of August 2017, just over a year and a half after implementation of the five-year programme, there are clear signs of progress. Twelve projects have been closed with a further 24 in progress and 10 in the execution stage, with four scheduled to be closed by the end of October 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that Project Future has introduced new ways of working in the civil service which not only have the potential to improve the success of non-capital projects, but serve to fill gaps in the decision-making process and project management approaches within the civil service that have been identified by our Auditor General.

Coordinated by the Strategic Reforms Implementation Unit (SRIU), the programme introduced the use of business cases as tools to strengthen the quality of our advice to the Government on how we can achieve their policy priorities. I am pleased to note that the vast majority of approved Project Future business cases documents to date, 19 of 23, have been prepared by civil servants who have been trained in that particular area. We are also developing formal project management skills across the service to improve our management and delivery of projects. In 2018/2019 we will build on this work by embedding the good practice lessons learnt thus far from Project Future into our day-to-day work.

As part of our development strategy for the civil service, we will continue to build internal capacity and capabilities in relation to business case and project management methodologies. This will enable us in training, providing more hands-on project support for civil servants engaged in project delivery, and in the establishment of a project management community of practice for CIG [Cayman Islands Government]. We are doing things differently; we have learnt some hard lessons and we are well on our way to achieving success.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Infrastructure spoke about e-Government, so I won't go into too much detail, but I am very proud of the work that the Ministry has been doing in relation to e-Government. Last year I announced in my speech that our E-

Government Steering Committee had set a goal whereby within 3 years — that is by the end of 2019 — no government entity will be allowed to ask a customer to provide any information already owned or in the possession of another government entity other than to establish identity.

How many times have we heard someone say, *I went to a particular government department and they just sent me to another government department to get some paperwork?* We want to put an end to that. If you go to the Immigration Department to submit a work permit and they need a police clearance, you should not be sent over to the Police Records Office. Immigration should have the ability to access your criminal record. That is just one example, Mr. Speaker.

I am also pleased to advise that in 2018/2019 we will be starting to realise our goal with the introduction of inter-operability of key services for entities such as General Registry, Department of Commerce and Investment and the Criminal Records Office. The infrastructure to securely facilitate this will be installed before the end of this year, and training for the systems administrators and software developers has already started, so we are well on our way, Mr. Speaker. We have continued to make progress in many other areas that have or will improve the delivery of government services to our citizens and improve interactions with business and industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister talked about the e-services Government Portal and about being able to get your police record done online now. I can say that since the 10th of May, over 3600 applications or 23 per cent of all submissions have been submitted via this service. In our recent survey of customers who utilise the service, 65 per cent scored it at 9 or 10 — 65 per cent on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the best. Sixty-five per cent! That is a very, very good start, Mr. Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Infrastructure spoke about the improvements at the Planning Department, so I will not go over that except to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is important for my office and the Minister to work together to achieve the results he stated in his speech. I can say, without reservations, that the aspirations the Minister has for how he would like to see his departments and agencies operate are identical to mine. We have the exact same goal, and I want to assure the Minister that he will have the full support of my office and the civil service, as he looks at making some major changes to services in Planning, Trade & Business and the Driver's License areas to name a few. We are all on the same page; we all want to achieve fantastic results for our people.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to speak a bit about our Strategic Plan. As you know, strategic, effective planning is a critical component of good management and governance. Planning helps assure us that an organisation remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the people it serves; enables us to look into the future in an orderly and systematic way; facilitates new programme developments and also provides a basis for monitoring progress and assessing results and impact. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have taken important steps to develop the very first strategic plan for the civil service.

Mr. Speaker, hundreds of civil servants and other stakeholders provided frank feedback through our civil service re-imagining initiative, but instead of focusing on our deficiencies and problems like so many other reports do, we focused on what was possible when the civil service was at its best. This work was coordinated by the SRIU [Strategic Reforms Implementation Unit] and is now involved through a partnership with the Portfolio of Civil Service in specific objectives and actions to be pursued as part of a Five-Year Strategic Plan for the Civil Service.

