



**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



# **PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS**

## **OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**First Meeting of the 2024/2025 Session**  
*First Sitting*

**Monday**  
**7 October, 2024**  
*(Pages 1-39)*

**Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin**  
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

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

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister of Education, District Administration & Lands and Finance & Economic Development
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of Financial Services & Commerce <i>and</i> Investment, Innovation & Social Development
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Minister of Tourism & Ports
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports and Heritage
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, OCI, JP, MP	Minister of Border Control & Labour and Culture

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Eric Bush, JP	<i>Acting Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, KC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Hon. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Parliamentary Secretary to Tourism <i>and</i> Social Development, Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
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APOLOGIES

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert Hon, JP	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**  
**FIRST MEETING OF THE 2024/25 SESSION**  
**MONDAY**  
**7 OCTOBER, 2024**  
**11.06 A.M.**  
*First Sitting*

*[Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Speaker, presiding]*

**The Speaker:** Good morning. May I invite the Honourable Premier to lead us in prayers?

### PRAYERS

**The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Finance, Education and District Administration & Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East:** Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let us pray:

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

*Bless our Sovereign, King Charles III; William, Prince of Wales; and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace 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 Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers of the Cabinet, ex officio Members, Members of the Parliament, the Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary that we may be enabled faithfully to perform the responsible duties of our high office. All this we ask 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.

Madam Clerk, would you please read the proclamation summoning this Meeting of the Parliament.

### READING OF PROCLAMATION

**The Clerk:** PROCLAMATION NO. 2 OF 2024 BY HER EXCELLENCY JANE OWEN, GOVERNOR OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS.

WHEREAS section 83(1) of the Constitution of the Cayman Islands provides that the sessions of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands shall be held at such places and begin at such times as the Governor may from time to time by proclamation appoint;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jane Owen, Governor of the Cayman Islands, by virtue of the powers conferred upon me by section 83(1) of the Constitution of the Cayman Islands HEREBY PROCLAIM that a session of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands shall begin and be held at the House of Parliament, George Town, Grand Cayman at 10 a.m. on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2024 and shall thereafter continue until such date and time as the Parliament may adjourn thereto.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND THE PUBLIC SEAL OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS AT GEORGE TOWN IN THE ISLAND OF GRAND CAYMAN THIS 19<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-FOUR IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Clerk.

### ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

**The Speaker:** May I invite Mr. Eric Bush, the Acting Honourable Deputy Governor responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service, to come forward and make the Oath of Allegiance and Due Execution of Office, to allow him to become the Temporary ex officio Member of the Parliament, in the absence of the Deputy Governor. Members, please stand.

#### Oath of Allegiance

**Hon. Eric Bush, Acting Deputy Governor:** I, Eric Bush, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III, his heirs and successors, according to Law, so help me God.

#### Oath of Due Execution of Office

**Hon. Eric Bush, Acting Deputy Governor:** I, Eric Bush, do swear that I will well and truly serve His Majesty King Charles III, His heirs and successors, and the people of the Cayman Islands in the Office of Ex-Officio Member of Parliament, so help me God.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Eric Bush, may I congratulate you on your temporary appointment and welcome you, in your role as temporary ex officio Member, to this Parliament.

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

**The Speaker:** I have received apologies for this Meeting from the Honourable Deputy Governor Franz Manderson and from the Hon. G. Wayne Panton, the Member for Newlands.

### PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** None.

### PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

#### Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands – Annual Report 2023 – Excellence & Innovation In Aviation Regulation – Fiscal Year Ended 31 December 2023

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

**Hon. André M. Ebanks, Deputy Premier, Minister of Financial Services & Commerce and Investment, Innovation & Social Development, Elected Member for West Bay South:** Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands Annual Report 2023 entitled Excellence and Innovation in Aviation Regulation, for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2023.

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

**Hon. André M. Ebanks, Deputy Premier:** Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, to thank the staff of the Civil Aviation Authority ably and expertly led by Mr. Richard Smith, Director-General. Their work is exemplary, their contacts and the way they support the industry are exemplary, and the way that they regulate is exemplary. [!] thank them all.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

#### Cayman Islands Stock Exchange – Report for the Fiscal Year Ending 31 December 2023

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

**Hon. André M. Ebanks, Deputy Premier:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange Report for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

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

**Hon. André M. Ebanks, Deputy Premier:** Only briefly, sir, to thank the staff and the Board.

The Cayman Islands Stock Exchange is led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Marco Archer. This is a very nimble organisation that provides a dividend to the Government and provides an additional tool in financial services. I just had the honour of traveling throughout Asia with the CEO, Marco Archer, who is expanding market share, so I expect an even more glowing report in 2024, but I thank the staff for all their work in 2023.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

#### Health Services Authority - 2023 Annual Report – Reinforcing Our Dedication To Our Mission

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Prospect:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Health Services Authority - 2023 Annual Report – Reinforcing Our Dedication to Our Mission.

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

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 52(8) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision), I am pleased to present to this honourable House, the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of the Cayman Islands Health

Services Authority for the 12-month [period] ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

The Health Services Authority (HSA) is a statutory body established as an Authority on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2002, under the Health Services Authority Law. The purpose of the Authority is to provide health care services in the Cayman Islands in accordance with the National Health Strategy and Plan prepared by the Cayman Islands Government.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, HSA provides primary and secondary care through the 127-bed Cayman Islands Hospital on Grand Cayman, 18-bed Faith Hospital on Cayman Brac, and a host of community-based service facilities, such as:

- Smith Road Medical Centre
- Bay Town House
- George Town General Practice Clinic
- West Bay Health Centre
- Bodden Town Health Centre
- East End Health Centre
- North Side Health Centre
- Public Health Department
- Lions Eye Clinic
- George Town Dental Clinic
- Merren's Dental Clinic
- Cayman Brac Dental Clinic, and
- The Little Cayman Clinic

Mr. Speaker, I begin by outlining the highlights of the 2023 Annual Report. There are five strategic priorities which guide the Authority's mission to provide the highest quality of healthcare and improve the well-being of the people in the Cayman Islands through accessible, sustainable and patient-focused services.

### **Strategic Priority One Patient and Staff Experience**

Strategic Priority One relates to Patient and Staff Experience. The Authority continued their journey towards achieving Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation by focusing on safe quality care, infection control and medication management. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to once again congratulate the Health Services Authority for achieving the JCI accreditation in May 2023.

HSA also expanded their Patient Services Department to include a dedicated Call Centre Team to promote access, and make navigating services easier. They implemented "Purposeful Hourly Rounding", which is a proactive approach to patient care that includes nurses checking in on their patients for four critical aspects of care— pain, positioning, personal needs, and proximity of personal items— at least once every hour.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that HSA achieved an 88.5 per cent satisfaction rating across all

departments in 2023, following patient surveys, up from 85.9 per cent the previous year.

### **Strategic Priority Two Clinical Capabilities and Core Services**

Strategic Priority Two relates to Clinical Capabilities and Core Services. HSA offers the most comprehensive healthcare with fifty-three core services ranging from Neonatal Intensive Care to Geriatrics. In fact, last year, HSA introduced geriatric medical care to address the needs of our ageing Caymanian population to ensure they have access to specialist care when they need it.

In 2023, HSA acquired Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA). A cutting-edge medical technology that offers minimally invasive alternative treatment to patients and helps with pain management, RFA is a type of cancer treatment that uses heat to kill cancer cells, control their growth or control symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, as you will be aware, mental health is a growing concern in our community, especially among our children and young people. They need access to spaces that are appropriate and child-friendly. In conjunction with the Ministry of Health & Wellness and the Alex Panton Foundation, Alex's Place, the youth mental health hub, was launched in January 2023. It provides support to residents ages 10-20 from Monday to Friday— for now.

The HSA increased their clinical capabilities in dental care and saw nearly ten thousand more visits when compared to 2022, which boosted HSA's revenues: 27,906 visits in 2022 compared to 37,861 visits in 2023.

I am also pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that the Authority won seven awards in the Best of Cayman Islands 2023 Awards. They won gold for best Chiropractor, Oncologist, Occupational Therapy and Urgent Care/Walk-In Clinic; and silver for Behavioural/Mental Health Treatment, Paediatrician, and Speech Therapy.

Waiting times in General Practice decreased by 10 per cent between triage and consultation, improving patients' access to primary care, and possibly impacting on reduction in need for secondary levels of care.

Mr. Speaker, initiatives that progressed in 2023 to improve access to care and services included expanding capacity at the Smith Road Medical Centre by introducing additional clinics on Saturdays. This initiative helped to support an additional 2,477 patients who otherwise may not have been able to attend clinics during the typical working week.

The Emergency Room operations included an additional five nurses for triage— six registered nurses and three healthcare assistants. By increasing clinical capacity and extending operating room procedures for an additional week in December, the HSA was able to complete an additional forty-eight surgical procedures,

including eighteen medical procedures, prior to Christmas, which I am sure contributed positively to patients' peace of mind during the holidays.

### **Strategic Priority Three Talent Attraction and Retention**

Strategic Priority Three is Talent Attraction and Retention, and this speaks to the Government's first strategic broad outcome: Improving Quality of Life for Caymanians. Not only is the HSA improving lives through the provision of services, it is also improving quality of life through employment opportunities.

The HSA continues to be one of the largest single employers in the Cayman Islands with almost 1,200 employees, over 52 percent of whom, I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, are Caymanian. When we look at the new cohort of clinical staff, over 50 per cent of new hires are Caymanians.

In 2023, a new Director of Nursing, Dr. Sharon Radcliffe, was appointed, with over 30 years' experience. A total of sixty-three colleagues were promoted, thirty-seven of whom are Caymanians, including the appointment of Ms. Racquel Sutherland to the senior management position of Director of Support Services. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the Authority is focused on employing and upskilling a Caymanian healthcare workforce, and ensuring that our people have a bright future in healthcare.

The Authority carried out an institutional upskilling of staff from housekeeping to frontline staff, doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, and administrative staff, to learn about best practices, patient-centred care, and maintaining a safe environment.

There was also a \$2 million allocation for continuing education programmes, ensuring that medical professionals have access to the latest knowledge and technologies.

### **Strategic Priority Four Infrastructure**

Strategic Priority Four relates to infrastructure. To improve service delivery and the HSA's commitment to transformation, operating theatres on Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac were renovated in 2023, and the Accident and Emergency (A&E) [Unit] was expanded to meet the increasing need, all while providing 24/7 care.

HSA expanded clinical capacities by relocating the administration team to Citrus Grove, allowing for greater bed capacity at the hospital. They also converted the previous Orthopaedic Department into consultation rooms for the expanding needs of Urgent Care. The main hospital and district clinics were repainted, and the nursing stations were redesigned to cater to the ergonomic needs of staff.

On Little Cayman, a standby generator was donated by the R3 Cayman Foundation to the Health

Centre to help ensure an uninterrupted power supply during hurricane season.

### **Strategic Priority Five Technology**

Strategic Priority Five is Technology, which helps to drive efficiency and provide patient-centred care.

Mr. Speaker, 2023 saw the full integration of Oracle Fusion to ensure a cohesive interface with the existing Cerner system. Barcode scanning capabilities were introduced to optimise inventory management and reduce errors in medication administration. The integration also enables comprehensive patient data management improving clinical decision support and overall workflow efficiency; and enables patients to access the online payment portal and receive email reminders of appointments, reducing missed appointment rates.

Moving on to our Sister Islands, Mr. Speaker, as it is a top priority to improve access to care and services in the Brac and Little Cayman, the following upgrades and initiatives were carried out in 2023:

1. JCI accreditation for both Faith Hospital and Little Cayman Health Centre;
2. Renovation of the Operating Theatre at Faith Hospital;
3. A new clinical rotation programme between Faith Hospital and the main campus to foster professional development and collaboration among healthcare providers;
4. The Public Health and Community Health services were relocated to the medical wing at Aston Ruddy Centre, providing a dedicated space for these services, with capacity to expand;
5. A new dedicated Registered Nurse for community health to expand the home visits offered to patients in Cayman Brac;
6. A full-time Psychologist and community Psychiatric Nurse to enhance Behavioural Health services, thereby offering more comprehensive mental health care and, in response to a growing need;
7. A second dialysis nurse was employed to ensure increasing demand for dialysis services can be met; and a visiting Nephrologist also cares for patients in Cayman Brac, so they do not have to travel.

Turning our attention to Public Health, Mr. Speaker, in 2023 the HSA worked closely with the Ministry of Health & Wellness to develop a registry for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), a critical tool to guide public health policies, identify trends, and allocate resources more effectively. Health promotion activities address the health implications of smoking, the importance of a balanced and nutritious diet, the

management and prevention of diabetes, the risks related to hypertension, and other chronic diseases.

The Authority administered over 3,200 doses of the influenza vaccine, and rolled out effective vaccination programmes that contributed significantly to controlling diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and COVID-19; and, by collaborating with the Mosquito Research and Control Unit (MRCU), the Department of Environmental Health (DEH), and the Cayman Islands Molecular Biology Lab (CIMBL), the HSA effectively managed vector-borne diseases like Dengue fever.

#### Snapshot of 2023 Achievements

I would like to provide a snapshot of HSA's achievements in 2023, Mr. Speaker, as they play an indispensable role in our community. These were:

1. Integration of advanced technologies in patient care and experience;
2. Benchmarking of operations against international standards with the achievement of JCI accreditation;
3. The introduction of new specialised services;
4. Meeting demands for innovative and specialised healthcare among a growing population; and
5. Going above and beyond in the execution of HSA's mandate.

Turning our attention now to HSA's Audited Financial Statements for 2023, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the public and Members of this House that the Auditor General's Report for the Audited Financial Statements presented an unqualified opinion on HSA's Financial Statements for the period ended 31st December, 2023. In other words, the financial statements present fairly in all material aspects. Furthermore, the financial position of the Authority as of 31st December, 2023, its financial performance and its cash flows for that year were in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards.

It was declared that the Authority recorded a total revenue of \$176,807,029 from the Government programme, patient service fees and other sources. Additionally, the total operating expenses reported were \$183,899,254, and the reported net loss was \$7,092,225.

Mr. Speaker, the total current assets as at 31st December, 2023 were reported at \$111,702,038 and the fixed assets were \$108,487,248. The Authority also reported total assets of \$224,121,305 and total liabilities of \$265,422,365. The net equity was reported at \$41,301,060 compared to the period ending December 2023. Importantly, the Authority ended the fiscal year with a cash balance of \$24,141,844.

Mr. Speaker, while we should expect no less from any of the other statutory authorities, the HSA should be applauded for achieving another clean audit

opinion—five consecutive years—on its 2023 financial statements. I'm sure you will agree that we look forward to witnessing this upward trend.

Mr. Speaker, there was one Emphasis of Matter in the Auditor General's 2023 report. The Auditor General draws attention to note 25 (Going concern considerations), which states that the recognition of post-retirement health liability resulted in a net liability of \$41.3 million in the statement of financial position. This event raised a substantial doubt relating to HSA's ability to continue as an ongoing concern. Note 25 also explains a series of action plans taken by management to alleviate this concern.

The Auditor General's opinion is not modified in respect of this matter; nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, the leadership of the HSA continues to monitor and manage the risk resulting from annual actuarial valuations.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognise the Health Services Authority for their achievements in 2023 and publicly thank the Board and Management for their hard work and perseverance in producing this report in the high standard required to receive an unqualified opinion. As always, Mr. Speaker, I invite Members of this honourable House, and the public, to review these reports in further detail.

A health system is only as good as the care it provides. Every employee of the HSA plays a role in doing so, and they have my gratitude. Allow me to applaud the HSA on their sterling contributions and the tremendous progress made over the year, enduring to improve and enhance services for our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

#### **Ministry of Home Affairs – Cayman Islands Government – 2023 Annual Report – For the Period: 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Government – 2023 Annual Report – Home Affairs for the period 1st January 2023 – 31st December 2023.

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

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner:** Very briefly on this one.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Sabrina T. Turner:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to offer brief

remarks on the 2023 Annual Report for the Ministry of Home Affairs.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the strategic initiatives and key operational activities that were carried out over the period of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 by the Ministry's six esteemed departments, namely:

- The Department of Public Safety Communications;
- The Department of Community Rehabilitation;
- The Cayman Islands Regiment;
- The Cayman Islands Cadet Corps;
- The Cayman Islands Fire Service; and
- His Majesty's Cayman Islands Prison Service.

Mr. Speaker, throughout 2023 we faced numerous challenges, yet achieved remarkable milestones in the strengthening of our national resilience. In such times we are reminded by author and former U.S. Serviceman, Jocko Willink, "**As a leader, you have to balance the dichotomy, to be resolute where it matters but never inflexible and uncompromising on matters of little importance to the overall good of the team and the strategic mission.**" In other words, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry remained adaptable and responsive to changes.

