

First (1st) Sitting of the Seventeenth (17th) Meeting of the First Session of the Thirteenth (13th) Legislature

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

19 FEBRUARY 2026

(Parliament)

Hon. Speaker

Speaker

Disclaimer: The electronic version of the *Official Hansard Report* is for informational purposes only. The printed version remains the official record.

THE PARLIAMENT OF TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

19 FEBRUARY 2026

Parliament

PRAYER

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AND CALL TO PRAYER

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good afternoon, members. I now call this first sitting of the 17th meeting of the first session of the 13th Legislature of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to order. Honourable Members, I now call on our Chaplain, Bishop Coleta III, to pray for this meeting.

OPENING PRAYER

Chaplain:

Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 5. And I said to the king, if it please the king, and if your servant have found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's tombs, that I may rebuild it. Leaders who navigate do more than control the direction in which they and their people travel. They see the whole trip in their mind before they leave the dock.

It seems remarkable, but Nehemiah could see both the problem and the solution. Even though he had never visited Jerusalem, he had a strategic plan and a deep desire to see the restoration of Jerusalem. All great leaders have uncommon vision. A leader sees one further than others see. Nehemiah was able to see the problem and he could picture the solution in his head. A leader sees more than others see. Nehemiah knew that the wall could and should be rebuilt, and he knew what it would take to do it. Finally, a leader sees before others see.

None of Jerusalem's neighbors wanted to see the Jews rebuild their wall, and several enemy leaders conspired against Nehemiah and his people. But Nehemiah saw the danger and planned accordingly. He refused to give in to enemy's plot. Let us pray. Father, the God of power, the God of favor, the God of vision, and the God of resources, we thank you for the burden and the vision that you have put in the heart of our leaders. For our people and for the building of our country and its people. Help them to make a difference in their ministry and the position that they are in for the betterment of our beloved country. So Lord, as our leaders gather in this Parliament to debate, to deliberate, and to legislate, we pray for safe laying of all bills today.

Gracious Father, thank you for the spirit of discernment and good judgment for our Speaker, the gift of boldness and creativity and vision for our Premier, the gift of wisdom and vision and courage for our Leader of the Opposition, the gift of strength and the spirit of Nehemiah for all members of this Parliament. We pray especially today for the Honourable Member of Blue Hills and the Howell family on the passing of his brother, for strength and comfort. The gift of wisdom and sound legal advice for our Attorney General. The gift of good stewardship and physical and mental strength for our Clerk.

Bless this Parliament. Bless and protect and prosper this country. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

OPENING REMARKS AND APOLOGY FOR LATE START

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Amen. Pray be seated. Honourable Members and those persons listening to us via radio, Turks and Caicos, I want to first apologize for our late start. As we had to resolve a few technical issues, I would now like to call on the Honourable Premier to reorder the Order Paper.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 12 TO SIT BEYOND 6 PM

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. 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?

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education that this Honourable House sits beyond the 6 PM hour. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Premier.

REARRANGEMENT OF ORDER PAPER TO GIVE PRECEDENCE TO GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order No. 49, I wish to rearrange the business of this Honourable Parliament so that Government business can have precedence over all of the other business. In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I move that Item No. 6, Papers, be taken as Item No. 4, Item number 11, first reading of bills to be taken as item number 5. Item number 17, orders of the day to be taken as item number 6.

PAPERS

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND TRANSITION TO PAPERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Premier. I want to welcome all of you here to this meeting of Parliament. I also want to welcome those persons who are listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and also via our SmartStream platforms. I want to send out condolences to persons that we have lost since our last meeting, and also

I want to send out particular condolences to the Honourable Member for Blue Hills on the loss of his brother. Again, I want to apologize for our late start, so we'll get right into the order paper. Number 3, messages from Her Excellency The Governor. There were none. Number 4, papers. Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands approved virement log for the periods 14 January to 16 February 2026, to be laid by the Honourable Premier.

Honourable Premier.