Mr. Speaker, our vision is bold: to be a World Class Civil Service. Now, Mr. Speaker, *I know* that vision immediately puts a bullseye on the back of every civil servant. Why? Because the public will expect us to be world-class overnight and that won't happen; but the added pressure will drive the right behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, some have asked: Why be so bold? Why world-class? The answer is simple: because it is what the people, the elected officials, and civil servants deserve. They do not deserve regional best or Caribbean best. We want to be world-class. The public deserves world-class programmes and services. Elected Officials deserve world-class policy advice and implementation, and civil servants deserve a world-class employer.

Mr. Speaker, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: **"The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it; if it fails, admit it frankly and try another but above all, try something. The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach."** Let me say it again, Mr. Speaker: **"...but above all, try something. The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach."**

Isn't that what we have been hearing here in the Cayman Islands? I think that quote is very appropriate and relevant to our beloved Islands, Mr. Speaker but, as the former President said, it requires "bold persistent experimentation." We have to be doing things differently to achieve different results because we must aspire to be the best by any standards.

We aspire to make excellence our norm in the civil service, and in 2018, 2019, and beyond, we are committed to implementing programmes, policies and procedures that will serve to ensure that we become increasingly effective at working with the Elected Government to deliver excellent incomes for the people of the Cayman Islands; and providing excellent

standards of customer service, at operating in a fair and equitable manner and, at offering good value for money in the way in which we use the resources entrusted to us by the public. To achieve this, stakeholders within the civil service and the private sector identified five key goals for us to tackle:

- Leadership;
- Customer experience;
- Talent development;
- Communication; and
- Governance

In each of these areas, the aspiration is for "excellence". Given our starting point in some of these areas, the cynical response might be to consider this unattainable; however, I am forever reminded that these are not just lofty aspirations. Currently, across the civil service, there are numerous examples of excellence. Our greatest challenge, therefore, is to make this practice our business as usual. While all five goals are going live in 2018 and 2019, the priority goals over the next two years are customer service and leadership, which we believe are the keys to unlocking success in all the other goal areas. Let me explain.

Customer experience: continuing the trend of making bold new projections around planning improvements for our customers, I am excited to announce just a few developments for our strategic plan for the civil service that speak to our commitment to putting the customer at the heart of everything we do. Beginning next month, we will place customer feedback devices in 10 high-traffic departments to measure customer satisfaction in real time. This will allow us to benchmark the level of customer service being provided, but also promote accountability.

Commencing next year, Mr. Speaker, we will provide dedicated support to these departments to assist them in driving improved performance, including introducing training for all front-line personnel and their managers. I like to lead by example, so I am going to attend some of the customer service training because I want the same training my staff is getting. Work will also commence in 2018 to roll out deliver service standards, so that there is greater transparency and accountability for performance at the department level.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, this means extending customer service measurements for departments that transact most of their business at arm's length, including government agencies, whose primary customers are internal customers. We want to make sure that all our agencies, not just the public-facing ones, but the ones who are supporting those outside agencies, are all working to the same level.

Mr. Speaker, someone said, "A company is doing right if both its employees and customers are happy." I agree. The data we receive from our customers will provide objective feedback on the effectiveness of our customer service improvement strategies. This is very much an outward-facing measure that we will use to gauge our progress. At the same time, we are also giving priority to ensuring that we know how our employees feel about our organisation. An engaged employee is important as he/she will be enthusiastic about work and take positive action to further the organisation's reputation and interest.

In that vein, Mr. Speaker, another initiative to come from our strategic plan will be the implementation of an employee engagement survey. Our employee engagement survey started just this week, seeking frank feedback from each and every civil servant. This survey will provide baseline data against which we can measure our progress with the employee engagement that sheds light on the many facets of the civil service such as leadership, learning and development, organisational culture, pay and benefits, and inclusion and fair treatment, to name a few. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we are not only preparing ambitious plans for improvement, we are establishing accountability mechanisms that will provide objective feedback from our customers and our staff about what progress is being made. This feedback will allow us to know what is working and what is not, and to make the necessary adjustments as we move forward in our journey towards world-class standards.