As we sought to manage and understand a variety of complex issues—from evolving gang-related issues to natural disasters—our aim was to apply robust, coordinated, and sustainable solutions. Ultimately, as the 2023 Annual Report reflects, we have established that the enduring vision of the Ministry of Home Affairs is to help build a safer, more resilient Cayman Islands. It is through this lens that we are responding to an increasingly diverse set of public safety risks.

At the same time, the Report demonstrates that we are eager to pursue new opportunities, and break new ground as needed, in order to advance public safety. In doing so, the 2023 Annual Report shows how the Ministry pursued particular strategic initiatives through each of our departments, with the goal of delivering impactful public safety outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, over the period, the Ministry delivered on important policy decisions that, among other things, resulted in:

- Funding for the creation of additional firefighter posts to meet emergency response demands;
- Deployment of additional national CCTV cameras to support the police in tackling serious criminal activities; and
- Enhanced offender management operations.

Mr. Speaker, we took the strategic decision to provide funding for the purchase of a maritime training vessel for the Cadets Corps; and at the same time, we

forged new relationships with the Uniformed Services – all with a vision to create Public Safety career pathways for our Cadets.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we are aiming for impactful outcomes within the criminal justice sphere of our operations. The joined service delivery between the Prison Service and the Department of Community Rehabilitation [DCR] has become a model for other jurisdictions. In collaboration with their partner agencies, including the Police Service, Counselling Services, and the Courts, the 2023 Report highlights the ways in which DCR and the Prison Service are seeking to progress a "whole-of-society" approach to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Mr. Speaker, the Report also speaks to the emergency operations side of our business highlighting that a deliberate focus is being placed on improving response capabilities through multi-agency training and implementation of cutting-edge technology. In particular, we are aiming to enhance situational awareness not only for our own departments, but also for our partners including the Police Service, Coast Guard, and Customs & Border Control.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to thank all of our staff in the Core Ministry and across the six departments. As evidenced in this Report, the work of Home Affairs directly contributes to national security and is pivotal to the functioning of our society. I must therefore commend our incredible public safety professionals whose collective work underpins the safety and stability that we continue to enjoy; and on which we will build into the future. Indeed, this 2023 Annual Report reflects a Ministry that is full of engagement, enthusiasm, and dedication to delivering on the vision of building a safer, more resilient Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to providing an additional statement during this Sitting, which will serve as a further update on the strategic initiatives and outcomes currently being pursued on the heels of our 2023 deliverables.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

#### **Cayman Islands Central Planning Authority & Development Control Board – 2022 Annual Report**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Planning.

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development, Elected Member for North Side:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Central Planning Authority Development Control Board – 2022 Annual Report.



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

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** No, sir. It's self-explanatory and I encourage everybody to read it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure – Cayman Islands Government - Annual Report 2022 – Recovery and Resilience**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development.

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to lay on this honourable House—

**The Speaker:** Not on the House, just the Table.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** On the Table. Sorry. *[Laughter]* Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure – Cayman Islands Government – Annual Report 2022 – Recovery and Resilience.

**The Speaker:** So ordered. Does the Honourable Minister, wish to speak thereto?

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Again, sir, it is self-explanatory and I encourage everybody to read it.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

**Financial Reporting Authority – 2023 Annual Report – Cayman Islands Government Portfolio of Legal Affairs**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

**The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this House, the Financial Reporting Authority's [FRA] 2023 Annual Report.

**The Speaker:** So ordered. Does the Honourable Attorney General wish to speak thereto?

**The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin:** Mr. Speaker, yes; with your leave, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as an administrative financial intelligence unit, the Financial Reporting Authority is responsible for receiving, requesting, analysing and disseminating financial information disclosures

concerning proceeds of criminal conduct or suspected proceeds of criminal conduct.

Domestically, Mr. Speaker, the investigation of financial crime and any associated offences fall under the ambit of the relevant law enforcement agencies; but during the relevant period, the FRA received 1,501 cases comprising 1,290 suspicious activity reports from 292 reporting entities; 129 requests for information; and 47 voluntary disclosures from 47 overseas' financial intelligence units. It also had 35 requests for information from local law enforcement agencies. The number of cases received decreased by 5 per cent or 1,501 versus 1,586 in the 2022 period. Regarding sources of Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs), banks regained their spot as the largest source.

Source	Number of reports	%
<b>Banks</b>	392	26
<b>Virtual Asset Service Providers</b>	282	19
<b>Overseas Financial Intelligence Units</b>	176	12
<b>Investment Funds</b>	130	9
<b>Company Managers (Corporate Service Providers)</b>	110	7
<b>Mutual Fund Administrators</b>	76	5
<b>Securities Licensees</b>	56	4
<b>Lawyers</b>	55	4
<b>Insurance Business</b>	40	3
<b>Trust Companies</b>	31	2
<b>Money Transmitters</b>	31	2

Mr. Speaker, 2023 was the third year in which multiple reasons for suspicions for each case could be tracked, with 2,668 reasons for suspicions recorded, the seven most common being:

Reason for Suspicion	Number of cases	%
<b>Suspicious Activity</b>	1,005	67
<b>Suspicious Fraud</b>	720	48
<b>Money Laundering</b>	235	16
<b>Sanctions</b>	121	8
<b>Decline in Business</b>	81	5
<b>Tax Evasion</b>	78	5
<b>Corruption</b>	76	5

Mr. Speaker, during the reporting period, the FRA performed an initial analysis on 492 cases. It also issued 217 directives pursuant to section 4(2)(c) of the Proceeds of Crime Act in order to amplify or clarify information received by the FRA, or to respond to requests from overseas financial intelligence units. The FRA itself also made 38 requests for information to overseas financial intelligence units, primarily to assist local law enforcement agencies with their investigations. The FRA closed 1,133 cases during the reporting

period resulting in 379 disclosures to local law enforcement agencies or competent authorities.

Mr. Speaker, on four occasions during the reporting period, the FRA exercised its powers under section 4(2)(b) of the Proceeds of Crime Act to obtain an order from the Court ordering an entity to refrain from dealing with a person's account for up to 21 days. The assets impacted in these accounts were US\$1.8 million.

Mr. Speaker, Russian sanctions. The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 led to an unprecedented number of sanctions being imposed on Russia by the United Kingdom and other countries, in terms of size, scale and, of course, complexity. As a result, it was a very challenging year for the Financial Reporting Authority as it relates to sanctions implementation in the Cayman Islands.

Between February and December 2022 there were 17 amendments with one revocation covering various measures to the UK's Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations. Fourteen of these amendments were extended to the Cayman Islands in 2022. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, between 1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, a total 1,030 compliance-reporting forms were received by the FRA relating to the Russian sanctions regime, with a total of approximately US\$8.8 billion and €298.6 million impacted by some of the actions taken by the FRA.

Mr. Speaker, the FRA has also seen a significant increase in licence applications and queries received under the Russian sanction regime; 22 formal applications were received, the majority of which were made under the extraordinary situation and prior obligation licensing grounds. These are where assets or their ongoing activity are frozen and the firm—law firm, accounting firm, or whatever it is—needs permission to deal with the asset. Notwithstanding the fact that it is subject to sanctions, they can be granted a licence to carry out limited activities.

The Cayman Islands has adopted a robust and comprehensive response to the imposition of the new Russian sanctions' measures. Of note, Mr. Speaker, in March 2022 a joint task force on Russia comprising representatives from 11 ministries, offices, portfolios and agencies was formed to coordinate, identify and implement policy amendments in order to implement the Russia sanctions regime.

The Director of the Financial Reporting Authority, Mr. RJ Berry, [OBE], is the Chair of the task force, and the sanctions coordinator is also a member. The primary purpose of the task force is to provide centralised discussions and decisions around policy and communications arising from the ongoing sanctions. The task force met numerous times during 2022, meeting weekly initially, it now meets every two weeks later in the year and, if necessary, more often.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Director of the Financial Reporting Authority, Mr. Robert Berry,

also known as RJ Berry and his dedicated staff for their excellent and exemplary work.

I thank you.

**The Speaker:** Very well.

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

**The Speaker:** Given the hour, I invite the Honourable Premier to move the Suspension of Standing Order 23 (7) in order that questions may be asked of Ministers after the hour of 11 o'clock.

### **Suspension of Standing Order 23(7) and (8)**

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the Suspension of Standing Order 23(7) and (8) to allow the questions to commence beyond the hour of 11 a.m.

**The Speaker:** The Motion has been duly moved. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: Standing Order 23(7) and (8) suspended.**

### **QUESTION NO. 1 DETAILS OF THE DELEGATION THAT WENT TO THE PARIS OLYMPICS**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question No. 1, standing in my name to the Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports and Heritage. Can the Honourable Minister provide details of the delegation that accompanied him to the Paris Olympics, including the duration of their stay, the cost per person, and the tangible benefits this trip brought to the Caymanian people? Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Youth, Sports and Heritage.

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

Before I answer the question from the honourable Member, I'd like to say that it was my honour and responsibility to have attended and supported our athletes. I also want to take this opportunity to again

congratulate Jillian Crooks, Jordan Crooks, Charlotte Webster and Davontè Howell for representing the Cayman Islands in such an incredible way; and thank them for the way they filled our country with so much pride and excitement. They made us truly 'Caymanian Proud'.

*[Applause]*

**Hon. Isaac D. Rankine:** Mr. Speaker, the answer: In all instances possible, the Minister and/or representatives responsible for the Minister of Youth, Sports and Heritage attend and support initiatives and events relevant to these subject matters locally and internationally, including the Olympics.

The Ministry delegation that attended the 2024 Olympics in Paris comprised the Honourable Minister Rankine and the Deputy Chief Officer with oversight of Sports. The Honourable Minister travelled from the 27<sup>th</sup> July – 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2024 at a cost of \$17,655.46. The Deputy Chief Officer travelled from 20<sup>th</sup> July – 5<sup>th</sup> August at a cost of \$12,520.17.

The key benefits of the trips were the opportunity for the Minister and the DCO to provide encouragement and support to the athletes attending the Olympics; the ability for the Minister to develop closer professional partnerships with Ministers and representatives from other jurisdictions; and the DCO's attendance at the Ministerial Forum Sport Conference held by UNESCO, which proved to be informative and beneficial for the future enhancements of sports in the Cayman Islands.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Supplementaries? No Supplementaries. Question time is finished.

## STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

**The Speaker:** I received four statements this morning, but I regret I have not had a chance to consider them so I will defer them to the next Sitting.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**The Speaker:** None.

## OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

**The Speaker:** I have received notice from the former Leader of the Opposition, the current Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition of their wish to make short speeches on the occasion of the appointment of their new Opposition

leadership team. The honourable former Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Roy M. McTaggart:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Cayman is on the brink of something extraordinary. Change is in the air; but unlike the uncertainty that has plagued us over the last three years, today marks the beginning of intentional, purposeful change led by a unified People's Progressive Movement (PPM). It has been my honour to lead the PPM through times of challenge and triumph.

We have navigated turbulent waters and reached new heights, always with a vision for a Cayman which serves all of its people; but even as we have built a foundation of strength, there comes a time when every movement must look ahead, embrace renewal and prepare for what is next. The transition we all witnessed today is a testament to our strength, our vision and our readiness to embrace change. It is not a departure from our core values, but a reaffirmation that we are a living, breathing movement, one that evolves, adapts and rises to meet the needs of every Caymanian.

I pass this mantle to my friend and colleague, the Member for George Town North, with full confidence in his ability to lead us into this new era. He represents the very best of what our party aspires to be: a blend of fresh-thinking, unwavering energy, and a deep heartfelt connection to our people.

He brings a dynamic vision that will propel us forward while still honouring the legacy and principles that have defined us. He is stepping into a role at a very pivotal moment. Things are about to get interesting, and that's precisely what our Cayman needs—a leader unafraid to challenge the norm, to innovate and push for the changes that will ensure our Islands not only survive, but thrive.

Mr. Speaker, as I continue to serve in Parliament, my commitment to our shared mission remains steadfast; I will be there not as a leader but as a partner, ready to support, guide, and lend my experience whenever needed. The torch I passed today, is not an end, but it is a beginning. A signal that the PPM is more than ready to face whatever lies ahead, and we are not afraid to do so.

To my fellow Caymanians: I urge you to rally behind our new leader, and together we will continue to build a Cayman that stands as a beacon of hope and progress for all. Today, it isn't just about changing the Leader of the Opposition. It's about embarking on a journey of renewal, innovation, and boundless potential. I have no doubt that our Party will not only endure but flourish in ways we have yet to imagine.

To my fellow Progressives: I thank you for your unwavering, trust, your unyielding support, and for being part of this journey. Let us move forward united and resolute, ready to embrace the changes that will define a brighter, stronger, Cayman.

May God continue to bless the PPM and may He continue to guide and protect these beautiful Cayman Islands we all call home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Applause]*

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

**Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman is on the brink of transformation. We stand at the start of a new chapter; one that will be written by the hands of every Caymanian, fuelled by our courage, our unity and our unwavering will to rise together.

Honourable Speaker, esteemed Members of Parliament, my fellow Caymanians: Today, I stand before you not just as the new Leader of the Opposition, but as a dedicated servant of these Islands— of every man, woman and child who calls Cayman home. The role I accept is more than a position. It is a responsibility. It is a call to action. A call to protect the soul of our nation and secure the future that we all deserve.

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to the Honourable Roy McTaggart. His leadership has been a guiding light through some turbulent times. Your dedication and steadfast hand have set a path that we are committed to honouring and building upon; and now, as we face new challenges, we step forward with the strength, vision and boldness that our people demand and deserve.

I'm likewise honoured, Mr. Speaker, to welcome my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Georgetown South, as the new Deputy Leader of the Opposition. She has been a loyal and invaluable member of the People's Progressive Movement since 2002 playing key roles in shaping our Party's direction. With her impressive career in financial services and her experience in various parliamentary roles since being elected in 2017, including a time as Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Youth and Finance and now, as Shadow Minister for Education and Social Development, Barbara brings immense expertise to this position.

Her appointment today is truly historic as she becomes the first woman to hold this Office, and I have no doubt her leadership will be instrumental in shaping the policies that will positively impact the lives of Caymanians.

Our story will not be one of waiting for change to happen. It will be a story of driving change ourselves. This movement is not just an idea, but a promise to every Caymanian who has felt the burden of struggle; to every young person who dreams of a future where their potential knows no limit, and to everyone who envisions a better tomorrow. We will not stand by as passive observers of our destiny. We will be the architects of Cayman's next evolution.

Under our leadership, the People's Progressive Movement will not simply be a voice in Parliament. We will be the pulse of the nation. We will be the force that challenges the status quo, and advocates for an economy that works for every Caymanian. To the young people of Cayman, standing on the threshold of your aspirations: This is your Cayman. Your voice matters, you will be seen and you will be heard. Change is upon us, Mr. Speaker. Together, we will build a Cayman that is proud, strong, and unrelenting in its pursuit of progress for all. This is our moment, and we will not rest until every Caymanian can confidently say, "This is *our Cayman*".

Colleagues, I want to thank you for placing your trust in me. Together, we will write the next chapter in Cayman's story. I am committed to my role as His Majesty's Leader of the Opposition, and while I will continue to hold the Government accountable, I also look forward to working with them throughout the term for the betterment of our nation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my concern for those who may be facing Hurricane Milton this week. Many Caymanians have loved ones in the affected areas, and our thoughts and prayers are with them. We pray for their safety and well-being during this challenging time.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless our mission and may God bless these Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

*[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Deputy Leader.

**Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town South:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is with deep humility, immense pride, and an unwavering sense of duty that I accept the honour and responsibility of serving as Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I am profoundly grateful to my colleagues in the Official Opposition for their trust and confidence in me. Their recommendation for this role is both humbling and motivating.

I would first like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Honourable Roy McTaggart, for his exemplary leadership over the past three and a half years. His steadfast commitment to fiscal responsibility and social advocacy has set a strong foundation for us to build upon. As we move forward, I am equally excited to work alongside the Honourable Joey Hew, whose leadership will undoubtedly bring fresh ideas and a renewed sense of purpose to both the People's Progressive Movement, and the Official Opposition.

For the past seven and a half years, I have had the privilege of serving the people of George Town South. Their support has been unwavering and for that, I remain deeply grateful. I want to take this opportunity to reassure not only my constituents, but all the people

of the Cayman Islands, that my dedication to working tirelessly on your behalf remains resolute.