LAYING OF GOVERNMENT OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS APPROVED VIREMENT LOG

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to lay on the table of this Honourable House, in accordance with Standing Order No. 32 and Section 51 of the Public Finance Management Regulations 2012, Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands approved Viamont's Log for periods 14th of January to the 16th of February, 2026.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

TRANSITION TO FIRST READING OF BILLS - DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FEE AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Madam Clerk. Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. I will now return to the Order Paper. We are now at the First Reading of Bills, and we will have the First Reading of the Destination Management Fee Amendment Bill 2026.

FIRST READING OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FEE AMENDMENT BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

What's that? The Destination Management— who's going to lay that bill?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

I will, I will, I will read it, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Okay, to be laid by the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I move that pursuant to Standing Order 94, that the bill entitled Destination Management Fee Amendment Bill 2026 be read for a first time. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Premier and seconded by the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs, that the bill entitled Destination Management Fee Amendment Bill 2026 be read a first time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

This Act may be cited as the Destination Management Fee Amendment Act 2026, and shall come into operation on publication in the Gazette.

FIRST READING OF MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. We are still at the first reading of bills, and we will now have the first reading of the Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Premier.

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to Standing Order 90.4, that the Bill entitled Mortgage Corporation Bill 2026 be now read for a first time. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Second.

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 be read a first time. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

The ayes have it. Madam Clerk.

Clerk:

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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECOND READING OF AIRPORTS AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2025

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. Honourable members, I will now return to the Order Paper, and we are now at Orders of the Day, Second Reading of Bills, and we are at the second reading of the Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025, to be moved by the Honourable Minister of Education.

DEFERRAL OF AIRPORTS AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2025 - SECOND READING

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Minister with responsibilities for Airports Authority, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 92, Section 4, I move that the bill entitled Airport Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred to the next meeting of this Honourable House. Do I have a seconder?

DEFERRAL OF AIRPORTS AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2025 AND TRANSITION TO PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 1 OF 2026

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Hon. Minister of Education, and seconded by the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, that the bill entitled Airports Authority Amendment Bill 2025 be deferred until the next meeting of the House. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable members, we are still on orders of the day. And we are now at the Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2026, to be moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' NOTICES

PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 1 OF 2026 - APPOINTMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW EMPLOYMENT ACT

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to lay on the table of this honorable Parliament, in accordance with Standing Orders 32 and Standing Orders 50, re motion for the appointment of a select committee to review the Employment Act. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable members, motion moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Speaker, that motion number 1 of 2026 for the appointment of a select committee to review The Employment Act. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, good afternoon everyone. I'll read the motion as it is and I will give some brief remarks before I open for debate. Whereas the existing Employment Act, which came into force the 26th of November 2004, requires comprehensive review and updating, and whereas there is a need to ensure the continued protection of workers' rights, the promotion of fair employment practices, and the adoption of the law to recent economic, social, and technological changes, and whereas, as technology evolves, laws need to address issues related to remote work, AI, and gig economy platforms, and legislation should reflect current economic conditions to promote fair compensation and social protections. And whereas, new occupational hazards and flexible work arrangements require updated safety protocols and laws, ensuring employment laws are consistent with evolving international human rights conventions.

And whereas anticipating issues like demographic changes, climate impact, or automation as new forms of exploitation or discrimination emerges requires proactive legislative updates. Now therefore, be it resolved that this Honourable Parliament in accordance with the standing orders and the parliamentary procedures of the Parliament of the Turks and Caicos Islands, hereby establishes a select committee to undertake a detailed and thorough review of the Employment Act with the following terms of reference.

Number 1, to examine the current provisions of the Employment Act and identify gaps, ambiguities, and areas requiring modernization. Number 2, to consult with relevant stakeholders including representation of employers, employees, labor organizations, legal experts, and other interested parties. Number 3, to recommend appropriate amendments or new provisions aimed at making the Employment Act more relevant, equitable, and effective. Number 4, to report its findings, recommendations, and proposed legislative updates to this honorable Parliament.

Be it further resolved that the select committee shall be constituted as follows: a chairman; two other members of Parliament; a representative of the TCI Civil Service Association; a representative of the TCI HTA; a representative of employees; an expert in employment and labor affairs. And be it further resolved that the purpose of this select committee is to ensure that employment laws of the Turks and Caicos Islands reflect contemporary needs and promote fair, balanced, and effective labor relations. Moved this 19th day of February, 2026. Moved by myself, Deputy Premier Minister of Immigration and Border Services.