Leadership: Mr. Speaker, the other area in the strategic plan that will be tackled in 2018 & 2019 is leadership. I have listened to complaints from the public and, this week, Members of this honourable House, about the ineffectiveness of our public services. Complaints vary, whether it is a lack of enforcement or substandard service, but the vast majority of complaints can be attributed to one thing: poor leadership. What I have found in the civil service is that we have trained our staff to be good technocrats, but we have not trained those who are leaders to be great leaders. We need leaders who will inspire and motivate their staff while holding them accountable. We need leaders who are going to own their responsibilities and not shy away from making the tough decisions required for us to reach that world-class level.

Mr. Speaker, for an example of leadership, we need to look no further than yourself. On Wednesday an issue was brought to your attention; you owned the issue and took decisive action. Such leadership is what we need to be business as usual in the Civil Service. Mr. Speaker, you did not shy away from the issue that was brought to your attention; you owned it and made your decision. Whether people liked it or not is beside the point. The matter was dealt with appropriately. That, Mr. Speaker, is good leadership.

How are we going to get there, Mr. Speaker? Our leadership training has already begun. We have trained 100 leaders and aspiring leaders during a one-day leadership summit led by a distinguished author and motivational speaker. Each year, for the past three years, we have sent leaders to a public service leadership conference in Toronto, hosted by the Inter-

national Public Administration. Locally, senior leaders and aspiring leaders have been sponsored to participate in Leadership Cayman, organised by the Chamber of Commerce, and the Executive Global Certificate in Leadership offered jointly by UCCI and FIU, so we have already started our leadership training.

Early next year, Mr. Speaker, we will extend our use of the 360 Feedback, which currently applies to myself and Chief Officers, to all Heads of Department. Within three years, 360 feedback will be applied to all the approximately 300 persons who act as supervisors, managers, and strategic leaders. We are currently launching the Cayman Islands Government core competencies, which identify the essential behaviours needed for individual contributors, supervisors, managers, and strategic leaders to realise our shared vision to be a world-class civil service. These competencies are represented in three clusters:

- developing capabilities;
- working together; and
- delivering results..

Mr. Speaker, beginning in 2018, strategic leaders and HODs will lead by example and be the first to adopt these core competencies as part of their performance objectives. The programme will allow the civil service to strengthen performance management and to assess leadership behaviours more accurately in addition to their outputs. Dedicated support will be provided to bolster leadership across the organisation. We are developing a Leadership Academy as a component of the Civil Service College, which will consolidate and expand local and overseas learning and develop opportunities that are linked to core and functional competencies, which are job-specific.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like the civil service to look at innovative ways of solving problems to work smarter. In our research, a number of governments and civil services have put in place something called "behavioural insights teams" also called 'Nudge Units'. When a government has a particular problem, they give it to this special unit and say, "come up with an innovative way of solving this problem." I will give you two examples which I found to be fascinating.

In a particular UK borough, people were parking their cars outside their homes, in front of their garages, and they were being stolen at night. Every night a car was stolen from in front of a house. Now, Mr. Speaker, what would we do in Cayman if in my district in West Bay, we began to get a rise in car thefts? We would put in CCTV; ask the police to do more patrols, put in more policemen. We would do many things that cost a lot of money. This particular unit came out, looked at the situation, saw that everyone was parking their cars in front of their garages every evening and the cars were getting stolen so instead of more policemen, more CCTV, they said to the homeowners, *why don't you simply clean out your garage and park your car in the garage?* End of story. People put their cars in the garages and they were no longer being stolen. It didn't cost anyone anything.

Another initiative was when the Courts found that many traffic tickets, something like ten per cent, were [not] being paid. What would we do if 10 per cent of the public were not paying their traffic fines? Well, what we do now — we send a policeman out to hunt the person down, arrest them, and up their fines. They sent the problem to the Nudge Unit and they said, *Okay, let us try a new strategy.* They had all the people's information and they sent them a text message saying, *Pay your fine or get prosecuted.* When the person got a personal text message (not a letter, as letters don't work) saying, *Come and pay your traffic fine by this particular date,* right away, they got five per cent better compliance. The second time they personalised it and said: *Franz Manderson, you owe us $400, come and pay it.* It shot up by 20 per cent. The last time, they sent the person a picture of their licence plate, their car, and their name and said, *Come and pay it.* That was the end of the problem.

