First Sitting of the 23rd Meeting of the First Session of the 13th Legislature

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

1 JUNE 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

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PRAYER

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

I now call this meeting of the First Session of the Thirteenth Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to be held on Monday, 1st June 2026, at the Honourable Andrew J. S. Francis Building, Pond Street, Grand Turk, to order. Honourable Members, I now call on our Chaplain, Bishop Calita Williams III, to pray for this meeting.

PRAYER

Chaplain:

Matthew chapter 7, verses 24 to 25: Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. Strong today, secure tomorrow. This text teaches the importance of establishing strong spiritual, moral, and practical foundations today to secure a greater tomorrow. A greater tomorrow is only possible when it is built on a strong and lasting foundation.

Many people desire success, prosperity, and fulfilment, yet they fail to recognise that without proper preparation and spiritual grounding, all efforts are vulnerable to collapse. Foundations determine endurance in life's storms. Jesus emphasised that hearing His word without acting on it is like building on sand. Temporary success, achievement, or knowledge alone cannot sustain life in challenging seasons.

A strong foundation endures life, withstands trials, temptation, and uncertainties. First, the foundation of wisdom and obedience. A strong foundation begins with wisdom and obedience to God's word. Knowledge alone is insufficient. Action on God's principle brings security. Wisdom builds, strengthens, and sustains every aspect of life. Second, the foundation of faith and trust in God. Faith anchors life to God's promises, even when circumstances seem unfavourable.

Trust in God is the bedrock of any enduring foundation. Faith in the unseen ensures confidence and direction. Trust always allows one to remain unshaken.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Amen.

Chaplain:

When life's trials come, rely on God's word rather than circumstances, and it secures our future. Let us pray. Father, Lord God Almighty, the God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, we bow in reverence to You in this honourable Parliament and thank You for all of our leaders. Help them to lay strong spiritual foundations for their lives, their families, their communities, and ultimately this country.

Lord, grant them wisdom to build on Your word consistently. Strengthen their faith to trust You in all circumstances. Cultivate integrity and uprightness in their character. Father, reveal Your divine purpose and guide their steps. Protect the foundation of their lives from every attack. Secure their greater tomorrow through foundations laid today. Bless the deliberation of this Parliament. Bless our Speaker.

Bless our Premier. Bless our Leader of the Opposition and members. Bless our Government members. Bless our Attorney General. Bless our Clerk. Bless this country. It is in Jesus' name we pray.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Amen.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Please be seated.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Honourable Premier.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Before the Honourable Premier, we have to swear in the Honourable Acting Attorney General. We will now have the administration of the Oath of Allegiance for the Honourable Acting Attorney General. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Honourable Premier.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good morning.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 12

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Good morning, colleagues. Good morning to those in the gallery, including members of the Attorney General's Chambers who are here to assist us today with dealing with the bills in front of us. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 130, I move that Standing Order 12 be suspended to allow this Honourable House to sit beyond the 6 pm hour. Do I have a seconder?

Chaplain:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier is that this Honourable House sit beyond the 6 pm hour. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Aye.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

REARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 91, I wish to rearrange the business of this Honourable Parliament so that Government business can have precedence over all other business. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I move that item number 18, Orders of the Day, be taken as item number 5. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2025 - SECOND READING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. Good morning again, Honourable Members. I also want to welcome the strangers in the gallery this morning. I also want to welcome persons who are listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and also on our social media platforms. I want to send condolences to all persons whom we have lost since I was last in the Chair, and

I also want to send congratulations to persons who are celebrating happier times in their lives. Honourable Members, last week the Clerk and I attended a conference in the Cayman Islands. It was the Commonwealth and Overseas Territories Speakers Conference, which is now in its fifth year, and it brings together speakers from all across the Overseas Territories, providing a vital forum for strengthening cooperation, sharing experience, and advancing parliamentary democracy. This year, the conference focused primarily on harnessing AI and digital innovation. We also focused on building resilient and independent legislatures.

We spoke about reforms that have happened in the British Virgin Islands to strengthen parliamentary independence. We also spoke about strengthening trust and engagement with global trust and political institutions, and I gave a keynote on significant and emerging threats, from hurricanes to cyber threats, and the importance of parliamentary resilience and continuity, which is very important during those times. I want to thank Speaker Miller from Cayman for hosting us.

He put on an excellent conference for the participants, and I want to thank them for their hospitality this week. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We have messages from Her Excellency the Governor. There were none. We are now at Orders of the Day. We are at the Second Reading of Bills, and we will have the Second Reading of the Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025, to be moved by the Honourable Minister for Physical Planning and Infrastructure Development. Honourable Minister.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Put on your microphone for me, please.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that, in accordance with Standing Order 92, the Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred to the next sitting of Parliament. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion moved by the Honourable Minister of Physical Planning and Infrastructure Development and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Public Safety is that the bill entitled Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred to the next meeting of Parliament. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026 - SECOND READING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still at the Second Reading of Bills, and we will now have the Second Reading of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier and Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 92, I move that the bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 be read a second time. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier is that the bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 be now read a second time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I present to this Honourable House a bill that speaks directly to one of the most pressing concerns facing our people, and that is the rising difficulty of owning a home in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Across this country, families are feeling the strain. Young professionals are working hard, earning steady incomes and doing everything right, yet still finding that homeownership remains just beyond reach.

In Grand Turk, a young public officer, employed for years and saving diligently, still struggles to secure financing for her mother's home. In North Caicos, a family with land passed down through generations cannot build, not because they lack the will, but because they cannot access affordable financing. In Providenciales, a young couple watches prices rise faster than their ability to save, forced to remain renters in a housing market with which they can no longer keep pace. Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: this is not a problem unique to the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Around the world, countries are confronting housing crises driven by rising construction costs, increasing land values, and tightening access to finance. But, Mr. Speaker, in a small economy like ours, those pressures are felt more sharply and more personally, because here housing is not an abstract issue. It is about whether our people can live with dignity in their own country. Mr. Speaker, the realities in the Turks and Caicos Islands are well known.

Construction costs have increased significantly, driven by imported materials and global supply chain pressures. Property values continue to rise, particularly in high-demand areas. Access to mortgage financing remains limited for many Turks and Caicos Islanders, and lending conditions often exclude individuals who, in every practical sense, are capable of owning a home. This is the gap we must close.

Mr. Speaker, there is, however, an important matter of

responsibility that we must confront honestly. Too many of our people who, under normal circumstances, would be able to qualify for and sustain a mortgage are today unable to do so because they are heavily burdened by high-cost obligations from informal and predatory lending arrangements.

These obligations erode the ability to save, weaken their credit standing, and limit their access to formal financing. The Government has taken steps through policy and is putting in place regulations to discourage these practices and to promote responsible borrowing. Yet, despite these efforts, this remains a persistent challenge. Mr. Speaker, if we are to expand access to homeownership, then public policy must be matched by personal financial discipline.

Access to opportunity must be met with responsible choices. Homeownership is more than a personal achievement. It is the foundation of stable families. It is the basis of strong communities. It is the primary way in which ordinary citizens build wealth and pass opportunities from one generation to the next. When access to homeownership is restricted, inequality widens and the promise of economic growth becomes less meaningful for the people we serve. Mr. Speaker, we must recognise what this means in real terms. It means a teacher in South Caicos who has returned home to serve the community but must commute between rented accommodations without the certainty of a permanent home.

It means a police officer in Providenciales working night shifts to keep our communities safe, yet unable to secure financing for a house in the very communities they protect. It means young Turks and Caicos Islanders returning home with skills, savings, and ambition, but no viable pathway into the mortgage system. These are not isolated stories. They are national realities.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak directly to the people of our Family Islands. For too long, the challenge has not only been affordability, but access: access to financing, access to serviced land, and access to opportunity. In islands such as North Caicos, Middle Caicos, South Caicos, Salt Cay and Grand Turk, families often possess land, sometimes for generations, but remain unable to unlock its value because the financing system does not adequately serve them. This bill is designed to change all of that. It creates a pathway for a family in Bottle Creek to finally build on long-held land.

It provides an opportunity for a young couple in South Caicos to return home, not just to live, but to settle and invest in their future. It enables development in Grand Turk and Salt Cay that is driven by our people, not only external forces. It supports a vision of national development that is balanced, where prosperity is not concentrated on one island but extended across all. Because a national housing policy that does not work for the Family Islands is not a national policy at all.

Mr. Speaker, around the world, Governments are responding to this challenge by adopting what is now widely described as smart shelter policy. That simply means this: Government cannot stand aside. Government must act carefully, responsibly, and deliberately to ensure that its people are not excluded from access to housing. The bill before this House is part of that response.

It establishes the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation, a specialist institution with a clear mandate to expand access to mortgage financing, to support affordable housing development, and to increase homeownership among Turks and Caicos Islanders. Let me be absolutely clear. The Mortgage Corporation is not the entire solution. It is a critical part of a broader and evolving national shelter policy, one that this Government is actively shaping to ensure that access to housing becomes more equitable and more attainable over time. The broad policy efforts include increasing access to serviced land across our islands, encouraging the development of housing that meets the needs of our people, not just the global market, strengthening planning frameworks to support sustainable communities, and working with private sector partners to expand housing supply responsibly. But even where land is available, even where opportunity exists, without access to financing, ownership remains out of reach.

That is the barrier this Corporation is designed to remove. This institution will create real pathways for the young civil servant in Grand Turk who wants to stop renting and start building; for the family in Middle Caicos who wants to develop inherited land but has never been able to access a mortgage; for the hospitality worker in Providenciales who contributes daily to our tourism success but struggles to find long-term housing security; and for the returning graduate who wants to invest in their country but needs a fair opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, let me also address a key point. This Corporation is not designed to replace commercial banks. It is designed to complement the financial system, to fill the gaps where traditional financing does not reach. It is about inclusion, not disruption. Because this institution will carry significant responsibility, the Government has ensured that it is built on a foundation of strong governance and strict oversight.

It will be guided by an independent Board with professional expertise. It will operate with dedicated oversight committees, and it will be subject to prudential supervision by the Financial Services Commission. This is a disciplined and accountable institution designed to endure. Mr. Speaker, at its core, this bill is about fairness.

It is about ensuring that Turks and Caicos Islanders are not priced out of their own country. It is about ensuring that when we speak of development, we are speaking about development that includes our people. It is about ensuring that the dream of owning a home is not reserved for a few, but remains within reach for the many. The Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 is a step forward.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

This is an important step, but it is part of a larger journey towards a more inclusive housing system, a stronger middle class, and a more equitable economy. This Bill reflects the same principle that guides our national budget: growth must

be inclusive, opportunity must be expanded, and prosperity must be shared. Mr. Speaker, in closing, we are building an economy that works not just for some, but for all; an economy in which every Turks and Caicos Islander has a fair chance to own, to build, and to belong.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I recommend this Bill to this Honourable Parliament, and I invite my colleagues to make their positive contribution. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier, for your presentation on the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this Bill, and the Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for the Bight.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, strangers in the gallery. Good morning to my good constituents of ED6. Mr. Speaker, every member of this House wants to see Turks and Caicos Islanders owning homes. The objective of increasing access to affordable housing is one that we all support. However, our duty as legislators is not only to support the goal, but to ensure that the mechanisms created to achieve that goal are financially sound, transparent, accountable, and capable of delivering results for Turks and Caicos Islanders.

Mr. Speaker, here are some of the weaknesses and concerns of this Bill. First, there are no clear eligibility criteria. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest concerns is that the Bill creates the Corporation but does not clearly establish income thresholds, first-time homeowner requirements, loan qualification standards, or priority categories. Who gets approved, and who gets denied? Those critical details appear to be left for future policies and regulations.

Parliament is being asked to approve the structure without seeing the rules. Secondly, there is no guarantee of affordable interest rates. The Bill gives the Corporation authority to determine loan rates and terms. However, nowhere does it guarantee that the mortgage rates will actually be lower than the commercial bank rates.

If the rates are similar to the banks, then what problem are we solving? Thirdly, there is significant financial exposure. The Corporation receives $20 million in setup funding, authority to borrow up to $50 million, and authority to issue bonds and other obligations, potentially exposing taxpayers to tens of millions of dollars in liabilities. What safeguards exist if loan defaults rise dramatically? Fourthly, political appointments. The Minister appoints the Board.

While qualifications are listed, the Bill still gives significant appointment authority to the Government. The public will want to be assured that appointments are based on competence rather than political connections. Fifthly, housing strategy. Providing mortgages alone does not solve the housing crisis. The larger question is: where are the affordable homes? Without land availability, infrastructure, and housing development, financing alone may simply increase demand and drive prices higher. Sixthly, the risk of future losses. The Corporation may extend loans, restructure loans, postpone repayments, and write off loans with approval by Parliament. While flexibility is important, these powers could create long-term financial risk if they are not properly managed.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition supports the dream of homeownership for Turks and Caicos Islanders. We support measures that genuinely expand opportunities for our families to own homes. However, good intentions alone are not enough. This House must ensure that the Corporation is financially sustainable, transparent, free from political interference, and capable of delivering real results. The success of this legislation will not be measured by the creation of another statutory body. It will be measured by how many Islanders receive affordable mortgages, build homes, and secure a better future for their families. Those are the answers the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands deserve before we entrust this Corporation with millions of dollars in public resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is good to see you in this Chamber, and I hope that you had a very good session with Madam Clerk in the Cayman Islands with your brother and sister Speaker colleagues. I will always be the MP for Leeward and Long Bay; that is where my heart rests. Mr. Speaker, I know I normally take my 20 minutes, but due to my recovery I do not think I can stand for the full 20 minutes.

I stand today to lend support to the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, which the Honourable Premier presented moments ago. Given that our colleague from the Bight is the first to speak on behalf of the Opposition, and that unlimited time has already been used, I thought we would have spent a little more time going through the Bill to raise the concerns that he raised. I will assist my honourable colleague, through the Speaker. I will start where he ended.

This Bill would not contain the details he is seeking. Its purpose is to provide enabling legislation. If he would look at clauses 114, 115 and 116, that is where he would be able to identify how the rules would be created for the corporation. Clause 114 provides for the development of regulations. The

Minister may, on the recommendation of the managing director, make regulations for carrying out the objectives of the Act. In particular, it lists the regulations that may be made. Those would include the fees and charges to be paid to the corporation for its services; the forms, which would include the eligibility criteria for the corporation to provide access to capital; any other information that an applicant may need to provide to the corporation in order to be granted or provided with funding; the terms and conditions under which the corporation would operate; the data protection protocols required, including how information provided to the corporation is stored and saved; and provisions for the corporation issuing bonds or debentures. The purpose of the corporation is for it to reach a significant institutional size so that investments may be made in it, not only by TCIG but through bond lending that would be repaid.

It also sets out the terms and conditions for any debentures that may be required to be made by the corporation. Last but not least, provisions are made for anything else that would assist in making the mortgage corporation a reality in these Islands for the benefit of the people. I wanted to bring that to my colleague's attention because this is enabling legislation, and the regulations would be the secondary or subsidiary legislation that would set the rules and operation for the corporation. Clause 115 sets out rules.

The Minister may make rules for carrying out the objectives of the Act. Finally, on guidelines, which I believe the Honourable Member also touched on, the corporation may issue guidelines with respect to the procedures to be followed. Those documents would be reviewed to ensure that the corporation is acting within the framework given to it by the Act, when passed, and by the Bill presently before us. Mr. Speaker, I echo the sentiments expressed by the Premier and by my colleague opposite from the Bight. He eloquently said that everyone in this Chamber supports access to homeownership for Turks and Caicos Islanders. We know that over the years it has been very difficult for Turks and Caicos Islanders to benefit from mortgage opportunities at commercial lenders.

I am a Turks and Caicos Islander and also a politically exposed person. When I was seeking a mortgage to build my forever home, it was very difficult. Not just the PEP part, because that opens a whole other door of reporting and disclosure, which I signed up for when I put my name on the ballot in 2012, but also because it was as if the goalposts continued to move. I used a commercial lender.

I had been a customer of that lender from the time I returned in 2006 to take up full-time employment. I had an employment history with a private firm, because at the time I sought the mortgage I was with a private institution. I was initially told what my deposit amount would be. Then they looked at the assets I had and the value of the land, and they changed the deposit again.

That put me in a position where I had to ask my parents for a little help so that I could build up the deposit to qualify for the mortgage. It felt as if I was begging them to assist me by lending me money at an interest rate that would double by the time I finished paying off the mortgage in 25 years. The commercial institution is winning, but they make it seem so difficult to qualify for the lending that one becomes completely disenfranchised from the process.

With this mortgage corporation, we have a responsibility, and the corporation will have a responsibility, to ensure that it follows the required compliance rules of knowing its customers and ensuring that persons who come to it to seek funding are suitably qualified, because we do not want the corporation to fail by over-lending at the beginning in order to appear to be the choice. We must ensure that we staff the corporation with the right talent to make it succeed. Mr. Speaker, this corporation is another institution that is desperately required in these Islands. There was a time when lending for homeownership could be subsidised by Government through TCInvest, and then we had TCI Bank.

Although it was a commercial bank, it was our bank, a local bank. We have lost both institutions over time, and this seeks to fill the gap with a streamlined mandate. It is a mandate that will allow, as the Premier said, the young public servant who has access to property because of generational land, but whose salary or savings may make the commercial banks consider the risk too great, to have another opportunity. We have to acknowledge that the commercial banks in these Islands are risk-averse.

The private bank in these Islands wants you only if you have plenty of money to bring to it, and then it will assist you afterwards. You have to get your foot in the door with a large cheque to make it worth its while even to take you as a customer. The private mortgage fund lenders seem to lend to almost anyone, but unfortunately the rates are astronomical, the terms are almost borderline abusive, and people feel that they do not have a fair shake. They pay every single month, yet the principal never seems to go down and the interest is all they are paying.

Eventually, they may slip into arrears and find that foreclosure proceedings have begun. What we are seeking to do with this institution is to have a modified, calm, no-need-to-rush approach. It is here and it is not going anywhere. We are going to take our time, staff it properly, ensure that it is properly funded, get it up and running, and start giving genuine, competitive opportunities to Turks and Caicos Islanders.

The Premier advised us, and I want this to be understood, that this will not replace the commercial banks, but it is another element of funding that will be available. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Leeward and Long Bay, and in assisting my colleague from the Bight in understanding that the answers to the questions he seeks are in the Bill, I lend my support to the Bill. I am grateful.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your contribution to the debate. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Grand Turk North for his contribution.

Hon. Otis Chuck Morris:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Honourable Members. Good morning to the constituents of ED1, whom I represent. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise in full support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, a piece of legislation that addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing our beloved Turks and Caicos Islands: access to affordable housing and homeownership.

For far too many of our people, the dream of owning a home has seemed beyond reach. Across our nation, and in particular among the hardworking people I represent in ED1, there are young families, single mothers, low-income workers and ordinary citizens who work diligently every day but struggle to secure the financing necessary to build or purchase a home. Housing is more than bricks and mortar. Housing provides stability, security, dignity and hope.

A home is where families are nurtured, children are raised and communities are strengthened. This Bill represents a significant step towards making that dream a reality for many of our people. I am especially encouraged by the opportunities this legislation can create for the young single mother striving to provide a better future for her children, for the public servant who has faithfully served this country, and for hardworking constituents throughout our districts and throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands who simply desire a place they can proudly call their own. This Bill is not merely about mortgages.

It is about empowering people, building stronger communities and investing in the future of our nation. It is a critical part of the long-term solution to our housing challenges and will have a positive impact across the length and breadth of our beautiful by nature Turks and Caicos Islands, particularly for those living outside the island of Providenciales, who often face additional barriers to development and financing. As we consider this legislation, I am reminded of the words of scripture: moreover, the profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served by the fields, Ecclesiastes 5:9.

Also, they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, Isaiah 65:21. These verses remind us of God's desire for His people to enjoy the fruits of their labour and to dwell securely in homes of their own. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people who sent me to this honourable House and on behalf of the wider Turks and Caicos Islands, I offer my full support for the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. I believe it represents hope for many families, opportunity for future generations and a meaningful step in addressing our national housing crisis.

May we continue to enact policies that uplift our people, strengthen our communities and build a brighter future for all. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may God continue to bless our beautiful by nature Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair now recognizes the Honourable Minister for PPID.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make my contribution in strong support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. At the outset, allow me to extend my respectful salutations to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all the Honourable Members of Parliament. I also acknowledge our people across the Turks and Caicos Islands, with special recognition to the people of North and Middle Caicos, the people in the gallery, and those who have experienced loss.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my deepest condolences. I want to make mention of Roderick Jones, whom we call North Caicos Miss Jones. She passed away a couple of weeks ago and will be buried on the 13th. To Donovan and the rest of the family, Miss Jones practically grew me up, Mr. Speaker, so it is a big loss for the people of Bottle Creek, North Caicos.

Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note, to people celebrating milestones and achievements, I offer my sincere congratulations. My daughter Andrea will be celebrating her birthday on Wednesday, so I wish her a happy birthday as well. Their resilience and determination continue to shape the strength of our nation. Mr. Speaker, this bill is not only timely; it is a promise fulfilled. We campaigned on this. We went to the people of these Islands and spoke about expanding opportunities, making homeownership attainable and building a more inclusive economy, and today we are delivering.

This is progress. This is what a progressive government does. We do not only speak about change; we implement it. Mr. Speaker, Proverbs 24:3 reminds us that through wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established. This legislation reflects both wisdom and understanding: wisdom in recognizing the structural challenges within our housing market, and understanding in crafting a solution that meets the real needs of our people. Mr. Speaker, for far too long, hardworking Turks and Caicos Islanders have found the dream of homeownership just beyond their reach, not because they lack discipline or ambition, but because the system was not designed with them in mind. That is the reality, Mr. Speaker, and this Government is not afraid to confront reality and fix it. The Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 represents a decisive intervention.

It establishes a public-purpose institution that will expand access to mortgage financing, particularly for first-time homeowners, young professionals, entrepreneurs and families who have been overlooked by traditional lending systems. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I value most about this bill is that it is deliberately designed for independence. The Member from the Bight drew reference to the sole responsibility of the Minister, but, Mr. Speaker, that is the Minister in Cabinet. The corporation is structured to operate without political interference.

I stress that point deliberately, Mr. Speaker, because 25 years

from now, when my good friend the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and his team may find themselves in government, this institution will still stand strong and impartial, continuing to serve the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands without fear, favour or political direction. Mr. Speaker, that is leadership. That is maturity in governance. That is how you build institutions that outlast administrations.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will broaden access to financing, yes, but it will also stimulate economic activity, support local contractors, strengthen small businesses and create jobs across our communities. It recognizes the realities of our economy, seasonal employment, entrepreneurial income and the unique financial patterns of small islands like this. It also promotes responsibility, with built-in safeguards, transparent terms and consumer protection. This is not a reckless expansion.

This is structured opportunity. It is about giving people a fair chance while ensuring long-term stability. This bill helps people in North and Middle Caicos, South Caicos, Grand Turk and Salt Cay. The Honourable Member on the right said earlier that we might as well stay with the banks if the rate is the same.

That is not what I said. But, Mr. Speaker, the traditional banks do not give us any money anyway, so I beg to differ with the Honourable Member from the Bight. This bill will help those people, because the traditional banks look at North and Middle Caicos, South Caicos, Grand Turk and Salt Cay, look at their assets and say that they do not have any value. Let us be clear, Mr. Speaker: homeownership is not simply owning property. It is about dignity, stability, creating generational wealth and giving families a foundation upon which to build their future. When more of our people own homes, our communities become stronger, our economies become more resilient and our nation becomes more secure.

Mr. Speaker, markets alone will not solve this challenge. In small island economies like ours, government must play a role, not to control but to enable; not to dominate but to empower. This Bill reflects that philosophy. It is practical, forward-looking and rooted in the belief that opportunity should be shared.

I also wish, Mr. Speaker, to commend the many individuals, public servants, housing advocates and community stakeholders who contributed to shaping this initiative. Their work helps bring us to this defining moment. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is more than policy. It is about people. It is about ensuring that young people can see a future for themselves here at home. It is about ensuring that a hardworking family from North and Middle Caicos, Provo, South Caicos, Grand Turk or Salt Cay can finally hold the keys to their own home.

It is about ensuring that the promise of this country is accessible to all, not just a few. Today I stand not just in support of a bill, but in support of a vision: a vision where opportunity is real, progress is tangible, and this Government continues to deliver for the people. I therefore urge all Members to support this Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026.

Let us move this country forward together, united in purpose, confident in our direction and committed to building a Turks and Caicos Islands where every deserving citizen has a fair chance to own a home and secure their future. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, thank you very much for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Health for his contribution.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the esteemed Members of Parliament, to the constituents of Wheeland, to strangers in the gallery and to persons tuned in via radio and livestream. My fellow Turks and Caicos Islanders, good morning. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, and I speak to the clear need for this legislation and the benefits it will bring to the people of these Islands.

Mr. Speaker, at its core, this bill addresses one of the most pressing socioeconomic challenges facing our country today: access to affordable housing and mortgage financing for Turks and Caicos Islanders. Mr. Speaker, the policy rationale is clear. Many Turks and Caicos Islanders face structural barriers when attempting to secure mortgage financing through the traditional banking system. As one who previously worked in that financial system, I understand the challenges, and it is not as easy as persons may think.

As the Minister for Home Affairs alluded to, for a lot of Turks and Caicos Islanders, especially young professionals, it is very taxing to come up with the deposits, meet the criteria and even be approved. Once they get over that hurdle, there are other mitigating factors involved. Mr. Speaker, the Mortgage Corporation Bill therefore proposes the creation of a public-purpose mortgage corporation that will bridge the gap.

As stated previously, this institution is not intended to replace private lenders or operate as a commercial bank. Rather, it is designed to complement the financial system, focusing specifically on expanding access to mortgage financing in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back to a recent headline about the sale of CIBC. It makes the Mortgage Corporation even more important in the trying times in which we find ourselves, because at this current moment we are very uncertain as to the changes CIBC will experience, also making it even harder for persons to access homeownership opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is clearly articulated. The bill seeks to establish the framework that enables mortgage financing in order to support the acquisition and construction of affordable homes, while also promoting broader housing development in the Islands. Mr. Speaker, when the Member from the Bight stood up, I thought he would have taken the same approach as the Leader of the

Opposition, who said that anything that is good for the Turks and Caicos Islands he would support. But he went in a different direction.

He alluded to mismanagement by Ministers and fear of rules and regulations. I had to quickly grab my notes to make sure, and of course, as the Minister for Home Affairs alluded to, it is right there. Again, I do not know what the objective is, but what we are trying to do today, Mr. Speaker, is make sure that every young person and every Turks and Caicos Islander under the sound of our voices is given an opportunity to afford and access homes in their own country. Mr. Speaker, this is significant because homeownership is not simply a financial transaction.

It is a cornerstone of economic stability, family security and national development. When persons can own homes, they can build generational wealth, strengthen communities and deepen their stake in the prosperity of our country. This bill also demonstrates careful institutional design. It establishes the Mortgage Corporation as a statutory body with clear governing arrangements, including a board with expertise in areas such as finance, banking, law, risk management and real estate.

This ensures that the corporation will be guided by professionals with the experience necessary to manage lending institutions responsibly. Again, to my colleague from the Bight, there you have it. We are taking the necessary steps to make sure that we do things the responsible way, so there is no need to be afraid.

Mr. Speaker, some may understandably ask about the fiscal implications of such an institution, and the bill addresses those concerns directly. While the Government will provide initial start-up capital, the corporation is designed to mobilize funding through a range of sources, including borrowing and the issuance of financial instruments, subject to appropriate parliamentary oversight. This structure allows the corporation to operate on a financially sustainable basis rather than relying indefinitely on public subventions. In addition, it is important that we note and clearly understand that the corporation will not take deposits from the public and will not function as a retail bank.

Instead, it will operate as a specialized mortgage financing institution focused exclusively on supporting housing finance and expanding opportunities for homeownership. Mr. Speaker, beyond individual homeownership, this initiative will also have wider economic benefits. By facilitating financing and supporting housing construction, the corporation will stimulate activity across several sectors, including construction, building materials, professional services and small contractors. In that sense, this Bill is not only about housing policy; it is also about economic development and domestic participation in our growth.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Bill for incorporating mechanisms for accountability and periodic review. The requirement for regular reporting and independent assessment ensures that Parliament and the public will be able to evaluate whether the corporation is achieving its objectives and delivering real results. Mr. Speaker, this Bill was not created in isolation. After drafting, it went out for public consultation, giving persons the opportunity to share their views, concerns and recommendations, which I am sure has further strengthened the Bill before you today.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, when one looks at the Bill in its entirety, it becomes clear that this is not an unchecked expansion of government, but rather a carefully structured institution designed to address a specific housing challenge while maintaining financial discipline, transparency and regulatory oversight. Mr. Speaker, the real question before the House is therefore simple: do we wish to expand opportunities for Turks and Caicos Islanders to own homes, or do we leave the existing gaps in the housing finance system unaddressed?

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents a thoughtful, balanced response to a genuine market challenge. It recognizes that while the private sector plays a role in our economy, there are areas where public policy must step in to correct market gaps and expand opportunity. Mr. Speaker, the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 is therefore an investment in homeownership, social stability and long-term prosperity for Turks and Caicos Islanders.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, the Mortgage Corporation Bill has my full support. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for your contribution to the Bill. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Education for her contribution.

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to the House. A pleasant good morning to you, to persons in this House, and to persons seated in the gallery, especially the people of Electoral District 9: Five Cays, South Dock and Chalk Sound. Today, I rise not just to speak to this Honourable House, but to speak directly to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands: the hardworking men and women who dream of owning a home, raising their family in stability, and building a future they can be proud of. This also includes the people of Electoral District 9.

I stand here in support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. For many years, our people have been saying the same thing: owning a home is too hard, prices are too high, the banks are too strict, and the opportunities feel out of reach. These are not complaints; they are the honest voices of our people. When the people speak, a responsible Government must listen.

That is why the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation Bill is so important. It is not just another piece of legislation; it is a response to the real struggles of real families. It is a step towards fairness, towards opportunity, and towards giving every Islander, including the youth of the Turks

and Caicos Islands, a fair chance at owning a home. The Bill creates the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation, a new statutory body designed to help Islanders secure mortgages and build affordable homes. This corporation, as the Minister of Home Affairs so ably stated, is not temporary and will not be experimental.

It will be a permanent institution, built by law, with a clear mission to help our people become homeowners. To show how serious this Government is, we have already, as many persons have alluded to time after time in this House, set aside $20 million as the starting capital for this corporation. That is real money, already placed in the National Wealth Fund, ready to be used to help our people. This is not talk; this is action.

This is action in response to the cries of people when we knocked on their doors in communities. These are the cries of our young people returning home from school. This is indeed action. I do remember when the Member of Parliament for the Bight spoke. He spoke with the impression that, as a Government, we have not set aside any property. I am quite sure he is aware, if he attended the many town hall meetings, that we have already secured over 40 acres of property thus far in response to the shortage of homes.

This is just the first step in the right direction. The Bill lays out exactly how the corporation will operate, and again the Minister for Home Affairs so ably brought much clarity to it. It will have a board to guide its decisions, committees to manage risk and finances, if that is what some on the other side are afraid of, and a managing director and staff to run its daily operations. As also stated by the Member for Leeward and Long Bay and the Minister for Home Affairs, it will be critical to ensure that we have the right skill set on the board. We want to reaffirm to the people of this country that that board will not be a political board. We are a Government for the people, and I am quite sure that many persons in the Turks and Caicos Islands see how we operate as a Government.

We are inclusive. It is not about PNP and PDM. We are an inclusive Government. Island first. Leader of the Opposition, I see you over there nodding your head, and your people on your side can affirm that too. This is one serious inclusive Government, whether you want to speak it or not. The Bill requires that the board report regularly so the public can see how their money is being used.

Every five years, an independent review will check whether the corporation is meeting its goals. This ensures transparency, accountability and, of course, a level of trust. The Bill also explains how loans will work. It sets the conditions for granting mortgages, the rules for repayment, and the steps to take if someone falls behind.

It even allows the corporation to pause payments in special cases, because life happens and we must be a compassionate Government. To safeguard the people's money, the Bill introduces prudential supervision. That means a qualified supervisor will watch over the corporation's financial health, making sure it follows the rules and remains strong. If the corporation ever faces serious trouble, the Bill provides a process for official administration, but it cannot be shut down unless Parliament agrees.

This ensures stability and long-term security. It is clear. Beyond all the technical details, the Bill is about something deeper. It is about dignity and pride. It is about giving our young people, including the residents of Electoral District 9, Five Cays, South Dock and Chalk Sound, the chance to say, This is my home. This is where my children will grow, and this is what I will pass on to the next generation.

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Mr. Speaker, home ownership strengthens families. It strengthens communities and, indeed, our nation. I am always grateful for the vision of our Premier. I remember when he sat down with me in my constituency as we visited homes and saw that families were paying a significant portion of their income in rent.

This is the answer to their cries. It is about creating opportunities for the people, including those of Electoral District 9. The Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 is a promise that the dream of owning a home will not be reserved only for the wealthy or the fortunate. It is a promise that every islander, no matter their background, will have a fair opportunity to build a stable and secure life.

As we mark 50 years of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands, under the theme 50 years of leadership and nation building, it is important that our young boys and girls understand that this bill is being shaped with their future in mind. Last week, young boys and girls from Precious Treasures International School visited this Honourable House, and I had hoped for an opportunity for them to listen attentively to some of the bills being laid. For 50 years, our leaders have worked to build a stronger and more secure Turks and Caicos Islands. Today, we continue that journey by ensuring that, when these young people grow up, the corporation will still be in place and they will have a fair chance to own a home in the land they love.

This mortgage bill creates a pathway so that our people, our teachers, nurses, builders, fishermen, entrepreneurs and all our people, will not be locked out of ownership. Instead, they will inherit a system designed to help them build stable families, strong communities and a prosperous country. This is what nation building looks like: making decisions today that open doors for the next generation. This bill is a long-term investment in our people. It is a commitment to fairness, responsibility and hope, and it is a step towards building a Turks and Caicos where every islander can stand tall knowing that they have a place to call home.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I stand again in support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you, Honourable Member, for your contribution to the bill. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. A pleasant good morning to all those listening by radio or on social media platforms. I rise to make my contribution to the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. Before I do, I want to associate myself with all the words of condolence offered to all the bereaved families of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

To all those who have reason to celebrate, we hope you celebrate in style. I also say a pleasant good morning to every Turks and Caicos Islander, especially those in my constituency of Grand Turk South and Salt Cay. Mr. Speaker, I cannot get up and say wholeheartedly that, if the bill is good for the people, I will be the first to support it. Let me state clearly that both the Member for the Bight and I wholeheartedly want to see this mortgage corporation succeed.

We want our people to get the help. We want our people to be able to own homes throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands. We are not against anyone owning homes. We are not against a mortgage corporation. However, there are concerns, and the Honourable Member raised his concerns. He did not speak against the bill; he pointed out red flags in the bill. He was not saying that he is against it or that he does not want our people to get the help. On the contrary, because he really wants our people to get this, he wants to make sure that it is done right. I do appreciate this bill coming forward.

Again, I have some red flags. I hate to be Doubting Thomas, but there are concerns with this bill. We are not against the mortgage corporation being formed. We are not against our people getting access to houses. We want that to happen. However, we need to ensure that this bill is a step in allowing that to happen.

We have heard many words, and perhaps that is all they are. We know that, from the passage of this bill to making these things a reality, there is a long road. The Minister for PPID said that they campaigned on this. Yes, both parties campaigned on this. Both parties campaigned on building houses. I believe they campaigned on building 3,000 houses within this term.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

No, we did not say that.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, you can go to the videos; it is still there. I wanted to pull it up before this to cite the website, but I could not do it quickly enough. Three thousand homes was said on the campaign trail, Mr. Speaker. If you have to build 3,000 homes, and two budgets are already gone, we have three budgets left.

That means that, for the next three years, this Government has to commit to building at least 1,000 homes a year. I am talking about what the Minister mentioned in relation to campaigning. They campaigned on building 3,000 homes, and this is the second budget and we have not seen one home come out of the ground. We have not seen one foundation laid.

There are concerns. We know that the Mortgage Corporation received $20 million in seed money. Let us take away $2 million for administrative expenses, boards, chief executive officers, employees, rental of buildings, staff and electricity. That leaves $18 million in its first year. With $18 million, and using a very modest two-bedroom, one-bathroom house at $300,000, the maximum the Mortgage Corporation can service at $300,000 each is 60 applications. These are the things that we want to know. We want to be transparent with our people. Do not just say that this is a big thing; go to the details.

That is what the Member was trying to get at. Yes, it sounds good, but go into the details. We heard about regulations, but these things are not in the regulations. How much of the seed money is going to go directly to loans? What is the threshold? Is it $300,000, $500,000, or up to $1 million? How much? What level of loans are you going to give out? Is it going to be proportionate per island? Providenciales has the biggest population, or Middle Caicos has the biggest landmass.

How are we going to work this out? Are we going to look at need? Where is the need? If 60 people from Providenciales apply, that means nothing for Salt Cay, nothing for Grand Turk, and nothing for South Caicos. If 40 people from Grand Turk apply for loans, that means there are 20 for the rest of the islands. You are only able to give 20 to the rest of the islands using this maths. Perhaps, with the loan that you are seeking and with the borrowing, you are going to put some more of that $350 million, I think we are hearing, into the Mortgage Corporation.

How much? Using the $20 million threshold, taking away $2 million leaves $18 million. How are we going to do that? Is it $10 million per island? Once Grand Turk reaches $10 million, after four or five people apply, is that it? Once Salt Cay reaches $5 million, after four or five apply, is that it? How? Our people want details. We are not in campaign mode anymore; we are in governing mode. Those things sound good, but that is for the campaign trail.

We are in the House of Assembly, and then we have to go into committee. When we go into committee, we have to know the details. We are here to protect and to make sure that this serves our people. This is not campaigning; this is governing for our people.

Members must know that there is a sharp distinction between campaigning and governing. Yes, 3,000 sounds good on the stage at a campaign rally where everybody is jumping up, but

when you come into this House of Assembly, how are you going to do that? Show me the money for 3,000 homes. Surely this $20 million cannot do 3,000 homes. The Member is right: we need to know what the interest rates are.

At least someone should get up and say that the interest will be, for example, at least half that of the commercial bank, so our people know that the Mortgage Corporation interest rates are going to be at that level, that they are not going to be higher than this, and that they will always be lower than the commercial banks.

They say that because it is Government, it is going to be easy. That sounds very good in theory, but we know that sometimes things in Government get far more complicated than in the private sector. I am not saying that this is going to happen, but sometimes in Government we complicate things too much. There are concerns.

We need to know when we expect this corporation to be in place. The bill passes and is assented to by the Governor. What happens next? Are we going to start the hiring? What happens after this bill is assented to by the Governor next week if it is passed today or on the weekend? What does that trigger? What can we expect in 2026 going into 2027? When will the first loan go out? Will we see a big picture and all the fanfare of the first person receiving assistance from the Mortgage Corporation? We heard that the Mortgage Corporation is not the entire solution, and about access to land, housing development, private developers doing their part, and sustainable communities. We heard that this is going to provide a real pathway.

The people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are weary. As people say, we have seen this movie before. I remember hearing that the development bank would be around for when I grew up and became older. It is not here. Some Ministers said that this corporation is going to be around for our future and for when our children grow up. When I was a child and a young person, I heard that the TCI Bank would be around for when I grew up, became an adult and was ready to do business. Where is the TCI Bank? Twenty years later, it is still in liquidation.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL - SECOND READING

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Twenty years, and we cannot get that wrapped up as yet, Mr. Speaker. That was supposed to be around for my generation, now that we are ready to do business and own homes, and it is nowhere. We have seen this movie before. The Honourable Member is right to raise concerns to make sure that this can happen.

We want this to happen. We are not against this. Let me say it: the Opposition wants this to happen. However, Mr. Speaker, from the details that have been given, we are not so confident that it will happen in a timely manner and serve the people who need to be served.

The Premier laid out the realities facing our people. Yes, those are the realities facing our people, and we have to address them. But I thought many on the other side said that our people are living their best lives. How can our people be living their best lives when you are talking about people returning home who cannot get homes, and people working in government who cannot get homes? Is that living your best lives? You are being contrary.

What you say on the campaign stage is one thing, but real life and real application is another. If our people are living their best lives, why are we here today? That shows that our people are not living their best lives, and that is what we have been telling you. Our people are not living their best lives, contrary to what you all think. You admit it.

You say our people are living their best lives, but all the policies show that they are not. We agree with this because we need this mortgage corporation, because our people are not living their best lives. Our people need access to capital. They need to own homes. Very few people in the Turks and Caicos Islands are living their best lives. You talk about the middle class, but very few people in the middle class are living their best lives. In most countries the middle class has to pay for everything. The middle class is a little too well off to get all the social benefits, and not well off enough to benefit from everything else being offered in the country.