And seconded by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of work for— apologies, can't name names in the Parliament. So apologies to the Deputy Speaker and myself.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of work that Parliament is geared to do. We are going on 22-plus years since the Employment Act was enacted. So much has happened in this country and in the world in relation to employment and labor over those two decades. The House and Parliament have the right skill sets to lead this reform and bring recommendations to Parliament, which we will take on from a ministry standpoint to finalize and bring an update back to the House of Assembly or the Parliament. Given that we are on the cusp of completing the Immigration Ordinance repeal and replace, this is one of the other big pieces of legislative reform that we have in our ministry to get done. We want to utilize the full resources of Parliament to make sure we can get that done, because I think we need to ensure that we utilize this institution more in the way we govern. I have no doubt that once the chair is selected and confirmed, with the members of the team, they will have a great review and utilize all at their fingertips to bring this to a great end, which will benefit the people, employees, employers, and the government of the Turks and Caicos.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I open it now for debate. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE EMPLOYMENT ACT

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Premier. Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of work that Parliament is geared to do. We are talking about over 22 years since the Employment Act was enacted. Much has changed in this country and the world regarding employment and labor relations over those two decades. The House and Parliament have the right skill sets to lead this reform and bring recommendations to Parliament, which we will take on from a ministry standpoint to finalize and bring an update back to the House of Assembly or Parliament. Given that we are close to completing the Immigration Ordinance repeal and replace, this is another major legislative reform for our ministry. We want to utilize the full resources of Parliament to ensure this is achieved, making better use of this institution in governance. Once the chair is selected and confirmed, I am confident the team will conduct a thorough review and use all available resources to bring this to a successful conclusion for the benefit of employees, employers, and the government of the Turks and Caicos—the three key stakeholders.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I open it now for debate. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Hon. Deputy Premier. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Pleasant good afternoon to all those listening by radio or live streaming, to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, especially my constituency of Grand Turk South & Salt Cay and the wider Grand Turk, and to my colleagues here in the House of Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to this motion for the appointment of a select committee to review the Employment Act.

Before I begin, I want to associate myself with the words of condolences given to our colleague from Blue Hills and to the Deputy Speaker on the untimely passing of her niece, who is also my second cousin. It shows how interconnected we are in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Mr. Speaker, this motion for a select committee to review the Employment Act is well needed. As the Deputy Premier said, it has been in place for over 20 years. Since COVID-19, we have had to change how we look at employment and work. COVID-19 changed the world and showed us what is possible for the future.

We must adjust, be nimble, and move with the times or be left behind. I am pleased the motion mentions artificial intelligence and remote work. These technologies will soon be commonplace. Especially in government, we have too many people traveling for meetings when technology allows us to connect from anywhere.

COVID-19 showed us how education continued online, and I can see homework groups and work projects happening virtually. The technologies are there, Mr. Speaker. We must move with the times and set the example as a government. It's not only cost-saving but also time-saving and convenient. During COVID-19, we had meetings for 13 or 14 hours, sometimes from home. It shows the practical application of these changes. I am in full support of what the Deputy Premier is proposing. Even though some may say it's not good politics, it's about being a good citizen of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Any improvement for our people, I will support. There is much we disagree on, but as I said to a member this morning, the Premier and I want the same destination, just by different routes. While we spend time fighting, others benefit. We must know when to put that aside.

I will lead by example. We always say you must be the change you want to see. Perhaps that is why I am in opposition, to help bring about that change. The Premier once said the Leader of the Opposition is not the enemy, just competition. That stuck with me. None of us are enemies here; we all represent the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. When politics began, everyone proposed different ways to do things, and people chose the best option. That's what we're doing now.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

The Honourable Deputy Premier has brought a good motion for our people, and it will have bipartisan support because it benefits everyone who lives and works in the Turks and Caicos Islands. I urge all members to cooperate with the Deputy Premier and assist in making this a reality. I would add that we need extensive town hall meetings and stakeholder engagement throughout the islands—not just with the legal fraternity, but with all groups, such as taxi drivers and beach vendors. This will be good for our people, and if it is good for the Turks and Caicos Islands, I will support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for your contribution to this motion. Are there any further contributions? There being no further contributions, I will ask the Honourable Deputy Premier to wrap up so we can vote.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to wish happy birthdays and anniversaries to those who have celebrated since we last met, and condolences to those who have lost loved ones, including the Member from Blue Hills and the Deputy Speaker's niece, who is also my cousin. I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion for robust stakeholder engagement in this process. Some work has already been done on proposed updates to the employment ordinances, which the committee can review. We also have access to similar processes in the Bahamas and insights from the recent ILO Regional Conference in Punta Cana. We want to modernize the legislation to suit the Turks and Caicos reality, as our labor market is unique.