That is an innovative way that we can solve problems, so Mr. Speaker, I am going to be discussing this with our elected leaders and looking around the civil service as to how we can develop that type of expertise within our civil service, to work smarter, to find innovative ways of solving some of the issues that face us. Mr. Speaker, in a way, many of the problems we have here are experienced all over the world, except on a much larger scale. I do not believe in reinventing the wheel, so let us all work together to come up with some easy solutions to some of our big problems. That is an innovative way that we can solve problems, so Mr. Speaker, I am going to be discussing this with our elected leaders and looking around the civil service as to how we can develop that type of expertise within our civil service, to work smarter, to find innovative ways of solving some of the issues that face us. Mr. Speaker, in a way, many of the problems we have here are experienced all over the world, except on a much larger scale. I do not believe in reinventing the wheel, so let us all work together to come up with some easy solutions to some of our big problems.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that I have always acknowledged and indeed welcomed the significant public scrutiny the civil service attracts. As I have explained before, we do the people's work and should be held accountable. Regretfully, comments on the civil service are often framed with negative headlines but I trust that I have demonstrated today, through the many examples of achievement and progress, that while the civil service is under intense pressure and scrutiny, we are tackling the issues head-on and have bold plans for dramatic improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my sincere thanks to all civil servants who work hard every day to serve their government and the people of these Is-

lands. There are many who exceed customer expectations, and over the next few years we want this to become the norm.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the dedicated professionals in the wider Portfolio of the Civil Service who continue to drive improvements in HR management, public sector reform, and governance. Led by a highly capable Chief Officer, Ms. Gloria McField- Nixon, this team continues to produce sterling work that benefits performance across the entire civil service and delivers tangible results. The civil service has not only survived an extended period of austerity, but despite the odds, manages to thrive, drive innovation, and regain respect in many areas.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, presents a real turning point where we can return to business as usual, and accelerate HR modernisations to fuel performance and realise the vision of being a World-Class Civil Service. Mr. Speaker, for this vision to be achieved, it will take the entire civil service, working in tandem, to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. As such, I also wish to thank the talented group of chief officers, who expertly lead their respective ministries and portfolios, and who work closely with me every day, as we reform and change the culture of our civil service.

Mr. Speaker, all the improvements that I have mentioned would not have been achieved without the hard work of the chief officers, and I thank them all. As Deputy Governor and Head of the Civil Service, I ask for your continued support, as well as the support of all the Honourable Members of this House and the listening public. Together, we can ensure that the work delivered by the civil service continues to provide a solid bedrock upon which the social well-being, economic growth, and national competitiveness of the Cayman Islands can be sustained and expanded.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer my personal congratulations and support to the Minister of Finance and his team, for delivering his first Budget; by all accounts, Honourable Minister, you have done an excellent job and we wish you and your team continued success.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Attorney General.

Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, Attorney General: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am conscious that this is bordering on anti-social hours on a Friday evening, but I must publicly congratulate the Honourable Deputy Governor for the passionate presentation. Well done!

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my contribution to the Budget Address and Throne Speech, together with the Government's Policy Statement, and wish to congratulate Her Excellency as well as the Honourable Premier and the Honourable Minister of Finance for their presentations of those speeches respectively.

I intend to touch briefly on a number of departments that fall under the Portfolio of Legal Affairs starting with the Anti-Money Laundering Unit. Mr. Speaker, as you are no doubt aware, the Government is working tirelessly to prepare for the upcoming Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) the fourth round of mutual evaluations in early December. The Cayman Islands will be assessed, Mr. Speaker, for effective implementation of the revised 40 FATF Recommendations that were promulgated in 2012 and the related methodology that was promulgated in 2013.