The middle class in our country suffers the most. They have to pay for everything. They do not get anything free like those below them, and they do not have access to everything like those above them. We talk about growing the middle class, but the middle class is struggling.

A person making $4,000 a month cannot buy land and can barely afford rent of $1,500 a month for a sensible two-bedroom apartment.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

That is right.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

If you pay $1,500 to $1,800 per month, almost half your salary is gone, and you have two children to take care of, a wife, groceries, electricity and everything else. Our people are not living their best lives. We agree that this has to come. We agree with the mortgage corporation, and I wish I could stand up and say that this is good for the people and I support it 100%.

Yes, it is good for the people, but I cannot support it 100% unless we iron out these concerns and red flags. We need to ensure that this directly serves our people. Will more money be put into the $20 million this year or next year? When the fund grows, what will happen with the interest? Will it be reinvested here, or will it be invested like NIB money in overseas stocks, while money set aside to invest locally

cannot be spent year after year? There is also the issue of political influence. It says Minister, Minister and Cabinet; it is the same thing.

We have to ensure that there is no political influence in this. One place where our people let me down is political influence in almost everything, and I beg to differ with the Honourable Member: everything in the Turks and Caicos Islands is political. If there is a function, the colours have to be political. If someone is to speak, it comes down to politics. The first thing they ask is whether a person is PNP, independent or PDM. They say we need a PNP person to do this, a PNP caterer, or a PNP driver.

I do not say it does not happen on the other end, and maybe it happens when the PDM is in power, but I am talking about today. I am here to say, and members here say, that we need to do away with that. We are too political in the Turks and Caicos Islands. We say that is a PNP church, a PDM church, an independent church, and so on.

We have to get away from that nonsense. While we keep that ignorance up, others from outside come in and take over, while we are still banging on blue and yellow. We need to get away from that. This is the concern. We need to make sure that the Minister and his Cabinet colleagues, whoever they may be, whether PNP, PDM, independents, PDA or NDP, do not influence this board by saying that everything will go to one constituency because that constituency supports the ruling government. Anybody who applies from that constituency will get the loans. Those things happen. That is the reality, and we cannot sit here and say that they do not happen in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

We all live in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and we know the reality. Anyone who says that does not happen is being untrue. Let me be parliamentary: untrue, Mr. Speaker. They are talking bull jive.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, you have two minutes, and please remember that you have to be parliamentary.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, bull jive, I think, is parliamentary. The other word is not parliamentary. But jive is parliamentary, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing on this side, in the Opposition, is making sure that this bill truly touches the people who need it. We want to make sure that this bill truly reaches the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands who need the money and are looking for homes: the same people the Premier spoke of throughout the Islands; the couple in Grand Turk; the returning student in South Caicos; the residents of North and Middle Caicos; and the person in Providenciales who cannot find a home. All those people are not living their best lives under this Government, although they soon will be. It has been six years and they still have not been living their best lives.

We want to make sure that those people are served. With $18 million, only 60 applications can be entertained at the maximum. How will that be distributed? How will we ensure there is no political influence? That is my concern: no political influence, and no Minister and Cabinet colleagues sitting down and deciding which constituency, which group of people or which island gets all the funding. That is my concern.

It cannot be that someone is refused because of who they are or where they are from, while another is approved for the same reasons. That cannot happen.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, please allow the Honourable Leader. I am wrapping up, right?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

I am finishing right now, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that these things do not happen in our Turks and Caicos Islands. We have come a long way. Contrary to what they think, our people are not living their best lives. Exactly what they describe in here shows that our people are not living their best lives, Mr. Speaker. Let us ensure that this institution really deals with the concerns of our country.

I want to see the 3,000 houses being built as promised. You said a promise made, and that promise is not being kept. The promise has been made, Honourable Members. You all jumped up and shouted on the campaign trail. I will pull up the video as soon as I can find it, if it has not been removed from

Facebook.

While I sit down, I will send it to each of you so that you can see yourselves jumping up about the 3,000 homes. I will take a screenshot of it and try to send it to you all, if it has not been removed. Give the people what you promised, Mr. Speaker. Again, we support this bill. We support the spirit of this bill, but the Member has concerns.

He raised those concerns. I have concerns, Mr. Speaker. That does not mean we are against the mortgage corporation. That does not mean we do not want our people to have access to homes. We just want to ensure that this bill delivers for them. We are not against it; we want to ensure it delivers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Premier for his contribution to this debate.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, strangers in the gallery, and good morning to those listening via the nation's number one station, Radio Turks and Caicos, as well as those listening via all the social media platforms. I would like first to extend happy birthday and happy anniversary wishes to those who have been celebrating, or are celebrating, anniversaries and birthdays since we last met.

I would also like to pass on condolences to all those who have lost loved ones during that time. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, an important and forward-looking piece of legislation that seeks to expand opportunities for home ownership and strengthen housing development across the Turks and Caicos Islands. I pause now to thank our Honourable Premier for bringing this bill at this time. I would also like to thank the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, who started our journey in setting up our housing policy.

I thank myself, as former Minister of PPIID, who passed it, and I thank the current Minister of PPIID for pushing it forward, because, Mr. Speaker, over here this is a relay. This is a tag team. This is a journey that we are going on together for the people of this country so that we can provide affordable housing.

At its core, this bill establishes the Turks and Caicos Mortgage Corporation. The purpose of this corporation is to create a structured and sustainable framework for providing mortgage financing to islanders so that they can acquire or build affordable homes. The legislation also supports broader national efforts to promote the availability of affordable housing through responsible financing, strategic partnerships and sound governance. Mr. Speaker, housing is one of the most fundamental pillars of national development. A home provides more than shelter. It offers security, stability and the foundation upon which families and communities are built.

In a small developing country such as ours, creating pathways for Turks and Caicos Islanders to own homes is essential not only for social well-being but also for long-term economic resilience. While in South Caicos for the regatta, I visited one of our good friends, Nurse Mady Mills, and we were talking about housing. The conversation led to a realization or reflection that the building of communities has somewhat changed, because the reality, unfortunately, is that society is built on the two-headed household. If we are talking about one person trying to afford a house in this environment, or environments generally, it makes it more difficult.

If there is a husband and wife, two partners, two friends or two people sharing the mortgage, it is much more affordable because the income could be up to $100,000 between two heads of the household. That makes it viable. If you are on a $60,000 or $40,000 a year salary and have to pay $1,500 or $2,000 for rent or mortgage, it makes it more difficult because, as we know, banks or financial institutions at best loan you up to 40% of your monthly income for that particular payment because they expect you to live your best life. That is one of the realities we have to look at, getting back to basics.

Many people in this Chamber, and particularly across Grand Turk and other places, remember back in the day when persons, even before they left their parents' household, used to break rocks, put down foundations and build brick by brick until they got to bell course. When communities were communities, every weekend the men from the neighbourhood, with a pot of sauce and a bucket of beer or water, would go and assist their family members, and each sibling, one by one, would get help to get their structure to bell course and be able to get a loan after that point. Half of the building would already have been in place. You would go to the bank to get a loan to finish the house, but now we are starting from scratch.

Of course, in this new environment, there is going to be more weight on you from the beginning. I say that so that we can be reminded of what this housing thing used to be, because this is not new. It is not novel for the Turks and Caicos Islands. These are challenges that are faced across the world. Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the Mortgage Corporation represents a strategic step forward in addressing the challenges many islanders face when attempting to access financing for home ownership. Traditional lending requirements can often be difficult for ordinary working families to meet.

Through this corporation, government will be able to mobilize financing, support mortgage lending and create opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach for islanders. More importantly, this initiative recognizes the unique realities of the Turks and Caicos Islands as an archipelago nation. Development is not evenly distributed across our islands, and many residents living on smaller or less developed islands face greater barriers when trying to build or purchase homes. Access to financing, limited banking services and higher construction costs can make home ownership particularly difficult.

This bill helps to address those disparities by creating a national mechanism designed specifically to support Turks and Caicos Islanders. Through the Mortgage Corporation, greater attention can be given to expanding housing opportunities beyond the main population centres, ensuring that development and opportunity are shared across the entire country. I hope that speaks to some of the concerns the Leader of the Opposition raised earlier. I also wish to highlight the potential benefits for families, particularly mothers and single parents who are working hard to provide stable homes for their children.

For many mothers, owning a home represents security, dignity and a legacy that can be passed on to the next generation. By improving access to mortgage financing, this initiative has the potential to empower families and strengthen communities across our islands. For residents of islands such as North Caicos, Middle Caicos, South Caicos, Salt Cay and Grand Turk, the ability to secure financing to build a modest family home can make a transformative difference. This allows families to remain in their communities, contribute to local development and participate more fully in the economic growth of the nation.

Beyond the social benefits, this bill also supports the long-term economic development of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Expanding access to housing stimulates the construction sector, creates employment opportunities and encourages local investment. When more Turks and Caicos Islanders are able to build homes, we strengthen the domestic economy and promote more inclusive growth. The Mortgage Corporation will also operate under strong governance and accountability mechanisms.

The bill establishes a board of directors, committees responsible for finance, risk and credit oversight, and clear operational frameworks to ensure the corporation functions transparently and responsibly. These structures are essential to ensuring that the corporation remains financially sound while fulfilling its mandate to support Turks and Caicos Islanders. This legislation represents more than the creation of an institution. It represents a commitment by this government to invest in the people's future.

It demonstrates our recognition that access to housing is a key component of national prosperity and social stability. Mr. Speaker, before I get to that substantive close, there are some things that were said a few minutes ago, and it would be remiss of me if I let them go unchallenged. Off the bat, the Leader of the Opposition, who is a seasoned parliamentarian and has been here from 2012 until now, until they get rid of him, is a seasoned politician from 2012 to 2026. That is 14 years, if my maths is correct.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Why is he asking for regulations and policies to form part of a substantive Act, a bill, or an ordinance, when he knows better? When they say, theoretically, that the devil is in the details, the details are usually in the regulations and policies that govern an organisation. There is no difference here, Mr Speaker. All the information he seeks will come. The operational cost, and how the $20 million will be distributed between costs and actual lending, will be in the terms of reference, bylaws, regulations and all that information.

That is work to be done. If he has a contribution to make, and recommendations on how he would like to see that done, please do so. We are a listening Government. We listen to the entirety of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr Speaker. I was happy that he raised the idea of the distribution of funding, because that is important. We know that the Mortgage Corporation will be one of a few different types of financial institutions that offer lending in the country, so we have to ensure that we touch as many people as need it across the Turks and Caicos Islands to benefit from the affordable housing and financing that are needed.

But the one thing he failed to reiterate in his almost support for the bill is that only Turks and Caicos Islanders will be able to benefit from the financing of the Mortgage Corporation, Mr Speaker. That is very important. This is our Mortgage Corporation. This is for us, Mr Speaker.

I was a little disappointed, after being happy, that the first thing he did was take a shot at TCI Bank, when he knew very well, as a person who would have been in the civil service, a very senior civil servant during the time that TCI Bank was closed—

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

He was in the House of Assembly.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

No, he was not. That happened during the interim Administration. We were both senior public servants, so I know. I believe he was in the Governor's Office by then, right?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Right.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Deputy Secretary, Governor's Office.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

With oversight of the FSC?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Yes, the FSC. Anyway, let us leave that alone. We all know, and history tells us, that the Government of the day made efforts to provide varying borrowing solutions, even, I believe, through the Eastern Caribbean Bank, so that it could be kept afloat. But the FSC, under the particular directions from those who directed it, chose, rather than taking the bailout to continue that organisation for the 20-plus years to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, to close it down instead. A lot of things were happening during that time. Do you remember when they took $10 million from the NIB and said that it was back pay, and took the money to fill a loophole?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Yes.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Do you remember when they sold off our shares in Provo Water Company to pay bills? Those are some of the things that happened. The interim Administration is the they, because it happened under its jurisdiction between 2009 and 2012, when it was administering the country's affairs, Mr Speaker. It almost felt as though any institution— I almost forgot: did they close down TC Invest or Invest TC? Which was it?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

TC Invest.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

TC Invest. They closed down TC Invest, closed down the lending arm that was available, and sold it off to Telco or something like that. Whoever took the money, all of the TCI-first institutions that had been built up to that time were either closed down or taken advantage of, Mr Speaker. To throw that out there in the absence of the context of what took place, I am disappointed in you, because I know you were raised better than that.

We were raised better than that, and God Ma' would not be pleased with you. Mr Speaker, also, the Leader of the Opposition strongly told the people of this country that he hoped this would have no political influence involved. What I want to know, Mr Speaker, is when the idea of political influence will stop being a dirty word in this country.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Order!

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Because, the last time I checked, from Roman times to now, politics is about people, Mr Speaker. That is at its core. Any influence we wield on this side of the House is about people, because we realise and know that the need is great. Any Turks Islander and Turks and Caicos Islander who will benefit from this Mortgage Corporation is one more Turks and Caicos Islander whom we would have empowered, Mr Speaker.

We have the ability to borrow more money to help more people. Just so you are okay, we will make sure this happens so you will be all right. There will be no more political influence in 2030. We are giving 19-0, so there will be no PDMs at all. It will just be this side of the House, so you will not have to worry about political influence.

It will just be a one-party system, just like Singapore. Do not worry about that; we can fix that.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

It is about to get very bad.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Beautiful. Keep doing what you are doing and you will see. Lastly, Mr Speaker, before I close, I have to touch on this number that the Leader of the Opposition threw out about these 3,000 homes in five years. Mr Speaker, let us get this right. As a former Minister of PPID, and the person who would have finished off the housing policy that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs started, the data said we needed to build at least 600 housing units a year for the next 20 years.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Five years at 600 housing units is 3,000. That is maths. You are correct. Homes and housing units are two different things.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

That is where people stay. That is shelter. Which Government would be foolhardy enough to say outright that we are personally going to build 600 homes ourselves, when we have the public sector and the private sector? Mr Speaker, he said we are behind. The last I checked, in the last fiscal year, one project alone that this Government signed off on, right on the highway—you might know the person; I cannot remember the name, but you might know the people doing the housing work, because this goes back to political influence, good or bad.

We do not see colours when we are doing for the people of this country. Over 700 housing units—

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

And do you know how it was passed? Because an application had to be made to this good Government.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Government.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

To change the land use to ensure that it could move forward, Mr. Speaker; to change from open space to medium residential development, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Right.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

So, Mr. Speaker, it is over 700, because they made their break. Go and look back in the Sun newspaper; you will see the big development. One shot, 700.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Pop, check out.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

And that has nothing to do, Mr. Speaker, with the number of housing units that are approved weekly or monthly by the Planning Board and the Planning Department of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

And, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Benefiting from the options that you provided in the housing policy.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Bingo. Benefiting from those options that we support to make that happen. Mr. Speaker, I see you have a lot of questions on this stuff. Ask the question: how many housing units were approved over the last year, so that you can see how well we are doing against that 600 a year?

I am certain that the Minister of PPID will gladly provide those details from the Planning Department for you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, you have two minutes.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Two minutes? Do not worry; I have plenty of time to wrap up. Thank you, sir. In addition to those that I have described, first, we are really ahead of the game. Secondly, although on the Employment Ordinance books some time ago employers were responsible for housing, from the end of the last term going into this term, the Premier and Ministers of PBID, past and present, have engaged with the hospitality industry to house their workers.

They will have to build their own housing, so there is less pressure on us, because we happen to benefit from the boom of Airbnb and short-term rentals. A lot of our housing stock that used to be long-term was moved over, so that is where a lot of the pressure came from.

We are pushing the pressure back to where it needs to be, so employers will have to provide that housing. These are the things we are doing in real time, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are not priced out of the market and that we have an

opportunity to build and afford what we need. Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition thought he really had something when he said, 'Boy, 3,000 houses they said they can build in five years. They have not built one yet.' My goodness, I know he thought he had us, but his maths was not matching, Mr. Speaker, because we are already ahead of the game.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Yes.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

The maths is not matching. So, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to develop as a small island nation, we must ensure that progress includes the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 is one of the tools that will help us to do just that by expanding opportunity, supporting families and building stronger communities throughout our islands. Mr. Speaker, I once again support this bill. I thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution to this debate. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Speaker for her contribution.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to persons in the gallery, and good morning to the entire Turks and Caicos Islands, especially my family members and friends across this country. Mr. Speaker, today is a good day.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Good day.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Today is a very, very good day; a long-awaited day. Mr. Speaker, let me paint a picture for many of us, and for many of us who will know too well. Let us imagine a young Turks and Caicos Island mother. She works hard every day. She gets up early with the sunrise. She gets her children ready for school, goes to work, pays her bills, and does everything she can to provide for her family.

Every month she pays her rent. Every month she watches that money leave her hands, knowing full well that it is going to build someone else's future instead of her own. Her dream is not extravagant, Mr. Speaker, and it is not one of luxury. She is simply dreaming of a small home with a yard for her children to play in safely, where they can have their own bathrooms and their own bedrooms, where they will never have to worry about being told that the rent has increased again or that they have to move.

She dreams of one day handing the keys to her children and saying to them, 'This is ours; this belongs to us; this belongs to our family.' Mr. Speaker, that dream should not be out of reach of Turks and Caicos Islanders in their own home. This bill gives our people and that person hope. It gives her the opportunity not just to survive, but to build something that can outlive her: a legacy for her, her children and her grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to imagine that impact. Imagine a young teacher finally qualifying for a mortgage; a police officer building a home on his family land; a nurse purchasing her first home after many years of service; a single mother moving her children from uncertainty into their own home.

This is not just a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. This is about real possibility. Mr. Speaker, when I look at this bill, I do not just see a piece of legislation. I see people. I see families. I see young Turks and Caicos Islanders who want nothing more than an opportunity to own a piece of land in their own country and to own their home. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, because this bill is about our people. It is about giving Turks and Caicos Islanders a fair chance at homeownership and the opportunity to build a legacy for future generations.

Too many of our people are struggling to access housing. Young professionals, single mothers, teachers, nurses, police officers and hardworking families are finding it increasingly difficult to purchase a home. We must also be honest that many Islanders become frustrated when seeking mortgages from the commercial banks. They face high down payments, strict requirements and long approval processes.

Many can afford the rent but cannot access the finances needed to own a home. This bill creates another pathway, Mr. Speaker. It creates hope for those who have been overlooked and an opportunity for those who have been locked out of the housing market. Mr. Speaker, this bill is ultimately about legacy.

A home is more than four walls and a roof. It is about creating stability. A home creates wealth. A home becomes something that parents can pass on to their children and grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, while I support the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, I believe this conversation must go even further. We are seeing changes across the region where banking institutions are becoming larger, more commercialized and more selective about who they lend to. Decisions that affect the lives of Turks and Caicos Islanders are increasingly being made outside of these islands, and we hear about looking for approvals from the Bahamas and Jamaica based on profitability, shareholder expectations and regional priorities, rather than the needs of

our people. The reality is that access to credit determines whether a family can buy a home, whether a young entrepreneur can start a business and whether an Islander can invest in their future.

As lending becomes more restrictive, we must begin asking ourselves whether the time has come to seriously explore the establishment of another Indigenous financial institution right here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, for many years, and I have to say this because the Leader of the Opposition made mention of it, the PDM and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition made mention of it because they always try to use this conversation about the TCI Bank for political leverage against the PNP. Mr. Speaker, it is not something that they should be rejoicing about, that an institution that was supposed to serve the Turks and Caicos people failed. That is something that they should be outraged and upset about, not something that they use for political mileage.

A locally based institution would understand our people, Mr. Speaker. It would understand our challenges, our struggles and our development priorities. It would ensure that decisions about financing, lending and investment are guided not only by profits, but also by national interests and the long-term growth of our country. Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about empowering Turks and Caicos Islanders and creating opportunities for homeownership, supporting small businesses and building generational wealth, then we must also be prepared to have the conversation about greater local participation and ownership within our financial sector.

This mortgage corporation, Mr. Speaker, is an important step, but perhaps it should also be the beginning of a broader discussion about how we ensure that access to financing remains available, affordable and responsive to the needs of Turks and Caicos Islanders for generations to come. Mr. Speaker, this bill will not solve every housing challenge overnight, but it is a step in the right direction. It acknowledges that too many Turks and Caicos Islanders are being priced out of their own country. It acknowledges that housing security is one of the greatest challenges that we are facing as a people, and it provides a meaningful solution.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, because it is about protecting our people, creating opportunities for our people and ensuring that future generations have the opportunity to own a piece of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and God continue to bless the entire Turks and Caicos Islands. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Seventh All-Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my colleagues. Good morning to those persons in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say happy birthday to my adopted mother, Mrs. Dorothy Bean Francis, who is celebrating her 85th birthday today. May God continue to bless her. Mr. Speaker, let me start this off right.