We will draw on best practices locally and regionally. With that, Mr. Speaker, I now open the floor for nominations for the chair and two members of Parliament for the Select Committee. I nominate the Deputy Speaker as chairman. Do I have a seconder?

APPOINTMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW EMPLOYMENT ACT

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to wish all those who celebrated birthdays or anniversaries since we last met, happy birthday and happy anniversary. I also extend condolences to those who have lost loved ones, including the Member of Parliament from Blue Hills and the Deputy Speaker's niece, who is also my cousin. Regarding the stakeholder engagement for this process, I anticipate it will be robust, as we want to gather as much feedback as possible. There has been previous work on proposed updated employment ordinances, and we also have access to the process undertaken by the Bahamas, which took about three years. While I do not anticipate such a lengthy engagement, it demonstrates the depth this process can reach.

We intend to build on what has been done locally and regionally. Recently, at the ILO Regional Conference in Punta Cana, which I attended with the Deputy Speaker and my ministry team, we ensured we have the International Labor Organization's expertise to help modernize this legislation, making it functional and practical for the Turks and Caicos context. Our labor market is unique, so we will draw on best practices.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I now open the floor for nominations for the chair and two members of Parliament for the Select Committee. I would like to nominate the Deputy Speaker as chairman of the Select Committee. Do I have a seconder?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable members, motion moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Member from South Caicos that the chairperson of the Select Committee be the Deputy Speaker of Parliament. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. Hon. Deputy Premier, are there any further nominations for the other Members of Parliament? The Chair recognises the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Deputy Premier, through the Chair, I recommend the Honourable Member from The Bight as one of the members of this committee. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Is there a second? Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the Honourable Member from South Caicos that one of the other Members of Parliament be the Honourable Member from The Bight. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it.

Honourable members, are there any further recommendations? The Chair recognises the Honourable Ninth All-Island Member.

Hon. Willin A. Belliard:

Afternoon, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, Deputy Premier, I recommend the Eighth All-Island Member to be appointed to the committee. Any second?

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Second.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, motion moved by the Honourable Eighth All-Island Member and seconded by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs that the other Member of Parliament on the Select Committee is the Honourable Eighth All-Island Member. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Ayes have it. Now, Honourable Deputy Premier. The other members, are we going to— how are we going to select them? We just select the organization? The other members, we'll just select the organization, right?

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Hon. Deputy Premier, you have something else to say?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Sorry, for a second I thought I was in committee. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. For the other members, we will just write in those names through the chair. Those recommendations will be done separately.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

And you'll advise?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Yes, we'll advise the members.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. So members, the question put is that Motion Number 1 of 2026 for the appointment of a select committee to review the Employment Act, which was moved by the Honourable Deputy Premier and seconded by the Honourable Deputy Speaker, be hereby passed. All in favour say aye. All to the contrary, no. The ayes have it. No clap?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No? I guess not.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Member, you had something else to say?

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

No?

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

TWO MINUTE SPEECHES BY MEMBERS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Okay, thanks. All right, Members, Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper, and we are now at 2-minute speeches by Members. Are there any contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Member from The Bight.

Hon. Kimbule A. Skippings:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I want to say a pleasant good afternoon to the people of Middle Caicos. I want to give my condolences to The Honourable Member from Blue Hills, and to the Deputy Speaker of the House and my good neighbours, Sid and Glenys Robinson, on the passing of their daughter.

I also want to wish my father, the Honourable Oswald Skippings, a happy birthday. Today I pause to recognize a very special man on his very special day, my father. On the 19th of February, we celebrate not just another birthday, but a life of service, sacrifices, and steadfast leadership. As a former Chief Minister of our beloved country, his legacy is written not only in policy, but in progress and in the hearts of the people he served. To me, he is more than a public figure.