To this end, the Anti-Money Laundering Unit in the Portfolio of Legal Affairs has coordinated the development of a national risk assessment dealing with anti-money laundering, and this was done on behalf of the Anti-Money Laundering Steering group. The Unit itself, Mr. Speaker, is also servicing as a focal point for disseminating information on the results of the national risk assessment to all the relevant competent authorities and self-regulatory bodies. They are also serving as a focal point for the financial institutions and the designated non-financial businesses and professions. This latter group consists of the casinos, real estate agents, dealers of precious metals and stones, lawyers and accountants as well as those involved in trust and corporate service businesses.

The Anti-Money Laundering Unit has also overseen the implementation of a number of new legislation or amendments to existing anti-money laundering related legislation, with a view to strengthening the existing statutory framework, Mr. Speaker in combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and, of course, proliferation financing, and making sure they are in conformity with international standards.

Mr. Speaker, for the wider public, proliferation financing refers to the act of providing funding or financial services which are used for the possession, acquisition, manufacture, export, stockpiling or use of nuclear chemical or biological weapons.

Some of the legislative changes I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, include amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Law, as well as the Terrorism Law, and the latter piece of the legislation, the Terrorism Law, seeks to implement the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the suppression of the financing of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, we are also proposing additional amendments to bring the Terrorism Law further in line with relevant FATF standards. We also recently promulgated, on the 2nd of October, a new set of Anti-Money Laundering Regulations replacing the old regulations. The new regulations are far more contemporary as they reflect, in all their manifestations, the revised 40 FATF recommendations, some of which, as

you know, Mr. Speaker, deal with the issue of beneficial ownership for legal persons.

Mr. Speaker, we are also seeking to amend the Penal Code to include a more streamlined provision that would create a predicate offence to money laundering where certain revenues of the government are defrauded. The proposed amendment seeks to make certain acts or omissions, when done with the intent to defraud the Government of revenues, a predicate offence, so these are some of the illustrations of the Government's ongoing initiatives to further enhance the relevant legal and institutional framework of the Cayman Islands. However, more importantly, it demonstrates government's continuing commitment to comply with the international standards and best practices in the areas of anti-money laundering and the combating of the financing of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives have been pursued in partnership with the Ministry of Financial Services, the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority and, as is customary, in consultation with the Financial Services industry and other stakeholders. On conclusion of the onsite mutual evaluation in mid-December, we are keen to demonstrate that that would not be the end of the work for the Anti-Money Laundering Unit and the stakeholders involved in this initiative. In 2018, we are hoping to embark on training and awareness in a number of areas, including general awareness for money-laundering reporting officers and compliance officers, and for sanctions-related initiatives, dealing with terrorism and financing thereof, as well as general anti-money laundering risk.

Mr. Speaker, it is well-known and accepted that the continuing good reputation of the financial services industry of these Islands is paramount. It is, therefore, imperative that we continue to work together, the public and private sector, of course, to enable its continuing viability. These Islands have been reviewed every which way and we have always managed to demonstrate our adherence to international standards.

Mr Speaker, we are painfully aware that the upcoming review by the CFATF is not going to be an easy one. Indeed, I may be bold to say that it is going to be rigorous. We are all aware that the Cayman Islands is not given any margin of error. The standards themselves are onerous and in support of this observation, I just want to remind this House, Mr. Speaker, that some major countries have undergone this review and have been categorised for enhanced follow-up. Countries such as the United States, Canada, Belgium and Australia have all gone through this fourth round of evaluation and were put into what we call enhanced follow-up, which is that they are given about a year to ensure that all the weaknesses that have been identified during the review are addressed and it has to be done within a particular timeframe. Very onerous!

Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear: that, as we have done in the past, we will prevail. We have some of the best and brightest professionals, private and public sector, and they are assisting with this preparation, and we are confident that we will continue to demonstrate to the world that our financial services industry, our regulatory framework, and our administrative and other legal framework, are among the best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to also make reference to the work of the Financial Reporting Authority, the FRA. This agency is under the able leadership of a new Director, Mr. Robert R.J. Berry, who was appointed in 2016 and is also involved in the parallel efforts in respect of the upcoming mutual valuation. Pursuant to its mandate under the Proceeds of Crime Law, the FRA has continued its diligent work in the field of financial intelligence and in particular, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the analysis of financial information disclosures in order to counter money-laundering, terrorism, and financing thereof.