Matthew 25:40 says, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' I say that because the Leader of the Opposition brought up the 3,000 homes that the PNP campaigned about. Mr. Speaker, let me say that I fully support the Mortgage Corporation Bill and commend the Premier and the Government for this bill.

We all recognize the plight of our people in regard to homeownership. Mr. Speaker, this is a long-awaited bill for the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I believe that every Turks and Caicos Islander knows that a bill of this magnitude will be beneficial to each and every Turks and Caicos Islander who will be eligible under section 8 of the bill. Mr. Speaker, as a Turks and Caicos Islander and a homeowner, I can say that this bill will give those Turks and Caicos Islanders who do not have the opportunity through the commercial banks the ability to make their dream come true by owning a home.

Mr. Speaker, this is a stepping stone for those families, the single mother and father, that civil servant and that young person returning from college or university to becoming a homeowner. Mr. Speaker, this is progress in the development of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. When we speak about economic development and the empowerment of our people, this mortgage corporation is another institution that demonstrates this. Mr. Speaker, this is not a replacement for commercial banks, as mentioned by the Honourable Premier, but rather another avenue for the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, especially those in Grand Turk, Salt Cay, South Caicos, and North and Middle Caicos.

Mr. Speaker, section 11 of the bill also sets out the independence of the corporation: independence from the Government or any person, corporation or political interference in carrying out its functions and duties. Mr. Speaker, I must say this and would like to ask that when this Mortgage Corporation Bill is passed, there be no perceived bottlenecks and bureaucracy that will hinder the progress in regard to our people's access to funding, or this will be labour in vain.

Mr. Speaker, Proverbs 24:3-4 also says, 'By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.' Mr. Speaker, lives will be changed and dreams will be realized because of this piece of legislation. I end as I started: I am in full support of the Mortgage Corporation Bill, and I thank you.

MIDDAY SUSPENSION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, thank you for your contribution to the debate. Honourable Members, we are now at the 1 pm hour,

and so we will take our midday break. This Honourable Parliament is hereby suspended until 2 pm.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

All rise.

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes its sitting. Pray be seated. Honourable Members, we are now at question time, and we have a number of parliamentary questions to be answered by Honourable Members. The first question is to be asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services, will the Honourable Minister please inform Parliament of the financial and administrative position of the National Health Insurance Program? Will the Honourable Minister further say what initiatives, if any, will be put in place to ensure the financial viability of the National Health Insurance Program?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister. Please put on your mic. Thank you.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Member, for the question. The NHIP breakdown position is that member contributions for on-island care are only just covering costs. The NHIP plan was slightly in deficit. An actuarial review was conducted in early 2026, and a review of contribution rates has been recommended. TCIG is reviewing those contribution rates and caps to ensure they keep pace with inflationary pressures. From April 2025 to February 2026, the National Health Insurance Board recorded a $1.3 million cash flow deficit before TAP expenses. The primary driver was the settlement of $1 million in prior year invoices, which has been enabled by strengthening invoice tracking processes.

Excluding these legacy payments, the underlying deficit for the period would have been $700,000. TAP costs are administered by NHIP but funded directly by the Turks and Caicos Islands Government through the national budget. Members' contributions for on-island care do not currently subsidize TAP expenditure. As TAP costs arise, NHIP submits invoices to TCIG in accordance with the current ordinance.

TAP costs for financial year 2026 were projected at $63 million, representing a 3% increase on financial year 2025, driven primarily by higher patient volumes. As the Premier noted in the recent town hall, the rising costs of TAP are not sustainable and are absorbing an increased share of the national budget. Measures to address this trend are now under active consideration, and I have additional information that can be submitted to you, in light of the lengthy response and the various appendices. On the administrative position, both the finance and IT functions are being stabilized, which is an important step forward.

However, we continue to face capability gaps, including the absence of a senior technical leader and heavy reliance on external vendors for critical IT support. Based on the timelines of the questions submitted, we have been able to identify a CEO for NHIP who should start on 15 June, next week. We have also made strides in restructuring the IT department. We are working on strengthening those technical capacities as we also work towards strengthening the board's function. Within NHIP, several key senior management roles are vacant, but I have just clarified that.

Until those posts are filled and the appropriate skills are in place, the organization will continue to depend on external expertise. Strengthening internal capability is essential for NHIP to operate independently and deliver sustainable services to the public. A new CEO has accepted the appointment and is expected to start on 15 June, with the recruitment of other senior positions. The steps to ensure financial viability include NHIP implementing several measures to ensure long-term stability, including reducing TAP costs through updated referral guidelines, closer oversight of high-volume claims and potential re-procurement of overseas service providers; improving financial governance via monthly cash flow tracking, tighter budget monitoring and regular performance reporting; and strengthening internal systems through automated controls, improving reporting tools and upskilling staff.

These actions will reinforce financial management and support the long-term sustainability of the program.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Supplementary.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To the Honourable Minister, you mentioned a review of contribution rates. When

will that commence, if it has not, and when will it end? When will we see the results of that review?

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Member, for the question. I am in a position to say that while we had received a first draft of the actuarial report, there was some additional information that we required. The second iteration of the draft was sent to me only this week, and I have not had an opportunity to go through it with my permanent secretary and the chair. As it pertains to your response, while I am not in a position to give you a definitive date and time, once we have gone through the relevant appendices and looked at the necessary changes, I will be able to come back and provide you with a more substantiated response as to the time and date for the actuarial report.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Yes, one more supplementary.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To the Honourable Minister, you mentioned that the CEO has already been recruited. Can you please inform Parliament where the CEO was recruited from and when he or she is expected to start?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The CEO is a local and is due to start on 15 June.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH TREATMENT ABROAD PROGRAM CHANGES

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Question number 2, to be asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services, will the Honourable Minister be pleased to inform this Honourable Parliament of what changes or adjustments, if any, are being made to the Ministry of Health Treatment Abroad Program?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you again, Member, for the question. The change that you mentioned, Honourable Member, is currently in train. There have been no substantial changes made as yet, as we are still going through a period of consultation with the relevant stakeholders. As you would know, the whole purpose behind the change, or the implemented change, was so that Turks and Caicos Islanders would benefit directly from the Treatment Abroad Program.

No other substantive adjustments are currently being made. However, the National Health Insurance Plan is actively reviewing additional measures to improve the affordability and sustainability of the program, including the development of a data-driven referral matrix to ensure that patients are directed to the most clinically appropriate and cost-effective providers; strengthening oversight of high-value claims, enabling earlier intervention and management of escalating costs; and exploring opportunities to re-procure overseas services to ensure better value for money.

We will also be introducing systems and automation in real-time cost tracking, allowing quicker and more informed decisions on patient treatment pathways. These initiatives are aimed at reducing costs while maintaining the quality of care for those who remain eligible for the Treatment Abroad Program.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Do you have a supplementary?

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

No.

NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS FOR WORK PERMIT HOLDERS AND CONTRACT WORKERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Question number 3, to be asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

To the Honourable Minister of Health and Human Services, recently there has been information given in the media and also during budget debates about the benefits of work permit holders and contract workers under the National Health Insurance Program. Will the Honourable Minister state clearly what specific changes are being proposed; what will be the financial implications to NHIP; what alternative insurance programs are being recommended to government contract workers; and when will these proposed changes come into effect?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you again, Member, for the question. I will respond in the same order as the items were listed, A, B, C and D. The Government is proposing that persons with Turks and Caicos Islander status and BOTCs will be eligible to access the Treatment Abroad Program. This change will not immediately affect government workers currently working on a government stamp.

Alternative coverage arrangements will be put in place before the change applies to them. The adjustment is expected to reduce TAP expenditure, as initial analysis, which is still being refined, indicates that around 15% to 20% of TAP costs are related to work permit holders and persons on residency permits. Treatment abroad is fully funded by Government, so this change does not directly impact the NHIP fund.

Member contributions paid to NHIP cover on-island costs only, not treatment abroad. On alternative insurance options, the broader implications of the change, including transition arrangements and alternative insurance solutions for affected government contract workers, are currently under review. Further details will be communicated once finalized. As you would know, there is a 90-day consultation period, which I explained would have begun on 1 April, during which employers are being encouraged to arrange medical insurance coverage for their employees.

However, there have been some adjustments to the date, so please do not quote me, and I will ensure that, in submitting the written responses, we make the adjustments. The questions were provided some time ago, and because of the work that we have been doing, there have been some minor adjustments. I apologise for mentioning that date. As far as the effective date is concerned, a clear implementation timeline will be issued shortly. Adequate time will be given to all persons affected to secure alternative coverage before the change takes effect.

These steps are designed to support long-term sustainability for public healthcare financing while ensuring continued support for those who remain eligible for the Treatment Abroad Program.

TREATMENT ABROAD PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND NHIP IMPLICATIONS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Do you have a supplementary? Okay, supplementary.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On question B, regarding the financial implications on NHIP, you mentioned that 15% to 20% of the expenditure is due to work permit holders or persons on government contract. How much in dollar value does that 15% to 20% represent?

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Member, for that question. As I alluded to, the second iteration of the actuarial report would have the actual numerical value. While I do not have it with these written questions, I will be in a position, once reviewing it, to provide it to you once given sufficient time to do so.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Yes, go ahead.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Honourable Minister, will work permit holders still be required to show proof of NHIP payment for the renewal of a work permit once these changes come into effect?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kyle Knowles:

Thank you, Member, for the question. Yes, they would still have to provide proof, but, understanding that there have been some amendments made to the immigration policy, I will allow the Minister for Border Force to provide the additional information.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and thanks to the Honourable Minister of Health. As persons would have known, the requirement for a clearance certificate from the National Health Insurance Board was removed from the work permitting process several years ago. However, in the review of the current draft immigration bill, we agreed to put it back as part of the regulations for the requirements.

Once the bill is passed, hopefully over the next month or two, we will be reintroducing the clearance certificate from the National Health Insurance Board as part of the work permitting process. Thank you.

HOWARD HAMILTON AIRPORT REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Any further supplementary, Honourable Leader of the Opposition? No. Okay, question number 4, to be asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to the Honourable Minister of PPID.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Honourable Minister of Physical Planning and Infrastructure Development, I will ask only A and C, as B was already answered by the Minister in his last speech to the House. Will the Honourable Minister please state the reason behind the Government not advancing with any of the bids that were submitted for the Howard Hamilton Airport redevelopment project? B was how the Government will now advance the Howard Hamilton project. The Minister told us before about that, so I will not require him to answer B at this time, because that was answered.

C is, when can the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands expect the proposed redevelopment of the Howard Hamilton Airport? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I will answer them in the order that he has requested. A, the decision was a policy decision taken and deemed to be in the best interest of the country at this time. C, the redevelopment has been bundled into a phased delivery approach, with the interim works being advanced.

At present, the TCI is awaiting the conclusion of the tender evaluation for the interim terminal building. Following the launch of the terminal building, the National Development Programme has determined its capacity to progress works for the parallel taxiway. The delivery is still poised for a new terminal.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Do you have a supplementary?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Honourable Minister, the Honourable Minister mentioned that the answer for A, the reason behind the Government not advancing, was due to a policy decision. Can the Honourable Minister state whether that policy decision was based on the cost of the contract or the value of the bids that were received for the contract?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Leader of the Opposition, yes, it is a matter of cost.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition, do you have a supplementary? Supplementary?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we just finished

the budget, where will the cost be realized for the proposed redevelopment now? Will it be in the Government budget, or will it be the Airport Authority seeking financing? Where will the cost occur: in the Government budget or within the statutory body seeking its own financing?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Arlington Alexander Musgrove:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Airport Authority will be seeking financing for the delivery of the terminal building. We are in the process of doing that now. We are talking to a few institutions, and we will update the House once we finalize anything.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

Yes.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Do you have another supplementary?

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

No, sir. No.

QUESTIONS NOS. 5 AND 6 TO THE MINISTER OF PPID

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Question number 5.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

To be asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to the Honourable Minister of PPID.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Question number 5 and question number 6 were answered in previous forums, so I will not withdraw them from the Order Paper. As it is with questions, once they have been answered and all the information is out there, we should not waste the House time being redundant. Question number 5 and question number 6 were already answered.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

All right, thank you very much, Honourable Members. Honourable Members, before our break and before question time, we were debating the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. Are there any further contributions to that debate? Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable 7th All Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I make my contribution, I would like to convey condolences to all those who lost loved ones, including the Butterfield family, Pastor Derrick and his family, and the Hall family. On a happier note, I want to say happy birthday to my godmother, Dorothy Bean.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the proposed mortgage corporation. Having previously addressed this matter during the Budget Bill, I will keep my remarks focused and avoid repeating myself unnecessarily. However, I have one deep concern regarding the funding structure of this institution.

The initial seed capital consists of $20 million drawn from the National Wealth Fund. This allocation does not appear to be structured as a loan or a commercial investment, which raises two direct questions for the Government. Is this a non-repayable gift? If it is, is it genuinely sufficient? I do not believe it is nearly enough. Even if we make the highly generous assumption that the fund achieves a 5% return on its $20 million, that yields just $1 million annually.

While no operational budget has been presented, the overhead costs of running a formal financial institution will almost certainly consume, if not exceed, that entire $1 million return. The fund needs to be significantly larger.

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Thank you.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

That much is obvious. So the question remains, Mr. Speaker: where will the additional capital come from? The history of the Bahamas Mortgage Corporation is highly instructive in this regard. The 2023 financial statements of the National Insurance Board of the Bahamas revealed that their pension fund has invested $95 million into the Bahamas Mortgage Corporation, representing nearly 10% of its entire assets. Mr. Speaker, that is $95 million tied up in an organization that has failed to produce audited accounts for 10 years. If I were a Bahamian pensioner, I would be deeply concerned.

Mr. Speaker, the National Insurance Board of the Turks and Caicos Islands certainly holds funds, but those funds belong strictly to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. They are sacred funds put aside for old-age pensions, and I hope the Minister of Finance can offer absolute reassurance to our pensioners and contributors that their hard-earned savings will remain untouched. If the additional capital required is not coming from the NIB, where will it come from? We simply do not have the fiscal headroom to continually bail out this corporation, and the notion that this entity will issue bonds or notes to private third parties belongs in an alternative universe. I expect the Minister of Finance to clearly explain the financial future of this company and identify the true source of its future funding.

Beyond finance, Mr. Speaker, several specific clauses in this bill are concerning. I turn your attention to section 13. It states that the board shall consist of seven members, all appointed directly by the Minister. This is a sharp departure from the established practice in our other statutory bodies, where the Leader of the Opposition appoints members to ensure democratic balance.

Why is there a sudden need for such an extreme concentration of power in the Minister's hands, or is that concentration the entire point of the exercise? Conversely, section 46 mandates that the board must consult both the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition just to appoint a managing director. This seems entirely redundant. If a competent professional board searches, interviews and identifies a suitable candidate, why is political input from either side necessary? Mr. Speaker, I direct your attention to section 8. I was under the impression that this mortgage fund was designed to issue retail mortgages to eligible citizens looking to buy their own homes.

Section 8 drastically extends the corporation's remit by permitting the application of financial resources directly to the construction industry for housing developments. This means the Mortgage Corporation can lend commercial capital to private companies, an activity carrying a substantially higher risk profile. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wholly support initiatives that empower Turks and Caicos Islanders to own their own homes.

However, I am entirely unconvinced that a government-led mortgage fund is the correct or safe way to achieve it. It would be far more effective and less expensive simply to provide matching grants or down payment assistance for qualified individuals to purchase homes through established financial institutions. There are better, safer and cheaper alternatives to this bill, and we owe it to our citizens to give this idea much deeper thought. Mr. Speaker, I think it would have been helpful if we had the regulations here, but I hope they come very soon so that we can have a clearer idea of what is going on with this mortgage bill.

Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, I will now call on the Honourable Premier to wrap up the debate.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for their contributions. I think my colleagues on the front bench and others who are not on the front bench have ably answered the issues that were raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Let me say, though, that this bill has been around for a while.

It has been properly vetted by stakeholder groups, including the Bar Association. There has been extensive public consultation on this bill, and anyone, particularly any legislator who wished to make a contribution at that time or now, even as we go through it, can do so. Mr. Speaker, we could analyse until we are paralysed, but we have to do something. In the words of Arthur Ashe, we have to start where we are, use what we have, and do what we can. We cannot afford to sit comfortably by and do nothing. The bottom line is that we need to fix the housing issue in these Islands.

Yes, there are alternative approaches, and yes, we have heard that a person spoke to the recalcitrance of the banks to be proactive in assisting in providing mortgages. Commercial banks, by their very nature, are not set up to have that as their core business. I said very clearly that this is not an attempt to replace the banks. We could never provide all the mortgages, even for affordable homes.

We could never provide all the mortgage finance that is necessary to build the number and quality of homes that need to be built. A significant part of the work of the Mortgage

Corporation is to facilitate the development or delivery of homes. At the end of the day, we can second-guess, and there is a process for how boards are appointed. The minister does not appoint boards.

Boards are appointed in the manner prescribed, whether by nominations from both parties in this country. Ultimately, the minister's appointment is agreed to by Cabinet. Anyone who would like to give the impression that the minister can single-handedly, with some ulterior motive, appoint members to the board of a statutory body is misleading the public. That has never been the case, and it certainly is not the case now.

Let me say categorically that any other statutory body in this country has its separate board. At this stage, I have made it very clear that it is the Government's intention to go to the capital market to raise funding for serviced lots and additional capital for the Mortgage Corporation. Of course, there are alternatives. In some countries, the Government backs mortgage guarantees, but that in itself can be a very complicated exercise, because it means that the risk, if people default, and all of the administrative work that one would have to go through to foreclose on one family in order to transfer that mortgage to another family, just creates more pain. There is no silver bullet to providing housing for our people, and whatever measure it takes.

Absolutely nothing can be said about anything that this Government has done that has not been in the light of day and fully accountable. To suggest that there is any other reason for establishing a mortgage corporation other than to assist in providing shelter for the people of this country is entirely disingenuous. Mr. Speaker, as I said when I rose, I would like to thank my colleagues on this side for their contribution, because it really has made my work a lot easier.

I do not have to answer issues that have already been answered. We are either going to stand behind supporting the delivery of housing for the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands or we are not. There is no perfect solution, and you cannot sacrifice the good for the perfect. I am not suggesting that, in a perfect world, every person would be adequately housed.

To the extent that we can, with an imperfect provision, deliver adequate housing for every deserving citizen and every deserving resident in this country, that is what we will do. Mr. Speaker, the law exists, and if there are amendments to be made or restructuring to be done, those can be done. This Progressive National Party has a track record of building institutions.

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

We do.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

This is because institutions outlive people. Because some of us are comfortable in our own place, it does not mean that we should ignore the fact that other people may be vulnerable or in need. We cannot close our eyes to the needs of others because our needs are met. Mr. Speaker, with that said, again, I rest my case.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I commit this bill to Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier, that the bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 now be committed to the Committee of the Whole. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Aye.

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS TOURISM AUTHORITY BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still on Orders of the Day, and we will now have the second reading of the Turks and Caicos Islands Tourism Authority Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier and Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade. Honourable Premier.

You have to turn the mic on.

ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence and the indulgence of the House, I would ask that the second reading of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill come first. This is a small bill. The Tourism Authority Bill is more lengthy, and I would prefer to deal with the other bill so that we can move both bills into committee and try to finish that part of the business of the House before the end of the day.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

All right. Honourable Members, we are still on the second reading of bills, and we will now have the second reading of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs. Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 92, I move that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 be read a second time. May I have a seconder?

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 now be read a second time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing us to leapfrog on this tiny amendment proposed for the Road Safety Ordinance. I think the Jamaicans say, little but tallawah, or something like that. In any event, it is a small amendment, Mr. Speaker, but it is very mighty. I rise to present to this Honourable House, and I want to acknowledge our colleagues from the Ministry of Home Affairs, our colleagues from PPID, Finance, Tourism and the Attorney General's Chambers who are here.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge you as the Chair of our House and our Speaker, and all Honourable Members, including our Chaplain and staff here in the House of Assembly. I also want to send a shout-out to our team in the Department of Motor Vehicles, whom this legislation will directly impact today.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated, this bill represents a significant and necessary step forward in the modernisation of public transportation here in the Turks and Caicos Islands. It is a bill that seeks to bring greater order, greater accountability, greater safety and greater fairness to the transportation sector while protecting both commuters and legitimate operators. At its core, this bill seeks to address a challenge that many citizens, residents and persons we invite to live among us face every day in these Islands, including our public service vehicle operators and DMV regulators. They have been concerned about unregulated passenger transportation services operating outside a legally established framework.