As I step into this new role, my focus will be on fostering unity, driving meaningful progress, and ensuring that the voices of all Caymanians are heard and represented. Together, we will navigate the challenges ahead and work towards a future that offers hope, opportunity and progress for every citizen of the Cayman Islands.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Deputy Leader. I recognise the Honourable Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to congratulate the Opposition, in particular the Leader of the Opposition, and also to say how delighted I am to witness a first female Leader of the Opposition. It's come a long way since we first started, Mr. Speaker. To see this happening today, is a delightful transition.

I also want to express our thanks to the former Leader of the Opposition for displaying that democracy is alive and well within the Cayman Islands that we can see a smooth, tranquil and serene transition right at the beginning of another Meeting of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, with your kind permission, I won't be long, but I would ask for you to allow me to do a quote by someone I'm sure you're familiar with as well, John C. Maxwell: **"True leadership is not generated by a title. In fact, being named to a position is the lowest of the five important pointers that lead towards leadership. To be more than a boss people are required to follow, you must master the ability to inspire and invest in people. One will need to know how to build a team that produces results, but also future leaders."**

Mr. Speaker, as I continue to quote, I believe that **by combining the advice, the skill, and the dedication, one**— and yes, "one" includes the current, new Leader of the Opposition. Your dedication, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, **"can indeed reach the pinnacle of leadership where your influence extends way beyond your immediate reach for the benefit"** that can be wrought **"of others."**

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to be in a jurisdiction whereby we can stand on the Floor of Parliament and, unless we were witnesses or listening live to YouTube or Facebook or later tonight or through Radio Cayman, one would never imagine that the transition had just occurred. Truly, Cayman is a blessed place, and democracy is still the best form of government.

Mr. Speaker, I would also ask you to kindly permit me to say just in passing, as there have been other forums where we've expressed what I'm about to express, that we are keenly watching what started out as

a system in the Bay of Campeche. At one o'clock last night it was 90mph; by six o'clock [this morning] it had increased to 125mph; at eight o'clock, when I was flying in this morning, it had increased to 150mph. The eye had not completely cleared out yet, so we can expect an ERI throughout the course of the day. Those of us in the Cayman Islands pay close attention to it, not because it is directed to our territory, but there are many Caymanians, in particular students, there.

I'm grateful for the colleague, the Honourable Minister of Tourism; Mr. Paul Tibbets and Fabian [Whorms] and others at Cayman Airways who have put on extra capacity to ensure they can go on, as I said, to Cayman Airways. There will be a flight coming out tonight and there were some extra seats today, as Tampa Airport has indicated that they will not open the Tampa airport tomorrow; so those within the listening [public] or those within the Chamber who have contacts through, please pass on this very important information. It is not a system for anyone to joke with.

Obviously, we can't force the students to come back if they choose to find shelter in place, but we would strongly urge and encourage them to come back. Cayman Airways have also waived the change fee for the tickets through Thursday— and that's not just for the Tampa Airport, Mr. Speaker, but also for Miami airport departure. I would covet the prayers not only of Members here today, but throughout the entire Cayman Islands to pray for those in Florida, as this impending weather approaches them.

God bless you and God bless the Cayman Islands.

*[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West:** Mr. Speaker, after I listened I thought that, as the longest-serving Member...

**The Speaker:** I was just going to ask if you are insisting on your right as the Father of the House.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush:** I do believe I have a right, sometimes.

**The Speaker:** I agree, sir. Please proceed.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush:** As the longest-serving Member, I thought I should say something.

I think the Premier put it absolutely the way it is, but I do want to welcome the change, and say that I know the new Leader all his life. I used to teach him Sunday School and I must say sometimes he didn't pick up too much, and sometimes he carried the good parts and brought them with him.

As the longest-servant Member— next month will be forty years. Forty years... and while I offer

congratulations to all of them, I say congratulations to the Party, because they've shown that it works and to have done it the way they have done it, speaks well for our democracy. Parties are needed. Organisation is needed in the country, where people must obey the organisation— not to leave the constituents aside, because it is the constituency that puts us here, the people put us here.

Organisation is needed, so Mr. Leader, I can only promise to give you as much challenge as you give me. If I am not in the ring next time round, I may still be helpful with challenges.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member.  
The Honourable Minister for Labour.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Minister of Border Control & Labour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East:** Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence as a former Member of the last PPM government. Proverbs 19:21 says, "**Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.**"

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate our parliamentarians and friends on their new appointments as Leader of the Opposition, the Member for George Town North, Mr. Joey Hew, who has been my friend for over forty-five years; and the Deputy Opposition Leader for George Town South, Ms. Barbara Connolly— the first woman in that post.

As we know, the role of the Official Opposition is to question and scrutinise the work of the Government and hold them accountable to the public. I am confident both are very capable of leading this charge, including their shadow Ministers. As Caymanians, and I want to repeat that: The nineteen Members of this Parliament are all of one cohort and we are all Caymanians and I never thought that any one—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, there are actually twenty-one Members. Nineteen [are] elected, but the other two are Caymanian as well.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Agreed and they elected them.

I think that they all mean well for these Cayman Islands and, Mr. Speaker, I wish them all the best. I also want to thank the Honourable Mr. Roy McTaggart, George Town East, for his service. I think I will end at this time, because if I say anything further, more accusations of my known relationship with the PPM Government, which I honourably served with.

I want to send up my prayers for those in Florida on the path of the Hurricane. God bless you all. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Ports.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism & Ports:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as the last Member just said, we are part of a fraternity in this honourable House, regardless of what side of the aisle that we sit.

With that in mind, I want to congratulate the Member for George Town North in transitioning to his new position, and thank the former Leader of the Opposition for doing his duties. Many times people may not be familiar with the purposes of each of these aisles and each one of these seats, which takes me back to a comment you made to me when I was in Opposition, Mr. Speaker— "*You have a responsibility over there, young man, do your job. Stop agreeing with me.*"

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has a serious role in this country and this is where, though we may oppose on policy positions, we respect each other's role and, unlike the other Minister, who worries about speculation of joining the Progressives, I'm doing—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** My apologies. I retract that, Mr. Speaker. Speculations of relationship with the members.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** In honour of the fraternity of which we are all a part, including all twenty-one members, I am standing to say thank you and wish you the best in your Opposition work; but we are the Government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. Madam Clerk. Oh.

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency:** Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time I won't be long but—

**The Speaker:** The Minister for Sustainability. Yes?

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency:** Thank you.

In the interest of time, I won't be long, but it would be remiss of me as a female to not personally congratulate the new Deputy Leader of Opposition, Ms. Barbara Connolly, on her appointment. Congratulations to you also, Mr. Leader—

*[Applause]*

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks:** I wish you well in your new role; and to the former Leader, I also

congratulate you on being able to accommodate the back bench and put the heat on those in the front.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. Madam Clerk.

## RAISING OF MATTER OF PRIVILEGES

**The Speaker:** None.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BILLS

#### FIRST READING

##### Information and Communications Technology (Validation) Bill, 2024 (Deferred)

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Information and Communication Technology (Validation) Bill, 2024 be deferred to the next Meeting of the House of Parliament.

**The Speaker:** The Motion is duly moved.

The question is that the Bill shortly entitled the Information and Communications Technology (Validation) Bill, 2024 be deferred to the next Meeting of the House. Those in favour please say Aye, those against, no.

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: The Bill was deferred to the next Meeting of the House.**

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.

## MOTIONS

### Government Motion No. 1 of 2024-2025 Referendum on Cruise Berthing Infrastructure

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Ports.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion No. 1 of 2024-2025 standing in my name: Referendum on Cruise Berthing Infrastructure.

**The Speaker:** I invite the Honourable Minister to read the Motion.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**WHEREAS** Section 69 of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 provides that a law enacted by the Legislature may make provision to hold a Referendum amongst persons registered as electors in accordance with Section 90 on a matter or matters of national importance;

**AND WHEREAS** there has been much debate for the last two decades on the subject of cruise tourism, in particular cruise berthing infrastructure;

**AND WHEREAS** since cruise ships returned to the Cayman Islands in 2022 following the end of the COVID 19 pandemic, passenger arrivals have significantly declined, registering 743,394 passengers for the nine-month period that the port was open in 2022; and 1.2 million for the full year in 2023— the lowest arrival numbers in over two decades, and 643,212 cruise passengers arriving during January to June 2024;

**AND WHEREAS** the Government intends to hold a Referendum on the cruise berthing infrastructure on the day of the 2025 General Election;

**BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the following question be declared to be a matter of national importance:

*“Should the Cayman Islands develop cruise berthing infrastructure?”*

**AND BE IT NOW FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the said question be specified in a Bill and brought by the Government to this Parliament for debate in accordance with the provisions of Section 69 of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009.

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

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism & Ports:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring forward this Motion for debate, with a sense of purpose, duty and urgency. The future of our nation's tourism industry is at stake, and it is my responsibility, as the Minister for Tourism, to address the evolving realities that threaten one of the key pillars of our economy— cruise tourism.

The Motion before us seeks approval for a Referendum to be held in tandem with the upcoming General Election on the question of whether the Cayman Islands should build cruise berthing facilities. This is a matter that affects us all, and we believe that the people should decide on this issue. It is a matter of national importance that we do not take lightly. This government has taken a supportive stance on the development of a cruise berthing facility, and I stand here today to explain why.

We are not here to rush decisions, or to force through measures that have not been carefully considered. Instead, we are here to ensure that the people of these Islands are given the opportunity to weigh in on an issue that directly affects their livelihoods, the future of their businesses, and the long-term sustainability of our economy. As the Minister for Tourism, it is my firm belief that the government's decision to support this Referendum reflects our commitment to transparency, democracy, and the welfare of our people.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it clear that this Referendum is about empowering our people. The issue of cruise berthing has sparked passionate debates across our Islands with strong views both for, and against, the development of a pier. The Government respects these views, and we recognise the need for the people to have their say in a fair and democratic process. This is why we are bringing this Motion for a Referendum to the Floor of this honourable House today. While the government has taken a supportive stance on the issue, we are not here to impose our views without the People's consent. It is only right that a decision of this magnitude, that can shape the future of our tourism sector for decades to come, should be made by the People.

Mr. Speaker, we trust the people of the Cayman Islands to make an informed choice based on facts, realities, and the long-term interest of all three Islands. The forthcoming General Election will already serve as a time for reflection and accountability and decision-making. Holding the Referendum in tandem with the election will ensure that its cost is minimised, and voter turnout is maximised. This is a prudent and democratic way to handle such an important and consequential issue.

Mr. Speaker, two other questions that will be included in the referendum were previously brought before this honourable House in December 2022, in [Government] Motion No. 3 of 2022-2023 entitled "**Referendum on National Lottery and Decriminalisation of [Small Quantities of] Cannabis.**" Given that these have already been debated and I spoke at the time, I will not repeat myself as it is not within the resolution of the Motion. Instead, I will focus on the specific question that asks whether the Cayman Islands should develop cruise berthing infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, this is a watershed moment for our Islands because the answer to this question, whether yes or no, will have a lasting impact on the future of the Cayman Islands' tourism industry. The outcome will shape our economic landscape, the livelihoods of our people, and our ability to remain a world-class tourism destination within two distinct sectors—stay over and cruise. This is why is critical that we allow the people to have their say on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I will now outline the Government's reasons for supporting the development of cruise berthing facilities in the Cayman Islands; one of the most compelling being the protection of Caymanian

jobs, businesses, and the greater economy. There are thousands of Caymanians who rely on the cruise sector for their livelihood. They are not abstract statistics—they are our friends, neighbours, and family members. They are taxi drivers, tour operators, artisans and small business owners who depend on cruise passengers for their income.

If the cruise sector is allowed to dwindle to nothing—and let me emphasise that this is a very real possibility—these Caymanians will be left without a source of income. Their jobs will be displaced, and the businesses they have worked so hard to build over decades, will face closure. We simply should not stand by and allow this to happen.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** And when I say we, Mr. Speaker, [I mean] we the people.

As a Government, we have a duty to safeguard the livelihoods of our people, and one of the most effective ways to do this is by ensuring that we have the infrastructure in place to support a thriving cruise industry.

There is a misconception, Mr. Speaker, that the loss of cruise tourism would only affect a small segment of our population. That is simply not true. The ripple effects of a decline in cruise tourism would be felt right across our economy. Businesses that rely on cruise passengers, whether directly or indirectly, would suffer. This includes restaurants, retail shops, and even those in the service industries who provide ancillary support. For example:

- The people who deliver supplies to the shops in the cruise industry;
- The people who clean the stores that cater to cruise passengers;
- The gas stations that supply gas to the taxi drivers, tour and boat operators;
- The landlords who lease and rent their units to cruise tourism businesses;
- The tender operators and captains— yes, they too will be affected over time, as fewer and fewer ships come to our shores.

The income generated from cruise tourism flows through our entire economy, and we must protect that flow to safeguard the future of our Caymanian workers and entrepreneurs; but don't take my word for it. Rather, let's look at what the Economics and Statistics Office's (ESO) report had to say on the matter and, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer you and the Members of the Opposition a copy, as I will be referring to it.

In their report entitled, *The Economic Impact of Cruise Tourism in the Cayman Islands*, the ESO quantifies that pre-pandemic in 2018, the cruise sector generated a total spending contribution of \$350.1 million into the Cayman Islands economy. That figure has fallen to \$261 million in 2023, a decline of \$89 million in six years— and, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't stop there.



[Revenue] is expected to decline further to \$253.4 million in 2024, substantiating the fact that the cruise sector is showing a pattern of slow but steady, decline. This revenue helps to fund our public services—our police, teachers, fire officers and civil servants; road systems, school facilities, affordable housing programmes, scholarships for our children, our health care at HSA, seamen's benefits, government pensions; and a host of programmes that benefit our people.

If we allow the cruise sector to decline, the revenue we earn from it will also disappear over time. As a Government, as a People, we have a responsibility to tell the people what that decline will do to the country and our economy. We should be taking a proactive approach to secure the future of our cruise tourism industry, so that it can continue to contribute to our economy for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, cruise lines have been clear about the changes in their business models. They are building larger ships that cannot rely on tendering. For years, they have told us this change was coming, but their advice has been dismissed and we have continued to ignore the warning signs in the market as we watch their ships sailing us by... Mr. Speaker, truth be told, I was one of those persons who were not convinced and didn't believe the cruise lines, but I will speak more on that later.

Mr. Speaker, history is full of examples of companies which did not respond to market changes because of their fixed mind-set; didn't just misread the market or miss out on opportunities, but actively refused to evolve and keep up with the changing industry trends. Eventually, they were left behind and suffered the consequences of job losses, loss of revenue and business closures.

I ask every Member in the House to take a look at their cell phone— even though some are already on their phones, like the new Leader of the Opposition.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** I would dare say [it is a] iPhone or Samsung, or maybe some other brand, but I can guarantee it is not a Nokia, Mr. Speaker; yet Nokia was the first company to create a cellular network in the world. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, they were the global leader in mobile phones, but they overestimated their appeal and the strength of their brand. They thought they were so special when it came to mobile phones, that they could arrive late to the smartphone race and still win but, Mr. Speaker, were they ever so wrong.

The same happened to Blackberry, Mr. Speaker. I'm pretty sure you remember back in the day everyone had their Blackberry in its holster on their belts. When the rest of the world was moving to touchscreens, they said, *People love our keyboard.*

*Our keyboard makes us different.* Blackberry refused to adapt and they, too, were wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you can see the pattern in the examples I'm using, but just in case you don't, there are plenty of others that I can use, like Kodak, Xerox and Blockbuster. Does anyone remember Blockbuster?

**Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West:** There's still one in Alaska.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** I'm quite sure they aren't making money.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** The company that was once on every street corner, in every neighbourhood, in every big city in the US, UK, and Canada. You see, Mr. Speaker, Blockbuster was doing great until Netflix started offering more convenience, more choice, and a better experience for their customers.

All of these companies have one thing in common, they all thought that their particular product was so unique and so special, that they refused to evolve—and their failure to adapt led to their downfall.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think it would be wise to allow the Cayman Islands to follow those examples, knowing where it will lead and the effects on our people, businesses, and economy. If we continue refusing to respond to the evolving needs of the cruise industry—an industry that has been transparent with us about their requirements—we, too, will be left behind. The cruise lines have been warning us for decades, not to be like Nokia, Blackberry and Blockbuster.

With the data and realities since COVID-19 lock down, it would be foolish to believe that the cruise lines are bluffing, and that Cayman's uniqueness and desirability will force them, somehow, to continue tendering because, Mr. Speaker, the evidence before us today shows otherwise. Let's take a moment to look at what some of the data is saying.