He is my teacher, my example, and my greatest source of inspiration. From him, I learned the value of integrity, hard work, humility, and putting country before self. Dad, I thank you for the path you paved, the lessons you taught me, and the love you continue to give. Your strength, wisdom, and dedication continue to guide me every day.

On behalf of our family and all those whose lives you touch, I want to wish you a very happy birthday. Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Speaker for her 2-minute speech.

Hon. Jameka L. Williams:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to colleagues, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and those listening via radio or other means. I extend sympathies to all those grieving, especially our member from Blue Hills. I ask all of you and those listening to continue to pray for my family, especially my brother and sister-in-law who are going through a difficult time.

This afternoon, my son is finally legal, 21 years old, my only son, and I am so proud of Jamari. We still have many great young men in our communities, and I am proud to be the mother of one. I want to extend a very happy birthday to him. He also has two godfathers in this House—the member from The Bight and the member from Wheeland. While he may be too old for gifts, I would appreciate those in cash so we can celebrate on the weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Thank you. Good afternoon, Honorable Speaker. Good afternoon to my colleagues and to all the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands. I want to register my sincere condolences to those mourning today. First, condolences to the Henfield family in North Caicos, as Mr. Henfield will be buried this Saturday. He lived in South Caicos for many years. I also pass condolences to my cousins, the family of the late Ms. Cicely

Ewing of Blue Hills, to her children and extended family. To my colleague, the Honourable Member from Blue Hills, and the Howell family, I express my condolences.

Last but not least, condolences to the family of our All Island Deputy Speaker of the House. This loss is personal, as the Robinson family have been my neighbours in London for years, and our families are very close. I want to express deepest sympathy to the whole family. I also wish a happy birthday to the former Chief Minister, Double O Skippings, and pray for many more years for him. As Minister of Home Affairs, Religious Affairs, and especially Transportation, I assure residents that my government is not sleeping on the jitney issue, and they will hear from us soon. Good afternoon.

Chaplin:

Thank you.

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Eighth All-Island Member for her contribution.

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and those listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and social media. When I was not in this House, I wondered why members always wished sympathies and happy birthdays during their 2-minute speeches. Now I find myself doing the same. I express my deepest condolences to my colleague, the Honourable Member from Blue Hills, to his family, to the Honourable Deputy Speaker, and to Glenys and Sid on the passing of their daughter.

I also wish deepest sympathy to my sorrow sister, Sister Sadie Jean, and her family on the passing of the late Stanley Williams, one of our commissioners. I wish a happy birthday to the Honourable Double O Skippings, one of my political supporters, and may God continue to bless him with long life and good health. There are issues in this country for Parliament to address, but I will leave that for another time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: CONDOLENCES AND BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Hon. Sharon A. Simons:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to my colleagues and to those listening via Radio Turks and Caicos and our social media platforms. Mr. Speaker, when I was not in this House, I used to wonder why members always wished sympathies and happy birthday. Now that I'm here, I find myself doing the same thing with my two-minute speech time.

I want to express my deepest condolences to my colleague, the Honourable Member from Blue Hills, to him and his family, to the Honourable Deputy Speaker, and to Glenys and Sid on the passing of their daughter. I'd also like to wish deepest sympathy to my sorrow sister, Sister Sadie Jean, and her family on the passing of the late Stanley Williams, one of our commissioners. I'd like to wish a happy birthday to the Honourable Double O Skippings, one of my political supporters, who always told me I would one day be in this House. I wish him a happy birthday and may God continue to bless him with long life and good health. Mr. Speaker, we realize there are issues in this country that we in Parliament need to deal with, but I will leave that for another time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: CHAIR RECOGNITION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

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

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: CONDOLENCES, CONGRATULATIONS, AND EDUCATION UPDATES

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Leader of the Opposition. I am going to beg for an additional minute as some events are coming up very soon and we will not have another House before then. A pleasant good afternoon to my parliamentary team members, those listening via RTC or Facebook, and to the people of Electoral District 9, Five Cays, South Dock, and Chalk Sound. On Saturday, the late Conrad Forbes, former principal of the A.