Colloquially, we call them jitneys. In other countries they call them maxis, and in some countries they call them tuk-tuks. It is not a phenomenon in the Turks and Caicos Islands. I know we want to be first in certain things, but we did not create the opportunity of the jitney, Mr. Speaker.

What we are seeking to do with this bill today is to ensure that there is a legitimised transportation framework that provides legitimate and legalised operators, who have invested their resources and comply with the laws of these Islands, to operate in a fair, open market. We want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that passengers are not exposed to any unnecessary risk and that the Government continues its necessary oversight. What does this bill do, Mr. Speaker? The key reform contained in the draft bill is the replacement of the term community cab. After many stakeholder meetings with taxi drivers, they felt that the term community cab gave the impression that it was a cab system, so the term was changed to the broader and more modern concept of community transportation.

This new definition recognises vehicles carrying between five and 15 passengers for fare-paying services under a valid licence, providing a clearer legislative framework for regulating this important sector. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I know this change may just seem to be a change of wording, but it reflects a much larger policy shift. It is a conscious mental shift that we are seeking to introduce. We are going to create in the Ministry of Home Affairs a transportation model that is structured, more flexible and more capable of meeting the needs of our growing communities while maintaining the appropriate regulatory oversight.

In the bill, colleagues will see that there is greater clarity regarding who may apply and who may operate community transportation services by ensuring that the definition of Islander is included in this bill to reflect that of the Turks and Caicos Islander Status Act, so that there is no misunderstanding moving forward.

Our Government, Mr. Speaker, remains committed to ensuring that economic opportunities are created within the transportation sector and that those opportunities benefit only Turks and Caicos Islanders. We have to ensure that we maintain a clear licensing framework, and this is just one step in a holistic review of the Road Safety Ordinance. There will be other sessions, Mr. Speaker, where we will bring other amendments and then a globalised bill towards the end of this year. One of the most important aspects of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the focus on enforcement.

The Road Safety Act is enforced by the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force, not the Road Safety Department, now known as the Department of Motor Vehicles. I think the public needs to understand that point. We hear often, what is Road Safety doing? What are their officers doing? We do not have officers with arrest powers. We do not have officers with ticketing powers.

We will, Mr. Speaker, but as of today we do not have that. It is coming, because we are going to build our task force in our department and equip them with the tools and powers they need in order to ensure that our roads are continuously safe for all of us to use. What we have put in this bill, Mr. Speaker, is greater penalty powers offered by the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. I want to make this abundantly

clear.

Let me see if I can stand on both legs for this point, because this knee is not cooperating. If you are found operating a vehicle that falls within the definition of community transportation, meaning it can hold five to 15 persons, and you are not a licensed operator, your car will be impounded. It will be held for 15 days. You will be fined $1,000.

ROAD SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Mr. Speaker, this requirement is important because, as we look to modernize our transportation system and network, we cannot allow rogue operators to continue operating, thereby taking away opportunities from legitimate operators to make a living in these islands. I want to make that abundantly clear. We have given the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force greater powers to impound vehicles. Even if the $1,000 fine is paid on the day the vehicle is impounded, it will be held for 15 days. Rental car companies should hear this loud and clear: if you rent your vehicle to persons who decide to operate a jitney, and the police stop them and find the driver, your vehicle will sit in an impound yard for 15 days.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

They will have to collect money.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

So you will not make any money from that vehicle. Rental car companies and those who lend vehicles to friends should know who they are lending vehicles to and what they are being used for. A word to the wise is what, brother man?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Sufficient.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Sufficient. Further, Mr. Speaker, the reason we are looking at this is not because we want to punish our people or the operators. We are sending a very clear message. My officers are doing their work. They are going above and beyond to ensure that licensed operators are on our roads, yet persons are ignoring the fact that we have a fully functional set of legislation. We are going to remind them with a bigger penalty and by taking the vehicle away. We are going to create a level playing field. I have only been in this office for 30 days and I have heard it: there are too many taxis on the road, there are too many VIP plates on the road, I need a taxi plate, this one should not have a taxi plate, and why did this one get a taxi plate when I did not? The taxi quota is met and the VIP quota is met.

There will be no new ones issued at this stage because we need facts, figures and data to make sensible decisions on any quota increase. We have now created another avenue for a person to operate the same vehicle that would have been used as a taxi or reserved VIP vehicle in this community cab system. If you have the large black Suburban, you may not necessarily want to pick me up from Misick and Stanbrook and take me to Leeward because that is only $8, but you could pick me up from Misick and Stanbrook and pick someone up from IGA. Most of us in this room have used Uber in some jurisdiction in the world, and the community transportation system that we are creating is akin to Uber internationally.

This is also a clear signal to Uber not to write to me, because I am not interested. We will grow our own, develop our own app, our own software and our own mechanisms to protect our own industry. As Minister of Home Affairs, it is my responsibility to protect my team members, honour them and work within their needs. Further, Mr. Speaker, we have to accept that transportation and technology are changing in the islands.

We have already met with four app developers to develop a holistic public transportation app for residents, Turks and Caicos Islanders, people we invite to live and work among us, and tourists, to utilize taxicabs, community transportation, or ComTrans as it will be colloquially known, private reserved vehicles, or VIP vehicles. We also have the first draft of the transportation bus policy as we look at introducing public buses to the roads. We are populating that draft with the numbers of persons in the islands and visitors to the islands, and developing the routes. We have been extremely busy over the last 30 days.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this abundantly clear: applicants for community transport licences will be required to satisfy enhanced standards. This includes safeguarding training and criminal background requirements. This training will be in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Safety and Utilities and the Social Services Department, because these measures are specifically designed to protect the vulnerable. We know that children are put in jitneys. Hopefully, the parents know the jitney drivers sufficiently well and trust them to transport children to and from primary and high school.

Because we are encouraging community transportation, we expect Community Trans to offer the same service, but we are licensing drivers who are adequately trained in how to handle vulnerable persons, including children and the elderly. We are also going to ensure that the criminal background requirements are stringent enough that if a person has committed any form of sexual assault or any form of assault against a vulnerable person, whether a child or an elderly person, that person will not qualify for a community cab licence. I believe in rehabilitation; I genuinely believe in that. If something happened 20 years ago, I am sorry, but this is not the licence for you, because I have an overarching requirement to ensure that I do not tempt you in certain

positions that may arouse certain feelings again if you have been convicted of one of those offences.

I will protect the public and protect you by not putting you in the tempting environment of transporting vulnerable persons at night or early in the morning. We are also going to equip these vehicles with electronic tagging. The reason for that is to ensure that we are able to track the movement, not of individuals, but of vehicles. The software will also be connected to the app that we are developing.

If I am at the Pink House and need to leave, and no one is available to pick me up, I can call my community cab on the app. They can come to the Pink House, pick me up, take me where I need to go and then take me home. That is the future. That is what we are developing and looking to roll out within the next few weeks.

That is how seriously we are taking this transportation overhaul in these islands. In order to do that, we will need an electronic device in the vehicle so that I can use the app, the app communicates with the driver, and the driver can decide whether to pick me up.

The bill provides an opportunity for that to be done. The amendments ensure that the government has the legal tools necessary to regulate emerging technologies and maintain appropriate oversight as the industry evolves. I emphasize that this legislation is here to strike a balance between reform and practicality. Last but not least, the regulations will provide a six-month transition period to allow existing operators to adapt to the new framework and, where appropriate, transition into the Community Trans system.

To wrap up, this government is committed to the implementation of a new system that is fair, orderly and transparent. We are not seeking disruption, except that we will disrupt the unlawful movement of cars in these islands that are operating as public service vehicles without being licensed to do so.

We are seeking to improve the network that we have available. We are not seeking to eliminate opportunity; we are looking at creating opportunity in a safe and properly regulated environment. This bill is but the first step in the modernization of public transportation in these islands. We are going to strengthen public confidence, protect passengers, support legitimate licensed operators, improve enforcement and work with our colleagues as we build a transportation system fit for the current and future Turks and Caicos Islands.

Our people will look back on this time and agree that they were provided reliable, safe, accountable and modern transportation. This bill is but the first step. It may be tiny, but it is powerful. In this regard, I invite my honourable colleagues in this chamber to support the Road Safety Amendment Bill 2026, and I look forward to answering all questions during the Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you, Honourable Member, for that presentation on the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the bill, and the Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Speaker for her contribution.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Again, good afternoon to all the members in the gallery. It is really good to see the members of the Road Safety Department here. Mr. Speaker, it is always very hard to go after my sister colleague. I do not think I have ever gone after the Minister of Home Affairs, but I am just here today to support everything that she said 1,000%. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. You made it before the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, but the Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to this bill.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my contribution to the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026, and just want to say that I am someone who enjoys going both before and after the Honourable Minister. Yes, Mr. Speaker. My contribution to this Road Traffic Bill is that, yes, it is timely and, yes, it is needed, but there are some holes that I can identify and will identify, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is not against this bill. We just want to see it better. We are not bringing it, but we are known for making a good thing better, like BA FS. We make it better. Mr. Speaker, let us start with the definition. The definition of the cabs is, the Minister said, five to 15. I think the legislation speaks to 18. I have not noticed a motion.

Okay, that is an error. Okay, so it is five to 15, Mr. Speaker. If someone decides to operate illegally, but only has four persons inside the vehicle, that person can argue with the officer when the officer pulls them over and say, look here, I am not operating, because, as you said, they are operating with five to 15; but if the person has four—

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

So I do not know why we need this definition that only if you have five to 15 can you be charged under this ordinance. I do believe we have to clarify that, because persons will say, look here, I can only take four of you, but not five. I cannot take five, because I will be charged under this ordinance. Even though it is still an offence and they are operating illegally, under this ordinance they cannot be charged because they only have four or three persons. So I do believe we have to tighten that to make sure that persons do not try to find a way around this ordinance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister also mentioned that a lot of children are put in jitneys and that most times the parents know the drivers.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Hopefully.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Hopefully they know. But, Mr. Speaker, we know internationally and here in the Turks and Caicos Islands that most children are abused by persons the family knows. It is rarely strangers who abuse children. Most children are almost always abused by family members, friends of the family, or persons the family knows.

So I am wondering whether we can have a minimum age at which a person can ride in the car; that is, that we can say no child under a certain age is allowed to ride in a jitney by themselves. It will protect the child and protect the parents who may be thinking of that, because I do believe that a child at five years old, a little girl at five years old, should not be put in a jitney and told that the jitney will take her to school unless she is accompanied by an older child or an adult. So I do believe we have to tighten this to make sure that you cannot put a three-year-old, a four-year-old, a five-year-old or a six-year-old in a jitney by themselves and tell the jitney to take them to school at 7 o'clock in the morning, or at 6.30, when it is almost still dark.

We have to protect them. So I do believe, yes, the legislation is needed, but there are some things on which we have to go further, Mr. Speaker. Those are two of the weaknesses that I have identified. We need to look at a minimum age for persons who can ride in a jitney by themselves, Mr. Speaker. Also, when we look at the impounding, where will these cars be impounded? A Government-owned lot? A privately owned lot? How will that happen? Will we identify business people who have a lot and say that these are the impounders? Will the owner of the lot dictate what the fee is for the 15 days, or will that be directed by Government or by Road Safety? I do believe that that is an avenue for money for Government and for Road Safety. If Government gives Road Safety a lot, or assigns a lot, a Government lot, to them, whether it is an old garage site or whatever, then that 15 days' impounding fee goes directly to the Treasury under the Road Safety budget.

So now they can be a call centre where they are making even more money. So when they come to Parliament and say, we need this and we need that, they can say, look, our department is bringing in more money.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Thank you.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Not just from licensing, but from the impounding of these vehicles. This is not going to a private person. I am not trying to take any money from private people, but I do believe it is regulated better under Government, that Government can set the prices. It is not a private person saying, I am going to charge $100 a day for this impounding, and it is going to be $1,500 by the end of the week.

Government can say, look here, the price is this. You go to the Treasury, get your receipt, pay that at the Treasury or online, bring it back to Road Safety, and Road Safety will allow you to have your car back, Mr. Speaker. So I do believe we have to look at the impounding sites, the minimum age, and that five to 15: if a person is carrying four persons, what will happen?

Will they escape prosecution or escape the law? So I am not speaking against this, just trying to make it a little better from the flaws that I saw inside it, or not flaws, just things that were omitted that we need to look at. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member for Public Safety for his contribution.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to my honourable colleagues in the House, to those in the gallery, especially the employees from the Road Traffic Department here in Grand Turk, and the Attorney General's Chambers. I also say good afternoon to the wonderful people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, whom I am always proud to represent, from Gibbs Cay to West Caicos. Mr. Speaker, I want to stand with my colleagues—

Hon. Gordon Burton:

One moment, Honourable Member. I hear a phone in the Chamber. I again remind Members and persons in the gallery to please either turn off or mute their phones while in the Chamber. Thank you. Please proceed.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand with my colleagues in passing on condolences to all persons around the Turks and Caicos Islands who are in mourning today. I rise this afternoon to support the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 and the Minister. As the former Minister of Transportation, I am very pleased to see that we are finally about to cross the line on this much-promised transformation in the Road Traffic Department.

The people of the Turks and Caicos Islands were elated a few months ago as work began to clean up and take long-awaited action to deal with illegal jitneys. We started the work, and today is a great day for the public in these Turks and Caicos Islands. I thank the new Minister for completing it. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of the 5 to 15 passenger capacity.

He is out of the room, but I want to clarify for him that the amendment was made because, prior to it, to drive what was called a community cab, a vehicle could carry only 5 to 7 passengers. That meant that if someone had a minivan that carried up to 15 passengers, he or she was not able to acquire a community cab licence. Therefore, the amendment was put forward to allow the passenger count for community cabs to be from 5 to 15.

I wanted to clear that up. As I said earlier, I support the bill. I am elated that the Minister has stressed to the public that not only will this amendment bring clarity to how community transportation will operate, but the work will continue through the Traffic Department and the police finally to eradicate this headache of illegal jitney operators in our country.

It is a good day for the people of this country. With that, I lend my full support.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you, Honourable Member, for your contribution to this debate. I am seeing the Honourable Seventh All Island Member there, but another name is coming up, so I recognize the Honourable Seventh All Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I lend my support to the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026, and I commend the new Minister of Road Safety. Welcome back.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, I ask the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs to wrap up the debate and to commit the bill to the Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my honourable colleagues who gave their support to the bill. My brother, the Leader of the Opposition, is not in the room, but I know our colleague opposite from the Bight will assist in sharing a response to his inquiries. In response to the Leader of the Opposition's first question about a car that is stopped by the police with four persons in it instead of five, that person would still be committing an offence against the principal ordinance, section 44(1)(e), which says that where it appears to a police officer that a motor vehicle has been used for public service without the appropriate licence, the police officer may take charge of the vehicle and drive or tow it, or have it driven or towed, to a place authorized by the Commissioner to be used as a vehicle pound.

The person can also be fined for operating a vehicle without the necessary public service licence. This amendment creates what would be known as the community transport public service licence. There is the taxicab public service licence, the private reserved licence, colloquially known as the VIP licence, which is a public service licence, the omnibus public service licence, the mass transportation public service licence and, of course, the community cab public service licence. In this regard, that person would need to convince the officer that the four people in the car are relatives or friends and are not being transported for a fee.

We have had stakeholder meetings with the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force, and its officers have advised us of what they look for when they stop a vehicle. We are comfortable knowing that they have a training plan in place that would identify these challenges. Even if the vehicle does not have five persons in it, the police already have general powers in relation to public service vehicle operators who are unlicensed. What we are seeking to do is to have a longer impounding period if someone is operating an unlicensed jitney, because we need to disrupt the network.

We need to take the car. Many of these cars are rental cars, and when the rental car companies realize that their profits are now in jeopardy and their vehicles are being impounded, they are less likely to rent willy-nilly and more likely to do due diligence. Those powers are already in the legislation, but specifically for community cabs the police officer has the ability to identify whether it is an unlicensed community cab

operator or an unlicensed general public service operator. We are giving them two bites at one cherry, if that makes sense.

They are very happy, and they sent us a list of other things they want us to look at in this legislation. Since they are our partner in it, we are going through those matters as well, because there are more ticketing powers that they would like to have in the legislation. A couple of questions came in by WhatsApp about my officers who work at the airport giving tickets. They are authorized by the Road Safety Ordinance to do so.

Our officers are not allowed to issue a ticket outside the airport. If they see someone driving recklessly on Leeward Highway, they do not have the authority to pull the person over; that is for the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. However, in the vicinity of an airport, our officers are empowered to issue tickets if someone is parked in the wrong location, or if, after being asked to move and after the courtesy time it takes to take luggage out of the vehicle, the person runs inside and waits for conch fritters and a drink and comes back to a ticket.

They are authorized to issue that ticket because it is a breach of another set of regulations empowered by this legislation. There was a question about ages. In the regulations, we were looking at having the minimum age for a passenger to ride alone at 10. After this sitting, or perhaps in committee, Members may make recommendations to increase or decrease it.

We thought 10 was a good buffer, given that the criminal law ordinance provides that culpability can be attributed to a child from the age of 8 to 10, and given that a 10-year-old child can communicate if something has happened. As we advised in working with the Social Welfare Department, these drivers will have continuous training.

Hon. Josephine Olivia Conolly:

Thank you.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

That training will be on vulnerable persons, how to operate around vulnerable persons and how to ensure that drivers do not put themselves in a position that could result in a vulnerable person being harmed. We will do it that way, but the age is 10 years old in the regulations. As a committee, we can decide whether to go up or down with that number. On impounding, we received a very good impounding lesson from the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force.

The initial rollout of this legislation will utilize the services that they have and provide. I believe that is a third-party contractor, but we have already written to the Crown Land Unit and to Her Excellency the Governor, as we have identified two locations where we would like the Department of Motor Vehicles impound lot to be installed. Our colleagues at PPID have graciously advised us that our inspection location in Providenciales will need to move, and so we have sent this up the food chain to those two departments in seeking to verify one of three locations for temporary operations, which also has the necessary fencing and security measures in place.

We have written to Her Excellency the Governor to see whether we can get the green light for that facility. Failing that, we have already written to PPID and the Crown Land Unit, as we have identified another site on Crown land that we hope to get the green light to use for our impound lot. That will be coming as the next few weeks roll by. I confirm that the minimum age can be discussed further in committee; that the impound lot is being considered with the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force, the Crown Land Unit and the Governor's Office through the National Security Secretariat; and that there are general policing powers provided by the ordinance as well as enhanced policing powers that will be provided by this bill.

Thank you to all colleagues for their contributions. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 move to the Committee of the Whole House. May I have a seconder, please?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 be now committed to the Committee of the Whole. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, I will now suspend this Honourable House and call the Honourable Deputy Speaker to chair the Committee of the Whole. This Honourable House is hereby suspended.

Hon. Otis Chuck Morris:

All rise.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable members, we are now in the Committee of the Whole to scrutinise the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026. We will suspend for a 15-minute break. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 1, short title and commencement.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 1 now stand part of the bill. May I have a second?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Minister of Education that Clause 1 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Clause 1? There being no contributions, the question is that Clause 1 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 2, interpretation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful again, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 2 now stand part of the bill. May I have a second?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Minister of Home Affairs, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Clause 2 stand part of the bill. All in favour?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary? No.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that Clause 2 stand part of the bill. All in favour?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary? No.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 3, section 2 amended.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful again, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 3 now stand part of the bill. May I have a second?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Minister of Home Affairs, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Clause 3 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognises the Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move a motion that in the third line in the definition of community transportation, the word 18 be deleted and replaced with the word 15. May I have a second?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, seconded by the Minister of Health, that in Clause 3 the word 18 be deleted and replaced with 15. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the definition says, community transportation means a motor vehicle constructed and used for the carriage of not less than five passengers. Is that saying that a community cab cannot take four passengers or two passengers, or if they transport two passengers they will not be deemed a community cab and will be called something else? Can you explain that for me, Honourable Minister?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you again, Madam Chair, and thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for your question. This relates to the licensing of the vehicle that would be used for community transportation. Once you are licensed, you can take one passenger up to 15, based on your vehicle size. Again, when we contributed to this in the debate, we referenced the rideshare company Uber in the United States.