For the period of January to August 2024, cruise passenger arrivals were 758,512 which is down 39 per cent or 485,202 persons from the same period in 2019; just a few years ago. Compared to 2023, passenger arrivals are down 13.9 per cent or 122,265 fewer persons. Looking at cruise calls, during this period there were 230 cruise calls, which is a worrying 173 calls less than in the corresponding period of January to August 2019; and 52 calls fewer than last year.

The ESO report forecasts that, based on the current cruise schedules and the trend of newer ships not calling at Grand Cayman, cruise arrivals are expected to decline by 4.8 per cent in 2024—and if you add the weather patterns we had last month, I'm certain the numbers will be worse. Aside from a temporary rise in cruise calls in 2025, after I have begged them over

and over, the Cayman Islands is expected to see an annual decline of 5.2 per cent going forward.

The ESO report goes on to state, **“Under current projections, it is estimated that by 2029, gross value added from the industry will fall to \$128.9 million or 1.8% of GDP. Similarly, the total supported employment is projected to fall by 19.3% to 1,169 by 2029”**— a whopping 19.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker. To all the good people of this country, I encourage you to go online and read the full report. It is very, very daunting. **“Additionally, government’s revenue from cruise is projected to decline by an average of 4.3% annually after 2025.”**

What this data is telling us is that we are losing our competitive advantage because other destinations that have been keeping up with changing times are taking our place in the market. As Caymanians we are so proud to speak about how we have thrived because of our ability to adapt and innovate and respond to changing times. This decision should be no different. It is simply a test of our willingness to embrace the future.

For all these years, despite the fact that some have seen it as threatening, the cruise lines have been consistently informing us of their cruise berthing needs. Now, they are taking steps to adjust their itineraries based on the reality of our current infrastructure, or should I say the lack thereof, Mr. Speaker. We cannot afford to ignore this reality any longer without facing the consequences, Mr. Speaker, and I fear the consequences will be dire.

If we want to continue being a preferred destination for cruise passengers, we should invest in the infrastructure they need to bring their passengers to us, safely and efficiently. Simply put, if we want to continue attracting visitors, and maintaining our status as a “top destination”, we have to provide the facilities that modern travellers expect.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things I am about to say have been said before, as a matter of fact, you said them, but they are so important, they bear repeating. Starting with the benefits of a cruise pier.

We have heard many times, Mr. Speaker, that it would allow passengers to spend more time on our Islands. Currently, the tendering process limits the amount of time passengers have to explore and enjoy our attractions; by building a pier, we would streamline the disembarkation process, giving passengers more time to visit our shops, restaurants, and attractions. This would lead to increased spending and greater economic benefits for local businesses.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most common complaints about cruise passengers is the perception that they are low income, low spending visitors, but this is simply not factual. The pre-pandemic 2019 Bi-Annual Report of Tourism Statistics and Trends produced by the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism states that:

- 38 per cent of our cruise visitors reported an annual house-hold income between

US\$100,000 and US\$150,000. By way of comparison, 25% of stayover visitors fall in this category.

- 25 per cent reported an income of between US\$150,000 and US\$200,000; for stayovers, this was 29 per cent.
- 10 per cent reported an annual income of US\$200,000 to US\$300,000; for stayovers this was 17%.

My point is that the difference between the household incomes of our stay over and cruise visitors is not that much. Simply put, the data is telling us that 73 per cent of our cruise passengers make over US\$100,000 per year, so it’s not that they don’t have money to spend. The issue is that they don’t have enough time on the island to spend it.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the larger ships have a higher price tag, meaning it costs more to sail on them and consequently they carry passengers that have a 20 per cent higher spending power. Unfortunately, these are the ships that are sailing past us because we don’t have the facilities they need to embark and disembark their passengers. If we don’t build a pier and the years of decline continue, whatever ships do visit, will likely be filled with lower spending passengers, because the trend is that everyone wants to be on the newer, bigger, ships. [These are] simple facts; I am not making it up.

If we do decide to develop cruise berthing infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, passengers would have more time on island, and would be able to book multiple tours; enjoy more of our cuisine, visit more attractions and purchase more items from local vendors. This is particularly important for our small businesses, which rely on a steady stream of visitors to remain viable. To stay alive, to have a job, to feed their families. Cruise berthing would provide a boost to these businesses, ensuring that they can continue to thrive and keep their workers employed.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if we had a pier, ships could even consider overnighting in our port. I want us to think about that for a minute. Can you imagine what an uplift that could be for downtown George Town? Most of us in this room are old enough to remember when George Town used to be the liveliest place in this country. Now, after the sun sets, it’s a ghost town. Maybe having a pier can be the one thing we talk about, “the revitalisation of George Town”. Mr. Speaker, I know you remember what it was like because you used to like those fancy restaurants, *nuh true?*

Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn my attention to some of the concerns the public has been voicing. I know many have asked, *how can they vote on a referendum question without it being tied to a specific project?* We have heard views like: *I can’t vote for it if I don’t know the cost of the project; I support piers but it depends on who will control the port once it’s built; I believe we should have a pier but I don’t want it in George Town; I will vote yes but I don’t what to see*

*them dredging up the coral reefs; I support the building of a cruise pier but I am concerned it will add to the traffic problem downtown.*

In bringing up these concerns, it is very important to note that it can easily be assumed that the public in general is in support of building a pier, once these concerns can be mitigated. Mr. Speaker, first off, I agree and accept that they are all legitimate concerns; and if the referendum returns with a Yes, it should be a priority for the next government to ensure that they are mitigated— and the good news, is that they all can be mitigated or reduced to a point of reasonable sacrifice.

Most of the concerns raised by those who are reluctant to support, or outright against the building of a pier, are connected to five main subject areas, namely:

1. Cost;
2. Ownership and control of the ports;
3. Location;
4. Traffic;
5. Environmental impacts.

However, Mr. Speaker, before I break down the ways [by which] I strongly believe that such concerns can be resolved and/or mitigated, it is important to note that they have to do with *how* it should be built, not *if* it should be built. Which is precisely why the Government has approached the cruise question and concerns in the way we have— by not attaching it to a specific project, but rather, by dealing with the fundamental question of whether we should build a pier or not.

If the people say No, it would've been a waste of money to put plans together before asking the people because, Mr. Speaker, truth be told, though the question the people will have to decide on speaks of the building of a pier, it is really about whether we want to stay in the cruise business or not. That is the truth.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask, *young Brian, how have you come to that conclusion?* The best way to explain that is by using the analogy of a car. Just for a moment, let us think of the cruise industry as being a vehicle. A vehicle is defined as an engineered mechanism with a purpose of getting its cargo from point A to point B. It is made up of some very important parts. You have the engine, the body of the car, the wheels, an exhaust system, and many other parts. However, I'm sure we would all agree that the most important part of a vehicle is the wheels, because without them, it cannot do the fundamental purpose for which it was built— and Mr. Speaker, with respect to the future of the cruise industry and its evolving business models, a pier is equivalent to the wheels on a car.

Eventually, the cruise business will not be able to operate without it, so we can debate what kind of car we should have, should it be an expensive Cadillac or an affordable Honda; whether it should have an environmentally friendly exhaust system to control the emissions, or even debate what size we want, whether a big sports utility vehicle (SUV) or a small hatch back,

but what we can *no longer* debate, Mr. Speaker, is whether we should have wheels on the car because, if we want to continue to be in the cruise business, we have to put the wheels on the car, or we will go nowhere!

Mr. Speaker, let me take us back to the point I was going to outline earlier, which is how we can reduce, mitigate or resolve the concerns I highlighted, which all relate to one of five things— cost, ownership and control, location, traffic and the environment— starting with cost.

I think it is fair to say, that nobody wants the country to build a pier that is overly expensive and unnecessary, and costs the people hundreds of millions more than what we need. Continuing with the analogy of the car, I don't think the people want some 24-inch rims, with low-profile tires, made by the most expensive car manufacturer you can find. I think the people would accept your standard rims and tires that allows the car to do what it was made to do —get from point A to Point B.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, standard wheels on the cruise industry vehicle equates to simply one pier and no upland development. It will meet the basic requirements to get our cruise guests on and off the ships in an efficient and safe way; and I know that it can be done at an affordable price that does not burden the people with debt.

Turning now to concerns about who would own and control the pier if we decide to build one. Mr. Speaker, I think this is the easiest one to solve, because that decision, really, is up to us. I am confident that no one wants our port to be owned or controlled by anyone other than us, the Caymanian people. Interestingly though, ownership and control is tied to our first concern, which is the cost. If we accept that we will keep it simple and inexpensive, then ownership and control never have to be an issue.

Why do I say that? Here is why, Mr. Speaker, which I'm sure you are fully aware. How we finance a project, such as building a pier, brings into question the control of the cruise pier side of things. For example, if we the people say, through the Government, *we cannot finance it ourselves and we want to allow an entity to finance it*— that entity will most likely demand some security on their investment, meaning they will want to control the payments per passenger head until the debt is paid. It's a normal thing in business.

However, Mr. Speaker, I say that control is only specific to the kind of financing model we choose; I believe we can create a local investment fund only for Caymanians, to raise the monies necessary to build our own cruise berthing facility. This would allow the people to reap the profits from their own infrastructure, while at the same time having the security of mind that they own it; Mr. Speaker, if the People say Yes to a pier, it will be for the People to demand of the next Government, how they want the financing model to be done.

Turning now to the traffic concerns, Mr. Speaker. I do accept that the current infrastructure and road systems make it difficult for vehicular road users when we have multiple ships in port, but much of the congestion is because we don't have a pier that allows the port to run more efficiently. If we had a pier, we could reduce much of the traffic caused by, or associated with our cruise guests.

Mr. Speaker, another point that will help with the traffic concerns is the National Road Authority's Road System Plans that have been in the works from when your Administration was in power. I know the new Leader of the Opposition — you see how I wrote that into my speech? I knew you were going to be the Leader of Opposition.

Being the former Minister for Roads, he knows about the plans to reroute traffic from Seafarers Way, and connect Godfrey Nixon Way to North Church Street, creating a link for cruise and port traffic, ultimately creating a road system that goes around George Town. These plans are intended to allow the public to drive north to south without having to go through the downtown area on busy cruise days — right, Mr. Leader?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** That was part of your plans?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Turning now to the location, Mr. Speaker.

Technically, a pier can be built anywhere in Grand Cayman and we have talked about it many times. The public has heard of locations that could be used and about locations that should *never* be considered at all. There are many factors that engineers would have to consider when deciding where the best location would be— the prevailing winds, depth of the water, reef life, zoning of the area, economic and socio-economic factors, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker if the people say 'Yes' in the referendum, I am sure that there can be a quick, economic report advising where would be the best place to have a cruise pier, but with hundreds of millions of dollars already invested around the current location to facilitate the industry; and the wisdom of our forefathers telling us it is the best place for it, I am confident that economic and environmental assessments would suggest it is best to keep it where it is. In a natural harbour that has already been established for port activity, potentially highlighting some of the damage— but, again, let's first decide whether we want it or not.

Moving it to another location could create more unforeseen problems, so it may prove to be better to build it where it is, in an area that already has some damage, rather than to go somewhere else and damage a more virgin marine environment; and on that note I should add, that if and when the time comes, if the

people say, 'Yes' in the referendum, modern engineering allows for so many different techniques designed to reduce environmental damage, such as building on pylons, which was a part of your project before, but we will get to that shortly. Mr. Speaker, as years pass, more environmentally friendly engineering solutions are being developed.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the most sensitive area of concern: the environment. We have heard all of this before, so perhaps it is time for us to talk about the elephant in the room because I recognise that there are real concerns about the environmental impact of building a cruise pier. These concerns are valid, and the Government takes them seriously.

We know it is the beauty of our natural environment, above and below the waterline, that appeals to our visitors and keeps them coming back; but Mr. Speaker, natural beauty alone will not sustain our economy, keep our people in jobs, or put food on their tables, therefore, a balance *has* to be struck between environmental protection and economic sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour on behalf of the good People of the Cayman Islands and the rest of the Caribbean to be the Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation for the past two years and in doing so, I had the opportunity to see many of the other Caribbean countries. Many of them are just as beautiful as the Cayman Islands but not more beautiful— definitely not; but, because they have not invested in their infrastructure as much as we have, it can be seen reflected in their airports, roads, hotels, ports and transportation, which in some respects, negatively impacts their beauty and convenience.

That's the difference with Cayman, because we have always been able to say that we've stayed ahead of the game in this respect. We have nice roads, a beautiful new airport, amazing hotels, our transportation system is efficient... We are ranked in the top three in the Caribbean with those points, but when it comes to our port infrastructure, sadly, I can't say the same.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to ensuring that if the people vote 'Yes', and we have their permission to start looking at ways to build a pier, we will also be looking at every means possible to minimise environmental harm and protect our marine environment. I am sure that every Member in this honourable House, whether they support a pier or not, understands and agrees with the importance of preserving our natural heritage and resources for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, the continued decline of our cruise tourism economy and its revenue will not only affect Caymanian jobs and businesses, it will also have a major effect on some of our most prized wild life, attractions and artefacts. I know that this must sound surprising to some, but let me explain by highlighting three entities that most of us don't think about on a regular basis, that depend on cruise passenger revenue for their survival.

Firstly, the Cayman Islands Turtle Conservation Centre. The place known for its research and conservation of the green sea turtle. The place also known for supplying our national dish, turtle. It took \$14.5 million dollars last year to operate the Turtle Centre. The revenue from cruise passengers contributed \$7.5 million, with the other \$7 million subsidised by Government. Mr. Speaker, this entity would be in serious problems without the cruise sector revenue. Honestly, some days I really worry about all the Caymanians who work there, when I think about the serious risks to our cruise industry without a pier.

The other two entities are Pedro St, James, the location known as the birth place of our democracy; and the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park, the home of the endemic Blue Iguana and most of our special flora and fauna, such as the beautiful Cayman Banana Orchid. Both of these entities fall under the Cayman Islands National Attractions Authority (CINAA) and cost \$3 million annually to operate. The Government subsidises these entities to the tune of \$1.9 million, and the rest of the monies they need to fund their operations come from tourism revenue. In other words, Mr. Speaker, these entities depend on visitation to their attractions for a third of their revenue.

You see Mr. Speaker, the effects of a decline in cruise tourism are more far-reaching than many anticipate— and while we are addressing the elephant in the room, this might be a good time for me to further elaborate on my own personal journey regarding this issue.

**The Speaker:** Minister, I think the title you are looking for is the ‘Road to Damascus Experience’.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you for your intervention, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** I recall that when the last cruise pier project was put forward by your Progressives-led Administration, Mr. Speaker, like many in the community, I was vocal in my opposition to the project, not because I opposed cruise tourism, but because I was against the idea of developing both cargo and cruise infrastructure together. I know you remember that. I honestly thought the cruise lines were bluffing when they spoke about not being willing to bring their ships here— I mean, how could they not?! I thought, “*We are the Cayman Islands, the jewel of the Caribbean. They have to keep coming.*”

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are today. Now I’m the Minister of Tourism, dealing with an almost forty percent drop and those realities. Although those were

my personal views at the time, I strongly believed that the people of this country deserved the opportunity to express their views on the matter, and it was for that reason that I supported the call for the referendum, believing that the people should decide on such a critical issue—and, Mr. Speaker, I stand here today still of that view.

That is why I am bringing this Motion on behalf of the Government and advocating for a referendum now. The people must be given the chance to have their say on this important national issue. It is a principle I hold dear, and for as long as I have the privilege to be a representative of this country, I will stand by my belief that the voice of the people should guide the actions of any representative, and any Government, especially on matters of national importance.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly address tourism at a macro level, as the second pillar of our economy. As such, this, and every Government that comes after has a responsibility to safeguard all sectors of this important industry, because the stay over sector and the cruise sector are both crucial to our economic well-being— one cannot replace the other. While stay over tourism brings significant value to our economy, it is simply not realistic to expect that stay over arrivals can make up for the loss of the cruise sector; both sectors complement each other, and both must be supported if we are to ensure a thriving tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of what is at risk if we lose the cruise tourism sector, let us briefly look at how the revenue from cruise passenger head tax is used to support everyday life in our society.

Using 2023 as an example, the Government collected a total of \$5.2M in revenue from stay over and cruise visitors which was directed to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). I want to clarify that was not the total amount that we collected for core Government. It was just revenue that was collected and directed to the EPF, 56 per cent or \$2.9 million of which came from the cruise sector via the per passenger cost.

This revenue, which piles up year after year to the point where we had almost \$50 million in the EPF, is used for the acquisition and management of protected areas and for measures to protect and conserve protected species and their critical habitat, and for many environmental related programmes. For example:

- Buying land for the National Trust;
- Conducting Environmental Impact Studies;
- Reef restoration projects;
- The protection of our endemic Blue and Rock iguanas;
- Help to pay for turtle-friendly lighting on our beaches;
- The green iguana pest control programme; and
- Many other programmes.