Along with the Anti-Money Laundering Unit, the Monetary Authority, the Ministry of Financial Services, the FRA played a key role, Mr. Speaker, in completing the National Risk Assessment that I mentioned earlier, and this is part of the preparation of the upcoming evaluation. The risk assessment relates to the Cayman Islands' obligation to identify, assess and effectively mitigate money laundering and terrorism financing risk, and to utilise resources to counter those risks in the most efficient manner.

In anticipation of this new, or some of the upcoming responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, a dedicated Sanctions Coordinator is appointed to the Financial Reporting Authority in 2017. The post holder plays a critical role in the implementation and enforcement of targeted financial sanctions and other restrictive measures related to anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism and proliferation. Mr. Speaker, we just need to remind ourselves about some of these United Nations Security Council resolutions dealing with places such as North Korea. Those, believe it or not, concern us as well, given the nature of the business that we are in, thus a Sanctions Coordinator being appointed to have direct responsibility for dealing with those.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the FRA, I would like to highlight that, during the period 2016/2017, the FRA received over 600 new suspicious activity reports. The total number of reports exceeded 600 for the second consecutive fiscal year and, Mr. Speaker, the growing numbers are indicative of the vigilance of the reporting entities against efforts of unscrupulous persons to launder money in our jurisdiction, and of course, the display of enhanced due diligence on the part of our financial services providers.

Mr. Speaker, another area that falls under the Portfolio of Legal Affairs is the Truman Bodden Law

School and that deals with the provision of legal education. As part of the Truman Bodden Law School's long-standing relationship with the University of Liverpool, in September 2017 two new postgraduate programmes were launched: Post graduate Diploma and Master of Laws (LLM) in International Finance on a part-time basis; and it is anticipated that from 2019 the programmes will be provided on a full-time basis.

Another outstanding achievement for the Law School in 2017 was the establishment of a new postgraduate partnership with Oxford Brookes University in the UK, in relation to our Professional Practice course, known as the PPC for the Law School; thanks to the dedicated effort of the Director of the Law School and his staff. Mr. Speaker, what this means is that persons who successfully completed the PPC course will now get a certificate from Oxford Brookes University in the UK, evidencing the completion thereof.

Mr. Speaker, from September 2017, the University of Oxford Brookes will also award the Sports Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice to our students. The significance of the PPC course, Mr. Speaker, is that for those students who have completed their LLB degrees here but are not desirous of proceeding to the United Kingdom to further their studies, they do the PPC and then go on to do 18 months of Articles, so it is quite a useful course.

Additionally, in September 2019, the Law School intends to enter into an agreement again with Oxford Brookes University, which will allow successful PPC students at our law school to register with that University for a Master of Law Degree in Legal Practice to be awarded also from that University upon completion of the relevant dissertation. Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate the significance of this milestone, not just for Law School and its reputation, but also for the graduates who will now have the opportunity to expand the scope of their academic qualifications without the associated expense of studying and residing abroad in doing so.

Mr. Speaker, the law school graduation that recently took place in August showed some stellar results. Of the eight PPC graduates, four students graduated with distinction and the other four graduated with a commendation. Of the 11 graduates in the LLB Degree Program, two were awarded first-class honours and six received upper second-class honours degrees. Mr. Speaker, though the graduating class was smaller than previous years, the proportion of the number of students graduating this year, these results, were definitely among the best the Law School has ever recorded.

Mr. Speaker, no student passed the PPC with less than a commendation, and this has never happened before. Every student passed with at least a commendation; therefore, I understandably wish to congratulate the Director and his staff for their excellent job in providing legal education to our students from our own Law School. It is a really first-rate legal education programme which is helping to upskill our people.

Mr. Speaker, I move now to the Legislative Drafting Department. Earlier I touched on the legislative reform in the context of the upcoming mutual evaluation. I would add, however, that the various legislative initiatives that I referred to only form part of the work of the Legislative Drafting Department. The Legislative Council, Mr. Speaker, has continued and, in the coming year, will continue to work on proposed amendments to existing laws, including the Evidence Law, the Matrimonial Causes Law, the Youth Justice Law as well as the promulgation of new laws, such as the Cost in Criminal Proceedings Bill which, Mr. Speaker, will seek to streamline the procedures by which courts determine when costs should be awarded to defendants who have been acquitted.