The concept of community transportation here, given that there is no standardised form of vehicle, means that your vehicle that can hold five persons could be licensed as a community cab. On your downtime, when you are not doing your Leader of the Opposition work and you decide that you might need a couple extra dollars, you are a licensed community transport operator, you can turn on and do your licence. The vehicle that my stepdad, Jay Stubbs, drives can hold seven passengers. He could also be licensed because his vehicle falls between five and 15.

This is also going to give current taxi driver operators and those who have gone out there and purchased a vehicle without being licensed as a taxicab, and so have a vehicle sitting in the yard but are unable to obtain a taxicab licence because the quota has already been met, the opportunity to be licensed as a community transport operator.

The standard size taxi in the islands is between 10 and 12. That is what we mean when we say we are creating further opportunities for persons to get into the public transportation system.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Do you have a follow-up question?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, thank you very much. Through the Chair, just for clarification, if I have a standard sedan and I am the driver, and I can hold one person in the front and two persons in the back comfortably, I cannot register that as a community cab? It has to be able to hold five persons in order to be registered?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Yes, it must be able to hold five passengers in order to be registered. The reason for this is that we do not want the Swifts and the Fits being licensed as community cabs. When those get in accidents, people rarely survive.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Okay, thank you. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, the question is that Clause 3 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 4, section 10 amended.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Madam Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 4 now stand part of the bill. May I have a second?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Minister of Home Affairs, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Clause 4 stand part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, does this section that deals with being an Islander for a licence mean that if person A has a licence and he or she wants to hire a driver who is not a Turks and Caicos Islander, that person can hire a driver? For instance, if I say I want a driver to deal with a certain population of this nationality who speaks this language, because I am not going to go into that community and I cannot understand what they are saying if they say they want to go this way, or go that way, or stop here. I want to hire a speaker of that language to service that community.

Does this prevent it or allow it?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Google Translate. Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the beauty about the Turks and Caicos Islands is that Islanders come in multiple shapes, sizes and original nationalities. If an Islander does speak another language and wants to service a population that speaks another language, this is a great avenue for them. But this legislation is abundantly clear: you must be an Islander, as defined in the Turks and Caicos Islander Status Act, which has the various roadways into becoming an Islander, whether by descent, which, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you and I have the distinct privilege and honour of being Islanders by descent.

We also have an honourable member in this House who is an Islander by grant. Because we are all Islanders, we all have a fair opportunity to take part in this. I want to make this abundantly clear to operators. If you hire anyone who is not an Islander, meaning they cannot show you an Islander status card or an Islander certificate or show you proof of their Islander status, you are in breach of this legislation and you will be fined a hefty fine for allowing a person to operate as a public service vehicle licence holder. A reminder that fine is $1,000 and 15 days of the impounding of the vehicle.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Do you have a follow-up? The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I just want to make sure that the bill and what we are passing is very practical and really serves the communities. That is why I

was asking if they are able to hire other persons, the actual rollout of this.

For instance, not talking to any community, if you know persons who want to serve Dockyard, for instance, where a lot of people speak either Creole or Spanish, will our Turks and Caicos Islander drivers be going down there and taking calls in the middle of the night if it is an emergency, or taking children to school from that community and other communities within Providenciales, for instance? Do you see our Turks and Caicos Islander drivers serving those communities?

CLAUSE 4

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. If I had a crystal ball, I would have a clear answer. My position is that we hope so, but we also have Turks and Caicos Islanders who reside in those communities. They may very well decide that this is something they could do to supplement their income. Remember, this is modelled on the rideshare system used around the world. As a Minister, I am prohibited from taking part in anything but being a Minister, but say, for example, the Permanent Secretary had time, although he does not, and in the evenings from 6 to 10 pm he decided to provide a community transport service in any area. The hottest area is Grace Bay.

You get them after Shisha Lounge: quick money. At the end of the day, that is an option for him to operate in. As it stands, we are going to limit this to Turks and Caicos Islanders only. If it does not work, we will go back to the industry and ask its view on increasing it to British Overseas Territory citizens with a connection to the Turks and Caicos Islands.

That may open up the pool even greater. I genuinely believe that some of the current operators of these jitneys are islanders in their own right, and they are looking for a way to be recognised.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Follow-up?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair. We are just trying to clear all the mischief and the things that may arise, because we all want to see this rolled out successfully and we do not want any loopholes coming into play. I am happy that you said that, if the industry decides that it cannot meet all these communities, British Overseas Territory citizens may be considered if that time comes when we cannot meet it. That was the concern, Madam Chair: that we are able to make sure that productivity is maintained, people can get to school, people can get to work and move about the community, and the country does not suffer from that.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, the question is that Clause 4 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

CLAUSE 5

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 5, Section 13 amended.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 5 now stand part of the bill. May I have a seconder? Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Minister of Public Safety that Clause 5 stand part of the bill. Thank you. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Clause 5 deals with casual hires. Before I get into that, the Member from the Bight said that he is going to pick up the Independent Member, so please excuse him. He wanted me to tell the Chair in case the Chair was wondering why he left in a hurry. Minister, you introduced the term casual hire. Clause 5 says that no public service vehicle other than a community transportation or taxicab shall stand to ply for casual hire. Can you give me the exact definition of casual hire?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

The definition of casual hire?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful, Madam Chair. Mr Leader of the Opposition, casual hire is not defined in the principal Ordinance, but this clause is replicating the definition of taxicab, which reads: a motor vehicle designed or adapted for the carriage of not more than 10 passengers which, when in the control of a person holding a valid licence, is permitted to ply for casual hire for the conveyance of passengers and their belongings. Casual hire means that there is no need to have a reservation in place. Where a reservation is needed would be under the definition for pre-arranged transfer, private charter or private transfer vehicle.

Casual hire is, for example, me at home realising that I do not have any milk, but I cannot drive yet because I have not been given clearance to drive by my surgeon, and I need a ride down the road. I can call a community transport or I could call a taxi driver to pick me up. It is not pre-arranged. I did not book it days in advance.

They do not already have my deposit. Casual hire is basically pay-as-you-go transportation. You pay at the end of where you are going, versus an omnibus where you pay at the start of your journey, if that makes sense.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Follow-up question, and just for clarification. In the definition that you gave for the regular taxis, it is up to 10. Casual hire cannot go past 10. If my friends and I want to go out, and nobody wants to drive because everybody wants to party until they drop, and we say, there are about 12 of us and you have a van, we cannot just call for casual hire because it is more than 10?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

You can do that with a community transport. If you call a community transport that has up to 15 seats, the 12 of you can ride in that. If you are calling a taxicab, they max at 10. The reason why a taxicab is different is that it is the only public transport for casual hire.

Remember, private transfer, also known as VIP, is pre-arranged and pre-hired. I cannot flag a VIP down on the road, but I could flag a taxi down on the road, or see one in Grace Bay, flag it and jump in if they agree to take me where I want to go.

The reason why the taxicab is designed the way it is is because of luggage. You cannot have them filling the van with 15 people because that back row of seats will eliminate the ability to carry luggage. The taxicab van design is designed for 10 passengers and luggage, and it is a safety mechanism that is put in place. Casual hire literally means that there is no pre-arranged order for the use of the vehicle.

You have decided to go at that time, or you are leaving a hotel and there is a taxi in the parking lot. If you pre-arrange, that is the private reserved, or VIP, transportation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Okay.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Anything else, AG?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The AG is good.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. You have a question? The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes. I am thinking of many of the taxi operators who transport cruise ship passengers in Grand Turk. If they want to operate as a casual hire in the evening, and the majority of them have buses that can take up to 15 people, can they operate in that manner in the evening? Can they say, I transport cruise passengers in the day, but in the evening I am out for casual hire?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

That is exactly what we hope they would sign up for. We have provisions in the regulations that will make it easier for current taxi operators to obtain a community transport licence. An operator can have two licences assigned to the vehicle.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions? Having no further contributions, the question is that Clause 5 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

CLAUSE 6

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Clause 6, Section 14 amended.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that Clause 6 now stand part of the bill. May I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion has been moved by the Minister of Home Affairs and seconded by the Minister of Public Safety that Clause 6 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is the last clause for this bill that we are discussing. One of the things that came up in the debate is the age, and I do not know where else to bring it up, but since this is the last clause, I have decided to bring it up here. Can we get a background as to why 10 and not eight or 12? I am not saying 10 is bad, but what is the rationale behind 10, and do all members of Cabinet or Parliament agree that 10 is the ideal age at which a person can ride by themselves in a cab at any time?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Madam Chair. As promised to the Leader of the Opposition, we were going to have this discussion even though it does not relate to a specific clause, because it will be in the regulations. It would be good to get a temperature from the House on how we should move forward on this. As contributed during the debate, in our legislation criminal culpability for persons can start at the age of 10.

In that regard, it is determined that a 10-year-old has enough communication skills to express themselves and say, I am going here, please take me here, how much does it cost, et cetera, and also, if someone interferes with them, that they are mentally mature enough to communicate that. They may not have fully understood what happened to them, but they can say that someone interfered with them in that manner. Because the age for criminal liability in this country is 10, we took it from that position that, at the age of 10, if I could be convicted for a criminal offence, then I am probably old enough to ride in a community cab or community transportation. If members feel that we should increase the age, I am open to it as well.

It is not set in stone at any stage. It is something that we can still discuss.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was going through it in my mind: what is the maximum age in primary school before a child reaches high school? Should it be from once you reach high school, rather than primary school children, instead of saying 10? I am wondering whether it is a consideration that primary school children cannot ride alone, but from high school, from the time you reach first form and up, you can. I am just thinking that probably can be a consideration, not just looking at the age. Again, like you said, it is more from the temperature of the room, but that is just a suggestion.

CLAUSE 6 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Indication from the Minister of Education is 10 or 11 for grade 6 going into Form 1. As a promise, we will meet with Education and Social Development and get their views on the appropriate age, because it will be part of the vulnerable persons programme provided in training these drivers. I will then bring an update to Parliament and write to your office as well, hoping that you also agree with where we are going with that.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

I promise that we will undertake that extra bit of work. Grateful. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you very much for that.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Member, I agree that we should have that collaboration, because the age for primary school goes up to 12. It does not surpass 12. Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Clause 6? There being no contributions, the question is that Clause 6 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Aye.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, we move now to the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. I bring to your attention the separate sheet of paper containing the motion to amend the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026. We will be working from two documents, the Bill and the amendments. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that, in accordance with Standing Order 97, the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 be called in parts. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Minister of Public Safety that the Mortgage Corporation Bill be called in parts. All in favour?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary?

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

No.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 1.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 1 stand part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that Part 1 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? There being no contributions, the question is that Part 1 stand part of the bill.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Affirmative.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Members, we will be taking this in parts. I direct your attention to the Bill to ensure that you look through the parts properly and see whether there is anything that the public may need to have addressed in those parts. I will allow the Clerk to read the parts in each section. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 1, preliminary, clauses 1 to 5: short title and commencement, interpretation, purpose, application and applicable laws.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Madam Clerk. Are there any contributions? Honourable Leader of the Opposition, any contributions? There being no contributions for Part 1, the question is that Part 1 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 2, establishment of the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation, clauses 6 to 11: establishment of the Corporation, seal of the Corporation, functions of the Corporation, powers of the Corporation, ministerial direction, independence of the Corporation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Deputy Attorney General:

Are there any contributions?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I would like to move. If members have the motion to amend, I would like to draw your attention to the amendments relating to clauses 8, 9 and 10. Madam Chair, I move that Part 2 stand part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that Part 2 stand part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

And.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Under clause 8, letter M, after the semicolon, add the word and.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

I second the motion.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that, in Part 2, clause 8, after the semicolon, the word and be inserted. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, under clause 9, subsection (1), delete the word one; and in paragraph O, insert after the semicolon the word and, so that it reads, exercise or perform any other powers conferred on or required to be performed by the Corporation under any other Act, and.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that, in clause 9, the word one be deleted, and in paragraph O, after the semicolon, the word and be inserted. All in favour?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Deputy Attorney General:

Aye.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

That is it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

And substituting the word the.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

On page 9, clause 10, subsection (3), the motion is to delete the words and the.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

And substitute the word the.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

And substitute the word the, so that it reads, the Minister shall consult with the Board before giving the direction.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that, in clause 10, the words and the be deleted and the word the substituted. All in favour? Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Deputy Attorney General:

Aye. That is it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

That is all the changes for Part 2, so you can move that Part 2 stand part of the bill.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 3 now stand part of the bill.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

She has to put the question first.

Deputy Attorney General:

That is all.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

That is after all the contributions.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Did you put it?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

No, not yet. It is coming.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Part 2? I will give you some time, because this is clauses 6 to 11, establishment of the Turks and Caicos Islands Mortgage Corporation. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. In the establishment of this Corporation, can the Honourable Premier say whether this will be operated as a statutory body or similar to the operation when it was in TCI Invest?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

This is a standalone, specialized statutory body.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions? Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Will this statutory body be under the Ministry of Finance or the Premier's Office? Which ministry will have carriage of this statutory body?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

It is the Ministry of Finance, and for the time being that happens to be the same as the Premier. It does not mean that will always be the case.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions? Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Being that this is a statutory body under the Ministry of Finance, will it be fully subject to the Government auditing system, whereby it has to appear before the Public Accounts Committee and the Appropriations Committee, and questions can be put to it by both committees?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The answer is yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair, thank you very much. With that in place, Honourable Premier, I believe there will be far more accountability than we had before with it being in this structure. I agree with that kind of structure being in place, so that if it is receiving public moneys it is fully accountable to the people, and the oversight committees of the House can scrutinize what is going on.

Thank you very much for assuring us that it will be fully under the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee and the Public Accounts Committee.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Are there any further contributions? Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

As this deals with financial services, what role will the Office of the Governor play in this, if any?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

I will go to you, sir.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The Governor's Office will have no role in this. The FSC, the Financial Services Commission, will have a role, and it has been instrumental in establishing the prudential principles. It will have prudential supervision over the Mortgage Corporation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, as we are still dealing with the formation of the board, Honourable Premier, when do you foresee the positions required within this statutory body being made available to the general public, so that persons can know whether there will be a financial manager, human resources and other posts, and can start preparing their resumes?

When do you envision the rollout of those positions circulating to the general public?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

This is the first step that we are going through at the moment. We will get the Bill passed, and the focus will then be on operationalizing the institution. We have had a tentative date set for the establishment of the Mortgage Corporation by September of this year, at which time those persons would be identified.

Deputy Attorney General:

What companies are being worked on there?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The job descriptions will be made public, and they are being developed as we speak.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

You may go ahead with your follow-up question.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Through the Chair, Honourable Premier, can you state the estimated operational cost of the Mortgage Corporation?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No, I cannot. I do not have that information now, but what I can tell you is that the operational cost of the institution is to be met from a different source, perhaps from a new source other than the initial $20 million earmarked for the loan book.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, that is where I wanted to get to: to see whether the $20 million given to the Mortgage Corporation will be used entirely for loans or for operational costs, as the Premier alluded to. If so, will we be approving appropriated funds for the operational costs in the regular course of the budget, as we do for subventions to statutory bodies?

Will there be a subvention under the Ministry of Finance for operational costs, rentals, buildings and staff for the Mortgage Corporation?

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think initially there will be a subvention for those operating costs. Eventually, the Mortgage Corporation should stand on its own, particularly if we are going to provide additional capital, which is the intention.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 2? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 2 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 3, Constitution of the Board of the Corporation, clauses 12 to 24: Board of the Corporation; Constitution of the Board; Criteria for Appointment of Members; Appointment of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson; Term of Appointment for Members; Managing Director Ex Officio Member; Functions of the Board; Vacancy of the Board; Alternate Members of the Board; Appointment and Terminations to be Gazetted; Board Deemed Properly Constituted; Appointment of Advisers; and Secretary to the Board.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 3 stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that Part 3 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I have an amendment in clause 14. The amendment is to insert after subsection 2 the following: 3, appointments made under this section shall be subject to the Commission's fit and proper assessment. The Commission means the Financial Services Commission. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that clause 14 be amended by inserting after subsection 2 the following: appointments made under this section shall be subject to the Commission's fit and proper assessment. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Deputy Attorney General:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I have another amendment under clause 19. In clause 19, in paragraph c, by inserting after the semicolon the word or and a semicolon; and in paragraph d, by renumbering subparagraph 6 as subparagraph 7, and by inserting after subparagraph 5 the following.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

6.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

6, demonstrates lack of competence, integrity or prudential fitness, as determined by the Commission, or.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that, in clause 19, in paragraph c, after the semicolon the word or be inserted; and in paragraph d, subparagraph 6 be renumbered as subparagraph 7, and after subparagraph 5 the following be inserted: 6, demonstrates lack of competence, integrity and prudential fitness as determined by the Commission, or. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I have another amendment in clause 20. In clause 20, I would like to insert after subsection 2 the following subsection 3: Alternate members shall be subject to the same fit and proper requirements as members appointed under section 13.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that, in clause 20, after subsection 2 the following subsection 3 be inserted: Alternate members shall be subject to the same fit and proper requirements as members appointed under section 13. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair. With respect to the qualifications of board members, I just want to ensure that, for instance, a health professional who wants to run a financial institution might be told that finance is not really his lane, and to make sure that we have people with suitable qualifications on this board.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition, thank you for your question. If you look at clause 14 on page 10 of the document, it deals with the criteria for appointment of members.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Subsection 2?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Under subsection 2, it says that a person appointed as a member of the board shall have seven or more years of experience, expertise and knowledge in at least one of the following areas: mortgage lending, banking, finance, law, risk management, audit, credit risk compliance, valuation and real estate planning. I think those are the broad heads under which people would have those types of qualifications.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Through the Chair, Honourable Premier, can you point me to that page again?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Page 10.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Page 10, section 14, specifically subsection 2.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair, it says that a person appointed as a member of the board shall have seven or more years of experience, expertise and knowledge in at least one of the following areas, and the areas are listed. However, I wanted to clarify what is meant by seven years' experience, expertise and knowledge.

If I had seven years as a cashier in a bank, can I say that I have seven years' expertise and knowledge of a financial institution? I am wondering what level of expertise, experience and knowledge we are looking for. In credit risk, for instance, if I am just an insurance broker selling insurance, I want to be sure that we have the persons we want on this board and at the suitable level, instead of someone saying, I was just a cashier and I have seven years' experience in banking.

At what level should the experience and expertise be?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

If we go to clause 14, it says that in making appointments to the board, the Minister shall use his best endeavours to ensure that the individuals appointed are fit and proper and have knowledge, experience or expertise that is relevant to the functions of the Corporation. Typically, when these appointments are made, the resumes are attached to their nomination in Cabinet. This is not done by the Minister on his own volition. It is a decision made by Cabinet based on the evidence of the person's experience.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

We just inserted subsection 3 to that same section.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

If you look at subsection 3—

Deputy Attorney General:

Sorry.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

We just inserted a new section to make it clear. If you remember, there was an amendment to say that appointments made under this section shall be subject to the Commission's fit and proper assessment. It is not just Cabinet; the Financial Services Commission has to support that appointment and say that the person is fit and proper to sit on the board.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Okay, I see it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the

Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes. I was looking at clause 18, the functions of the board. Will the board be responsible for approving the hiring of any staff? I see plans and the budget of the Corporation submitted to the ministry, but will the board approve any hiring or any projects? For instance, if there is some project or activity that the institution wants to undertake, does that come to the board?

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Like the Airports Authority board and other boards that look at the hiring of staff.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Honourable Leader. That would normally come into regulations. Typically, as you would know, in situations like this, the CEO is normally appointed by the Minister in Cabinet, and the rest of the appointments are done exclusively by the board. When the appointment is made by the Minister in Council, there also has to be board agreement.

What would normally happen is that the board would identify someone, and the Minister would have that person approved for appointment in Cabinet as the CEO. Normally, the rest of the appointments are done strictly by the board. That is the case, for example, with the National Insurance Board, and this would be no different.