It all comes from cruise passenger monies. The Government received \$7.6 million which went to general revenue to help with core government costs to pay for all we talked about; our teachers, seamen benefits, police and prison officers, our customs officers. The Port Authority also received the sum of \$3.1 million last year, which was used to help pay for the cost of port operations and salaries—and I am happy to say as the Minister for Ports that I think we are at 98 per cent employment of Caymanians.

To recap, Mr. Speaker, that adds up to a total of \$13.6 million collected in 2023, from cruise passenger head tax alone, that supports so many sectors in our economy, and this \$13.6 million is just a small portion of the \$350 million left in our economy from the cruise sector each year. The point I am trying to make, is that the revenue from cruise tourism helps this country much more than it is often realised.

Mr. Speaker, it is no joke or exaggeration to say, that thousands of people's lives and livelihoods depend on the sustainability of this industry. Against all of these factors and realities, the Government has a duty to look ahead to anticipate challenges and act to mitigate the risks, before they hit us.

Failing to provide the infrastructure needed to support cruise tourism would mean the potential loss of millions of dollars to core Government, thousands of jobs lost from the workforce, hundreds of micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses closing down, and an unquantifiable loss of revenue from our economy. That's what it means.

[Applause]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to let the cruise sector dwindle to nothing over time; nor can we gamble on the faint hope that cruise lines will continue to visit the Cayman Islands without us having the necessary facilities to service them. Every day, they are proving otherwise by passing our shores.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important to recognise that this is not a new debate. Matter of fact, for eighty per cent of my remarks, I bet you probably have been saying to yourself, *I told you so*.

[Laughter]

**An Hon. Member:** Ninety per cent.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Ninety per cent.

[Laughter]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** The truth is, Mr. Speaker, you would be right.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the current make-up of our Parliament, apart from those who are in their first term, virtually every Member here has been a part of an Administration that has considered cruise piers. It is an issue that has come up in every Government for close to twenty-five years. Therefore, the questions I have to ask are:

- Has every one of those Administrations been wrong?

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:**

- Have all those years of discussions, research, careful consideration and money spent been in vain?
- Why has it taken a quarter of a century to make up our minds?

Maybe, just maybe, it's because we have never given *the people* the right to choose; the right to tell us what *they* want. Well, Mr. Speaker, this Minister, this Government, believe in our people. We believe that they can, and will, make the right decision for themselves, their families, their environment, their businesses and the economy. We believe in the People.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, it is evident that successive governments have recognised that a cruise pier is essential for safeguarding our cruise tourism sector, because I believe I'm correct in saying, that since the year 2000 every government elected had promises of a cruise port in their election manifesto, or as part of their delivery plans— all except this administration.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** You can check my manifesto, it's in no way there.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Now we find ourselves in a position where the decision cannot be postponed any longer.

**An Hon. Member:** No!

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** For over two decades we have gone back and forth, back and forth, spending millions of dollars and getting nowhere. Mr. Speaker, when this Government took office in 2021, the then Premier and Member for Newlands [*sic*] stated that **"The cruise port referendum is not an issue that is in this Government's agenda for the rest of the term; whatever happens with [the cruise berthing**

**referendum], it will be another government that deals with that.”**

We are here today in terms of a referendum, not quite as the Member meant at the time, but his words were quite—I’ve been practicing this word for so long, Mr. Speaker...

**The Speaker:** Prophetic.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Prophetic— you had my speech or what?

**The Speaker:** I read your mind.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Prophetic.

His words were rather prophetic nonetheless, because another Government will have to deal with it one way or the other; either building a pier, or preparing for the fallout of not building a pier— and let me tell any person out there who is thinking about running [for office]: Dealing with the fallout, will be much harder than building a pier.

*[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Minister, just a moment.

Members of the public in the gallery, I have let it go because the Minister has been singing such a sweet song but generally, the rules preclude public displays of support or otherwise from the gallery, so if I can ask you to observe those rules going forward. There will be much more debate over the course of this day.

Thank you.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As well intentioned as that statement was, and as much as we thought at the time that we were reflecting the people’s wishes, the truth is

- a) This is too important an issue to put off any longer; and
- b) We will never truly know what the people’s wishes are, unless we ask them.

Mr. Speaker, when you were the Premier and leader of the Progressives-led Government in the 2017 Administration, you are quoted as saying **“As cruise ships grow in size, they will increasingly pass by Cayman on their way to other destinations that have the facilities needed to cope with their passengers. Visitor numbers in Cayman will fall, Caymanians will lose their jobs, and their businesses will fail.”**

The passage of time has also proven you right, Mr. Speaker. As ships have grown in size, they are indeed passing us by, en route to other destinations that can service their needs. Visitor numbers have fallen, and continue to decline; businesses on the waterfront

that rely on cruise [tourism] are facing a decline in their customer base of over forty per cent, and we risk seeing them close one after the other. The obvious question is, Mr. Speaker: Are we really going to wait until Caymanians start losing their jobs by the hundreds, before we finally decide to take action?

Mr. Speaker, the Motion before us today is a significant one because it’s not just about whether we should put a big old concrete slab in the ocean, as they say. This Motion is about protecting Caymanian jobs, safeguarding the economy, and ensuring that our tourism industry can thrive and prosper well into the future; but more importantly, it’s about giving the people the opportunity to have their say on a matter of national importance. That is why the Government is bringing this Motion for a Referendum, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, when Members vote on this Motion today, we’re not voting for or against the building of a cruise birthing facility. We are voting to give the People the power to choose their destiny. Although we have stated publicly that we are in support of a pier in order to secure the future of our cruise tourism sector, it is for the people to decide whether they want it or not.

I firmly believe that they have the wherewithal to make that decision, and this Government has given its commitment that, whatever the outcome will be in the referendum, we will respect their views.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

**The Speaker:** Honourable Father of the House, I received many messages from people claiming to be hungry, so I believe—

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush:** Yes; we are very, very hungry.

**The Speaker:** That now would be a good time to take the luncheon adjournment. It is 1:30.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush:** As long as when we come back, you recognise that I have risen.

**The Speaker:** Yes, sir. Yes sir. We will now take the luncheon suspension until 2:30.

**Proceedings suspended at 1:33p.m.**

**Proceedings resumed at 2:40p.m.**

**The Speaker:** Parliament is resumed. Please be seated.

When we took the luncheon suspension, the Father of the House had caught my eye intending, I believe, to speak on the Motion before the House.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll say it right off: I rise to support the Minister and the Government in getting this Motion passed.

Mr. Speaker, I think one and all know that I'm not a hypocrite; one and all know that I will speak my mind and, while right off the bat I say that I am supporting the Minister in his efforts to try to get this, bear in mind that we can start today, but we got a long way to go before you see anything done out there.

I begin by saying that I am concerned about this referendum. I think the House knows my position about referendums. I go along, because the majority says so and it's a democracy, but I don't believe that for everything we do, even if we term it "national" we have to go put it to a vote by the people and wait, that kind of time, on the people. The biggest concern is, suppose the people say "No". Then, what will the government do?

If we are saying that things are so bad, and the Minister gave some stark and troubling stats of loss of business to our people and what can happen— and he did not say anything new. We have said that... He said twenty-five years, I've been here forty and it started way back then, and I'll come to that in a little bit, but I don't intend to be long. I only want to put some historical [context] in place, because people tend to forget and you hear that, "*Nobody did anything until now*". What are they talking about? Where they come from, anyhow?!

If we are saying that things are so bad, and we go to the vote and the CPR or CP-hell or whatever they call themselves gets the upper hand, and the people say no— then what happens to all those people who are dying now? What happens to all those businesses that we *know* are hurting? That is my huge concern about what we are doing here.

What I will say here, is what I said to the Minister. I wasn't going for any outright vote, that was out of the question. Of three things [I support], that was one. I was concerned, and I would support coming here, and if the people and the House said, "*Yes, let's go for the vote*", I would support it; but the other thing... It is three things for me: that we build in George Town, because it is where we are. How in the world do they get a dive spot in the middle of where the ship is anchoring? Where in the world that happens? I don't support that. That's where it is.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, I think you meant in the middle of a port.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush:** I meant that the ships were dropping their anchor in the middle of the port at times.

**The Speaker:** I know how the reporting goes in this place, you see, so I want to make sure you got it clearly.

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, you are paying very close attention; thank you very much.

It aggravates me, when for generations we've been out there and all this talk about you breaking up the coral and this— well... shouldn't be that— if that is so, man, I don't think that's reality anymore out there. We have some sensitive areas that we have to watch, and I leave that up to those people who are knowledgeable. I used to dive to 60ft., now I can't dive 5ft. I float right back up, so I don't know anything about down there now.

Mr. Speaker, that's the place for it. Mr. Berkeley, and I well know, because we had that battle between 1972 and 1976 to get that dock, and he was defeated and they opened it in 1977, when he had lost, and they called him to speak and he had his say. I was right there, and he could say; but since then, you had the naysayers, and those people who believed, *well, this is where we've been coming in for generations, so we are going to build the dock there.*

That was 1972 to 1976— and they built it, and it lasted; and if we don't build, we will lose the business that we have been losing and if there is anybody that has the anchor may be, if coral reproduces itself as they say, then what is being reproduced will get destroyed or continue to get destroyed; unless they are going to stop every doggone thing and we have nothing at all.

We are losing the business. Not new. We said that, and I can confess to anything. I have been, I still am in the forefront all the time, pushing, planning— *begging* for the understanding of the Opposition and Mr. Speaker, you got somebody else coming behind me but I know, you remember the days when you all were against it, too. Oh, yes, you all beat me to pieces, but...

*[Inaudible interjection]*

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush:** Can I hear the answer for himself, but I remember the dock argument.

The third thing that I support with cruise tourism, it cannot be all here in George Town, I don't care what they say, and we are not going North Side if they are only going to have a couple of hours. They are not going to East End, if you only have a couple of hours. We know that we have to do something in Cayman Brac, we know that, but I have always maintained— and I will say it again: Spotts is atrocious.

They say it's not where ships want to go, I believe that; but sometimes some do, and for what we are supposed to be, a first-world country, to have that mess there... I know the tenders hit the reef up there too, at times, so we should be doing something to clean that place up; make it a place, in this modern Cayman that we are trying to build, where they can go. You might not



be able to get more than one, but at least that one would be here and they would not pass us by.

Then, Mr. Speaker, when we built the Turtle Farm, all the industry came to us and supported us because, if you recall, I think it was Hurricane Mitchel or Michelle, whichever one it was, destroyed the Turtle Farm, and we decided that we had to move it away and in deciding that everybody was crying that all we had was Stingray City. That's what we had for tourists. We had Hell and Stingray City, not much more, and they said, "*We need, need things for the tourists to do*". They encouraged us to build the Turtle Farm, and while building the Turtle Farm it was decided that we would put one pier there to get a ship. Oh, well, why did McKeeva Bush try to do that for? They investigated me for that, too, and we still took it on but it never got built.

Government is probably spending, I think, \$7 or \$8 million a year and we have, what? A few hundred people employed there. I heard this: Oh, shut it down or sell it. Why? Why, if it's a one hundred and fifty, two hundred Caymanian families who are benefiting? That's a couple hundred people well, but the country benefits from it. Some of the people that operate the business, who are in the business, *oh, if you take it down [to the] Turtle Farm, it is going to take away business from us*. Come on. Where is your thinking?

You think because you bring a load of people, all of them will go to Turtle Farm? No; a good portion is going to go to the Turtle Farm— cut down on the government's grant each year; but plenty of them are still going to Stingray City. They are still coming up here to do business, to shop and see the town, so they would still get their tours and their trips, and if they are going Pedro Castle. They will still get that. It's not going to stop them. What I've said here you, go in the records of this House and you will find it.

Those are my three things that I support. Well, I'm a supporter of the Government. I'm not in Cabinet. I do have a vote in Caucus, and I make my position known, but from 19— we said 25 years, I'm saying more— 1984 to 1988 you will find it in the records where it was mentioned. Talk of getting some kind of new dock and a proper cruise ship dock because [back] then they anchored. [In] 1988, I remember Mr. Linford Pearson, who was in charge of the port talking about it, wanting it, putting plans forward. That was 1980 to 92 and, "*Oh, if you do that, you are going to have the waves up in the assembly*". That killed that.

[In] 1992 to 96, some talk; 1996 to 2000, some talk. 2000, I became Minister later that year, and in 2001 I campaigned on it. All those times I campaigned on getting proper cruise [piers]. I even talked about looking at the North sound, likely got my head chopped off... it is still on, so I survived. [In] 2000, having campaigned, I began again, the start of getting a pier and improved facilities— and the battle for cruise ships was back on.

A battle, Mr. Speaker, because the hoteliers, not so much the taxi drivers, who were campaigning

against me and just took that as a natural part of the campaign, and were against me or whatever team I was on, but the hoteliers in Cayman and the hotels in the Caribbean had put up a lobby against the cruise ships. They went so far, because I was the voice here in Cayman, to try to get me elected to the Association twice, but I said, "*You think I fool, fool. I don't want no name post. I need to be where I can hold big arguments*", and so I refused, well, both times— once after the election and one right before the election, I said, "*Ah-ah*"— but we had a real battle with them.

It was people like the late Robert Hamaty and others, even with Mr. Brainard Watler. There were all those people, but I speak of Robert Hamaty because he was a friend and advisor and a big businessman here in George Town who understood the business and knew that people were making money from the business. Not just his business, not just his business, he did much, and I say that here. Two meetings in Miami with me, other times loaded us with information to go and talk to FCCA there; but we had that kind of knowledge. People who understood marketing, understood the business, but we had that battle to keep the cruise [ships] coming.

From 2000 to 2003, we got the Royal Watler done, had a battle there too, sabotage within. The old Caymanian jealousy kicked in— "*We don't need piers*", and what you heard was, "*they must be getting something out of it*"; for that's all they seemed to have thought about, somebody was getting something out of it... but the other part of it was political as well. That old thing Gerard said came back, about "*if a Caymanian can't be the Captain, he going down in the riggings and wreck it*".

That's where the politics came in. Felt if you got that project done, if McKeeva got that project done, boy, not stop him. Let's kick it in the face. If Moses get that project done, PPM get that done, you can't stop them because you got to have a little time to prove its value and that is still going on today! Still going on. Even when I did that road, they nearly killed me for it, and the first person that I saw on it, thumbs up, was the one with the biggest placard against me about stopping it. That's what happened. Today, it is the best thing.

Shetty Hospital was the best thing, or the worst thing; look at it today. Even to Royal Watler, those are things that have served and are serving the country. The Turtle Farm is the same thing. People like to chat and talk and chat and talk, but don't know a damn thing about what they're doing. They don't know what they're doing. They haven't been anywhere, they don't own any business. Now, that they got a chance. Now that they have a boat. Now that they have a car. Now that they have a van, maybe they'll understand what it takes to run a business, and when they come and talk about too many, *too many* people.

Well, what is George Town going to be then, if you want to put it here, in George Town? It will still be a load of people, but for how long? A day, maybe do

that four or five days a week? It can't kill us to support the Government in building this pier. It can't, but we got to put aside some things and I didn't have to experience that uniqueness of the Damascus Road. Somebody said I was there, I was there, and so Mr. Speaker, without holding the House up, the last proposal that I had was the Chinese proposal 2009-2012, and, of course, sabotage and accusations from within took that away as well. They had a good plan. Low cost, nothing was finalised because we had so much in-fighting, so much sabotage within the civil service and the elected politicians, that I said, "*You know what, let's see what they are going to do*". Well...

Then you came, and they didn't do any better with you. They nearly killed you. I was the Speaker of this House, but I said, "*this is meaningful to this country*", and people like me, they have a little knowledge. Not that I know it all, of course, I don't and I don't proclaim to! However, I do know. As somebody said, I was there. I was there, and I know who was against—and we forgive them. Only thing [is] that I can't really find it yet. I will, though, because I don't hold any grudge.

To know that we have to wait for so long to get it, and we don't know if we are going to get it. Is this a House in futility? I hope not, Mr. Speaker, I hope not. I am for it cause there were understandings, and I pray to God that we can win out because if we don't, where then is the democracy? What do we do then? If the naysayers win, what happens? What do we do? Come back and say, *well, the people voted against it, so sorry, darling, but you know I can't help you*. Ah-ah!