Louise Garland Thomas High School, will be laid to rest at Abundant Life Ministries at 10 AM. Let us continue to pray for his family and all others grieving the loss of a loved one. I also want to mention condolences to our Honourable Member for Blue Hills and my Deputy PS Mr. Edgar Howell on the loss of their brother Mr. Keith Howell, and to the bereaved family of Mistress Cicely Yoing, a former educator who made a remarkable impact, and to the family of Mr. Stanley Williams, father of Dr. Kieran Williams.

Let us remember these persons as they grieve. To our Honourable Deputy Speaker, let us remember the young person who died—gone too soon. On a higher note, congratulations to the students who participated in the inter-high school basketball competition: first place to Maranatha High, second to Clement Howell High, and third to H.J.

Robinson High School. Congratulations also to the students in the Inter-High School Softball Championship: A. Louise

Garland Thomas High took third, Clement Howell second, and H.J. Robinson High first. Education Week activities are scheduled for March 1st to March 6th under the theme 'Where Parents Lead, Children Succeed.' Members, please check your emails for the schedule and support us. On March 6th, we will host a mega gala banquet for all 450 teachers on Providenciales.

Updates for my ministry: the Raymond Gardner new art block in North Caicos will be completed by the end of this month. Tenders are out for playground areas in Middle Caicos, North Caicos, and The Bight. The Grand Turk Sports Complex is slated for completion in April 2026. The South Caicos field tender closes in March.

For Electoral District 9: works to the entrance of Five Cays and Chalk Sound, including signage, are underway and awarded. Works to Enid Capron Primary School playground basketball court and Felix Morley Community Center are being wrapped up. Chalk Sound sidewalks are out, and Sapodilla Bay development contract is also out. This is progress.

I wish everyone a restful time and encourage us to love and care for each other. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: CHAIR RECOGNITION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? The Chair recognizes the Honourable Deputy Premier for his contribution.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: VISA STATISTICS AND OVERSTAYERS

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon again, Turks and Caicos. For my two-minute speech, I'd like to give some statistics and updates, particularly regarding visas. There has been feedback that people feel we are targeting one nationality indiscriminately, so I want to provide context. When we put in the visa moratorium for Haitian nationals over six months ago, it was part of a suite of measures considered by the Premier, Cabinet, and NSC to fight crime. Recent reports show serious crime is down by 43% year on year, so the measures have had results.

During the six months after the moratorium, we looked at links between visa overstayers and work permit holders. For the first six months of 2025, there were 2,141 visa applications for Haitian nationals, 651 for Dominican nationals (23%), 56 for Jamaican nationals, and a few others. About 75% of applications were from Haitian nationals. Of those, 809 were approved, which is about 40%.

In the six months since the moratorium, out of those 809, 41 persons migrated to work permits, and 14 returned home. That means 93% of those approved for Turks and Caicos visas are still in the country as overstayers, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Rachel Marshall Taylor:

What's the number?

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

That number is 754 out of a total of 809, which is the main reason the moratorium remains in place. The data shows we cannot afford to open it back up, as it would add more people to those already here. This is not about discrimination, but the reality of the challenges we face. Compared to other nationalities, the numbers are much higher.

Persons who are sureties must ensure these visitors leave; it is not for us to chase them. If you are a genuine visitor, enjoy Turks and Caicos and return home. You are putting your neck on the line for them. We welcome tourism and visitors, but you must return. Governor's Beach, Bambara Beach, Grace Bay Beach, The Bight Beach—these are all top beaches. If you want to come, come, but you must return so you can come again.

Sureties, please find them and get them out. If not, don't call me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Shaun David Malcolm:

Long Bay.

Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson:

Right, Long Bay. Sapodilla Bay and East Harbour have award-winning beaches as well. If they want to come, come, but you must return and you can come again. Sureties, please find them and get them out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: CHAIR RECOGNITION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognizes the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution.

TWO-MINUTE SPEECHES: GREETINGS, ANNIVERSARIES, AND CONDOLENCES

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Minister of Education, it wasn't you this time with the ministerial speech. However, we appreciate the information, Honourable Deputy Premier. It was needed, but just the wrong setting. We appreciate the information. I want to associate myself with the birthday greetings to Honourable Skippings, the former Premier and former Chief Minister.