Deputy Attorney General:

Yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, through the Chair. The functioning of the board, that part of its functions, you said, will be in regulations. I was looking at the functions of the board and, as you said, the CEO is appointed by Cabinet and everyone else will be through the board. If that is clear, I appreciate the clarification that this will be in regulations as it relates to the hiring of staff for this institution.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Part 3?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Madam Chair, can the Premier direct me to the term limits for the board? I see vacancy of the board and resignation and removal, but I am looking for the term limits for the board. Is that clause 16?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

It is clauses 14, 15 and 16.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes. Through the Chair, when it says eligible for reappointment, is that for the next three years? If you have exceeded your three years and it says you shall be eligible for reappointment, is that an additional year or an additional three years?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think that could be flexible. It could mean that, depending on the effectiveness of the person, that person may not be reappointed. But if the person is effective and is required, one would expect that the term could be negotiated so that it could be one year, or it could be up to three years.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Through the Chair, that is the clarification I wanted, because it just says that the person may be reappointed. I was wondering what that reappointment is. On many other boards it may be reappointment for an additional one year. You are saying it can be negotiated up to the original three years, but not exceeding three years for the reappointment.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

For example, and I will not call names, I remember on the National Insurance Board there was one particular person who was very efficient and effective, and that person was appointed multiple times under both political parties. If you find someone whose work is really required, needed or thought to be critical to the proper functioning of the board, then this gives the board, or the Minister, depending on the circumstances, the power to reappoint that person. That is what this is meant to cover.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, and through the Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

I am just about done with this section. For clarity, after the original three years, a member could be reappointed for multiple three-year periods if a Government so desires? Multiple three-year periods? Okay. I am sorry. Does that also apply to the chair, with multiple two-year periods for the chair and multiple three-year periods for the chairman?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes.

Deputy Attorney General:

Yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I would imagine so.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Part 3? The Chair recognizes the Acting Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two further motions to amend in respect of Part 3, which I shall take in turn. Madam Chair, I move that the headnote—

COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE BILL

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Marginal note.

Deputy Attorney General:

The marginal note for clause 12 be amended so that the word the is inserted before the word corporation, so that it reads Board of the Corporation. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Acting Attorney General and seconded by the Minister of Health that the marginal note for clause 12 will read Board of the Corporation, by inserting the word the. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions to Part 3? Chair recognizes the Acting Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Secondly, in clause 18D, after the word corporation, which is the final word, insert a semicolon. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Acting Attorney General and seconded by the Minister of Health that in clause 18D, we are adding a semicolon to the end of corporation. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Deputy Attorney General:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 3 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 4.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 4, clauses 25 to 30: committees of the board, audit and finance committee, risk committee, credit committee, prudential standards committee, appointment of advisory committees, other committees.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 4 now stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier that Part 4 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, there is an amendment to put forward in clause 26. In paragraph F, by inserting after the semicolon the word and, and in paragraph G, by inserting after the word legislation the words including legislation on countering the financing of terrorism. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety that in clause 26, in paragraph F, by inserting after the semicolon the word and, and in paragraph G, by inserting after the word legislation the words including legislation on countering the financing of terrorism. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions? Honourable Premier, I believe you have another amendment.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes. On clause 28, by inserting after subsection 4 the following subsection 5: where A, the matter involves the board or a senior officer, and B, the board has failed to take appropriate action or is conflicted. The Prudential Standards Committee may, as a measure of last resort, notify the Minister solely to enable lawful oversight or referral. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Minister of Public Safety that in clause 28, by inserting after subsection 4 the following subsection 5: where A, the matter involves the board or a senior officer, and B, the board has failed to take appropriate action or is conflicted. The Prudential Standards Committee may, as a measure of last resort, notify the Minister solely to enable lawful oversight or referral. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The board has seven members. However, there are five committees, and each of these committees needs to have not less than three members from the board. What is the maximum number of members these committees can have? They say the board shall appoint each committee, but all of them say it shall have not less than three members from amongst the board. It does not state anything about other members, or how many members. Is that at the discretion of the committee or the board, how many members in total for each of these committees?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Normally, that is the discretion of the board in terms of the size of those committees and where they may co-opt persons from, in relation to their skills base and the prudential standards established by the FSC. This may be a bad example, but I am assuming that, in the same way persons may be co-opted from the public with certain skills to sit on the Public Accounts Committee, the same thing could be true where you want to bring in a particular skill in relation to a particular matter.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Through the Chair, Honourable Premier, that is the point exactly, because in our Standing Orders of the House it is specified that committees can bring in persons from outside. Here, there is no specification that the committees can co-opt persons from outside. If it is a general rule that they can, then so be it, but in our Standing Orders it is specifically spelled out that our committees can bring in people with specialized skills or for specialized hearings.

Does it need to be spelled out, or is the legislation okay just saying at least three members from the board?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I am not a legal drafter, but I have been advised that the new approach to drafting is not to overburden the principal legislation with minutiae, and these types of issues normally reside in the regulations. My assumption is that detailed matters not covered in the principal legislation will be covered in the regulations. The Attorney General is here, so if she has a view on this, maybe she should address it.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Honourable Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand that the policy decision was that there would be no maximum specified in the legislation.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Is that also for, I think, when we reach remuneration of the committees, those members who may come in? I will wait until we reach remuneration to bring that up, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Part 4? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Acting Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that in clause 28, after the number 28 and the period, the following be inserted: open bracket, 1, close bracket. What is missing from that clause is subsection 1. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Acting Attorney General, can you repeat that motion for me, please?

Deputy Attorney General:

Madam Chair, at the beginning of clause 28, where the number 28 and a period appear in bold, what is missing is the 1 to signify subsection 1. I move that after 28 and the period, the following be inserted: open bracket, 1, close bracket. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Acting Attorney General and seconded by the Minister of Health that, in clause 28, Prudential Standards Committee, after the number 28 and period, we insert the number 1 in open and closed brackets. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions to Part 4? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 4 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 5, clauses 31 to 43: meetings of the board, special meetings of the board, time and places of meetings of the board, quorum, validity of proceedings of the board, invitation of non-members and experts to meetings, minutes of meetings, declaration of interest by members of the board, protection of persons dealing with members of the board and agencies, remuneration, allowances, general power to regulate proceedings and to delegate, preservation of confidentiality of information obtained by board, and immunity.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 5 stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Eighth All Island Member that Part 5 stands part of the bill. All in favour?

Deputy Attorney General:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary? The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that in clause 39, by deleting the words Chief Executive Officer and substituting the words Managing Director. May I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Public Safety that in clause 39, we delete the words Chief Executive Officer and substitute the words Managing Director. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was looking at clause 40, remuneration and allowance. It says a member of the board or a person invited to attend meetings who is not a public officer shall be paid the remuneration allowance and travel expenses incurred in connection with the services to the board as the Minister may determine. I was asking if that is the same thing for committee members who are not members of the board.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think that would be the understanding. Yes, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Just some clarification on clause 43, immunity from liability for board members. A member of the board is not personally liable in any action or proceedings for or in respect of any act or matter done or omitted to be done in good faith in the exercise or discharge, or purported discharge, of any duties or functions under this Act. Can you clarify that for me? Does it mean that anything they do in good faith, whatever the outcome, whether negative or otherwise, they are not personally liable?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think that is what it says. If it is done in good faith, and good faith is broadly interpreted. I am going to go out on a limb here: good faith is acting within your authority. Obviously, if you go outside of your authority and capacity as a board member, you are not acting in good faith.

But within the authority provided to you as a board member, if you act in good faith based on whatever evidence or criteria there is, then you cannot be, or should not be, penalized. Otherwise, you will never act.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, let us say, for example, if the board approves a loan that is outside the ordinary, and it is later found that they should not have approved any loan at that level for housing. If the regular loan is $300,000 and they approve a $700,000 loan, would that be considered good faith?

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Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Well, then the whole board would be compromised. I do not think that could potentially be in good faith, because the board would obviously have lending guidelines. At the end of the day, the Mortgage Corporation is meant to assist in the delivery of affordable homes and shelter. Even within our expensive real estate market, based on the example given, I think it would be hard to justify that a $700,000 loan was made in good faith.

It depends on the circumstances, but I cannot see that happening in an entity committed to affordable shelter.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Just one final question on this part. Does the immunity from liability exist for the regular day-to-day staff, the CEO and the accountants? If they have done things in good faith, do they have the same protections under the law? The immunity from liability is for the board members, but what about the regular staff? Do the accountant, secretary, CEO and directors of the institution have the same immunity from personal liability if they act in good faith?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

In my experience, depending on the level of authority granted, there are accountability frameworks. Once a person acts within that accountability framework, for example, if they went through all the criteria and made a loan based on the information they had, and it then turned out that some of that information was false because whoever provided it perjured themselves or committed fraud, they would have made a bad loan, but they would have done it in good faith based on the evidence they had. I imagine that would permeate through the organization once one was operating within their decision rights.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 5? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 5 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk. Managing Director and staff. Corporation.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Part 6.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 6, Managing Director and Staff of the Corporation, clauses 44 to 59: custody and use of common seal; management of the corporation; appointment of the managing director; functions of the managing director; resignation and removal of the managing director; delegation of functions by the managing director; deputy managing director; appointment of the staff of the corporation; internal audit; staff may appeal; secondment of public officer to the corporation; preservation and accrual of pension benefits; pension fund options for the corporation; training of employees; right to belong to and form trade unions; regulations relating to staff. Clauses 44 to 59.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 6 stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that Part 6 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I have a motion to amend Clause 54. In Clause 54, in subclause (1), the amendment calls for the insertion after the words exceeding one of the word year, so that it will read exceeding one year. In subclause (2), by inserting after the semicolon the word and. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education: in Clause 54, in subclause (1), by inserting after the words exceeding one the word year, and in subclause (2), by inserting after the semicolon the word and. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Part 6? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. At first, when we were discussing this in the debate, I was under the impression that a CEO would be appointed. However, this section talks about a managing director appointed by the board. I am confused. Will there be a CEO appointed by Cabinet and a managing director appointed by the board, or is this the same position?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Can the Premier clarify: is the managing director appointed by the board or is the CEO appointed by Cabinet?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I would just like to point the member attention to Clause 39, where that was previously changed in an amendment from CEO to managing director. Those definitions are more or less the same, but in our jurisdiction, our jurisprudence, the term managing director is often more appropriate, particularly as it relates to financial institutions.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much. Through the Chair, was the amendment made that the managing director will be appointed by the board or by Cabinet? Clause 46 says that the board may appoint a managing director of the corporation, so it says the board appoints. However, we were told that Cabinet will appoint the CEO, or managing director.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

As I indicated in a previous conversation, the board normally identifies and appoints, and then Cabinet confirms. That is normally the procedure.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Clause 51, appointment of the staff of the corporation, states that the managing director shall, subject to the provisions of

this Act, regulations or policy guidelines which may be made from time to time by the board, appoint the officers and employees of the corporation as may be necessary. When it says the managing director, are there provisions for a committee, or is this the managing director, in his or her own remit, appointing these persons? Is it understood that it means the managing director in collaboration with an administrative officer, hiring committee or recruitment committee, or is it just the managing director alone?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think you had it right the first time. Just as the minister would not approve an appointment on his own, I would imagine that in a corporate setting the managing director would have a human resource manager and even a human resources committee. He is normally the person who is given the right to sign off on the appointment. He may decide, based on the information presented to him, that it does not meet the criteria, and therefore he may send it back until they get it right, but ultimately he has to sign off on it.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

No.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, through the Chair.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

He or she.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Sorry, I would like it to be a she here.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

The reason I raised that is that any managing director, he or she, may feel that they have the God-given power to hire and fire and say, look, the legislation says the managing director can hire and fire as he or she sees fit. I am wondering whether, if that time comes, that person can use this legislation to say that he or she has the power to hire and fire because it says the managing director shall. They may use Clause 51 to say, it is my decision to hire or fire this person.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Leader of the Opposition, Clause 51 says that the managing director shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, regulations or policy guidelines which may be made from time to time by the board, appoint the officers and employees of the corporation. So he cannot do it in his sole discretion.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Are there any further contributions to Part 6? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 6 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 7, Funding and Financial Provisions and Audit, clauses 60 to 77: transfer of property; initial funding by the Government; funds of the corporation; loan to the corporation from the consolidated fund; power to borrow or raise capital; issuing obligations; apportioning cost of borrowing; advances to the corporation; financial year; preparation and submission of estimates; accounts, audit and annual budget; reserve fund; unexpended funds; annual financial report; publication of accounts and annual report; tax exemption.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Thank you.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Financial regulations; deposit accounts. Clauses 60 to 77.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 7 stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that Part 7 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, under Clause 73(1A), I move to insert after the word losses the words in accordance with recognized accounting standards. Do I have a seconder?

Deputy Attorney General:

1A.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Sorry, 1A.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that in Clause 73, by inserting after the word losses the words in accordance with recognized accounting standards. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Part 7?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Part 7 talks about transfer of property. Has a location, potential office block, offices or office units been identified for the Mortgage Corporation as yet?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. This is all the responsibility of the board of directors. Until the institution is established and a board appointed, none of that work can be done. To do that would be acting ultra vires.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, can I get some clarification on Clause 63, loans to the corporation from the consolidated fund? At the request of the corporation, the minister may submit to Parliament for approval to lend moneys to the corporation from the consolidated fund on any terms or conditions that Parliament may fix. Is this something that is regularly in practice, that the Government lends money to statutory bodies? If so, who determines the terms?

Who monitors the payments? Is it Parliament that determines the terms of lending? Will the Government be expecting interest if this happens? How does lending money to a statutory body function?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Right.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I cannot think of a specific example, but I am sure it has happened in the past. Parliament has a right to do whatever it wishes within the confines of the Constitution, and so Parliament does have that right.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The minister?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The appropriate minister, such as the Minister of Finance, may take a paper to Cabinet and then to Parliament, because Parliament is the only body that appropriates. The minister would not be able to dole out money without Parliament approving it. That is why the Revenue and Expenditure Estimates is a bill and becomes an Act, because it is an Act of Parliament. In order to lend money, it has to be done by Parliament.

Parliament is the final arbiter as to whether it should be done or not, but there is nothing irregular about this.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair. The reason I say it is because I have never seen Parliament, in my time, lend money to a statutory body. I know we appropriate money for them, but to lend to them and give them suitable terms, I have not seen that. The next question is about standing surety.

Will it be the Government standing surety if they say not to exceed 64 powers to borrow or raise capital? Is it expected that the Government, the TCIG, will stand surety for sums not exceeding $50 million?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Basically, the Government has contingent liability for the debt of all statutory bodies, including those that are operating successfully, such as the Airports Authority. That contingency may be weighted based on the operation. This may be necessary if we were to, for example, underwrite a loan from a third party that goes directly into the body. If the United Kingdom Government, through UK Export, which is an import-export bank of the United Kingdom, and TCI does qualify based on its economy for a certain level of borrowing from UK Export, were to lend $100 million or $50 million for the Mortgage Corporation, the Mortgage Corporation itself could negotiate a $50 million loan, and it is likely that the TCIG would stand surety for that amount.

Again, there is nothing irregular about it, because all these agencies and institutions are quasi-government and act on behalf of the Government in any case. In this particular case, again, this would be a decision that Parliament would make.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

One last one on this section, Madam Chair. Reserve fund, 71: the corporation shall establish a reserve fund into which it shall pay monies from the corporation's surplus at the prescribed rate. It says how the corporation shall use this money, but will the same criteria be prescribed here where Government can access excess money, as we can from other statutory bodies, to say that there is an excess of your excess and TCIG will take a portion of it, as we do with other statutory bodies with excess revenue?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I do not think that is the case. This is a specialized organization. Think of it in terms of a bank. It is not a bank, but think of it in terms of a bank. Any money that is surplus to its operation goes, in my view, into the lending portfolio. Think in terms of the National Insurance Board. Government does not get that back. That goes towards growing the fund so that it is sustainable.

This would be a similar situation, reinvesting the surplus in a way that works towards the sustainability of the corporation.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair to the Premier, since Government cannot request that they remit any money, can a Government access any borrowing from them? For example, if the Government says that we want to build 15 very low-cost homes for vulnerable populations, someone in poverty who lost their house or so, and we want to approach you and start it on behalf of those individuals, is there any provision for the Government to approach the Mortgage Corporation on behalf of

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

any one of the ministries, such as one that deals with the most vulnerable among us?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I think that would be against prudential principles. If the Government is going to have a need to develop social housing, it needs to find that money somewhere else.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Yes.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair, there will be no allowance for any special programme to say that we want you to assist at least 15 persons in this category with loans? There will be no input from the Government like that?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Here is what I think will happen. As it relates to housing support, there will be a ceiling or a range above which the Mortgage Corporation will not be funding, because above that range persons accessing funding for housing would have the ability to fund it. If I want to buy a home for $1 million, $750,000 or even $500,000, it is unlikely that the Mortgage Corporation will fund me.

I will have to go to the regular high street bank. This is truly meant to assist persons who are affordable and who need shelter. I do not want to give the impression that TCIG is going to fund the delivery of housing to persons who are unable to pay. There are criteria here, including prudential criteria.

I do not know if you remember when we were first discussing this in the House, we spoke about disposable income. There are still criteria that one would have to satisfy in order to get a loan.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Right.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I believe TCIG will have to provide a new source of assistance for people who are vulnerable and do not have the wherewithal to afford a home, but who deserve to live in a decent place. The United Nations calls that adequate shelter, and that is shelter that is fit for human habitation and has all the amenities to sustain life. That is not the job of the Mortgage Corporation.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair. I am not sure if I should ask this under this section or the following one, but I wanted to ask, and we can defer it if it is under the next section. Honourable Premier, will the Mortgage Corporation fund the construction of homes, the purchase of homes, the purchase of land, or all three?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Let me try to explain what I believe will happen. We now have a housing department. The housing department is likely to be transitioned into a housing authority. Do not take this as exactly the way it will happen, because we will have to come here to discuss how this happens. Let us say, for example, the Government wants to build 100 houses in a particular area, and the Government decides it can do that on 30 acres of land and assigns that 30 acres of land to the housing authority.

The housing authority will be responsible for managing the construction of those homes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Right.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

By managing, I mean they would be responsible for having them built. I imagine there will be a situation where funding could be allocated from the TCIG budget to build a number of homes or from the loan programme, and then Government is reimbursed as those purchases are made from the housing authority. Funding may be released from the Mortgage Corporation. That is the sort of way that I see it working in principle.

There are different structures, and discussions are now going on within housing and within the Government as to exactly how we are going to deliver. As the Minister will tell you, he was in the Cayman Islands two weeks ago to look at their structure. It may very well be that we would not reinvent the wheel; we would just use one of the existing structures, whether the example of the Bahamas or the example of the Cayman Islands or somewhere else. There may be some sort of bridging arrangement whereby, whether it is a developer who invests his money, once those units are transferred to a qualifying Turks and Caicos Islander for whom the Mortgage

Corporation will provide the funding to buy, the developer or that agency, that middleman, gets paid back.

That is one structure. The other structure, which I am told exists in Cayman, is where Cayman bulk-purchases all or most of the material and then assigns the labour or selects a contractor to do the labour and supplies the material or some of the material. That way, they can control the actual cost. These are just structures, and discussions are now going on within housing and within the Government as to exactly how we are going to deliver.

The intention is, once this is passed and we do the transition between the housing department and the housing authority, to try to fast-track this. As you said yourself today, we realize that we are behind based on the commitment that we have made to the people of this country to provide housing for them. We have to find a structure that works and one that is transparent and easily auditable.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any more contributions to Part 7? Any further contributions to Part 7? There being no further contributions to Part 7, the question is that Part 7 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable members, I just want to recognize that we have gone past the 6 o'clock hour. The Premier this morning did give a motion that we would go past the 6 o'clock hour this evening, and the Speaker has been notified that the Committee will continue with its work.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Great. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 8, Loans by Corporation, clauses 78 to 86: conditions of loans created by the corporation; replacement; repayment of loans; cancellation or modification of approval of loan; power of the corporation to deny payout of outstanding part of an approved loan; suspension of payments of principal and interest; realization and restriction on the mortgaged properties acquired by the corporation; appointment of a receiver or manager; assessment of loan granted; direction for repayment of loan following an assessment.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 8 stands part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister of Border Force.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Great.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Part 8 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I have an amendment in clause 83, by deleting the words but not later than five years after the acquisition and substituting the words within timelines approved by the Commission. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that in clause 83 the words but not later than five years after the acquisition be deleted and the words within timelines approved by the Commission substituted. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Part 8, section 78(1) states that the Corporation shall make loans to persons on terms and rates to be determined by the Corporation. It goes back to what the Honourable Member for The Bight was asking in his contributions to the Bill about the interest rates. Is it the Corporation alone setting those interest rates, or the Corporation in collaboration with the Financial Services Commission, approved in Cabinet? How will the setting of those rates be conducted?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Basically, I think the rates will be set by the marketplace and by prudential principles. Of course, as you know, the market is always moving, and if you were to go to a regular bank to borrow money, it would be a number of points above prime. At the end of the day, the Corporation has to pay for itself. It is affordable from the point of view that you are starting with an advantage, in that the cost of the house is lower and already subsidized by Government.