I'm elected to lead! And if I make a mistake, I made a mistake, it can be corrected; but I'm elected to lead, and leading means making a decision, even though there are people against it. As far as I'm concerned, that is true leadership. I come here because the people put me here to make a decision on their behalf, and they gave me the privilege of saying, *I am voting my conscience, this is what I have to do*. Sorry, I don't.

I'm hoping and praying that our arguments, and the arguments of the people who know and understand—and now even more people are suffering because the economy is still buoyant, but not for those people, not for them. I know they hurt. I know who is coming to me, who never came to me, to help them pay for insurance, light bill or telephone bill. They had never. They could do it. They could do it because they were making money out of the cruise industry; but we sat down and listened to people who either are making *skillions* of dollars out of it themselves and don't want that to change, or they don't care about those [other] people—and we have some of those.

We have some of these people who say they are environmentalists, but do you ever see anything like this, Mr. Speaker? They are such big environmentalists, but they leave the high ground and go out into a pumped-up garden to build a house; "reclaim land"—they are the ones telling us, *no, no, you can't do this* but

yet they go and build a big house on what I call "pumped up land", with big gates, can't even see over the wall. Yet, "*don't do anything out there, it's going to destroy the country*" when Cayman, as far as I can understand, is still probably over fifty per cent swamp. It was more than fifty per cent swamp, you know, this little island here; more than fifty per cent swamp, and the hypocrites want to look me in the face and tell me that I am against the environment because I say let's get these facilities.

Oh, yeah? No, baby. We have come a long way, and we have yet plenty. I believe that our country still stands in a good position and, as the new Leader of the Opposition says, we have a good opportunity; but we must take that opportunity by the hand and let us lead!

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Member—

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, under your leadership, I had the opportunity to join you in the negotiations for the changes in the advancement of our Constitution, and speaking in a podcast recently, I was saying that one of the highlights of that was the name of the Wi-Fi where we sat—"Churchill's War Room"—because we sat in the vicinity of Churchill's [actual] War Room.

On my most recent trip to the UK, I had the opportunity to visit, not together but separately, the Churchill War Room Museum with the former Leader of the Opposition, and while I was there, I found this little book called, *The Wicked Wit of Winston Churchill*. When asked what qualities a politician required, Mr. Churchill replied, "**...the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month, and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen.**"

[Laughter]

**Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:** Well, the Minister of Tourism took away that opportunity for me to explain why it didn't happen. He did so very well in his presentation this morning.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Mover of the Motion I was struck by how much he had changed; and I give him the respect and acknowledgement that he was willing enough to get up—and it was a very brave move; to express his change in opinion. He is now fully on board with having a cruise pier and he even supports having it located in George Town, which we were once accused of not having any vision. Why were we building a port in George Town? Yet, as he confessed today, he was one of those who fought against cruise

piers in George Town when he was in Opposition. He has also said in recent times that he now supports building a new cargo dock facility. His debate today sounded as if he dusted off speaking notes from the People's Progressive Movement (PPM) Government when we were trying to get an upgraded cargo port and cruise berthing built.

Mr. Speaker, this was with the cruise companies footing the bill, with repayments from the cruise passengers, not from the government coffers. That is what the Minister and others on the Government benches fought against, but at least, their eyes seem to have finally opened. The Minister says he is worried about the negative impact that cruise decline is having on our people and on government revenues.

As the Minister also seemed to confess, this referendum will not really settle the issue. Despite his glowing words today, Mr Speaker, the Minister's past actions, even in Government, lead me to believe that this referendum is not about settling the question of cruise berthing but is, instead, a smokescreen designed to deflect attention away from the Government's failure to take any actions necessary to support Cayman's tourism industry and the livelihoods of those who depend upon it. The Government understands that it will face the electorate in a general election in six months or so. They know that they will be found wanting when held to account for their performance after four years in office. What can they say to the five hundred or so Caymanians who have lost their jobs as cruise visitor numbers have slumped while the Government did nothing? One thing they should do is beg forgiveness. Maybe this is what this referendum is seeking to do.

Mr. Speaker, let us recognise again, that cruise visitor numbers are at their lowest level this century, and that there is no defined path or plan to recovery. Unfortunately, this referendum is not it. This referendum proposal is intended to signal to voters that the Government is at least doing something worthwhile about cruise tourism. At the same time, it signals the excuse they will try to use for their significant failings; but the reality is that they should never have gotten us into this position. With our tourism sector, especially the cruise tourism sector, on its knees, we are here because the Government turned a deaf ear every time the Opposition pointed to the unfolding crisis and urged them to act.

Mr. Speaker, one sensible thing the Government has done since embarking on this course, is to accept that the referendum should be held on Election Day. We welcome that change, if only because it will save the enormous cost of a vote on a separate date.

Mr. Speaker, we are where we are today. I take note that the Motion itself highlights the crisis in our cruise industry, detailing a significant decline in cruise arrivals and claiming "**the lowest arrival numbers in over two decades.**" The data supporting these claims are undeniable, and the deterioration in one of our

critical economic pillars has been unfolding before our eyes for the past two years. The Minister, in his speech earlier, confessed to this.

The PPM Opposition has consistently highlighted this issue. With each report from the Ministry of Tourism showing declining numbers and no sign of meaningful progress, we have urged the PACT and now UPM Government to act swiftly to safeguard this critical industry; but, after years of delay, instead of presenting this House and the People with a concrete plan to address this crisis, the Government has now opted to propose a referendum. All the glowing words today in favour of cruise tourism and the need for cruise piers will not be solved with this Motion, Mr Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that referendums can be a valuable democratic tool, however, they are only effective when the people are presented with clear, developed alternatives to choose from. A referendum should be the culmination of a decision-making process, where there are options on the table that are fully outlined and understood. This allows voters to make an informed choice based on the facts and the future direction they prefer for the country. Unfortunately, the referendum question proposed by the Government fails in this regard.

Instead of providing a well-developed plan that outlines the specifics of cruise berthing infrastructure—where it would be located, how it would impact the environment, the costs involved, and the long-term benefits—we are being asked to support a question that is, at best, vague, and at worst, incomplete. It is not enough to simply ask, *should we develop cruise berthing infrastructure*, without giving voters the detailed information they need, to weigh the pros and cons.

This leads to my primary concern, Mr. Speaker: What is being presented today is far from that. There is no proposal on the table for the people to consider, no cost breakdown, no detailed environmental impact assessment, and no feasibility studies outlining what this infrastructure would look like or where it would be built. Without such critical details, how can the public be expected to make an informed decision?

Mr. Speaker, before the people can make a judgement on whether to support cruise berthing infrastructure, they need answers to a few fundamental questions, including, but are not limited to:

- Where would the infrastructure be built? Will it be in George Town Harbour, as previous discussions have indicated, or has the Government identified a new potential site?
- What will be the environmental impact of the Government's proposed solution? Will there be measures in place to mitigate damage to marine life, coral reefs, and our environment as a whole?
- What would be the projected cost of the cruise berthing project? Who will foot the bill? Will it be the Government, the private sector, or a public-private partnership? How

much of that cost will ultimately fall on Caymanian taxpayers?

- Will the redevelopment of the cargo port be part of this project or will it be handled separately, as has been hinted?
- What additional infrastructure will be necessary to support cruise berthing facilities? Will we need expanded roads, more transportation options, or new visitor amenities? Let me say, Mr. Speaker, these are not standard rims on your car.
- What is the economic impact of proceeding or not proceeding with this project? How many jobs will be created, and how many might be lost if we don't move forward? What will the long-term benefits be for local businesses?

These are fundamental questions that any responsible Government *must* answer before asking the people to vote on a matter of such national importance.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister spoke to some of these questions during his journey to Damascus this morning, however, though well intended, he truly did not answer those questions. The public is being asked to weigh in on an issue without the facts they need to make a meaningful decision. This is not how a responsible government should act, especially when dealing with something as critical or, as the Minister said of national importance, as the future of Cayman's cruise industry; a sector that supports thousands of jobs and generates significant revenue for our economy.

The recent economic impact assessment of cruise tourism by the Economics and Statistics Office sent out just this morning, attempts to provide some facts, however, it only further explains the current dire situation with the cruise sector; it does not assess or address the future impact of building new piers.

Mr. Speaker, incredibly unhelpful were the Minister's vague statements to the press on cruise berthing, when he stated, **"Our view is simple ... as cheap as it possibly can be, most environmentally friendly it can be and we don't think you need two. The country can simply survive on one based on the ship amounts."** The Minister should publish all the research supporting his views on the number of piers needed and clarify what "as cheap as possible" means, including who will bear the costs.

He must also explain how the balance between "cheapest" and "most environmentally friendly" will be achieved. For instance, he spoke this morning about traffic plans that we presented which were designed around the port. Mr. Speaker, such traffic plans cannot be created without extra space at the port, and the port cannot move into George Town. To be able to have a true port, where all its activities happen at the port, it has to expand into the water.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there is no evidence behind the Minister's sweeping claims. Given his well-publicised statements, should voters consider his off-the-cuff remarks as being the solution when casting their ballots? What if a different proposal emerges later? What if a future government, after a "Yes" vote, conducts research and determines something different from his comments? What if they find the need for additional spending on environmental mitigation, preventing the "cheapest" option?

Making such comments without presenting a detailed, concrete proposal has potentially poisoned the public's ability to make an informed decision on what is being voted on. Then, by pushing for a referendum without offering clear details or supporting research, the Government has muddied the waters, leaving voters to speculate on critical factors like cost, environmental impact, and feasibility. The Minister's words today may have added to that.

Mr. Speaker, this brings us to a second point: A "Yes" vote will not settle the issue. If the Government believes a "Yes" vote will allow this or any government to proceed smoothly with building cruise berths, they are mistaken. Any government project involving cruise berths will be contested if it doesn't align with what the people believed they were voting for. Could a future government implement a two-pier solution after the Minister publicly stated there would only be one? His public statements may already have constrained what is possible.

The fact is, Mr Speaker, this referendum will not resolve the issue, and a referendum that fails to settle matters is largely pointless. Lack of clarity undermines the referendum process, creating confusion and uncertainty, rather than providing real solutions to the challenges facing Cayman's tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, this leads me to my third point: The Government is shirking its responsibility. Instead of developing a comprehensive plan to address the cruise industry's decline, the Government is shifting the burden of decision-making onto the public without doing the necessary groundwork. This referendum, as it stands, will do nothing to solve the crisis we are facing. It will not provide employment for the people standing out there this morning. If anything, it only serves to delay the Government's responsibility to act.

Let us consider the logic the Government is using. They claim that cruise berthing is a matter of national importance, yet they offer no clear position on the matter. The Government is asking the public to vote on a question while remaining neutral on the outcome themselves. How can we expect the people to take this issue seriously, when the Government does not seem to have a firm stance? If this issue is of such national importance, the Government should lead with a clear plan, not pass the buck to the public.

Mr. Speaker, people need to know, has the Member for West Bay North changed his mind? [He] who stood on his platform of *Prexit*— "port exit" — and

walked the Floor. We know the Minister of Tourism said back then that if the people wanted it, he would eat his words and would have his shovel ready to dig the first hole—and today he has stood, bravely, and in so many words eaten his words, pardon the pun, Mr. Speaker. The public needs to know. Where does the Government in its entirety stand on this project?

Mr. Speaker, referendums are not a quick fix. As the UK's Independent Commission on Referendums has pointed out, a referendum should be part of a wider decision-making process, not a substitute for it. The Government's approach is to use a referendum as a way to avoid making tough decisions and doing the hard work of governance; however, a referendum should only come once there is a fully developed proposal that the public can evaluate and either support or reject. By proposing a referendum before any substantial work has been done to create a plan, the Government is essentially asking the people to make a decision in the dark. This is not just irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, it is a disservice to the people of the Cayman Islands.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we all know this referendum will not solve the crisis facing our cruise and stay over tourism sectors. Even if the people were to vote in favour of cruise berthing infrastructure, we would still be no closer to knowing what such infrastructure would look like, how it would be funded, or what the long-term impacts would be.

As proposed, the referendum only postpones the urgent action that is needed; however, despite the many concerns we have expressed here today, the PPM Opposition will not vote against the Motion—

[Laughter]

**Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:** [Because,] simply put, no other political group has supported the cruise sector more than the People's Progressive Movement; and despite the current slump, there are still hundreds and hundreds of Caymanians who earn a good living from cruise tourism, and those businesses, their workers and their families' future, depend on finding a solution to the challenges I have outlined.

We have long been the champions for a thriving cruise and stay over tourism sector across the Cayman Islands, and the PPM will not now abandon the thousands of Caymanians whose livelihoods depend on tourism so, Mr. Speaker, despite our concerns, we will nonetheless vote for the Motion to show our solidarity with the many good Caymanians who serve as ambassadors to our Islands in the cruise sector.

We expect that the Government will pass the Motion and bring a Bill to this Parliament to set up the necessary arrangements to enable the proposed referendum. When it comes, we will evaluate the Bill on its merits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May God bless us all.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Leader.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

If no other Member wishes to speak, I will invite the Honourable Minister to exercise his right of reply.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've got to say that I am a little disappointed in what I heard from the new Leader of Opposition, but I can't say that I am surprised by his approach. Interestingly enough, before the debate started, he said to me, *Kenneth, don't worry, we cool, but you know it's my first speech as Leader of the Opposition so I have to be strong.* Fair enough.

[I'm] prepared for what can be seen in the world of politics as the "political licks". Mr. Speaker, I'm okay with that, because I consider myself a leader. I consider myself a representative. I don't like the word *politician*, and sadly the Leader of the Opposition didn't start his reign as the new leader in a good way because in my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, he has fallen for the trap of politics.

Mr. Speaker, knowing my political stance it took much for me as a representative, to come to this honourable House, to convince my colleagues, after three and a half years working on their behalf, to say, *Colleagues, I've looked at numbers, I've sat with these executives over and over again, I've done everything I possibly can to beg these cruise lines to come and nothing is changing.*

Please, allow me to say this, Mr. Speaker: He keeps talking about the Members. Not all the Members are to blame. If you want to blame anybody, blame me. Mr. Bush was on the other side, [so] I guess it's only me you can blame.

[Inaudible interjections]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Yeah, I heard him *throw slabs* at you, but I'll take the licks for it; it's okay.

I've done everything I possibly could to convince them, and I've come back to my colleagues and said, *colleagues, it's probably not very attractive.* Everybody knows that 25 percent of the voter population signed to have a referendum, and it's perceived that 25 percent of them would be against the pier—which many of them would be wrong in that perception because, even when I supported the signatures, it was on the basis that *the people should have their say*; but we are going to get to what my position was, shortly, Mr. New Leader.

Mr. Speaker, I don't even know how to go about the last part of the Member's contribution. He practically convinced the country to vote against the referendum. You've given every argument in this honourable House, regardless of what is perceived as hypocrisy by myself in the last administration, but rather

than taking it as goodwill to say, *Thank God, this side is recognising what you have said was the right thing*, you decided to dive yourself into politics, and now you have confused the people about what they should do in the referendum. You have given all the reasons why they shouldn't vote in favour of the referendum, and then you're going to get up and say, *but Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support the referendum.*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, as you take a break, I'd be grateful if you would direct your speech at the Chair so when you're speaking about the Honourable Leader, you say "the Honourable Leader", not you. There's a reason for that.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, will do.

Mr. Speaker, the Member said a "Yes" vote will not help the issue. The Honourable Leader said a referendum is pointless. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition also referred to, I think it was a book by Churchill, if I am not mistaken, about leaders taking a decision on things; and there's truth to that—but I wonder if he has forgotten that the number one document that leads this country, called the Constitution, was done by way of referendum.

Mr. Speaker, maybe it's because I am a new-generation leader who believes that the people can make the right decision when presented with facts, and that leaders can persuade with truth, evidence... and trust! Because, Mr. Speaker, the new Leader of the Opposition and the former Minister of Tourism will recall my conversations with them about where they failed in their last attempt.

My mother always used to say to me, "*It's not what you say, but how you say it*", and Mr. Speaker, you would recall my contribution in this Honourable House, and that I was quite annoyed by the fact that the contributions talked about "rascals". These were the people who were a part of the CPR group then but, though me and they may not share the same opinion today, they are my people. They are voters in this country, they pay taxes like everybody else. Democracy means the way of the majority.

What strong leaders do, is present persuasive enough evidence to convince the masses, and that's what your administration was unable to do, so don't be upset today by highlighting and then derailing the process by giving them more reasons to say no. The Government *can* get a directive from the People. You might get lucky, if you win the government, that at the very least you can—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister.

I've directed you not to address the Honourable Leader directly, we're trying to avoid this becoming too personal. Say what you wish to say about him or what he said within the parameters of what's allowed in parliamentary process, but direct all of it at me. Okay?

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Yes, sir, thank you. Okay.