Mr. Speaker, the department is also continuing to assist with the work on the Data Protection Regulations. Mrs. Myrtle Brandt, who headed that department for some 20 years, and who is so familiar and helpful to all of us, finally retired in June of this year, and we certainly wish her an enjoyable and well-deserved retirement. The department is now headed by Ms. Cheryl Neblett, who was formerly the Director of the Law Reform Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Members will recall the case of *Donette Thompson v the HSA*, a case that was described by the courts as sad and troubling and, as a result, Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Assembly amended the HSA [Health Services Authority] Law in June of last year, to modify the scope of the immunity afforded to the Authority. If we recall, it was a case where medical negligence was alleged in respect of a child who was born in very unfortunate circumstances. I say alleged, Mr. Speaker, because no negligence has been proven against anybody at this stage, neither the hospital nor the attending doctors, but the problem there was that the way the Law was crafted, is that the parties were barred from even bringing the action to court in the first place to allege negligence.

The Law has been changed, and it is now the position that the Authority's Directors and the Committees (HSA Authorities and Directors, of course), will not be liable for acts and omissions, unless it can be shown that the act or omission was either negligent or in bad faith. Prior to that, you could only be sued if you could demonstrate bad faith which is tantamount to wilful intent, which was very difficult to prove. Mr. Speaker, what that means is that, in order to ensure consistency with similar immunity provisions in other laws, we are now undertaking a review of the various other laws to try and harmonise the similar sections in other laws to make sure, where appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that persons might be able to bring actions in negligence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is true that there are some statutory authorities where this might not be

appropriate, given the nature of the work they are involved in, so we will have to ensure that in doing so, we don't invite what is called the "floodgate effect" of allowing people to allege negligence in every action or steps taken by some of these regulatory authorities. We are thus working on ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that there is an appropriate balance that is allowing litigants, where appropriate, to bring a claim in negligence, but, of course, they would still have to prove negligence; and also to ensure that, in respect of some authorities, that they continue to enjoy a certain degree of protection from certain claims in negligence.

Mr. Speaker, I will touch briefly on the Law Revision Commission. The Law Revision Commission headed by a new Commissioner, Mrs. Camille Stoll-Davey. She joined us in 2016 and will be working to achieve a more harmonised structure for all stages of our legislative process — that is from the drafting of the Bills to the Gazettal of the Laws. We are trying to establish, Mr. Speaker, and we are hoping at some stage to partner with the Legislative Assembly in that, in this initiative, we will have a sort of a harmonised workflow where we can track the work from the moment the Bills have been drafted, the moment it is sent to the Clerk, enacted, and sent back to the Governor for publication. All parties can be working basically from the same platform to ensure that there is consistency and harmony. We are hoping to be able to roll that out sometime during the course of next year, Mr. Speaker, and we will certainly hear more about that.

Mr. Speaker, on the Law Reform Commission itself, as you know, the Commission's mandate is to study and review the statutes and other laws comprising the laws of the Cayman Islands with a view to their systemic development and reform to keep them contemporary. This work is inevitably ongoing and of significant importance given the ever-changing needs of contemporary Cayman Islands society. Mr. Speaker, we have a Bill of Rights, which is enshrined in our Constitution, and also, there is a need to reform the laws to reflect government's priorities and so, Mr. Speaker, the work of the Law Reform Commission is understandably of vital importance in trying to keep us on the cutting edge of legislative proposals.

Mr. Speaker, some of the initiatives that the Law Reform Commission will be looking at are the measures to introduce provisions which will facilitate plea bargaining or plea agreements between the defendants and the prosecutions, and the prosecution when determining the offences to be tried and the penalties to be pursued. They will also be looking, Mr. Speaker, to the introduction of provisions intended to safeguard the interest of consumers and to provide adequate remedies when consumer standards are breached.