You would have heard me mention that we plan to go to the capital market too, and part of the loan will go towards serviced lots and housing. One of the things that is planned is to provide the services. A Turks and Caicos Islander is already qualified for a 50% reduction in the land price. Look at it this way: if you have a house lot that is subsidized, and all the services are put in, such as cable, water, electricity and internet, that has a value that you do not have to pay for if you are building on a raw lot.

Then there is the price of the land itself. You are basically starting significantly below what a regular person would start at. It depends on the structure. Let us say the Government is buying materials in bulk that it can pass through to the contractor. Instead of having a house on the market for 350,000 dollars, if you were going the traditional route, the Government can deliver a house to you for 200,000 dollars. That is the affordability element. When it comes to the interest rates, those are set by the market and by how the Government finances that. Let us say we want to borrow 50 million dollars from UK Export Credit.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Export Credit.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

At 4% interest, you cannot then give somebody a loan at 3%. You are looking at maybe 5% or 5.5% because you have to have a margin in order to pay your operational costs. But you are already ahead because you are buying the house for below market price, and it is only available to you as a Turks and Caicos Islander.

That is where the affordability part comes in. We cannot predict interest rates. That will be whatever it is at the time. What we can do is hold down the cost of the house itself to make it affordable for you to pay your mortgage payments. There is a whole slew of calculations that has been done. If you are making a certain amount as a household, you can afford only so much.

Can you imagine two public servants each working in border services and making, say, 30,000 dollars apiece? That is 60,000 dollars for that household. They may be able to afford a mortgage of 2,000 dollars a month or something like that. I do not know what the calculation says, but this will all be priced into the policy. That is where the affordability comes in.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 8?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

One question on this.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Through the Chair to the Honourable Premier, are there any provisions for someone who gets a loan from outside this system and wants to purchase a unit that the Government has put up through its system, with the reduction and the materials and everything at that cost? If a Turks and Caicos Islander says, I am not going through the Mortgage Corporation, but Bank A or Bank B has given me this money and I want to purchase one of these homes, although I am not in the Mortgage Corporation system, is that allowed?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I would imagine it would be, but remember that these are restricted for locals. The bank, using its own prudential principles, will want to be able to sell in the open market to anybody if I do not pay my mortgage. The bank has to look at how it will get out of it. It may not wish to have a restricted market.

The way I see this working is that the Government may, depending on the circumstances, in addition to its own pool of funding, have arrangements with local banks to guarantee certain mortgage payments because, as you rightly said, 20 million dollars is not going to get us very far. We may use our own credit rating to support funding through commercial banks to deliver housing. Remember also that, as a Turks and Caicos Islander, you still have the right to a residential Crown land lot. The plan would be to provide services even into subdivisions that may not be subdivisions for affordable housing, because you may be able to afford a house that is more than half a million dollars.

If the Government opens a subdivision, what has happened in the past, where you get a piece of land with no roads, lights, electricity or water, is the sort of thing we want to get away from.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Yes.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

That creates blight and unfinished-looking communities. You may still benefit from your discount, and you will benefit from the fact that you can now build on a serviced lot. The whole system is quite comprehensive, and that is why the Mortgage Corporation has to work hand in hand with Crown Land and with the Housing Authority. It is a whole system that we are trying to put in place.

You may not be obliged to buy a house in an affordable housing development, but you are still entitled to a residential lot, which should be serviced.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions on Part 8? The Chair recognizes the Member for South Caicos.

Hon. Tamell Seymour:

Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is on the Premier's response to the Leader of the Opposition as it relates to interest rates. South Caicos is a peculiar economy, where you have seasonal workers, such as fishermen, and then you have the lower tier of government, which is not the 60,000 dollars a year employees. You also have weekly employees who are not considered civil servants, or whatever category we put them under.

I am trying to understand whether this Mortgage Corporation has taken into account the different economies and the realities on the ground as it relates to a place like South Caicos, compared to Providenciales, where somebody can have two jobs, while in South Caicos you are struggling to have one.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

As I said earlier, everyone is entitled to adequate housing. There will be some people who will never make enough money or have enough income to own a home, but that does not mean they should not be entitled to live in a decent place. Ultimately, for some people, the Government will have to provide subsidized housing. It may mean that the Government will subsidize their rent based on Government-built or Government-provided accommodation, because the Government has an obligation to everyone.

Hon. Tamell Seymour:

After Hurricane Ike.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The EU housing that was built after Hurricane Ike was meant to house indigent people or people who could not afford housing, but it is then meant to be reallocated to someone else after that person dies. The same thing happens in places like Gibraltar, because they have the very same problem with housing. The Government provides housing for those persons, or subsidizes them, but they may have a life interest in the property, and someone else in a similar situation can benefit once that life interest has expired. What the Government does not want to do is encourage delinquency, where lazy offspring feel that they can sit around and wait for their parents to die to inherit a Government property.

That is not the kind of society we want to build. However, if there is someone who is indigent, or an older person who is unable to pay, we have an obligation to make sure that they are sheltered. That will require a change in the economy and squeezing more out of people who can pay more.

Hon. Tamell Seymour:

Madam Chair, just a quick follow-up. I think I heard you say that you are going to build houses in South Caicos for the less fortunate; correct?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes, across the Islands. As I said in my speech this morning,

we have an obligation to provide adequate housing for everyone.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Either build them or subsidize the rent, or something of that nature. That is what a social democratic society does.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 8? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 8 stand part of the Bill. All in favour say aye. Those to the contrary say no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 9, Reports and Progress Reviews, clauses 87 to 90: Quarterly Reports, Other Reports, Independent Assessment of Progress, and Report on Review of the Corporation. Clauses 87 to 90.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 9 stand part of the Bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that Part 9 stand part of the Bill. All in favour say aye. Those to the contrary say no. The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I have an amendment to clause 87(1): in paragraph (a), by deleting the full stop and substituting the words and; and in paragraph (b), by inserting after the word report the words in the format determined by the Commission. Can I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that in clause 87(1), in paragraph (a), by deleting the full stop and substituting the words and; and in paragraph (b), by inserting after the word report the words in the format determined by the Commission. All in favour say aye. Those to the contrary say no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Could you give us a minute, please, to have a chat with the Attorney General? Madam Chair, we may wish to revisit clause 39.

COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE BILL

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Clause 30.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Clause 30, once we finish getting to the end, to deal with a question, a matter that the Leader of the Opposition raised and the Attorney General has been giving some thought to. We will go back to that once we have gone through the rest of this document.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Okay.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay. Before then, you were asking whether there are any contributions to Part 9.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Are there any contributions? There being no contributions to Part 9, the question is that Part 9 stands part of the bill. All in favour?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 10, Prudential Supervision. Clauses 91 to 100: appointment of Prudential Supervisor; functions of the Prudential Supervisor; special examinations for soundness; prudential requirements; disclosure and access to books and records by Prudential Supervisor for examination; remedial actions the Prudential Supervisor may take; additional remedial actions; additional powers of remedial actions against members of the board, officers and employees; appointment of observer; failure to comply with remedial actions. Clauses 91 to 100.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 10 forms part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that Part 10 stands part of the bill. All in favour?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I have an amendment in relation to clauses 92, 98 and 99. Madam Chair, I move that in clause 92, we delete the words once per quarter and substitute the words twice per year. Clause 92 be amended by deleting the words once per quarter and substituting the words twice per year. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Minister of Education, that in clause 92, by deleting the words once per quarter and substituting the words twice per year. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that clause 98 be amended by deleting the word committee and substituting the word commission, semicolon. In clause 98, I move that the word committee be deleted and be substituted by the word commission and a semicolon thereafter. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that in clause 98, by deleting the word committee and substituting the word commission, and in clause 99, by deleting the word committee and substituting the word commission, semicolon. All in favour?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier, I wish to bring to your attention an amendment on Part 10, clause 92.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Right.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Functions of the Prudential Supervisor. It is saying correct spelling. Yes, so we are going to be changing that. It looks like your error. Sorry, Honourable Premier, we had a correction. Okay, sorry.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Great.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Are there any contributions on Part 10 of the bill?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Just for clarity, I think you called both 98 and 99, right?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

For the Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Madam Chair, to the Premier, just for clarity, the regular functioning of the FSC as a regulatory body, these actions and functions are not able to be carried out unless they are appointed as the prudential supervisor? They are regular activities of the FSC?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Exactly. They are subject to those prudential limits.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 10? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 10 stands part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 11, Official Administration. Clauses 101 to 104: official administration; grants for official administration; matters to be considered on the appointment of an official administration; insolvency or winding up, not applicable.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable Premier. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Eighth All Island Member, that Part 11 stands part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Sorry, Madam Chair, I have an amendment in clause 103, by inserting after the semicolon the word and. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education. I just want to make a clarification that in clause 103, you are going to be inserting after the semicolon the word and, semicolon.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

So, just to be correct, it is actually 103L.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

I said it looked like an L. Great. We are going to be amending clause 103L by inserting after the semicolon the word and, semicolon.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Right.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Part 11?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Premier, I just have one on this section. It is at 104, insolvency and winding up. Clause 104 says an Act relating to insolvency or winding up of a company shall not apply to the corporation. So they are saying any Act that is in existence or will exist will not apply as it relates to insolvency or winding up to this corporation.

Clause 104 says the affairs of the corporation shall only be wound up by an Act of Parliament in accordance with section 40 of the Public Finance Management. Will this prevent, as was stated, I think there is a possibility in the Deputy Premier's comments, of persons in an interim administration pushing for the winding up of this Act or something like that? Will this prevent external forces from outside the text, outside of Parliament, pushing for the winding up of this institution? Will that cure this mischief?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Well, I do not know, man. This interim administration should not be looked at as a feature of our culture, so I hope we never have another one of those.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Yes.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

But if we do, if it does happen that we have one of those and the Constitution is suspended, then they can do whatever they like. Unless that happens, because this is set up by Parliament, it can only be wound up by Parliament's direction. We have had two in 50 years, so we do not want any more.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 11?

Deputy Attorney General:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognises the Acting Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Madam Chair, in the same section, clause 104, in the second line, it should be a capital A in the word Act, so delete the common a and replace it with a capital A.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

104(2). Let me just get to that clause. One second for me, please. Okay, so 104?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes, on the penultimate line, if you are looking for it on page 39, clause 104, on the penultimate line, you will see there is a small a at the beginning of the penultimate line.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Honourable AG, can you go with your motion, please?

Deputy Attorney General:

Yes. Madam Chair, I move that clause 104 be amended in the second line by deleting the common a and the word act and replacing it with a capital A. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Acting Attorney General and seconded by the Honourable Premier, that in clause 104, second line, we are going to remove the lowercase a from act to replace it with a capital A. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any further contributions to Part 11? There being no contributions to Part 11, the question is that Part 11 stands part of the schedule. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 11, Miscellaneous, clauses 105—

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Sorry, 12.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Part 12, Miscellaneous, clauses 105 to 117: fees; electronic communication; service of notices; customer complaints and disputes; complaints board; confidentiality; oath of secrecy; immunity for staff of the corporation; limitation period for proceedings; regulations.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Rules.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Guidelines; consequential amendments. Clauses 105 to 117.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Madam Clerk. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that Part 12 forms part of the bill. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that Part 12 stands part of the bill. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, it has just been pointed out to me that on page 39 where it says Part 12, it is showing Part 13, even though we have referenced it in the content as 12. I move that where it says Part 13 on page 39 in the identification of the part, that it be Part 12 instead. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health, that page 39, which reads Part 13, Miscellaneous, should read Part 12. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I have another amendment to make in clause 105, in paragraph C, by inserting after the semicolon the word and, and then the semicolon; and then in paragraph D, by deleting the word and and substituting the word any, semicolon. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that clause 105 in paragraph C, by inserting after the semicolon the word and, semicolon, and, in paragraph D, by deleting the word and and substituting the word any, semicolon. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I have another correction, an amendment to make in clause 106, by inserting after the semicolon the word and. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, that clause 106 be amended by inserting after the semicolon the word and, semicolon. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, in clause 109, in subclause 2, by deleting the words section 107 and substituting the words section 108, semicolon. I move that in clause 109—

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Sorry, you want to do the three of them?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay, I could. In clause 109, I move that subclause 2 be amended by deleting the words section 107 and substituting the words section 108, semicolon; in subclause 3(a)(6), by inserting after the semicolon the word and; and in subclause 5, by deleting the words section 107 and substituting the words section 108. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that in clause 109, in subclause 2, by deleting the words section 107 and substituting the words section 108, semicolon; in subclause 3(a)(6), by inserting after the semicolon the word and, semicolon; and in subclause 5, by deleting the words section 107 and substituting the words section 108, semicolon. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No. Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I also would like to make a motion in clause 112, by deleting the word actor and substituting the word act, semicolon. I move that in clause 112, we delete the word actor and substitute the word act, semicolon. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education in clause 112, by deleting the word actor and substituting the word act, semicolon. All in favour, aye. Those to the contrary, no.

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026 - COMMITTEE STAGE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Acting Attorney General.

Deputy Attorney General:

Sorry, Madam Chair, it should not be a semicolon. It should just be Act or. I move that, in Clause 112, the word actor in the fourth line be deleted and replaced with the words Act or.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Space or?

Deputy Attorney General:

Yes.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Okay.

Deputy Attorney General:

Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Acting Attorney General and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health, that in Clause 112, the word actor be deleted and substituted with the words Act or. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair, I move that, in Clause 114(g), after the word subject, the word and be inserted.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Second.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I think by substituting the words and—

Deputy Attorney General:

Semicolon.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Semicolon, yes. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that in Clause 114(g), after the word

subject, the word and and a semicolon be inserted. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Aye. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Yes, Madam Chair. I move that, in Clause 117, in the proposed subsection 9, after the word exercise, the words his or be inserted. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that in Clause 117, in the proposed subsection 9, after the word exercise, the words his or be inserted. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Are there any contributions to Part 12?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

That is it, right?

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, Madam Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In this section, it calls for the establishment of a complaints board and sets out the different areas. I am concerned about the number of committees and boards under this institution. In terms of complaints, it says that complaints have to come to the board.

Can persons also make complaints to the prudential supervisor or to the Complaints Commission of Government, since this is a statutory body? Can the FSC, as the prudential supervisor, receive complaints that persons may have, or can the Government Complaints Commission receive complaints, or do all complaints have to come to this complaints board?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

In relation to the Ombudsman or the Complaints Commissioner, the public always has the right to complain if they have evidence of maladministration. As it relates to the FSC, I also think they have the right to complain to the FSC if they think there is an infringement of the law, particularly if it is something fraudulent.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Yes.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Particularly in relation to things such as money laundering or if they think there is a risk. However, I believe these kinds of complaints have to do with service more than anything else. I do not know whether Chambers agrees with me, but that is my interpretation of it.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes, through the Chair.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I believe, as the Premier stated, it is more about market conduct complaints, not the others. I am just wondering if those avenues are also available for complaints. I see the composition of the complaints board, but even going back to the other committees and the board of the Mortgage Corporation, is there any consideration for representatives from each island on those corporations, committees or boards? For example, having a representative from Salt Cay or Grand Turk, so each island has a representative on the boards and complaints committees.

That is just a thought going forward, Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

These boards are supposed to be professional boards, I believe, comprising people who understand the subject. They should be taken from wherever they can be found. It is not like the Immigration Board or something like that. You take the talent from wherever you can find it. Sometimes we restrict talent by boxing ourselves in. In this case, I think you take the talent from wherever you can find it. That is my feeling.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

I fully understand.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Madam Chair—

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 12? The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Just one last one from me. I am looking at Clause 112, immunity for staff of the corporation. I asked about this earlier. I see that employees are immune from anything done, considered to be done, in good faith. I am not being mischievous, but how is it that this immunity is not offered to parliamentarians, members of Cabinet and Ministers if we act in good faith and things do not happen as they should? As you know, a former Premier was held before the Integrity Commission for obtaining a helicopter for her and the Governor to move around when there was no transportation in the islands. I am sure that was done in good faith, but no immunity was given to them. They were held before the Integrity Commission. I am wondering whether similar language can be offered to us, as Cabinet members or Members of Parliament, so that when we do things for the good of the people and not in any malicious way, we have this immunity also.

I am glad it is here for these people, but I think it should be extended to others also.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I am glad you asked that question, and no one from the other side. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The Public Finance Management and Public Procurement Ordinances, along with the Integrity Commission Ordinance, are pieces of legislation that should be under constant review. I do believe that in some cases they are wound too tight and could be unduly costly to the Government, because in some cases people tasked with administering the country are boxed in to an extent that they should not be. Where there is an emergency, the system sometimes is not flexible enough to allow Government officials or Ministers to make a decision, even though the public thinks they have decision-making rights. I personally believe that policies should include perhaps more post-audit work rather than unduly restricting action.

I do not disagree with you, and perhaps that is something we can take up separately when we review these Ordinances, which are due for review. There is no reason why you could not bring a private member's motion, which we will look at. I do not disagree.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Are there any further contributions to Part 12? There being no further contributions, the question is that Part 12 stand part of the bill. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

The ayes have it. Honourable Premier, I think we are going back to Clause 30. The Acting Attorney General will—

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

You have it? Thank you. Madam Chair, in Clause 30, I move to insert after subsection 3 the following subsection, in direct response to the issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition: A committee established under sections 25 to 30 may include not more than five persons who are not members—

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Who are not members.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Sorry, who are not members of the board. And subsection 5, the board shall determine the quorum, procedures and terms of reference to be followed by any committee established under this part. Madam Chair, should I read it again?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Yes, please.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Go ahead.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

The motion is that, in Clause 30, after subsection 3, the following subsections be inserted: 4, a committee established under sections 25 to 30 may include not more than five persons who are not members of the board; and 5, the board shall determine the quorum, procedures and terms of reference to be followed by any committee established under this part. If you do not have it, I can give you the machine.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Second.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Just for clarity, those words are lifted verbatim from the Sovereign Wealth Fund or the National Wealth Fund, so they are not original. If that helps the Leader of the Opposition, those words exist in other parts and other places.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Yes.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you. The motion to amend has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, that in Clause 30, after subsection 3, the following subsections be inserted: 4, a committee established under sections 25 to 30 may include not more than five persons who are not members of the board; and 5, the board shall determine the quorum, procedures and terms of reference to be followed by any committee established under this part. All in favour? Aye. Those to the contrary? No. The ayes have it.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

Thank you.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Members, this brings us to the end of this bill. Thank you, Honourable Members. I am now going to suspend this committee to call His Honour the Speaker to take the Chair. This committee is hereby suspended.

SUSPENSION OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

We need a five-minute comfort break.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House now resumes its sitting. Pray be seated.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I am pleased to report that the committee has considered the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 and the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, both with amendments. I now turn these proceedings back over to you, Mr. Speaker.

THIRD READING OF BILLS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Honourable Members, I want to thank the Honourable Deputy Speaker for chairing the Committee of the Whole and for overseeing the passage of these two bills. For a moment there, I was wondering if we were back in Budget. Honourable Members, we are still on Orders of the Day. We are now at the third reading of bills. Which one would you like to go first?

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026 - THIRD READING

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Mortgage.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

We will now have the third reading of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier and Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Investment and Trade. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 99, I move that the Bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 be read a third time. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, the motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Premier that the Bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 now be read a third time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

This Act may be cited as the Mortgage Corporation Act 2026 and shall come into operation on such day as the Governor may appoint by notice published in the Gazette. Different dates may be appointed for different provisions and different purposes.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 99, I move that the Bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 do now pass. Do I have a seconder?

MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, a motion has been moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Public Safety that the bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 do now pass. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Aye.

ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, the bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 do now pass. Honourable Members, I will return to the Order Paper. We are still on the Third Reading of Bills, and we will now have the Third Reading of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Good evening, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and strangers in the gallery. Mr. Speaker, I move, pursuant to Standing Order 99, that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 be read a third time.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, a motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Public Safety that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 be read a third time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Aye.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Madam Clerk.

Hon. Rhondalee M. Braithwaite-Knowles, OBE, KC:

This Act may be cited as the Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 and shall come into operation on such day as the Governor may appoint by notice published in the Gazette.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Minister.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Grateful again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move now, pursuant to Standing Order 99, that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 do now pass. May I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, a motion has been moved by the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Public Safety that the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 do now pass. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Akierra Mary Deanne Missick:

Aye.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Honourable Members, the bill entitled Road Traffic Amendment Bill 2026 do now pass. Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I move that this House stand adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House now stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow morning.