Mr. Speaker, I kind of lost my frame of thought there, but I'll try to catch it back. I do apologise, I agree with you, and for those who are listening, the parliamentary proceedings or processes are there for a reason and though we get heated in our debates, it's essential that we keep the appropriate approach to our deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, I was suggesting that it would still be good to get a directive from the People. Of course, the Member is correct in suggesting that there's no quick fix—I agree; but I think most people don't like the dictatorship-type approach to politics. I know some people have different views, I don't. I believe in my people. I believe that when things get sensitive, when you can't be sure...

It's okay when it's 90/10, or 80/20 on a decision, but the truth is nobody could find a clear position on how the country, as a mass, felt about this matter and the Member from my side, the Godfather of the House, is right. We are still going to be in a pickle if the people say no—but isn't that what democracy is, Mr. Speaker?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, there is a saying, I want to try to remember it but I am gonna give a summary of what it is. Democracy is a terrible political system, but it's the best of those that we have. I think it's summarised to something like that.

**The Speaker:** Actually, the quote is one of Churchills and it goes: "**Democracy is the worst form of government— except for all the others [that have been tried].**".

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I knew with your wisdom and historical memory, you would have helped me with that.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am disappointed with the way the new Leader approached his contribution, because it was about getting back at those who were in the way before. He said, "*they should ask for forgiveness*". Well, here it is: Forgive me, please. Can we get the politics out of the way?

Sorry. Mr. Speaker, through you: Can you ask the Member to take my forgiveness, and let us now talk about getting this referendum approved by way of the People, so the next administration can fix the problem because we are six months away from an election, unless the Member was suggesting— and interestingly enough, he said, Mr. Speaker...

Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, I'm gonna find it here in a second...

He said, "we told them that something needed to be done to fix the cruise industry", but interestingly enough, I even remember noting it to my team. I said "*they're gonna say everything about cruise [tourism],*

*but they will never utter the words build a port*”; so the Opposition can say all they want, but they themselves were afraid of those who opposed it because, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the last administration lost primarily on that one issue. That’s why nobody wanted to talk about the piers.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll tell you how far I’ve decided to go with this issue and what it took to convince my colleagues— and my colleagues, in supporting me in this position, are taking what you call a political risk adding another major issue six months before the election. You know what we could have done? Not say anything about it at all. Next year January we could have picked a number and I could have come here and said, “*Oh, the projections are looking good*” and play the political game.

Mr. Speaker, it took a level of commitment to the country [to tell] the truth— and yes, to admit there was truth in what was said before, rather than playing politics with it now. What annoys me the most is that there will be people who are listening to the Opposition, who now, based on that contribution, will go, “*Am I voting for it or am I not voting for it?*” What is the guidance? Did the Leader of the Opposition, to convince the people who follow them, say whether they are going to vote for or against the Motion?

Yet they asked us for definitive? At least we said we support the building of a pier. We are taking a supportive stand, but will respect the People’s will. Again, Mr. Speaker, we fall for the trap of politics all the time. Couldn’t just take a political win to say, “*See? They ate their words.*”

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, accused me of opposing the last administration, but refused to tell the people all the facts. Mr. Speaker, the way I generalised my comment to say that maybe we only need one port downtown, was because of my previous position about cargo, which is still the same today and the Member knows it, is because the project that was proposed the last time— and I remember going through this debate the last time.

Mr. Speaker, he accused me of making a meme, right, about the cargo with the trucks going like this [*mimicking truck sounds*]. That’s why I opposed your project; because I accused the administration of not forward-thinking from a cargo perspective. At no point in the Hansards of this House will you read that I said I was against the pier. I am the representative of George Town Central and it’s the George Town Central people who live with trucks driving through their neighbourhoods every night. It’s the George Town Central people’s properties that cannot have any nightlife anymore because of the cargo; and I encouraged you at the time, during the last administration: *Have you considered moving the cargo component?*

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Hansards will show that I quoted you, as the then Premier saying on a radio show, “*we have not considered cargo at all*” and how you said you heard some comment by the

then leader of the CPR, Mr. Moxam, showing some ideas about it being somewhere, but you had no idea about it and you were not considering it; and I brought it up on the Floor of this House saying as the representative of the George Town Central People’s voice—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, I really hate to break your flow but you’re purporting to quote me. Just let me say it for the record: A renovated and expanded cargo port was part of the overall port project, so I could never have said we haven’t considered cargo; somehow you have misheard, and have now misquoted me. I don’t want to get into the fray, so please leave me out of it as far as you can.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** I’m gonna do my best. Also to say, sir, that you didn’t say about cargo itself, but *that cargo project* that was being circulated, not specifically the cargo project here. I would happily bring it up and read it for you, Mr. Speaker. I crave your indulgence.

**The Speaker:** Please. Let’s clear this up.

[Pause]

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Mr. Speaker, in my contribution on Tuesday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, I said: “**Mr. Speaker, let me move on to the other, probably most important, concern with the government’s proposed project, the cargo element. In the Government’s current plans, they say that they would be getting an upgrade to the cargo portion of the dock facilities somewhere in the region of CI\$ 20 million.**”

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time— because I don’t want to read my whole my contribution, I want to find the part where I was quoting you, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier at the time. Oh, here we go.

“**Another quote—**and this is quoting from the Hansards, now, Mr. Speaker— ‘**I know, I have heard it from other people around and I have seen some plans who have talked about putting a cargo in the Sound, there where Breakers that would be breach of the reef and come across the road and lean into the lakes created by the result of the quarries. I have seen those documents, I have heard those discussions about that. But none of that is this Government’s initiative nor does the Government endorse that. As I said, it is a big enough challenge for us to get through the enhancement of the cargo port and building the cruise port in the area that has been recognised as the natural harbour for Cayman Town**’, and the last line— quoting again— “**So we are certainly not about to try to put it somewhere else.**”

**The Speaker:** Thank you for that. That’s perfectly fine. That’s exactly what I said.

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, so my point is that at that time, my opposition to the Government's position was that there was no intention to think about the people of George Town, and the businesses in the George Town area; nor thinking about the growth of our country, to think about moving it— and the former Minister would remember our phone calls, don't you, Member?

*[Inaudible interjection and laughs]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Well, at least you didn't disagree. Mr. Speaker, the Member for West Bay West, the godfather of the house—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Father of the House, not the godfather— that's a different show, you know.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** I tell you what, if you ask a couple of people, they would say he is the Godfather.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** The Father of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a tremendous difference between our approaches to governance. I respect his way, I just think we just have different approaches. He believes that if you see that something needs to be done for the people, regardless [of whether] there is a 50/50 split, you do it. That's one way to look at it. I think we can get it done by persuading the people.

I'd be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I think even the public can feel the shift in attitude, and the recognition that we can do this in the right way where the people don't feel that they're losing everything. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, there is a port out there right now, and it got there somehow. I can bet that my great-grandfather probably caught a couple of squabs right out there before the current cargo pier facilities were done. We recognise there will be sacrifices.

There's a dock in Cayman Brac that I used to swim under as a young boy because it was on pylons, and there's marine life underneath that thing because I caught the biggest snappers in the world off of it (stealing onto the dock when the security guard wasn't looking, to fish off of it). Mr. Speaker, we have examples across the world where human engineering can merge with the environment and create a new environment that is probably even better than before.

Mr. Speaker, there is a movie with Will Smith in which he was the last man standing, I think it was in New York....

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** *I am Legend*— thank you, good Member.

Mr. Speaker, for those who may have watched the movie, the reason I'm bringing it up is because nature has a funny way of taking back what [belongs to it], you see, so when the environmental effects happen for the installation of a cruise pier, coral, marine life, all of those things, will happen. I had a conversation just the other day with somebody, about settlement—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Sediments— thank you so much, Honourable Leader.

Think about when we have a Nor'Wester and you look at the waterfront. It is creamy and sediment has washed up and the colours washed from the ground, but the coral doesn't die then. By all means I am no environmentalist, so I don't want to assume, because dredging is a totally different thing but there could be ways this can be done without such environmental impacts.

While I know that there are people listening who still have concerns, and even though the Leader of the Opposition has now confused them more than ever... Hopefully at one point, after supporting the referendum, he will get up publicly to convince the people out there what they should do, because I'm assuming he's not suggesting that they should vote against the referendum, but I'm quite sure the media, who are listening, will eventually ask him to comment on it because he wasn't very clear, Mr. Speaker. Since we're gonna play a little game of politics, maybe you should make it clear to the public moving forward, considering the fact that he's the new Leader— and I'm happy about that, you know. I don't want anybody to think I'm against it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just looking for my last [note]. I want to ensure that I have gotten all of them out before I close this debate. Oh, he spoke about cheapness. For further clarity, Mr. Speaker, I mean, as I said in my contribution, the cheapest one possible to the standard that is necessary for them to be safe. That's it. I didn't mean... I know he tried to infer that I'm talking about one that you just throw in and it breaks down. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that many people in this country worry about government overspending unnecessarily. That's what I mean.

I was trying to give comfort to the public, to know that we are gonna do no more than what we need, because people have concerns about cost. The truth is that what we are talking about here is their ability to get on and off; that's it. On and off the ship, that's all. That is the one thing that's stopping them from coming, so we don't need any more than that— and I say one because, rightfully so, as the Member for West Bay



West said, maybe we should consider one somewhere else— spread the love around the Cayman Islands.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** The good Member said “must”— and that’s for the next Government to decide, right?

Mr. Speaker, another thought, is that when you think about two mega ships it is four ships equal to the standard of what we have out there now, and that’s a good lot. If we had two mega ships per day, every day of the week, for 365 days, nobody in the business would cry, because that is a good day. You have good, good days when you have many of them, and then you have bad days but two mega ships, at the rates and the numbers they are now, it’s a good standard. It doesn’t overwhelm the traffic too much. It’s enough business for everybody to get a little piece. That’s why I said one. It’s also cheaper than two! And it doesn’t include the cargo.

Mr. Speaker, just because it’s related to the topic and we all have talked about cargo. The public may be aware that the Government is still going through the process of public consultation about the future of our cargo facilities and what the Government will have to consider. We haven’t finished the report because the report hasn’t come back to me as Minister yet for us to accept the report. As a matter of fact, once it comes, we will not be making a decision because it’s too close with respect to the election— it’s in the “area of sensitivity”, but we will get the report Laid before the honourable House in terms of what it suggests.

What we are trying to do, Mr. Speaker, and this is the part that the Leader of the Opposition should be mindful of, [is that] though we may not be able to get those answers, it doesn’t mean we do nothing. At the very least, the report can be the starting baton in a relay race to say, “*Here you go. We’ve done much of the work and spent much money on it. Here’s what the professionals have suggested.*” In the event that you are the next Government, or those on the outside who want to come in or even if it’s us who come back, you’ll have something to work from.

Mr. Speaker, you know, being a former leader of the country, that it takes more than one term to do things— I remember you telling me so personally and the reality is hitting me today; but it doesn’t mean we don’t do anything. Maybe we should consider longer terms in Parliament, five years like they do in the UK. God, if I bring that up they’ll say I’m looking more years so I will not, but my point is that some administration has to be able to work with the next to do parts of the work.

In our minds, Mr. Speaker, at the very least, [with] this referendum after the day of election the next administration will know who the Government is, *and* the will of the People. What more can you ask for? Then they can go off with a mandate, which I am hoping the

answer will be a resounding “Yes”. Then you can have the comfort to say, “the People have given us the mandate” not by our political one in our book, but the People’s will, and you can move forward.

I have no problem taking on a project that *unna* presented the last time, brushing it off, take a little bit of that cargo off of it and move forward with your project, you know? I had no problem with that. I have no shame to come here and say, yeah, I took your idea, but the people are benefiting. Ain’t nothing wrong with that. I don’t know why people hold on to those feelings. I’m here to represent the people. My point is, Mr. Speaker, suppose we had gone off in this administration and said, “*You know what? We didn’t like the PPM one, we started our own project. We spent a couple of million on the report, a different design, a different location*” and the people still come back and said, “*Who told you we wanted a cruise [berthing?]*” Suppose the public wants to move away from cruise [tourism?]

Mr. Speaker, because I know those who are against the pier is listening, I want to say to them: I respect your view, too, very much, but everybody’s view has to be respected. The last time we played games about the referendum and we probably would have been in a better place today if we had actually had a referendum then. We wouldn’t have the evidence that we have today, with the numbers being so low, but God doesn’t make mistakes. He doesn’t make mistakes. Maybe He did not want the referendum to happen then, until we are here today to actually feel the truth.

Maybe it wasn’t clear, and I’ll add one more component to it, Mr. Speaker. Leaders have to be trusted, in order for you to say I’m gonna do something even without your input. You know why people call for referendums more and more every day across the world? Because they don’t trust their elected arm anymore. They would rather say, “*You let me and my peers choose, and if we get it wrong, we’ll deal with it*” because we’ve lost the faith of the People.

Mr. Speaker, I trust my people. I trust the evidence will be presented between now and the general election. I trust that the people whose lives will be affected, will sit and have mature conversations with those who also have concerns about the environment to say, “*Listen, this is what will happen to me and my family; to my Susan or my David, whom I feed when I go home*”, because I don’t think the CPR group wants people to lose their jobs. I also do not believe that the people who want to keep their jobs want to damage the environment unnecessarily.

We all want the same thing and we can get there, we just need to talk about it— and I believe this administration will deliver the dialogue necessary for us to come out with a positive resolution from that referendum. Knock on wood today, that is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, because we’re being transparent and honest and we’re not going to play the political game with it, so I encourage the Opposition to clarify it to the

public that you are in support of the referendum, because you have made it clear as mud.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank those who were in the Gallery today, for coming to support the need for this very important referendum— thank you for your commitment to standing for what you believe in. I also thank those who are on the opposite side of it, for standing for what *they* believe in. That's democracy, and whenever we stop doing that, we've lost our society. Let's just do it in a mature way.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and ask all Members to vote in the affirmative for the Motion before us.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. The question is:

**WHEREAS** the Government intends to hold a referendum on the cruise berthing infrastructure on the day of the 2025 General Elections;

**BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED** that the following question be declared to be a matter of national importance:

“Should the Cayman Islands develop cruise berthing infrastructure?”

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the question be specified in a Bill and brought by the Government to this Parliament for debate in accordance with the provisions of section 69 of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order, 2009.

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

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it.  
Minister, you wanted to say something?

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May I call for a division please?

**The Speaker:** I didn't hear a 'No', but on this important matter, why not? Madam Clerk, would you please poll the Members?

**Division No. 1 of 2024-2025**

**Ayes: 16**

**Noes: 0**

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Conolly  
Hon. André M. Ebanks  
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan  
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner  
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks  
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine  
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks  
Hon. Heather D. Bodden  
Mr. Bernie A. Bush

\*Hon. W. McKeever Bush  
Hon. Joseph X. Hew  
Hon. Barbara E. Conolly  
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell  
Mr. Roy M. McTaggart  
Mr. David C. Wight  
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

**Absentees: 2**

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour  
Hon. G. Wayne Panton

\***Hon. W. McKeever Bush:** Reluctantly, but anyway...

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** The results are 16 Ayes, 2 absentees, and zero Noes. I declare Government Motion No. 1 of 2024-2025, entitled Referendum on Cruise Berthing Infrastructure duly passed.

**Agreed: Government Motion No. 1 of 2024-2025 - passed.**

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.

**Government Motion No. 2 of 2024-2025—  
The Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) -  
The Immigration (Transition)  
(Grant of the Right to Be Caymanian)  
Order, 2024**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Border Control, Labour and Culture.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, is there a problem? Do you need a moment?

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

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Minister, we'll take a very short suspension until you've sorted out those logistical issues. The House is accordingly suspended for five minutes. Please Members, don't leave your seats.

**Proceedings suspended at 4:07 pm.**

**Proceedings resumed at 4:15 pm.**

**The Speaker:** We will resume proceedings. Honourable Minister, I think for the sake of the record, let's start again.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, an Order entitled The Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian).

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, I do believe that the Motion which you are about to move is in relation to this Order.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Before I read the Motion, Mr. Speaker, Section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) empowers the Cabinet to grant the Right to be Caymanian to up to four persons in any calendar year, who are recommended for such grant by the Caymanian Status and Permanent Residency Board. Any grant made by the Cabinet, however, is subject to ratification by Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2023 an application was made to the Cabinet with the support of the Caymanian Status and Permanent Residency Board for the right to be Caymanian of Mrs. Donna Danielle Morris. Cabinet thereafter approved the recommendation for Mrs. Morris to be granted the Right to be Caymanian and requested that the decision be sent to the Parliament of the Cayman Islands for ratification.