I'm sure their names will come up during the 50th anniversary of Parliament. I also want to congratulate my parents, who celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on Monday. They have been together since my mom was in high school, so you have to add a few more years to that.

I tried to get more details about how they met, but my mom wouldn't share last night. Congratulations to all those having birthdays and anniversaries throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands. I also give sympathies to the brother of Deputy Speaker, Sid, who is part of my Robinson family. You can see his father at the store opposite where Glenn Clark's store used to be, where my grandma's house is.

He's now in retirement.

CONDOLENCES, CONGRATULATIONS, AND ILLEGAL DEVELOPMENT IN GRAND TURK

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Minister of Education, it wasn't you this time with the ministerial speech. However, we appreciate the information, Honourable Deputy Premier. It was needed information, but just the wrong setting. But we appreciate the information. Mr. Speaker, I too want to associate myself with the birthday greetings to Honourable Skippings, the former Premier and former Chief Minister. Thank you for the correction.

I'm sure their names will be coming up shortly when we're doing the 50th anniversary of Parliament. Also, I want to congratulate my parents on their 55th wedding anniversary on Monday. They have been together since my mom was in high school, so you have to add a few more years onto that.

I tried to get details on how they met, but my mom didn't share last night. So congratulations to all those having birthdays and anniversaries throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands. Again, I want to give sympathies to the brother of Deputy Speaker Sid, who is part of my Robinson family.

You can see his father, my Uncle Nick, one of my mother's older brothers, still living there. That is Sed's father and the connection to the Honourable Deputy Speaker's brother. Also, we had the death of a daughter on my Robinson side and the death of a daughter of one of my cousins on my Astwood side, Steve Astwood, who lost his daughter recently. So it was a double blow for our family, especially those connected to the Astwoods and Robinsons.

I also want to give condolences to our Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, Pop and Kieran, and Ken, on the passing of Commissioner Williams. We'll have more to say about that later. Before I sit down, I want to congratulate the regiment and the Marine branch on getting the boat that was commissioned yesterday.

I have to give credit where credit is due. The boat was well received and long awaited. I want to thank the government, the Governor's Office, National Security Council, and all involved in getting the regiment this boat. The importance of that boat was highlighted yesterday. The boat is important for rescue and protection. Last but not least, we still have a problem with illegal development here in Grand Turk, informal settlements. I urge the informal settlement unit to really do their work here in Grand Turk.

ILLEGAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN GRAND TURK

Hon. Edwin Andre Astwood:

We see as people go and dump things into the dump, materials, old materials, we see materials coming out. Anybody passing on that road will see things coming out in trucks, trucks going in to dump something, trucks taking out other things. We're seeing a lot of illegal development happening. The old house is still there in the front, but going straight back, there's a lot of illegal development.

The minister or ministry responsible needs to do more. It's really getting out of hand. You don't see it until you look carefully. Now you have about 15, 20 units in that same yard, and it's happening throughout Grand Turk. In my constituency in North Bexelina, not so much in South Bexelina or Breezy Break, but definitely in Overbeck, West Road, and North Bexelina, illegal development is getting out of control. I implore the minister responsible, or if it's under the Governor's Office, the informal settlement unit, to act. We need to nip informal settlement development in the bud, especially here in Grand Turk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CHAIR RECOGNISES NEXT MEMBER FOR CONTRIBUTION

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Honourable Member, for your contribution. The Chair recognises the Honourable Ninth All-Island Member for his contribution.

CONDOLENCES AND HEALTH CONCERNS IN GRAND TURK

Hon. Willin A. Belliard:

Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, Chaplain of the House, and those listening. First, condolences to those who have lost loved ones, in particular the family of the late Commissioner Williams, under whom I served for about two years before he retired. Also to the family of our Honourable Member for Blue Hills and my extended family, the Robinson

family, Ced Robinson and Glenice, on the loss of their daughter. And to anyone else who lost a loved one.

Speaker, we seem to be losing too many of our people too fast. Also, I raised the issue a few years ago about the predominance of cancer in this country. I'm not sure how to go about it, but we need to find answers as to why we have so much cancer, particularly among those who lived in Grand Turk for an extended time.