Mr. Speaker, they will also be looking at the modernisation of the Computer Misuse Law, in order to respond to the various forms of cyber-criminal conduct and cyber security issues. In respect of this particular project recent headlines, just last week, about data security incident at one of the Island's leading law firm and fiduciary firms would have served as a sobering reminder to the Government, and to all concerned, of course, of the need for vigilance in the ever complex IT world in which we live and operate.

Mr. Speaker, as ever, the work of the Law Reform Commission is in the form of legislative recommendations to government. Therefore, all these initiatives will have to go through the various stages of policy discussions before the final acceptance, but they are, as expected, well thought out and well researched recommendations for the Government's consideration.

Mr. Speaker, continuing on issues from the Portfolio, please allow me to observe that both the Solicitor General and I, with the support of our Honourable Deputy Governor, continue to facilitate and encourage the training and continuing professional development of Caymanians within the Portfolio, through our Article Clerk Training Programme, as well as on-the-job professional development both locally and abroad.

I am pleased to report that our last Articled Clerk took up a legal position within the civil service with Mr. Kern Owens now providing legal advice and support to the RCIPS, and Mr. Garvin Dixon, having joined the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution as a Crown Counsel. Mr. Speaker, there are currently two Articled Clerks undertaking their legal training within the Portfolio; one of whom, Ms. Da'vina Ramoutar, Assistant Clerk, who is familiar to many of us in this House, and the other, Mr. Gerard Coe, who is scheduled to complete his Articles within the first quarter of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to note that over the past 10 years, the Portfolio has provided training to over 20 Law School graduates seeking to undertake their Articles as part of the Portfolio's commitment to affording Caymanians the opportunity to cross that final hurdle before qualifying as practitioners. I am extremely pleased to announce that the Portfolio has sought to include in its budget for 2018/2019, funding for an additional Article Clerk position, which will allow us to increase our Article Clerks complement to three.

As in years before, I want to reiterate my thanks to CIMA and to the various private firms, such as Maples and Walkers, for partnering with the Portfolio, in allowing our Article Clerks the invaluable opportunity to undertake part of their training within these firms. This collaboration, of course, all goes to the benefit of the individual article clerks but ultimately, to the legal profession as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, demand on the Portfolio for legal services across government continues to grow. This has included a considerable number of well-publicised challenges to matters under the Immigration Law, and in particular, delays in the processing of applications

for permanent residence. In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are Bill of Rights issues that have continued to engage our Chambers on a trend which we expect may well continue into coming years.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of National Security, please allow me to applaud the Government for its ongoing commitment to the safety and security of these Islands as evidenced by, among other things, the provision of appropriation for 75 new police officers over the next three years. This initiative will understandably result in greater visibility of the police in the various districts.

It is no secret that our officers are stretched, as the Commissioner of Police and his officers endeavour to keep our streets and neighbourhoods safe, and deserve our support and encouragement; hence it is appropriate for me to use this forum to join those who have expressed their consternation and, indeed, disgust, at the recent spate of inexcusable assaults on our police officers.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: It is out of character with these Islands, and must be condemned by all right-thinking members of our society. Police officers should be assisted, not assaulted, Mr. Speaker. Assaulting police officers is a direct attack on the Rule of Law and must be condemned in the strongest terms.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the very hard-working staff of the Portfolio of Legal Affairs for their continuing dedication and professionalism. They continue to toil quietly and I certainly do appreciate their efforts. Finally, as ever, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Government for the continuing funding and their support of the initiatives of the Portfolio, as we pledge our support to continue to provide quality legal services in the coming years and beyond.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Alden M McLaughlin, Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Members for working hard today. In light of those efforts and relatively good behaviour, I think we should go home fifteen minutes early tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Members that we intend to wind up the debate on the Budget on Monday and start Finance Committee at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday. That way we will be able to conduct Cabinet and we can press on with the consideration of the budget. We know we are working against a hard deadline of the 24th of November to complete the business of this Meeting, hence the late nights, so I again wish to thank Members for their cooperation in doing the country's work.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10:00 a.m. on Monday, the 6th of November.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do now adjourn until 10 am, Monday, 6th November.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

At 8:47 pm the House stood adjourned until Monday, 6th November at 10 o'clock in the morning.