Mr. Speaker, I now will set out why the Caymanian Status and Permanent Residency Board and Cabinet were convinced that Mrs. Morris deserves the highest—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister. I do believe that you should move the Motion, and what you're saying now you say in your presentation on the Motion, because the Motion is asking this Parliament to ratify those decisions—

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** —rather than repeating it, okay?

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Okay. You can tell we don't do these often.

Mr. Speaker, Government Motion No. 2 of 2024-2025, Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision), Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) Order, 2024:

**WHEREAS section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) provides that the Cabinet, acting upon the recommendation of the Cayman Status and Permanent Residency**

**Board, may grant the right to be Caymanian in accordance with the section;**

**AND WHEREAS at their meeting on 8 August 2024, Cabinet granted Mrs. Donna Danielle Morris the right to be Caymanian, pursuant to section 26(1)(e);**

**AND WHEREAS section 26(1)(e) provides that such grant shall be ratified by the Cayman Islands Parliament;**

**AND WHEREAS the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) Order, 2024 was laid on the Table of the Parliament;**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) Order, 2024 be ratified by the Parliament pursuant to the provisions of section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Donna Danielle Morris is a 55-year-old American national who initially came to the Islands as a child in the late seventies, after her mother met and married Mr. Jackbert Mahomed Ebanks of West Bay, in New York.

Mrs. Morris completed her education through secondary school in Grand Cayman, having attended and graduated from the Cayman Islands Middle School and the Cayman Islands High School's class of 1985. Thereafter, Mrs. Morris returned to New York to continue her education, but visited Cayman during all of her school breaks and summer vacations. During her years living in New York, Mrs. Morris attended school, lived with her grandmother, got married and had a son, Dimitri; however, she remained steadfast in her determination to visit her family living in the Cayman Islands.

In 1992, Mrs. Morris returned to Grand Cayman where she remained and worked until 1999 when her sister graduated from high school. Subsequently, she decided to move to Atlanta, Georgia with her son and sister, who enrolled in university. During the ten years that followed, Mrs. Morris remarried and had a daughter, Destiny. In 1998 Mrs. Morris' mother, Mrs. Ebanks, applied for and was granted status; however, she was unable to pass this benefit on to her adult daughter due to Mrs. Morris' age at the time.

Mrs. Morris returned to Grand Cayman with her daughter in 2009, and remained until 2013 when she had to return to the United States due to difficulties securing employment, however, in 2017, Mrs. Morris once again returned to Grand Cayman with her daughter, who was 16 at the time, to assist with care of her ailing mother who, unfortunately, passed away in 2018.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Morris is currently employed as an executive officer in the Department of Education. Her adult son, Dimitri, a graduate of Triple C and daughter Destiny, a graduate of First Baptist Christian

School, currently live with her. Mrs. Morris has demonstrated a Christian spirit of volunteerism both as a Rotarian and a Member of her church, and will seek to continue to stay active in our community through these organisations.

Mr. Speaker, for the reasons outlined above, and in part because Mrs. Morris has provided a series of noteworthy Caymanian references in support of her application namely, Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, JP; Mrs. Alicia E. Dixon, MB; and Mrs. Deborah Webb-Sibbles, the Caymanian Status and Permanent Residency Board recommended Mrs. Morris as a suitable candidate to be considered for the grant of the Right to be Caymanian under section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) in March, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, while section 37 of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) provides for an applicant to apply for permanent residency after they are legally and ordinarily resident in the Cayman Islands for eight years, making Mrs. Morris eligible to apply for permanent residency in 2025, Cabinet felt that her familial connection to the Islands warranted special consideration under this facility.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that Mrs. Morris is deserving of consideration of being granted the Right to be Caymanian in accordance with the provisions of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

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

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

*[Pause]*

If no other Member wishes to speak, I will invite the Honourable Minister to wind up his debate on this Motion.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all Members of the Parliament for their tacit support. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The question is: **AND WHEREAS** the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) Order, 2024 was laid on the Table of the Parliament;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) Order, 2024 be ratified by the Parliament pursuant to the provisions of section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).

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

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: Government Motion No. 2 of 2024-2025 passed.**

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.

**Government Motion No. 3 of 2024-2025—  
The Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) –  
The Immigration (Transition)  
(Grant of the Right to be Caymanian)  
(No. 2) Order, 2024**

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk, I believe that, as was the case earlier, the Order needs to be laid before the Motion can be moved. I'll invite the Minister to do so now.

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House an Order entitled The Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024 for Ms. Hortensia Laudelina Fernandez.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Minister, you may proceed to move the Motion.

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

Government Motion No. 3 of 2024-2025—  
The Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) – The Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024:

**WHEREAS section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) provides that the Cabinet, acting upon the recommendation of the Cayman Status and Permanent Residency Board, may grant the right to be Caymanian in accordance with the section;**

**AND WHEREAS at their meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024, Cabinet granted Ms. Hortensia Laudelina Fernandez the right to be Caymanian, pursuant to section 26(1)(e);**

**AND WHEREAS section 26(1)(e) provides that such grant shall be ratified by the Cayman Islands Parliament;**

**AND WHEREAS the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024 was laid on the Table of the Parliament;**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024 be ratified by the Parliament pursuant to the provisions of section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).**

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

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I do.

Mr. Speaker, Hortensia Laudelina Fernandez is a 66-year old Cuban national who was born in Cuba in 1958 to a Cuban father and a Caymanian mother, Mrs. Elva Lloyd Nee Ebanks. After fleeing Cuba in 1959, Ms. Fernandez and Mrs. Lloyd were separated from Ms. Fernandez's father and ended up living in Tampa, where Ms. Fernandez attended Hillsborough County High School. Ms. Fernandez and Mrs. Lloyd returned to Cayman sometime in the early 1980s and unfortunately, Mrs. Lloyd passed away in 2016 without having ensured that Ms. Fernandez's immigration status was regularised.

It is unclear what identification documents were utilised in order for Ms. Fernandez to enter the Cayman Islands in the early 1980s, but upon Mrs. Lloyd's passing, the family realised that because Ms. Fernandez was undocumented, it would be problematic to prove that Ms. Fernandez was the daughter of Mrs. Lloyd in order to regularise Ms. Fernandez's immigration status; however, in December 2023 a DNA test confirmed with 99.999 [per cent] certainty that Ms. Fernandez is the daughter of Ms. Lloyd, proving Ms. Fernandez's Caymanian connection by descent.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2024, for the reasons outlined above, and in part because Ms. Fernandez has provided a series of noteworthy Caymanian references—namely Mrs. Julie Hunter, Mrs. Arikka A. Farley and Mrs. Daphne L. Orrett, the Cayman status and Permanent Residency Board recommended Ms. Fernandez as a suitable candidate to be considered for the grant of the right to be Caymanian under section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, while section 28(2) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision) provides that a person can apply to the Cayman Status and Permanent Residency Board for the grant of the Right to be Caymanian by descent, Cabinet felt it prudent to rectify Ms. Fernandez's immigration status as soon as possible. Once again, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Ms. Fernandez is deserving of consideration of being granted the Right to be Caymanian in accordance with the provisions of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Before I invite other Members to speak, Madam Premier, may I prevail on you to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2), in order that the business of the House may continue beyond the hour of interruption.

#### **Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)**

**The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the suspension of

Standing Order 10(2) to allow the business of the House to continue beyond the hour of 4:30 pm.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order that the business of the House may continue beyond 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?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

If not, I'll invite the Honourable Minister to exercise his right of reply or non-reply, whichever it is, since no one else spoke.

**Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank all Members of the honourable Parliament for their unanimous support. God bless you all.

**The Speaker:** The question is:

**AND WHEREAS** the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024 was laid on the Table of the Parliament;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the Immigration (Transition) (Grant of the Right to be Caymanian) (No. 2) Order, 2024 be ratified by the Parliament pursuant to the provisions of section 26(1)(e) of the Immigration (Transition) Act (2022 Revision).

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

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: Government Motion No. 3 of 2024-2025 passed.**

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.

#### **Government Motion No. 4 of 2024-2025—Amendment to the Development Plan 1997 - Proposed Rezoning: Lower Valley, Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Planning.

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move Government Motion No. 4 of 2024-2025 Amendment to the Development Plan 1997 - Proposed Rezoning: Lower Valley, Block 32D Parcels

320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638.

**WHEREAS** on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September, 2023 (reference CPA/21/23; item 3.3) the Central Planning Authority (CPA) originally considered the request to amend the Development Plan from Agriculture/Residential to Medium Density Residential over Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638. It was resolved to adjourn the application and invite the applicant to address the Authority regarding the potential adverse effects of the proposal;

**AND WHEREAS** on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024 (reference CPA/26/23; Item 3.1) the Central Planning Authority considered the request again and it was resolved to forward the proposal for a 60-day public notification and consultation period pursuant to Section 11(2) of the then Development and Planning Act (2021 Revision); **AND WHEREAS** the proposed amendments were duly advertised in the *Caymanian Times newspaper* on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2023, in accordance with Section 11(2) of the Development and Planning Act (2021 Revision), with public consultation closing on February 20<sup>th</sup> 2024;

**AND WHEREAS** persons were invited to view the application at the Department of Planning for comment and during this public consultation period no letters of objection were received on the proposed amendment; **AND WHEREAS** on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 (CPA/10/24; item 3.1) the Central Planning Authority again considered the proposal and in light of receiving no objections it was resolved to forward the rezone application to the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development for onward transmission to the House of Parliament, subject to Cabinet approval;

**AND WHEREAS** on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2024, Cabinet considered the rezoning proposal, and approved that the matter be submitted to Parliament for consideration;

**BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED** that in accordance with section 10(2)(b) of the Development and Planning Act (2021 Revision), the Central Planning Authority hereby recommends and submits to the Parliament the following proposal for alteration to the Development Plan 1997, a summary and maps of which are attached hereto; [[Government Motion No. 4/ Summary of Rezoning Proposal and Map](#)]

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** to alter the zoning area of Registration Section Lower Valley, Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638, from Agriculture/Residential to Medium Density Residential.

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

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker, honourable Members, I stand before the honourable House today to present the Government Motion that seeks to rezone Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638 from Agriculture/Residential to Medium Density Residential.

Honourable Members, the rezoning initiatives offers us a timely opportunity to provide much needed housing infrastructure for our mid-income Caymanians. It is a proactive step towards alleviating the housing crisis Caymanians are facing in forming healthy families and communities. While the land was zoned for agriculture purpose, it was really not very suitable for that purpose. With the proposed rezoning, we will harness these underdeveloped lands, shaping them into welcoming, vibrant neighbourhoods without losing sight of our environmental responsibility, traditions or innovations.

Following the public notification and consultation period, no objections were raised, therefore, the CPA found it favourable to rezone. Through collaboration with local stakeholders and institutions, we are confident that this development benefits Caymanians. The proposal is not a mere change in zoning, but a commitment to creating more housing opportunities that prepare us for the future and strengthen the economic backbone of the country.

Mr. Speaker and honourable Members, I respectfully submit this proposal to rezone Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638 for consideration with the confidence that, with your support, we can all deliver on the progress and prosperity for the people we serve.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister. Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of questions on the proposal, otherwise we have no objections to it. In the summary of the proposal, it says that, "**The subject parcels are underdeveloped, consisting of pasture lands and woodland. The applicant seeks to offer the lots to buyers to develop and construct homes targeted at mid-income levels.**"

I wonder if the Honourable Minister is in a position to say, if it would be only raw land being sold, whether it is intended to fit within the value of the first-time Caymanian duty concession; and, if there are plans by the developer to actually build homes, whether they, too, would fit within the value of first time Caymanian purchases for duty exemption.

With those questions, the Opposition have no objections to the Motion.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Leader.

Does any other Member wish to speak? The honourable Member for Bodden Town West.

**Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Government's Motion. I know the developer that's doing this particular project, and he has discussed it with me. From speaking to others within the community, there were only three people who had concerns mostly along the lines of traffic, and after speaking to them, those concerns were pretty much mitigated.

I can say that in this particular area, the land was never suited for agriculture— it's located just off Beach Bay Road. The developer's family has a reputation and a history of providing housing lots for many people within the Bodden Town West community, Northward being one of the biggest developments by Mike Watler and his family from back then.

I can say for the record, that it is Mr. Charlie Watler who is doing it, and he is definitely looking to help a lot of young Caymanians in terms of purchasing this kind of land and so forth. I can also say, from my discussions with him, that he's also looking to put restrictive covenants on it, so that it is not just anything that can be built there. With that, I'm a bit more comfortable.

I'm not sure if he's going into the housing business, I didn't get that impression; but in terms of the [land] lot sizes, I know he wanted them to a point where young Caymanians could actually afford one. I don't want to pre-empt the question raised by the Honourable Leader of Opposition, but I got the impression, from speaking to Mr. Charlie, that he did endeavour to try to get as many young Caymanians as possible.

With that said, while I am definitely supportive of this Motion, I want to make it known that I look at each project on a case-by-case basis and this is one that I think would definitely benefit the Bodden Town West community, so I thank the Minister for bringing it.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak? The Member from West Bay North.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush, Elected Member for West Bay North:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I too am very happy to see this, even though it's not in my district. The fact that it's going to be helping young Caymanians is the right thing to do. I hope and pray that before we leave this House I can also see the re-zoning of the head of Barkers, for West Bayers and for the whole island.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?  
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?  
[Pause]

If not, I'll invite the Honourable Minister to exercise his right of reply.

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I want to thank the Member for Bodden Town West. I know it's in his constituency and it has been coming for quite some time.

Now that he's mentioned his name, I'm pretty sure Mr. Charlie was not worried whether anybody knew that he is the developer, as it seems that when he does something, he does it right. He is a Caymanian of the soil.

As we spoke about, the area was traditionally zoned for agriculture but that parcel of land wasn't really suitable for it. That's something that we've been trying to make sure that we look at. If those parcels are suitable for agriculture, we try to make sure to keep them as an agriculture zoning area— especially as the Minister for Agriculture.

This was one of those parcels that was more hard rock and cliff. I don't know how much soil was actually in it, but I had the opportunity to drive out there recently during one of the first phases to see what the lay of the land was. I haven't had that conversation with Mr. Charlie to see whether he would be interested in building homes. I don't see him as that type of developer; I think he was more into developing the land, but I thank the House for their support.

I think I've answered the new Leader of Opposition's question about the housing situation. I would definitely think that first-time homeowners would actually get the benefit of this when buying the property. I cannot see any given reason why they wouldn't, unless there are different types of zoning in different areas, but I won't get into that.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. Johany S. Ebanks:** Oh, the value of it? I do think the lot sizes are valued. Not putting it out there, because there was a range, but it is what Mr. Charlie wanted to do— try to see how he could bring the cost down for land owners.

I sat and listened to him one day for maybe an hour and a half. He spoke about how when he looked around he wondered how younger generations are going to be able to own property, especially in the Savannah and Bodden Town area, because prices continue to go up. He thought that by re-zoning this and getting it done, he would be able to push the cost down and [pass on] the savings to help younger and future generations that wanted to buy property.

That'll be it. I thank the whole House for their support, sir.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Members, this is a difficult Motion to get the voting done procedurally correct because part of the resolution is attached to the Motion as a summary of a re-zoning proposal, so I trust all Members have read the summary of the re-zoning proposal.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** When the resolution is recorded, I wish for those who do the *Hansard* work to include the summary of the re-zoning proposal as part of the Resolution, otherwise anyone coming back and looking at it would not be able to make sense of it. It is an unhappy way of doing a Motion, but given the fact that we were so far down the road, I let it go by.

It's not because I want to be difficult but because, when this Parliament votes on something, it goes into the *Hansard* and it will be there for as long as this institution exists and long after all of us are gone. If it became an issue, no one would be able to track it. With those few words and guidance, I'll put the Motion:

**BE IT NOW THEREFORE RESOLVED** that in accordance with Section 10(2)(b) of the Development and Planning Act (2021 Revision), the Central Planning Authority hereby recommends and submits to the Parliament the following proposal for alteration to the Development Plan 1997, a summary and maps of which are attached hereto; [\[Government Motion No. 4/ Summary of Rezoning Proposal and Map\]](#)

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** to alter the zoning area of Registration Section Lower Valley, Block 32D Parcels 320-322, 339-341 & 355 and Block 38E Parcels 637-638, from Agriculture/Residential to Medium Density Residential.

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

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: Government Motion No. 4 of 2024-2025 passed.**

**The Speaker:** Madam Premier, I'll entertain the Motion for adjournment.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10 a.m., Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Premier. The question is that the House do now adjourn until 10 a.m. on

Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

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

**At 4:54 p.m. the House stood adjourned until 10 a.m. Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2024.**