Almost every family has been touched. Back to the people's work: there are many issues our people want answers to, so I put the front bench on notice that questions are coming to get the people the answers they want. Have a wonderful afternoon, Speaker.

CHAIR RECOGNISES PREMIER FOR 2-MINUTE SPEECH

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much for your contribution. Are there any further contributions? There are no further contributions. The Chair recognises the Honourable Premier for his 2-minute speech.

CONDOLENCES AND REQUEST FOR MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR COMMISSIONER STANLEY WILLIAMS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Speaker, it will be less than 2 minutes. I just want to add my voice to my colleagues who spoke, especially regarding condolences to families undergoing grief because of the loss of loved ones. I believe it is appropriate for us in this House today to stand for a moment of silence in honour of Commissioner Stanley Williams, who served for 37 years. If you look at the most long-serving persons in law enforcement, it would probably be him and to some extent his former deputy and former member of this House, Mr. Albert Grant.

I ask us to stand for a moment of silence in his honour.

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR COMMISSIONER STANLEY WILLIAMS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

I agree. Honourable Members, please stand in honour of Mr. Stanley Williams, who served for 37 years. Thank you very much. Please be seated.

CONDOLENCES TO WILLIAMS AND ROBINSON FAMILIES

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you. I would also like to extend my condolences to his wife and children. Like Hon. Willin Belliard, I served as a police constable under Commissioner Stanley, long before he retired, when he was still a relatively young senior officer here in Grand Turk. I remember him fondly.

He was never a man of many words, but a man with strong discipline. To Sid in particular, who worked for me for many years when I owned a newspaper—Sid was my printing person and a real gentleman. I've always found him to be one of the nicest people I know, and I know what he's going through has hit him hard. I extend condolences to him, his wife Glenice, and the entire Williams and Robinson families, and to my colleague, the Deputy Speaker.

CONDOLENCES AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

There are others I haven't written down, so I want to associate my condolences and thoughts with all those mentioned by everyone else today. Mr. Speaker, I will be delivering the State of the State on the 26th of this month, so I'll keep my powder dry. I have a lot I could say, but I'll wait. Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

TRANSITION TO ORDER PAPER - PETITIONS

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Thank you very much, Hon. Premier. Thank you, Hon. Jamell Rayan Robinson, for your 2-minute speech. Honourable Members, I will now return to the Order Paper. Petitions? There are none.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

TRANSITION TO GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Government notices?

SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION MADE SINCE MARCH 2026

RUN-THROUGH OF ORDER PAPER SECTIONS AND COMPLETION OF AGENDA

Hon. Gordon Burton:

There are none. Private Members' notices? There are none. Notices of questions? There are none. Report from committees? There are none. Statement by Ministers. There are none. Personal explanation. There are none. Motions for

leave of absence. I received notices from the Honourable Minister of Innovation, Technology and Energy, and from the Honourable Minister of PPID, and from the Member for Leeward and Long Bay, that they would not be present today. Oral replies to questions? There are none. Notices of motions for the adjournment of the Parliament on matters requiring urgent consideration? There are none.

Subsidiary legislation made since January 26th, which is on the Order Paper that you have. Hon. Premier, we have now completed the agenda for today. Do you want to speak to the subsidiary legislation? No? Well, I could call it out. Hon. Premier, you can turn on your mic.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

APOLOGY AND MORTGAGE CORPORATION BILL FIRST READING DELAY

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Mr. Speaker, again, I apologize for the late start of the House this morning. We did have some technical issues, as you outlined, and in fairness to yourself and the Clerk, I take full responsibility for that because it was in relation to the laying on the table for the first reading of the Mortgage Corporation Bill, which I really want to move ahead with because we are looking at early establishment of an institution and implementation of the bill and its framework so that we can facilitate the delivery of housing for the people of the East Turks and Caicos Islands.

Again, I apologize to the public for that and thank you very much for your forbearance and also to my colleagues.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE HOUSE SINE DIE

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, OBE:

Thank you very much. And with that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that this House now stands adjourned. Sine die.

HOUSE ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Gordon Burton:

Honourable Members, this Honourable House now stands adjourned. Signed, I.